

MINUTES
of the 153rd MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Brossman Center, United Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia, PA
December 6, 2018

DEVOTIONS AND MISSION MOMENT

The Reverend Dr. Jayakiran Sebastian, Dean of the Philadelphia Campus of United Lutheran Seminary, was present to lead the Synod Council in devotions, and to bring the Mission Moment. He brought greetings from the Seminary's Interim President, the Reverend Dr. Richard Green, who was unable to be present as he was attending a meeting of the ELCA Seminary presidents on this day.

Dean Sebastian said there is much envy about two of the seminaries in the ELCA: ULS and Luther. There is a strong effort to foster a collective vision of ministry for seminaries in this changing American context. ULS and Luther are at the forefront of this effort.

The number of students enrolled is strong. If one counts the certificate programs, there are 378 students enrolled. The number of those seeking degrees is 292. There are nearly 200 full-time equivalent students. These numbers are higher than the two predecessor schools had prior to merger, but are not close to the boom of the 90's when there were over 400 full-time equivalent students.

Dr. Green, in the midst of his many initiatives, is very pleased about his weekly "i-dates" (internet updates). If you do not receive them he invites you to sign up for this source of information about our Seminary.

Dean Sebastian shared that while the school launched with no mission statement, a statement now exists: "Unifying, Learning, Serving." When it comes to creating a mission statement the school has worked somewhat out of order. Normally one identifies values, then sets a vision, which then leads to a mission statement. ULS has clarified its values, created a mission statement, and is now working to finish a vision statement. All this is being done under the review of two agencies – the Mid Atlantic Adjudication Agency, and the federal accrediting board, the Association of Theological Schools, which is the peer accrediting agency, for whom the Seminary is answering questions about values, visions, and plan.

Dr. Green inherited a lot of challenges, and not just the public ones like the concerns of the LGBTQ+ community and the loss of the RIC status of the previous institutions. With regard to these particular concerns, the Seminary has continued its efforts to address them and has made a welcome statement as a part of this process.

With regard to the staffing of the school, all faculty members are on contracts. There is still a need to develop a system to address concerns of tenure and faculty permanence. Having a secure faculty is critical to the ability to create a viable and stable curriculum. Beyond the faculty concerns, major staffing issues have been, and are being, addressed since Dr. Green has come.

For instance, Human Resources needed to revise many of the personnel policies because of changes in state requirements.

The challenges continue as the school works to integrate all three “campuses” – Gettysburg, Philadelphia, and the on-line community. There is a need to address concerns of students in all three categories. Staff members have been rising to the challenge.

Financially efforts are being made to secure the viability of all three expressions of the school. Recently a \$30 million gift was made to endow a chair, and to provide student scholarships. On the Philadelphia Campus properties on Boyer Street are being sold. On the Gettysburg Campus work is being done with the Battlefield Trust to ensure its perpetual security.

Dean Sebastian finished his remarks by conveying how much the Seminary values its partnership with the SEPA Synod, as it is the home Synod of the Philadelphia Campus. The Seminary values the local congregations that make contributions, particularly undesignated gifts which can be used with the most flexibility. Yet this partnership goes beyond financial support. This is the Synod in which many students do their field education, pursue their internships, and where many of them worship regularly. The congregations of SEPA Synod are crucial as co-instructors of these students, as together we prepare leaders for the Church.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 152nd meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:39 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 31st Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod were approved as presented.

The minutes of the 152nd meeting of the Synod Council were approved with the correction of the date at the heading of the minutes; September 20th, not September 6th.

SETTING THE AGENDA

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 153rd meeting with the following changes: moving the Mission Moment to follow the devotions.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Davenport listed several people who stand in need of prayer, and asked the Synod Council to add these individuals to their personal prayer lists. Bishop emphasized how important it is that we advocate and pray for each other. This is a significant part of the work we do as Church. She also offered her prayer of thanksgiving for the members of Synod Council. Each member of Council gives of themselves and their time for this work of the Synod, and for that Bishop Davenport is grateful.

