

**MINUTES**  
**of the 155<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Faith Immanuel Lutheran Church, East Lansdowne, PA**  
**April 4, 2019**

**Welcome and Devotions**

The Reverend Dr. Moses Suah Dennis welcomed the Synod Council, and described some of the ministry of the congregation. Faith Immanuel is a very community based church. They host Girl Scouts and a day care. They host three worship services each week, including a midweek prayer service, which is being held this day.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 155<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:10 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 154<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Synod Council were approved as presented.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

As traffic was delaying the Dean's arrival, Vice President Beasley suggested we modify the agenda to have the devotions when she arrives. The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 155<sup>th</sup> meeting as modified.

**REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Davenport highlighted the following items from her written report.

**Trustworthy Servants of the People of God**

Comments from Rostered Ministers regarding "Trustworthy Servants of the People of God," the successor document to "Visions and Expectations," have been numerous and varied. There have been as many questions about the process of the revised document as there have been regarding content. Many, particularly in the LGBTQIA+ community, though not exclusively so, feel they did not have enough opportunity to provide input to this document prior to it being endorsed by the Conference of Bishops for adoption. Bishop Davenport did express these concerns to the Vice President of the ELCA. Nevertheless, the Conference of Bishops has endorsed the document to go to the Church Council for adoption.

While Bishop Davenport feels there could have been more input from a broader constituency of the Church, she is in favor of the adoption of this document, as she feels it is a better expression for our life together than "Visions and Expectations," and there will be the possibility to amend "Trustworthy Servants" as we live into it.

Mr. Albert Glenn asked what the differences are between the two documents.

Bishop Davenport answered that while both documents strive to deal with how we live with integrity in our personal lives as Rostered Ministers, “Trustworthy Servants” is more theological, where “Visions and Expectations” was more legalistic in approach, particularly in sexual regulations of how we live in relationship with each other. Our LGBTQIA+ community, women, and persons of color feel Visions and Expectations had excluded their voices and identification in its adoption and implementation. They wish they had been more included in the discussion of this successor document.

### **Holy Innovation**

Bishop Davenport raised an ongoing area of focus she holds for the Synod Council and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in general:

How do we hold on to what is core to us in everything we do, and stay grounded in the Gospel, as we innovate in how we build up the Kingdom of God?

How do we continue to come back to a position of prayer and devotion as we do this work?

Where do we see the bright spots?

### **Interfaith Conversations**

One area that has been a bright spot for this region and this Synod has been our interfaith activities. Bishop Davenport noted with sadness that the Reverend Nicole Diroff will be leaving the position of Associate Executive Director of Interfaith Philadelphia, due to a change in her husband’s job for which they have to relocate to Portland, Maine. Rev. Diroff will be the keynote speaker at our Synod Assembly. One event in which Rev. Diroff will participate prior to leaving Interfaith Philadelphia is an honoring of Kristen Tippet, host of the NPR program, “Speaking of Faith,” with the Dare to Understand Award. Even with Rev. Diroff’s departure, Interfaith Philadelphia continues its work to provide a vital place for conversation and building a thriving and diverse religious democracy here in Philadelphia. Bishop Davenport is pleased to see how we can converse across faith traditions. We are all dealing with opioids, and violence, and concerns in our communities, so what can we do together?

### **Elisha’s Call**

SEPA Synod was proud to host the first Elisha’s Call on the east coast. Elisha's Call is an event focused on young adults of African Descent, developed and sponsored by the Program Director for African Descent Ministry for the ELCA in conjunction with the African Descent Strategy.

There are still divisions in how persons of color are treated in the call process, but we in SEPA Synod are doing what we can to ensure as equitable a process as possible.

### **Meeting of the Chester Conference**

At this meeting the Dean, the Reverend Ronald Weseman was re-elected for a second term. But in addition to that, a conversation was held on what congregations can share with each other, and what it means to be in collaborative ministry. Can we open ourselves to the possibility of stronger, “Anchor Churches,” assisting smaller, weaker congregations? An example of collaboration occurred when Pastor Paul Townsend’s mother died, and Calvary, West Chester sent Pastor Dan Krewson to cover for him. A congregation with two pastors sent one of their pastors to assist a neighboring congregation in such a time of crisis. This is what we ought to do for one another. This is being the Beloved Community!

### **First Call Retreat**

For the second year we held the first call theological retreat as a Synodical, rather than as a Regional event. We again invited established pastors to come alongside our first call ministers. We have found that this process brings renewal to our established ministers, and energy to the relationship between established and new ministers.

### **Holy Closure**

Bishop Davenport found the closing service for St. John, Ambler, to be bittersweet in that they needed extra folding chairs for all the people who attended. But there was also great hope, in that many have already landed at neighboring congregations, even before the “open houses” that are planned to introduce the nearby congregations to the members of the former St. John.

### **Questions**

Bishop Davenport then asked if there were questions from the Synod Council regarding her report, or any other issue members may wish to raise.

Mr. Glenn noted in her written report that the Regions had gathered to assign First Call Candidates. We only received one. Is that equitable?

Bishop Davenport replied that no, it is not equitable, because one of the Synods in the Region needs 24 candidates, and we received the only one assigned to Region 7. We received this candidate because this candidate is a person of color, and is part of the LGBTQ community, and thereby would not have as good a chance to receive a call in many other synods. Overall we need to raise up leaders for the Church. We have many more congregations in need of leaders than we have leaders available for placement.

