

MINUTES
of the 147th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
United Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia, PA
September 14, 2017

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 4:00 p.m., and called on the Reverend Serena Sellers, pastor of Christ Lutheran, Kulpsville to lead the Council in devotions.

Pr. Sellers based the devotions on a passage from Lamentations. Sharing many pictures from the news she showed images of hurricanes, earthquakes, gun violence and the commemoration of September 11th. Who are we to address these needs? Children of the Most High God!

Vice President Beasley called the 147th meeting of the SEPA Synod Council to order at 4:18 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 146th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

The minutes of the 13th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 147th meeting with the following changes: we will consider Ms. Pamela Garozzo as the nominee for the open position of Lay Female at Large, and the Mission Moment will come after the Secretary's report, rather than before.

The name of Ms. Pamela Garozzo was then placed before the Council for consideration. Ms. Garozzo was able to give some words of introduction and describe her skill set and interest in serving on Synod Council. Vice President Beasley then asked her to step out while the Council voted.

The Synod Council approved Ms. Garozzo as Lay Female at Large without objection.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Claire S. Burkat highlighted the following items in addition to the items in her written report:

Bishop's Convocation

This annual event for Rostered Ministers is scheduled for November 15th – 17th, 2017 at the Bear Creek Resort and Conference Center, Bear Creek PA. Bishop Burkat is very excited about the

topic, “On the Road, Together,” and the presenters, as we explore how to meet the changing needs of society with the timeless message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Scholarships are still available, but the deadline to apply for one is September 25th. Please be sure to encourage the rostered leaders in your sphere to register early to be a part of this annual event.

Reformation Event

The primary event the Synod is sponsoring for the 500th Commemoration of the Reformation is entitled “Together in Hope,” and is taking place October 21st at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale. The presenters will be the Rev. Dr. Donald McCoid, Bishop emeritus of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and Assistant to the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, and Dr. John Borelli, Special Assistant to the President for Interreligious Initiatives at Georgetown University, and former Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Preaching at a joint prayer service will be the Rev. Dr. Peter Donohue, Augustinian Fryar and President of Villanova University. The focus of the day is to promote healing for those on both sides of the ecumenical divide. Rostered ministers are encouraged to attend and invite their parishioners, particularly those for whom the divisions between Catholic and Lutheran communions have been particularly painful.

Synods in Crisis

Bishop Burkat then stated the Council has her report, and has been able to read it, but there is a concern that has been on her heart that she feels needs more discussion than what she wrote. She shared her heart has been going out to the many synods for whom disasters have been a reality as of late. Eleven of our sixty-five synods are currently impacted by natural disasters. Hurricanes, flooding, wildfires and drought have been devastating the lives of fellow members of the body of Christ. Please pray for these sisters and brothers. But how can we help? What can we as a synod do to reach out with care and concern? LDR deals with many issues, but is acting for the region, not specifically for the synods in that region.

The Bishop opened the floor for discussion. Among the ideas raised were the following:

Bishop Burkat: At a minimum, we can send a letter from our Synod Council expressing our support and offering our prayers.

The Reverend Patricia Davenport, Director of Evangelical Mission, asked if we could bless each synod with a tangible gift of \$1,000. It is not a large gift compared to the concern, but shows tangible action in addition to our prayers.

Pr. Serena Sellers stated that after Katrina a clergy exchange occurred, where pastors from outside the region went in to give the local pastor a brief time off, allowing them to breathe, hear the Word, and be refreshed. Would there be money to support this?

Vice President Beasley suggested that we have certain congregations chosen and promoted through the Synod as collection sites where we could receive funds from people driving past, without having to leave their cars to support Hurricane Relief.

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, said we do have funds to help these synods, depending on what we choose to do.

Ms. Susan Pursch **MOVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod send \$1,000 to each of the affected synods, along with a letter from the Synod Council expressing our support and offering our prayers.**

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the motion.

Bishop Burkat asked for people to draft a letter for her to review and send on behalf of the Synod Council. Pr. Serena Sellers and Mr. Albert Glenn agreed to do this.