Bishop Davenport then asked if there were any questions about her report.

Pastor Matt Staniz asked about the numbers under the Bishop's activities, specifically why is there a "/" between them. The Bishop replied that these cover two months of activities, and the numbers for each month are delineated by the /.

Pastor Serena Sellers thanked the Bishop for the worship number, sharing her support for the way in which Bishop Davenport just pops up in worship at sites around the Synod. Pastor Sellers feels this is important and impactful.

Vice President Beasley noted in the first section of the Bishop's Report regarding the celebration for the Bishop's installation, you can add that the African Descent Lutheran Association Philadelphia Chapter was the host of the "Holy Smoke" gathering the evening before the Installation.

Bishop's Convocation

Pastor Gwendolyn King expressed her gratitude to Bishop Davenport for staying with those attendees of the Bishop's Convocation who were stranded because of the snowstorm. She stated how Bishop's presence was a boost to the spirits of those who were not only caught in the storm, but who also experienced an incident with the activation of the fire alarm early in the morning of the following day.

A discussion of the event followed, beginning with Vice President Beasley asking how it was to have a one day retreat.

Pastor Sellers said she was grateful for the snowstorm and the extra night. While recognizing it is more expensive to have a two day event, the second night is very helpful to actually get away and rest. Pastor Tyler Rasmussen concurred.

Pastor Laura Tancredi noted that she had been able to get away before the storm hit, but did miss the time away. There was not as much free time at the event, and she missed that time to connect with friends in a non-programmed setting.

Bishop Davenport was grateful for the feedback. She said that many similar comments are in the evaluations that have been received this far. The effort is to balance the needs of the participants for a helpful retreat while trying to contain the costs of the program to make it possible for leaders to attend.

Actions on the Roster

This will take place under the Secretary's Report

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley referenced the Executive Committee report.

Connecting the Synod in Prayer

As the prayer initiative has been discussed, one of the ideas has been to set a time where we just stop and pray. Secretary Richard shared that the former Faith in Action team had, at a previous

Synod Assembly, set “a minute for the Synod” at 1:11 each day as a time to pray for the Bishop and our common ministry as the SEPA Synod.

Bishop Davenport shared that one of the Conferences had the idea that perhaps the Synod Council could pray for three congregations each Sunday in their congregational prayers.

Another suggestion from the Conferences was the possibility of a gathering for the lay adults of the Synod. We have SHYG (Senior High Youth Gathering), and JYG (Junior Youth Gathering), why not a LAG (Lay Adult Gathering)?

Actions on the Roster

Vice President Beasley is aware that there are times when there are actions on the roster that involve people who are in transition who have not had the opportunity to inform their ministry site of their change in status. Consequently she would suggest that whenever we have guests at the Synod Council meeting we go into executive session for these deliberations.

Bear Creek Presentation

Vice President Beasley then invited Ms. Karen Hesper, Director of Development and Assistant Program Director from Bear Creek Camp to bring us an update from the Camp on their ministry this past year.

This past summer 1,136 kids attended camp. This is the highest enrollment since 2000! The camp has seen increase each of the last six years, and this year’s enrollment is 4% higher than last year. There has been a large increase in attendees from SEPA Synod. There has also been an increase in campers from other denominations. The staff is working hard to expand this ecumenical outreach. The staff also continues to offer programs off-campus for congregations to provide for their communities.

Ms. Hesper said that they have always felt that what they are doing makes an impact; now there is a study that verifies this! She asked the Council to see the 3rd page of the handout she provided, which contained information from the Effective Camp Research Project. Among the pieces of a Camp program that make an impact are: 1. it is faith centered; 2. it is a safe space; 3. it is participatory; 4. it is “unplugged” from home; 5. it is relational.

Ms. Hesper thanked the Council, and those whose congregations send campers, for all they do to support and promote Bear Creek.

