

MINUTES
of the 152nd MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Paul's Run Retirement Community, Philadelphia, PA
September 20, 2018

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 152nd meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:40 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 151st meeting of the Synod Council were approved as presented. The minutes of the 31st Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod should be available for approval at the December meeting of the Synod Council.

SETTING THE AGENDA

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 152nd meeting with the following additions: the Investment Committee and the Nominating Committee Reports will be included in Committee Reports.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Davenport shared that her written report had been submitted. She then shared some reflections that have been growing for her. Bishop Davenport reflected her sense that we in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod have a *working* Council. Our members are active in numerous committees, on this Council, in their home congregations, and in their lives as people of faith. In her experience at the Formation event for new Bishops she was taken by the breadth and depth of the work we do as the Synod, the Synod Council, and the Church. When she served in the congregation (Spirit and Truth, Yeadon), she knew she had 12 members on the congregation council that had her back. As Bishop, she knows when we gather as the Synod Council she has 30 people who have her back.

Mr. Bert Glenn made the following observation to Bishop Davenport: “I notice that you use language of kingdom building that I am not comfortable with, but I see you have a vision. What is that vision?”

Bishop Davenport replied, “Kingdom is when we get to a place where our love relationship with Jesus will lead us to loving and serving others. How do we move ourselves to get us to that place where this love of God and God’s kingdom is so within us that we are moving in this reality and relationship? It is about community, not necessarily church. How do we get ourselves to recognize we are the beloved community? Our community is broader than we think. Each of our congregations is one of 150 congregations in the Synod, which is one of 65 synods in ELCA, which is a part of the global reach of the Lutheran World Federation. Now that’s **kingdom.**”

Ms. Emily Fowler said, “I was raised to believe the Lutheran Church doesn’t change. But I sense in you a time of change. I am looking forward to it.”

Installation of the Bishop

A reminder that the Installation Celebration for Bishop Davenport will be held September 22nd at New Covenant Church, 7500 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia. All Synod Council members are invited both to the Installation and to the Dinner at the Brossman Center following the reception at New Covenant Church. Please let Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations, know if you plan to attend the dinner.

Actions on the Roster

Secretary Richard presented the actions of the roster.

Renewal of Invitation to U.C.C. minister to serve an ELCA congregation:

S.C.18.09.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve entry rite renewal, Invitation to Extended Service, for the Reverend Suzanne Marie Spaulding to St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Ferndale, PA, beginning September 1, 2018 to August 31, 2019. *This invitation is renewable annually by the Synod Council.*

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Renewal of Call to Specialized Ministry:

S.C.18.09.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one year, renewable call to the Reverend Ghislaine Cotnoir as Director of Spiritual Care at Artman and the Hearth at Drexel, beginning May 15, 2018 to May 14, 2019.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Call to Interim Ministry:

S.C.18.09.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Reverend Donna Wright to interim ministry at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Huntingdon Valley, PA beginning October 3, 2018, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until the Reverend Wright resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

On Leave from Call Requests:

S.C.18.09.04. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Phillip Waselik on leave from call status, first year, effective March 31, 2018

S.C.18.09.05. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants Deacon Ethyl Geist on leave from call status, first year, effective April 1, 2018

S.C.18.09.06. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Nancy B. Brown on leave from call status, first year, effective April 8, 2018

S.C.18.09.07. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Matthew Ollikainen on leave from call status, first year, effective May 14, 2018 - disability

S.C.18.09.08. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Raymond A. Miller on leave from call status, second year, effective June 1, 2018

S.C.18.09.09. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend James Goodyear on leave from call status, first year, effective June 1, 2018

The Synod Council unanimously adopted these resolutions.

Requests to move to Retirement Roster:

S.C.18.09.10. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Michael A. McKillip retirement status, effective August 1, 2018

S.C.18.09.11. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Paul M. Sorcek retirement status, effective September 1, 2018

S.C.18.09.12. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Marcia G. Bell retirement status, effective October 1, 2018

S.C.18.09.13. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Joyce E. Nelson retirement status, effective November 1, 2018

S.C.18.09.14. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Christopher L. Weidner retirement status, effective December 8, 2018

The Synod Council unanimously adopted these resolutions.