President Latini, United Lutheran Seminary

We were blessed to have President Theresa Latini of the United Lutheran Seminary with us. President Latini was originally scheduled to be at the Gettysburg campus on this day, but plans changed, and she was able to bring greetings to the Synod Council.

Dr. Latini shared some of her story. She is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA). She has served as a professor and administrator at two different seminaries, one of which was Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. She has served as a pastor in Presbyterian congregations, and as a spiritual care provider to persons with developmental disabilities. As a professor she taught in the areas of Pastoral Care and Conflict Resolution. She is excited to be here at ULS to teach how to bring the love and healing of Christ to a broken and fractured world. The very nature of how the United Lutheran Seminary has been constructed lends to this kind of work. From a history of division, two schools have come together to be unified, even as there remain distinctive sites for learning. We have a commitment to raising up public leaders who are public theologians.

Dr. Latini shared we have an enrollment of 75 new incoming students this year. This is stronger than any combined enrollment of the predecessor schools for many years. There are more residential students on the Philadelphia campus than in a long time. The new “no tuition” initiative has been a significant factor in this reality.

Bishop Burkat interjected that 13 or 14 of the new enrollees are from SEPA Synod.

Ms. Susan Pursch expressed her concern that in light of this increased enrollment we do all we can to ensure there are calls for these persons as they enter the Church for service.

Bishop Burkat noted that there are over 900 unfilled calls across the ELCA. There are places to serve, though we may not be able to place them all in our area.

Pr. Sellers made the observation that there are many retirements happening as baby boomers reach that time of their life. This tuition initiative makes it possible for people to afford to go to first call parishes, because the debt load will be more manageable in light of comparatively low compensation in these settings.

Bishop Burkat thanked Dr. Latini for her presence and her sharing. She then prayed for President Latini and the United Lutheran Seminary.

Actions on the Roster

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, shared some information regarding the roster that had been received from the Reverend Wm. Chris Boerger, Secretary of the ELCA. Secretary Boerger has been reaching out to all 65 synods to clarify questions regarding dates of persons moving to different calls or different roster status. Essentially, the date of the change needs to be the date of occurrence, regardless of when the Synod Council meets to vote on these changes. Secretary Boerger realizes that this results in synod councils often having to approve changes that have already occurred, such as for calls to Interim Ministry, or moves to “on leave from call” status. This can make councils uncomfortable. However, the change needs to be based on the time of the occurrence so the rostered minister can be in the proper category, and so the appropriate expression of the Church is responsible for that minister. For example, when a person leaves a call and moves to “on leave from call,” the previously served congregation or ministry site is no longer the responsible agency for the minister, but they are still under the authority and oversight of some expression of the Church, be that the Synod or the Church-wide Organization. The process does require some trust that the persons in the call process are working faithfully, and that the ministers in transition are accountable to, and receiving care from, the proper agency. Any concerns resulting from a call or roster status change is handled by the synod bishop, and when necessary the Secretary of the ELCA.

Secretary Richard then presented the actions on the roster.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the following resolutions:

Invitation to a UCC Minister to Serve an ELCA Congregation in SEPA Synod

SC 17.09.01. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, for the Reverend Suzanne Marie Spaulding at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Ferndale, PA beginning September 1, 2017 until August 31, 2018. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.

Extension of Non-stipendiary Call

SC 17.09.02. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a non-stipendiary call to Reverend Dr. Anita Baly as pastor at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Plymouth Meeting, PA beginning August 13, 2017 to April 30, 2018.

Call to Specialized Ministry

SC 17.09.03. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the Reverend Ghislaine Cotnoir beginning May 15, 2017 to May 14, 2018

On Leave from Call Requests

S.C.17.09.04. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant the Reverend Marissa Krey on leave from call status, 1st year, effective February 27, 2017

S.C.17.09.05. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant the Reverend Raymond A. Miller on leave from call status, 1st year, effective June 1, 2017

S.C.17.09.06. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant the Reverend Daryl Nelson on leave from call status, 1st year, effective September 1, 2017

Retirement Request

S.C.17.09.07. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant the Reverend Rodney Kopp retirement status effective November 1, 2017