Vice President Beasley asked if Bishop Davenport could describe the open positions we have in the Synod office, and what is being done to fill these positions.

Bishop Davenport noted that we have two openings on the Synod Staff. One we hope to have filled at this meeting, which is the position of Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership/Mission Advancement. This position will complete many of the tasks that Mr. Bill Harp used to do with regard to candidacy and mobility. The person in this position will work closely with Deacon Allison Wilcox, Director of Candidacy, Pr. Christian McMullen, Director of Interim Ministry, and Pr. Marcia Bell, Director of Mobility. This position will also have a strong focus on developing financial support for the mission of the Synod.

The other position still open on the Synod Staff is that of Director of Evangelical Mission. We are still interviewing candidates to be our DEM, and hope to have the right person selected soon. The position of DEM is a joint position with the ELCA. The Churchwide office takes the lead in hiring for this position, but significant input and consent from the Synodical Bishop is part of the process.

Following this description, the Bishop put forward the following resolution to fill the position of Vocations and Leadership/Mission Advancement.

**SC.19.04.01. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve a call to the Reverend Karen M. Sease as Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership/Mission Advancement, effective May 3, 2019. This call is co-terminus with the call of Bishop Patricia A. Davenport.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

#### **Actions on the Roster**

##### *Calls to Interim Ministry:*

**S.C.19.04.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Dr. Susan K. Folks to interim ministry at St. John's Lutheran Church in Ridge Valley, PA beginning February 1, 2019, until a pastor is called by the congregation or until the Rev. Dr. Susan K. Folks resigns this call, whichever comes first.

**S.C.19.04.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Janet S. Peterman to interim ministry at Grace Lutheran Church in Hatfield, PA beginning February 18, 2019, until a pastor is called by the congregation or until the Rev. Janet S. Peterman resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted these resolutions.

##### *On Leave from Call Request:*

**S.C.19.04.04. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Jonathan Shin on leave from call status, third year, effective February 1, 2019

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

##### *Request for Synod Council Approval of On Leave Extensions:*

**S.C. 19.04.05. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Harold Evans extended on leave from call status, 6<sup>th</sup> year, effective April 1, 2019

**S.C. 19.04.06. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants Deacon Suzanne Rigg extended on leave from call status, 5<sup>th</sup> year, effective May 31, 2019

**S.C. 19.04.07. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Margaret Ainslie extended on leave from call status, 8<sup>th</sup> year, effective June 30, 2019 (*Study Leave*)

The Synod Council unanimously adopted these resolutions.

#### **Information Not Requiring Action**

*Resigned from ELCA Roster*

The Rev. Daniel M. Schaefer effective January 14, 2019

### ***Transfer***

The Rev. Daniel W. Spigelmyer, Jr. to New England Synod effective January 2, 2019

The Rev. Dee Emmert to Sierra Pacific Synod effective January 10, 2019

The Rev. Richard Zuber to Florida-Bahama Synod effective January 10, 2019

### ***Deaths***

The Rev. D. Craig Landis March 30, 2019

## **DEVOTIONS**

The Reverend Leslie M. Richard, Dean of the Delaware Conference, had arrived, and Vice President Beasley called on her to lead the Synod Council in devotions at this time.

Dean Richard noted that we are approaching Easter, and the time when Christ passes from death to life. This is a time when we also move from space to space: from Winter to Spring, from Lent to Easter, from death to life.

Palms were passed out as a reminder of a threshold crossed by Jesus. Various passages from the Gospel of John were read. In each of them members of the Council were encouraged to consider what doorways were present, doorways that lead us to God, or lead God to us.

At the threshold of prayer, enter, and bring your desire before Christ.

## **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

In addition to the written report, Vice President Beasley shared that she had the privilege of meeting with the participants of Elijah's Call, as they met at Reformation, Philadelphia. Vice President Beasley introduced them to SEPA Synod, and shared with them that there is no other synod like ours. Ms. Beasley was impressed by the deep conversations. Dr. Green, Interim President of United Lutheran Seminary, was present that week, and was invited to stay for the lunch and bring greetings.

The Vice President also reported that we are making progress with regard to more diverse representation across the ELCA. We have grown from 6 to 21 Vice Presidents who are persons of color since she was first elected.

## **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

### **Reception of property from former congregations of the SEPA Synod**

Two congregations of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod have experienced "holy closure." To formally receive the assets of these former congregations, I move the following:

**S.C. 19.04.08. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of St. John Lutheran Church, Quakertown, to close, effective January 13, 2019, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of St. John, Quakertown, 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, on this date, April 4, 2019, authorizes the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, or the Bishop's representative(s), to sell the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

**S.C. 19.04.09. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of St. John Lutheran Church, Ambler, to close, effective March 31, 2019, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of St. John, Ambler, 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, on this date, April 4, 2019, authorizes the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, or the Bishop's representative(s), to sell the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

#### **Churchwide Assembly – Open Seats**

The Reverend Susan K. Ericsson is unable to attend the Church-wide Assembly. The Executive Committee recommends the Reverend Karl M. Richard as her successor.

**S.C.19.04.10. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirm the Rev. Karl M. Richard of St. Matthew, Springfield as Voting Member, Clergy to the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

Further, the Reverend Linda B. Manson received a call to another Synod, and is therefore not able to attend as a Voting Member from SEPA Synod. The Executive Committee recommends the Reverend Nancy B. Brown as her successor.

**S.C.19.04.11. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirm the Rev. Nancy B. Brown of Tabernacle, Philadelphia as Voting Member, