

MINUTES
of the 148th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
St. Peter Lutheran Church, Hilltown, PA
December 7, 2017

At 4:05 p.m. Vice President Tracey A. Beasley gathered the Synod Council together. She noted that Bishop Burkat would not be in attendance as she was at an event at Luther Seminary with Pastors Brad Burke and Chris McKinstry. She then invited the Reverend Joseph Varsanyi, host pastor, to bring greetings.

Pastor Varsanyi welcomed the Council to St. Peter, and shared some information about the congregation. St. Peter is part of Synod's "Cross Gen" program. Sunday school has come out of Sunday school and now Christian Education has taken a whole new direction. Things are intentionally left on walls so the groups who use our space can see what we have been learning about God. There are also some quilts displayed, as this is a ministry of several women of the congregation.

The Reverend Carolann Hopcke, Dean of the Upper Bucks Conference, distributed a book that describes the congregations of the Conference. Pastor Hopcke then led the Synod Council in devotions, based on readings of Advent and Christmas.

Vice President Beasley called the 148th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:21 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 147th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved with one alteration by Vice President Beasley regarding her suggestion for support of sister synods in crisis.

SETTING THE AGENDA

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 148th meeting with the following changes: the Treasurer's report will follow the Secretary's Report.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Vice President Beasley noted that the Council had received the Bishop's Report in the packet for the meeting. Ms. Beasley shared that the gifts to the various Synods in crisis were greatly appreciated by the receiving Synods. Ms. Beasley also expressed her thanks to the Synod Council for taking this action. Several of the Synods decided to "pay it forward" by returning the check sent to them, and requesting that the gift be added to that of the Florida-Bahama Synod to assist with the devastation in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria.

Actions on the Roster

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, then presented the actions on the roster.

Call to Specialized Ministry

S.C.17.12.01 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to Deacon Rachel Bailey as part-time Chaplain at Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care of Pennsylvania in King of Prussia effective December 8, 2017 to December 7, 2018

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

On Leave from Call Requests

S.C. 17.12.02 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants Deacon Allison Wilcox on leave from call status, 1st year, effective October 28, 2017

S.C. 17.12.03 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Sozinho Alves on leave from call status, 1st year, effective December 1, 2017

S.C. 17.12.04 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Christopher Weidner on leave from call status, 3rd year, effective December 7, 2017

S.C. 17.12.05 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Linda Manson on leave from call status, 1st year, effective January 1, 2018

Mr. Adam Clark of Zion Lutheran, Olney, asked about the request for Pastor Sozinho Alves, who is the pastor of Zion, Olney. Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations, clarified that Pastor Alves is serving under contract to Zion Olney. His call was to another agency, and the status in his called position is what has changed.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolutions.

Retirement Requests

S.C. 17.12.06 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Richard Zuber retirement status effective January 1, 2018

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Information Not Requiring Action

Transfers

The Reverend Marissa Krey to North Carolina Synod effective November 3, 2017

The Reverend David Penman from Virginia Synod effective September 28, 2017

The Reverend Nathan Preisinger from Upstate New York Synod January 22, 2018

Resigned from the E.L.C.A. Roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Mr. David Lembo effective November 6, 2017

Deaths:

The Reverend Edward W. Uthe, November 23, 2017

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley referenced the good news in the report from Bear Creek Camp, provided by Mr. Daniel Scharnhorst, Executive Director of the Camp. Attendance has been steadily increasing since 2012, with 2017 reflecting an increase in camper attendance of 68% over this five year period.

Bishop's Retirement Celebration

The date of the Bishop's retirement celebration is Sunday, July 8th, 2018. The price has come down from what was previously reported. It will now be \$115.00 per person, rather than \$150.00. There will also be a cook-out at the Seminary on the day before, Saturday, July 7th, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There will not be a charge for the cook-out.

Report on the Process for the Election of the Bishop

The Committee on the Election of the Bishop

Vice President Beasley will be meeting December 8th with Ms. Christine Simpson, chair of the Committee on Bishop Elections to go over the process for the election at the Synod Assembly.

The Transition Team

The Transition Team has distributed via e-mail and MinistryLink, the Synod's website, a questionnaire to assist them with the Synodical Mission Profile they are compiling. The deadline for completing the questionnaire is tomorrow, December 8th. All Synod council members are encouraged to participate in this, if they have not already done so, and are asked to encourage members of their congregations to do so as well.

Discussion was held regarding the questionnaire. Some members offered suggestions as to what may have been helpful to ask. Vice President Beasley noted that at this time, the questionnaire is out in the form it is. The Transition Team took great care to ask the questions they felt were most helpful for the information they need for the Profile. There will be other times in the process when other questions can be raised.

The Vice President noted that the Synod Staff is also helping the Transition team to compile some of the data the Transition Team has needed. The Synodical Mission Profile will be reviewed and released as soon as possible upon completion.

The Discernment Team

The Discernment Team is discussing how they will post materials on the internet. There may be a particular "tab" on the Synod website, or there may be a link to a separate website designated for this process. Mr. Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communications, is being consulted for the best practice to employ.

Forms for potential candidates will not be posted on Sharepoint. Neither will they be posted on any other site until the discernment process reaches the appropriate stage. To maintain a sense of fairness there is a need to be sure that persons on Synod Council, particularly the clergy, do not have access to the forms any earlier than the rest of the Synod.

There will be a Synod-wide Bible Study on February 10th, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. This study will be held at twelve sites across the Synod, using the same passages and questions at each site. The session which will be held at the United Lutheran Seminary's Brossman Center will be live-streamed so that those who cannot attend physically can have the opportunity to listen in to the conversation at one of the sites.

The Study will discuss types of leadership qualities seen in Scripture, and consider the types of leadership that might be most helpful for our Synod at this time.

At the end of the Study there will be a description of how names of persons who might have the needed gifts to be bishop may be raised. Those persons need to be asked by the presenter if they are willing to have their names placed before the Synod for consideration, and if so, they will be asked to fill out a form for posting. Names of all pre-identified candidates will be submitted to Vice President Beasley.

The Reverend Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam asked if the names will be placed on the E.L.C.A. website for viewing across the Church, or just on our Synod website. Ms. Beasley responded they would go only on our Synod website.

Mr. Albert Glenn stated that it is his understanding that anyone can participate, but that this study will be especially relevant for those who will be Voting Members at the upcoming Assembly. How is this going to be shared and the invitation be made? Ms. Beasley said that the Team is working with Mr. Fisher to find ways to get the notice out to the entire Synod.

She concluded her comments by asking that we keep the Teams, and the Synod in prayer as we go through this time of discernment.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Secretary Richard stated that the action the Council took last meeting to affirm Ms. Pamela Garozzo was not possible, as there is already a general member of the Synod Council from Ms. Garozzo's home congregation. The Executive Committee had not picked this up prior to submitting her name, and with apologies and regrets notes that we need to find another person to serve as Lay Female at Large.

In addition to this, he shared the Reverend Lyzette Rios Sanchez is no longer eligible to serve on Synod Council due to inability to attend the required number of meetings as described in the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the SEPA Synod.

The Nominating Committee has been asked to seek suitable persons to fill these open positions on the Synod Council.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, has made contact with the CFO of the United Lutheran Seminary to investigate the possibility of extending the lease for the Synod Offices for a year. There has not yet been response, but if the terms are favorable this may take some pressure off the next Bishop, ensuring a site for the offices for a year and four months, rather than only four months.

In her report she noted that as of the end of October we were in a good financial position due to an increase in unrestricted revenues, and a decrease in unrestricted expenses. The increase in income was from increased partnership support (\$13,400), better than anticipated returns on our investments (\$189,370), and a larger than anticipated returns from the sale of two properties (\$15,400). We now have only one property under management, the former St. Michael's, Germantown.

Ms. Neff highlighted that the Finance office and the Finance Committee continue to seek ways to effectively use resources on hand to keep the operations funded. An example she used was the use of designated monies for Candidacy that are used to help offset the cost of this portion of our budget.

Forward Together in Faith

Ms. Neff reported that to date the amount pledged and or given to the Campaign is \$609,239 Expenses related to the Campaign and disbursements in line with the Campaign's objective's total \$268,455.

Ms. Susan Pursch stated that she is pleased that we are being clear on how we use the proceeds from the sale of properties, but she expressed concern that since there is only one property remaining to sell, we cannot count on continued revenue from this source. Without money from the sale of properties we would be \$106,000 short in this fiscal period.