Information not requiring action

Transfers

The Reverend Dane Skillbred to Southwestern Minnesota Synod, effective May 1, 2017
The Reverend David Lose to Minneapolis Area Synod, effective July 1, 2017

Deaths

The Reverend David Percy, July 22, 2017
The Reverend Thomas Sauerman, June 21, 2017

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

ADLA Convention

Vice President Beasley shared that she was heavily involved with the National African Descent Lutheran Association Convention which was recently held in Philadelphia. The Assembly was held jointly with its counterpart in the Episcopal Church, USA, the National Union of Black Episcopalians. There were many logistical challenges with the Convention, but it was an amazing gathering. She expressed her deep appreciation to Bishop Burkat and the people of Holy Communion Lutheran, Philadelphia, for their assistance and hospitality.

Update on the Process for the Election of the Bishop

Vice President Beasley stated that the Transition team has met twice already, and are working on the Synodical Profile. They are working well together, and moving forward in their task.

The Discernment Team has also met, and is making progress on their portion of the process. They plan to have a series of Bible Studies beginning in February. They are also working on

ways to keep the process surrounded in prayer. Synod Council members are encouraged to have their congregations pray for this process regularly in their worship services.

Synod Office Space

Ms. Beasley noted the Executive Committee is aware that we need to consider the Synod Office space, as the lease with the Seminary will expire just about the time the new bishop takes office. It is important to have a sense of options for space prior to the new bishop's starting date. To that end, the Executive Committee would like to have people on a property team that have some professional experience in real estate, be that as realtors, lawyers, or other skills. Please let Vice President Beasley know if you have a suggested person for this team.

Synod Committees

Ms. Beasley referenced the list of persons placed to serve on the various Synod Council committees. She asked the Council to affirm the appointments as presented.

S.C. 17.09.08. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the appointments to the Synod Committees for 2017-2018 as recommended by the Bishop and Vice President.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Ms. Beasley encouraged the various committees to meet with their chairpersons over dinner to get acquainted with each other and review their tasks.

Farewell and Thank You for Bishop Burkat

Ms. Beasley asked the members of the Synod Council to mark Sunday, July 8th, 2018 on their calendars as the date for Bishop Burkat's farewell reception. The event is planned for the Crystal Tea Room in Philadelphia. Tentative price is \$150.00, which will include a gift.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Secretary Richard thanked the Reverend Tyler Rasmussen for filling in last meeting as Pr. Richard spoke at his daughter's Baccalaureate service. He then brought forward the following item from his written report:

Appointment of Board Member to Silver Springs – Marin Luther School

The Synod Council needs to affirm members to serve on several of our Social Ministry Organization boards of directors. Silver Springs – Martin Luther School has submitted the following request:

S.C. 17.09.09. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the appointment of Ms. Jodi S. Donahue, St. Luke's, Devon and the Reverend Janice Vogt, pastor of Grace, Norristown to the Board of Directors of the Silver Springs – Martin Luther School, each for a term of three years, beginning October 26, 2017, the Reverend Janice Vogt, pastor of Grace, Norristown, as an officer of the Board of

Directors of the Silver Springs – Martin Luther School (secretary), for a term of one year, beginning October 26, 2017, and Mr. C. Andrew Krepps, Jr., Trinity, Lansdale as an officer of the Board of Directors of the Silver Springs – Martin Luther School (chairperson), for a term of one year, beginning October 26, 2017.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

MISSION MOMENT

Ms. Ellen Daneke, chair of the Forward Together in Faith Campaign, shared an update on the Campaign. She reviewed the goals of the Campaign and the purpose for it. She also reminded the Council that the Forward Together in Faith Campaign is the way in which we as a Synod have decided to support the ELCA's financial campaign, by pledging 10% of our commitments to the ELCA's campaign. The overall goal of the Campaign is \$2.5 million, with \$250,000 going to the ELCA.

Currently the team is focused on gaining commitments from congregations. To date, 6 of the 26 congregations represented on the Synod Council have given gifts or made pledges. It would be good to receive commitments from all of these congregations, as they are leadership churches by virtue of having members on the Synod Council.

Overall, 48 of 154 congregations in the Synod have made commitments. This is 31% of our congregations.