Mr. Albert Glenn commented that the growth is impressive. He asked to what the Camp attributes this growth; is it the incorporation of these 5 principles?

Ms. Hesper replied that it was evident that there needed to be a change in mindset to focus on campers and Christ, and the change in leadership at the Camp helped emphasize this new focus.

Ms. Savannah Tucker said that she has been to Bear Creek Camp. She learned the songs, and has passed them on to her mother’s church groups.

Ms. Hesper was delighted to hear how Camp is being passed forward.

Pastor Brad Burke, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult, and Faith Formation Ministries expressed his pleasure at the intentional efforts to bring kids from the City, particularly youth of color, to the Camp.

Ms. Elizabeth Young shared that her congregation has had Bear Creek staff come to their site and lead Vacation Bible School, and that it was a great program.

Mr. Everett Wick said his congregation has also had the Bear Creek staff at their site, and it was a very positive experience for the youth and for the community.

Ms. Hesel shared that these “off-site” programs are also very helpful for the Camp, because it lets kids learn about Bear Creek and inspires them to come to the Camp. She noted that there are also many opportunities beyond the summer offerings. There are events that take place in the Spring and the Fall, and cabins are available for rent for your congregation to have its own program at the Camp.

Bishop Davenport praised the changes in the Camp, and encouraged the staff to be proud of that. The shift changed when the leadership changed; “the spirit of the leader falls on the people.” She thanked Ms. Hesel and the staff for their willingness to be open to new ideas, and to try them. She thanked the staff for their work reaching out to children of color. It is important that, increase an appreciation for this gift of life, perhaps we can decrease some of the senseless death that surrounds them. For these efforts and more, she expressed her thanks to the staff of Bear Creek Camp.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

The Synod Council went into executive session for the following deliberations. The actions will be reflected in the minutes as the persons in question will have had time to inform their ministry sites prior to the approval, and subsequent posting, of the minutes.

Actions on the Roster

Call to Interim Ministry:

S.C.18.12.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Reverend Kristine Peterson to interim ministry at St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Aston, PA beginning April 22, 2018, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until the Reverend Peterson resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

On Leave from Call Requests:

S.C.18.12.02. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Sozinho Alves on leave from call status, second year, effective December 1, 2018

S.C.18.12.03. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Louis Tillman, IV on leave from call status, second year, effective December 16, 2018

S.C.18.12.04. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Linda Manson on leave from call status, second year, effective January 1, 2019

The Synod Council unanimously adopted these resolutions.

Requests to move to Retirement Roster:

S.C.18.12.05. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Ellen M. Anderson retirement status, effective January 1, 2019

S.C.18.12.06. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend David C. Lutchter retirement status, effective February 1, 2019

The Synod Council unanimously adopted these resolutions.

Information Not Requiring Action

Transfer:

Deacon Rachel Bailey to North Carolina Synod effective December 17, 2018

Death:

The Reverend William A. Davis December 2, 2018

Following the actions on the roster the Synod Council emerged from Executive session.

Housing Allowance

2019 Housing Allowance Designation

Clergy Name	Housing Allowance Amount
Bishop Patricia A. Davenport	\$23,033.00
Pastor Bradley Burke	\$30,000.00
Pastor Violet Little	\$32,000.00

S.C.18.12.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2019 housing allowance for Bishop Davenport, Pastor Burke and Pastor Little, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT that the recipients be reminded that the 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 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.

Reception of Properties from Closed Congregations

Whenever a congregation closes, we need to ensure responsibility for the property is properly recognized as received by the Synod. We have two properties for which we need to adopt resolutions for such transfer and care. The two properties in question are for the recently closed congregations of Prince of Peace, Plymouth Meeting, and Immanuel, Burholme.

S.C.18.12.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges the action of Prince of Peace, Plymouth Meeting, to close (also termed “disband,” “dissolve,” and “cease to exist”), effective July 22, 2018; receives the property of Prince of Peace, Plymouth Meeting, in accordance with the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, specifically 9.71.b., +S13.23., and *C7.01. ; and authorizes the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, the Reverend Patricia A. Davenport, or the Bishop’s representative(s), to sell the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod on a determined date.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.18.12.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges the action of Immanuel, Burholme, to close (also termed “disband,” “dissolve,” and “cease to exist”), effective November 11, 2018; receives the property of Immanuel, Burholme, in accordance with the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, specifically 9.71.b., +S13.23., and *C7.01. ; and authorizes the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, the Reverend Patricia A. Davenport, or the Bishop’s representative(s), to sell the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod on a determined date.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, made the following notes from her written report regarding each of the funds of our budget

Unrestricted Funds

Through nine months we are behind last year’s receipts by \$50,000. This is a concern. Please check with your congregations, and those in your Conference, and see if you can encourage support of the Synod. There may be issues in your congregation that are causing you to fall behind in your support, but we cannot know that unless you share it with the Synod. We need to know about such issues so we can revise our expectations, and so we can know if there are things we may be able to do to assist your congregation with the underlying issues or concerns you may be facing.

Mr. Bert Glenn suggested that members check their congregational giving, and if it seems inaccurate, be sure your gift was sent and credited to the appropriate account.

We have approximately \$52,000 in expenses related to properties of former congregations.

Temporarily Restricted Funds

This fund has a surplus as of October 31, but this is because of receipts for the Bishop Convocation received in October which will not be expended until November.

Mission Funds

We have three teams responsible for monies in the Mission portion of our budget. There is the Congregational Vitality Team, the Forward Together in Faith Team, and the trustees of the Fund for Mission. Ms. Neff feels we need to coordinate these initiatives so that one congregation does not receive from all three funds, while other congregations may receive no funding.

Ms. Neff shared examples of some of the ministries we support through the mission portion of our budget, which we use to support youth ministry, global ministry, and local ministries.

- The Welcome Church receives \$55,000 of support. \$20,000 comes from the ELCA, and \$35,000 comes from us.
- Kairos Ministry is a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community, but receives no financial support from the Synod.
- Living Gospel Ministry receives some support from the Synod, and some from the ELCA.

The ELCA provides \$45,000 for our missions, we provide \$49,000. The Congregational Vitality Team evaluates places for ministry and how we might support these ministries.

The mission portion of our budget will always be in a deficit, as these are not programs that generate income, but which we feel we need to support as a Church.

Mr. Glenn asked if the Congregational Vitality Team is a new thing. The answer is no, it is a reconfiguration and renaming of the Evangelical Outreach Team.

Bishop Davenport said there is a template for the disbursement of Forward Together in Faith Funds that is known to the Congregational Vitality Team. It may be good to have this same template used by each of the three funding teams – Vitality, Forward Together in Faith, and Fund for Mission. Perhaps a coordination of requests and which fund has been accessed could be made by the Congregational Vitality Team.

Mr. Glenn stated that coordination of information may be helpful, but we should be sure to follow the parameters set for each entity's funds, per each fund's guidelines.

Pastor Burke noted this is the beginning of the change, not the end. We would need to consider whether we should change the procedures, but until then we keep each fund under its current processes.

An extensive conversation took place regarding congregational health; particularly financial health, but also the underlying issues of organizational health that impact financial health.

After much discussion Bishop Davenport emphasized one of the most significant things we need to do is build trust – within congregations, between congregations and each other, and between congregations and the Synod. When we build these relationships of trust, we can be invited in to have deeper conversations on issues of health, both structural and financial.

Vice President Beasley suggested that the Congregational Vitality Team present the Mission Moment for the next meeting of the Synod Council.