Ms. Neff responded that this is part of why we continue to put such income into the Fund for Mission so that we can have another source of funds for the "Mission" portion of our budget. This also requires us to re-evaluate how we use these funds, and determine if a particular mission continues to be worth our support.

MISSION MOMENT

The Reverend Marcia Bell, Director of Mobility and the Reverend Christian McMullen, Director of Interim Ministry, presented the Mission Moment to the Synod Council. Pastor Bell began the presentation, which was discussion oriented in nature.

Pastor Bell said she had been asked to present on "congregations at risk." She modified what she would share by asking the Deans to provide her with a list of congregations with 40 or fewer worshippers in regular attendance. She noted that this is not a hard and fast definition of a congregation "at risk." Some of these smaller congregations are very stable in terms of financial resources, type of ministry staffing, and activity in their communities. Other larger congregations may have deeper financial concerns, and be more "at risk" than congregations that have fewer active worshippers. Some congregations have done very well with a part-time pastor, while others have shared pastoral or administrative staff to keep expenses manageable.

She then discussed aspects of the transition process for congregations seeking a pastor. She noted that we as a Synod are very committed to Interim Ministry as part of this process, but that this can take various forms. Some congregations have a full-time Interim Pastor; some have a part-time Interim Pastor that may also be working with another congregation; some congregations have an Interim Consultant, with a bridge pastor caring for the pastoral concerns of the congregation. We now have lay persons who have been through the interim training who serve as such consultants.

Mr. Albert Glenn asked if there is a resource to share with congregations as to the different types of options that are available so congregations can look ahead to different ways in which a transition might be approached, and relieve some of the concern congregations have about the process.

Pastor Bell said that there is not such a list, but it would be nice to have one. There are many resources, including some leaders who are helping congregations to turn things around. But there is currently no one in the Synod office tasked with the role of compiling such a resource.

Pastor Christian McMullen shared that one resource is the MAP study. This study can help a congregation assess its strengths and passions, allowing them to focus their energy and mission. Success varies depending on how invested the congregation may be in engaging the process. This MAP was not originally designed for this time of transition, but has worked well in some congregations as part of this process.

Ms. Pursch asked if what we are currently seeing is a typical number of congregations in transition.

Pastor Bell said that it is. While things can always change, we are fairly consistent in the number of congregations in the process at any given time.

Pastor Bell went on to say that common questions include: Why do we need an interim? Why does it take so long? I work for Boeing. If I resign tomorrow there is another person on the line the very next day. Why not with pastor?

Pastor Bell said that we constantly have to remind people that this is a relational position, not simply a business position. Therefore it takes a different process, and often more time than replacing a person in other occupations.

Pastor McMullen then took lead in the conversation. He shared a handout that outlined the process. He shared that it is pretty straightforward, until you try to fill out the Ministry Site Profile. This is a strong part of the process, and the questions in it are deep. This is why it takes time. The history of a congregation is significant, but it does not seem important until you go through how the history has affected the ministry and decision making in the congregation.

He shared that our Interim Ministers gather for quarterly consultations, which are like continuing education events. All are expected to attend. This is a chance to hone skills, compare notes, and

work to make good choices for the congregations in which they are serving, as congregations vary greatly.

Ms. Pursch asked how many trained interims we have.

Pastor McMullen responded that we have about 15. This number is a bit fluid, as there are some trained interims who are backing off, but can be called in from time to time as needed.

The Reverend Serena Sellers, who has served as a n Intentional Interim Pastor, shared that it is difficult to grasp that all these numbers are in flux all the time. It includes people who are doing interims in neighboring synods, or that we bring in from other synods. It is hard to say “do we have enough interims?” Not every interim is appropriate for every congregation.

Ms. Pursch inquired as to how many synods have such a network?

Pastor McMullen replied that he did not know exactly, but that there are not many. We are a good Synod for this practice because of our relatively compact geography.

Pastor Bell shared that we are among the longest standing Synods to use an Interim Ministry Network as part of our process. We go back in this process about 30 years. Pastor Bell shared that her first call was with an Interim as a mentor.

The Synod Council expressed their thanks to Pastors Bell and McMullen for their presentation.

The Executive Committee will discuss how often we will have a report such as this given to the Synod Council.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee

Mr. Albert Glenn, chair, reported that when the committee last met they reviewed the continuing resolutions in the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the SEPA Synod to clarify their roles and responsibilities. They also reviewed the financial statements with the treasurer.

Constitution Committee

The Reverend Tyler Rasmussen, chair, reported that the committee is working with twenty congregations that are revising their constitutions. He anticipates that two will come to the next meeting of Synod council for ratification.

Investment Committee

Mr. David Ehret, chair, noted that the Committee has not met since August, but he provided an update on the funds we have under management. He noted as a regular disclaimer that past performance is no guarantee of future results.

As of October 31st,

Vanguard Funds - \$1,655,311

T. Rowe Price Funds - \$1,103,835

Mission Investment Fund - \$300,000
Waiting to be invested - \$50,000

Investments have demonstrated a return of about 12% over the past year.

Administration Committee

The Administration Committee presented that draft of the Agenda for the May 4-5, 2018 Synod Assembly. It was noted that the Agenda includes times of prayer by the Discernment Team throughout the Assembly to guide the process for the Election of a Bishop.

It was noted that the prayer at 12:25 p.m. on Friday will be led by Bishop Donald Kreiss, who serves our partner synod, the SE Michigan Synod.

On Friday at 2:00 p.m., the Finance Committee chair needs to be changed from Ms. Sue Massey to Mr. Albert Glenn.

It was suggested that the areas for balloting be made more clear and consistent throughout the document, so that it is more apparent which ballot is for the Election of the Bishop and which is for General Balloting, and to be sure the number of the Ballot for the Election of the Bishop is clear and correct.

There were questions regarding the timing of the distribution of the biographical material for those who are nominated for Bishop on the First Ballot. The Agenda calls for this information to be available prior to the Third Ballot. The question was raised as to why it would not be available prior to the Second Ballot. Vice President Beasley stated that this came from the Handbook from the E.L.C.A. regarding the process for the Election of a Bishop, and is a portion of the process that we have not followed correctly in the past.

Nominations Committee

As the Reverend Christopher McKinstry, chair, was not able to be present at this meeting, Secretary Richard reviewed the letter which was sent to Rostered Ministers and Congregations regarding the needs for other positions beyond the Bishop. We will be electing people to Synod Council, to the Committee on Discipline, and to the E.L.C.A. Churchwide Assembly in August of 2019.

If members of Synod Council know of persons that would be strong candidates for these positions, please approach them and encourage them to be in nomination.

If there are Synod Council members whose term is expiring, are able to serve a second term, and are willing to serve again, please let the Nominating Committee know. There is no automatic renewal; one needs to be willing to stand in nomination for a second term.

Forward Together in Faith Campaign

Ms. Ellen Daneke shared a handout updating the progress of the Campaign. With the Campaign planned to be complete by the May Synod Assembly, we are quite far behind where we wished to be.

To date, we have received 24.5% of our goal of \$2.5 million.
57 of our 154 congregations and worshipping communities have made a pledge or a gift. This is 37% of our churches.
The goal at this point was to be at 70% of our congregations, or 107

Synod Leadership that has pledged or given to the Campaign is 47 out of 57 persons/families
Synod Council Congregations that have pledged or given is 10 out of 29.

Of the \$613,219 pledged or given to date, we have had expenses for the campaign of \$228, 784,
and we have made investments aligned with the campaign of \$34,395

We still need to raise \$1,886,781 to reach our \$2.5 million goal.

OLD BUSINESS

Vice President Beasley stated that we are still trying to form a team to assess the needs of the Synod for Office space. So far one person has been recommended for this team. If you know of someone with experience in real estate and finances who might be a good choice for this team, please let Vice President Beasley know.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Bill Harp, Synod Staff, thanks everyone for going through the process of getting on the new data base system. The old system is no longer supported, and the ELCA notified us of this free option to use the system the Churchwide Organization uses.

The Reverend Serena Sellers asked that the thanks of the Synod Council be conveyed to Mr. Bill Harp for all his efforts on this project.

The Reverend Dwight Mason expressed his thanks to Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations, for the step by step email getting us to the site of tonight's meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:09 p.m. with prayer by Pastor Christian McMullen.

The 149th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be February 22, 2018, 4:00 p.m., Grace, Broomall.

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

Approved by Synod Council, February 22, 2018