As of this date, the total pledged or given by congregations and individuals is \$603,504, which is 24% of our total goal for the Campaign. This leaves us with \$1,896,496 to raise by 2018, the desired end of the Campaign.

We have incurred costs related to the Campaign of \$228,784.

We have made investments aligned with the Campaign of \$34,395.

Members of the Forward Together in Faith Team will be contacting your congregation to elicit your help and support. Please help the Campaign by approaching your leadership and explaining the goal and the need with them.

Ms. Susan Pursch inquired what will happen if we do not make our goal. Will we pro-rate the support to the four categories?

Ms. Daneke affirmed that this is correct. The intent is to have each of the areas supported to some degree. This includes the ELCA Campaign. Whatever gifts are given to the Forward Together in Faith Campaign, 10% of them will go the ELCA Campaign.

Bishop Burkat commented that a prime concern is that we have only a third of our congregations supporting the Campaign, and from them we have received a little less than a third of our goal.

When we get into the congregations and explain what we are doing, the people have responded. We need about 70% of our congregations to participate. When an Ambassador has gone, we have received a response.

Pr. Serena Sellers asked if it is possible to have the list of supporting congregations. She feels she can then go to her Conference and praise those congregations that have supported the Campaign, and encourage those who have not. This may be a way for each of us to share the story and garner support.

Bishop Burkat said this information could be made available.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Ms. Janet Neff highlighted the following from her submitted report:

To date, Partnership Support from congregations is above what we have budgeted. Referring to Unrestricted Revenues that are noted in her report, she pointed out that we have revenues that are greater than budget because of the sale of properties and some other gifts received.

This year we were in a positive position after the Synod Assembly. This was made possible by changing our fee structure, and by addressing some other issues around the Assembly.

The Assembly offering resulted in \$4,408 given to Racial Justice.

Ms. Neff said that we are, overall, in a positive position. Referencing the Statement of Financial position, which she described as “a snapshot of where we are,” we have assets of \$2.3 million, and liabilities of less than \$100,000.

We do need to address our pre-paid rent to the Seminary for our office space, which is listed on the Statement. This is decreasing, and will not last much more than six months following election of new bishop.

Ms. Neff also noted that the numbers in her report for the Forward Together in Faith Campaign are different from those presented by Ms. Daneke this evening, but her report contained the numbers she had received as of August 31st. Ms. Daneke has more current figures.

Referring to congregational giving, Ms. Neff encouraged members to be leaders in this regard as well as leaders for the Campaign. Members should check their congregation’s response in her reports, compare intended giving versus actual gifts made, and encourage faithful support of our Synod.

Ms. Susan Pursch asked what our financial situation would be if we had not sold two properties.

Ms. Neff responded that the sale of the properties brought \$150,000 to our Unrestricted Revenues. She reviewed that when we sell a property, 15% of the sale price goes to Unrestricted

Revenues. We then reimburse the costs incurred by the Synod for maintaining all the properties we have under management, and the remainder of the receipts goes to the Fund for Mission.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Constitution Committee

Pr. Tyler Rasmussen, chair, reported that twenty congregations are in the process of revising their constitutions. He noted that members should encourage congregations to contact the Constitution Committee at the beginning of the process, rather than at the end. This way the Committee can help ensure a smooth transition from the previous document to the renewed one. This can avoid congregational committees needing to revise a document they have already taken to the congregation, thinking they had it in order and ready for approval.

Investment Committee

Mr. David Ehret, chair, reported that the investments are performing well, and the Committee is able to monitor them in light of the parameters previously set by the Council. We have been experiencing a good return, averaging about 10% over this past year. The chair does remind the Synod Council that past performance does not guarantee future earnings. The Committee has an additional \$300,000 that they are ready to invest. We currently have approximately \$1.55 million under management in our Vanguard accounts, and approximately \$1.31 million under management in T. Rowe Price.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

The Reverend Bradley Burke, Assistant to the Bishop, was closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

The 148th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be December 7, 2017, 4:00 p.m., St. Peter, Hilltown.

Respectfully submitted,
The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Approved by Synod Council, December 7, 2017