REPORT OF THE FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

Mr. Bert Glenn, chairperson, referenced the report from the Committee. He noted that the Committee is exploring two issues with the Fund for Mission. One issue regards appropriate re-allocation of gains or losses from the Fund, and the second regards transparency of the use of the money from the Fund for Mission. At this time the Committee is not making recommendations, but is investigating how these issues might be addressed.

Vice President Beasley encouraged use of the word “clarity” rather than “transparency.” Questioning our transparency gives the impression that some information is being hidden or withheld from the Council or the Synod, which is not accurate. Clarity of how the money is being used is indeed important, and may need to be improved, but we do not want to give the impression that we are not being fully honest about the use of the resources in our care.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Forward Together in Faith

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

The Forward Together in Faith Team received 16 applications for grants. The total amount requested was \$187,000! This is significantly more than the \$26,000 that is available, but shows that congregations are actively considering ministry ventures in their respective settings. There has been a very diverse team evaluating the proposals. The team does have some overlap with the Congregational Vitality Team, as Pastor Bryan Penman is on both teams.

From the 16 applications, several were collaborative proposals involving multiple congregations, and there was one proposal made by a Conference. In the deliberations it was determined that some of the proposals were more applicable to the Congregational Vitality Team than the Forward Together in Faith Team.

It was determined that 11 of the applicants will be supported with grants, though only one of them will get their full request. There is ongoing conversation as to how the applicants will be informed of their awards, and how much of their requests are granted. Some of the remaining applicants will be referred to the Congregational Vitality Team, while some are labeled “not at this time.”

Mr. Glenn asked how the number of \$26,000 was determined. Ms. Daneke said that it was determined in the first year to use only the interest that had been generated in that year. The hope is to be able to provide more in grants as we move forward.

Constitution Committee

Pastor Tyler Rasmussen, chairperson, presented four congregation constitutions for approval by the Synod Council:

S.C. 18.12.10. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution for Temple, Havertown.

S.C. 18.12.11. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution for St. John, Richlandtown.

S.C. 18.12.12. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution for Grace, Broomall.

S.C. 18.12.13. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution for Trinity, Fairview Village.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolutions.

Investment Committee

Mr. David Ehret, chairperson, shared that while the funds had done incredibly well as of the last meeting, the bubble has now burst. We sustained a loss on paper, but not an actual loss. We are currently back to where we were at the beginning of the year.

Administration Committee

The Agenda for the 2019 Synod Assembly was presented. The biggest shift in the agenda is the move of the main worship service to Saturday so that lay people who are not Voting Members and have to work may be able to attend. The Committee is discussing how it might be possible to have a mass choir of people from across the Synod as part of this service.

S.C. 18.12.14. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the proposed agenda for presentation to the 2019 Synod Assembly.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Nominating Committee

Pastor Lydia Posselt, chairperson, said the Committee is continuing to seek qualified candidates. She noted we need people who are under 25. Please continue to put forward names.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations, is currently locked out of the ELCA Sharepoint system. While that is being resolved she will continue to send information by email attachments. Members expressed their support of this, with many members commenting that the email attachments are easier to use than Sharepoint.

Pastor Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam asked if we are planning to do anything as a Synod to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women in the ELCA. Pastor Anderson-Rajarigam and Pastor Serena Sellers agreed to gather a group together to see what might be possible.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ms. Sandra Zimmerman has heard a strong lack of trust between the Synod and the congregations, and asked how we can be more effective at sharing what we are as the Synod. Can Synod Council members go out and visit to make the connection?

Bishop Davenport stated that we all need to be telling the story of our Synod. If you are in Upper Bucks, tell the story to Upper Bucks. If you have a cell phone, post about our ministry on social media. If we, particularly as Rostered Leaders, are not saying who and what we are, the story will not get out. We all need to be sharing what God is doing in our Synod so that the people of the Synod will hear.

With no other business, Vice President Beasley asked for a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

The 154th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be held on February 21st, 2019, 4:00 p.m., at the St. James Lutheran, Limerick.

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

Approved by Synod Council February 21, 2019