Information Not Requiring Action

Transfers:

The Reverend Dana Heiserer Smith TO Upstate New York Synod, effective April 30, 2018

The Reverend Daniel Eisenberger FROM New Jersey Synod, effective July 9, 2018

The Reverend Joshua Ferris TO New England Synod, effective July 29, 2018

Deaths:

The Reverend Thomas Kadel, July 24, 2018

Authorization of Housing Allowance

S.C.18.09.15. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2018 housing allowance for Bishop Patricia A. Davenport in the amount of \$23,083, and the Reverend Bradley Burke in the amount of \$30,000, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the recipients be reminded that amounts so designated as rental/housing allowance are excludable from the gross income of the respective recipients only to the extent that said amounts are used to rent or provide a home. Further, the amount eligible for the Section 107 exclusion may not exceed the fair rental value of the minister's home (including furnishings and appurtenances) plus the cost of utilities. To the extent that a greater amount is designated as rental/housing allowance, the designation will be ineffectual with respect to such amount.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley referenced the Executive Committee report.

Office Space

Ms. Beasley noted the Executive Committee did have the opportunity to tour the space the seminary had proposed as alternative office space for the Synod. The Committee found it lacking in several respects, not least of which were handicap accessibility, and the usefulness of each of the areas offered. The space was quite disjointed. While we recognize the Bishop may choose her own space, the Committee does not recommend this as the space she might choose.

Bishop Davenport said the space would need significant renovations for us to be able to use it well. The site of the former Prince of Peace, Plymouth Meeting, which we own, may be a good alternative site. We are inquiring into the cost to renovate that space. Both the cost of renovation, and the reality that we own this property, may make Plymouth Meeting a better choice in terms of stewardship of all our resources. We are also considering space in Blue Bell, PA.

Mr. Bert Glenn asked if, in order to keep close to Philadelphia, there has been any consideration of using the site of the former St. Michael's, Germantown if it has not been sold.

Bishop Davenport shared it may be in process, and we may not have it for long. There are other congregations considering Holy Closure, and one of them may prove to be a good possibility.

Follow up on City Pastors

In previous meetings there were questions regarding the financial well-being of the pastors serving in the City. Bishop Davenport and former Bishop Burkat met with and reviewed the situations of these leaders, and found that all have health insurance, and only one pastor is significantly below the minimum compensation.

Committee Assignments

Vice President Beasley presented the proposed assignments for the committees of the Synod Council. She thanked all the returning chairs, and welcomed the new chair of the Nominating Committee, Pastor Lydia Posselt. Secretary Richard noted that we need to vote to affirm these committee assignments. To that end, he proposed the following:

S.C.18.09.16. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the committee assignments as put forth by the Bishop and the Vice President.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Secretary Richard thanked the Synod Council for their prayers, cards, and support during the ongoing recovery of his brother, and the recent death of his mother. He also expressed his gratitude for their patience during this difficult year.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, made the following notes from her written report:

Income is down about \$40,000 year to date. It is true that this is the end of the summer, but this is not a good financial place for us. We need to do what we can to make up support before the end of the year if possible. We don't want to bring down a hammer on congregations, but we need receipts on a regular basis to make our operations work.

Even though we are down \$40,000 in partnership support, we have watched our expenses carefully. Consequently we are not as far off income to expenses as we might be.

Since our receipts are down, so is our support to the ELCA. Since we send Churchwide 50% of what we receive, we have sent less than we budgeted.

MISSION MOMENT

The Reverend Brad Burke, Assistant to the Bishop, introduced Bishop Stephen Munga and the Reverend Dr. Aneth Munga from the North East Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania to the Council. The Mungas are in the United States for the installation of Bishop Davenport, and are here to share with us some background on their Church.

Bishop Munga expressed his thanks to Bishop Davenport for the opportunity to be here. He conveyed greetings from the North East Diocese and its congregations, and their congratulations to Bishop Davenport on her election. "We are pleased that someone we have known has been chosen as bishop. Peaceful transition of leadership is something we hope for in Africa."

This is the second time the Mungas have been here for an installation. They were here for the installation of Bishop Burkat, and now they are here again; it is a blessing.

Bishop Munga has worked with three bishops in this Synod: Bishops Almquist, Burkat, and now Davenport. He has seen what our Synod has been through. "You know us, and we know you too. We have other partnerships, but there is a depth to this partnership. You are part of us and that is what the kingdom should look like."

Bishop Munga stated that the North East Diocese is still a growing church. “If you think you are grown up, then you are not grown up.”

They can see their church is growing and expanding. The Diocese is adding about 2,000 people each year, most of them young adults, becoming part of the faith through baptism.

The North East Diocese has 29 congregations, and is about to add 12 more. Each congregation has numerous sub congregations, totaling more than 700 sub congregations. There are about 120,000 active members in the Diocese, and approximately 230,000 persons if you count inactive members. Some congregations have 30 sub congregations, served by one pastor. They use lay preachers, training them and sending them out. It is tough to have a growing church without enough pastors. They have now started training more pastors at universities. They host the oldest mental health hospital in east Africa. They have congregational ministry, and institutional ministry – hospitals, schools, and the like.

Dr. Aneth Munga shared about the Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University, which celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. “We celebrate in words and actions the ministry before us. We had a group of people in 2005 who came to us and took up the cause of assisting us in this project. That partnership was not just in words, but in deeds and generosity. Many thanks for the partnership we have with SEPA Synod to serve the downtrodden through the work of those trained in this school. We continue to have as our mission being a leading institution in caring for all people, whatever their need, to be advocates for their full inclusion in the life of society.”

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Forward Together in Faith

Ms. Ellen Daneke, chairperson of the Campaign shared the following:

Most of the teams for the Campaign have been dissolved. One team will remain: the Grants team. The first grant period is open until September 30. One complete application has been received, and there is an awareness of two others “in the pipeline.”

The Grants team has been allocated \$25,000 for grants to award for 2019. There has been some confusion from congregations as to the level of grants – some feel their cause is too big, others fear theirs is too small. The answer from the Grants team is “just apply.” We will see what we can do, and will not consider any project too big or too small.

Mr. Bert Glenn asked, “For the remaining funds not yet disbursed, are they all committed to congregational projects, or will they be available more broadly?”

Ms. Daeneke replied that there can be monies for clusters of congregations to work together.

Bishop Davenport echoed this, stating that we are encouraging collaborative efforts.

Nominating Committee

The Reverend Lydia Posselt, chairperson, stated that this is a light year for nominations; we are only seeking names for Synod Council. If you are coming to the end of your term and are eligible for a second, we will reach out to see if you are willing to serve again. Please feel free to reach out to the Committee if you are willing to stand for re-election. You will need to fill out a nomination form, complete with picture.

Investment Committee

Mr. David Ehret, chairperson, shared that our Investment Portfolio has produced 7.2% gains so far this year. “We are doing well so far, and we are having fun.”

Old Business

Vice President Beasley encouraged all members to please come to the pre-service and the installation of our new Bishop. “You are the Board of Directors, and you are welcome.” The pre-service, “Holy Smoke,” will be held at Reformation, Philadelphia on Friday the 21st at 7:00 p.m., the installation will be on Saturday the 22nd at 2:00 p.m.

New Business

Bishop Davenport: At the last Synod Council meeting you filled out cards stating your hopes and dreams for the Synod. What are your hopes and dreams for Synod Council?

Mr. Bert Glenn: “Can we discuss substantive things? There is so much that is perfunctory in our meetings. If there is the possibility of talking about substantive matters, it would feel as though we are making more of a difference.”

Bishop Davenport: “One of my ultimate concerns is the health of our rostered ministers. Their health directly impacts the health of the congregations and the people they serve. This would be one thing we can discuss.”

When starting Spirit and Truth she prayed “How do we build excitement for the people to experience God in this space?” How can we make this true for this Council and this Synod as well?

The Reverend Brad Burke: “Perhaps there may be issues in ministry that could benefit from our collective discussion.”

Bishop Davenport: Perhaps the next Mission Moment can be on Congregational Vitality.

Ms. Elizabeth Young: “How do we let people know the value of the Synod, so they can know why they should be excited?”

Bishop Davenport: “We need to encourage lifting up many things, including our communities and the world – pray for hurricane relief, people in the community who have died, what is happening in the broader church.”

Ms. Lisa Hand: “I believe we need to come together and let each of the congregations know that they all belong.”

Bishop Davenport: “We need to have a Synodical revival!”

With no other business, Vice president Beasley asked for a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

The 153rd meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be held on December 6th, 2018, 4:00 p.m., at the United Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia Campus.

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

Approved by Synod Council December 6, 2018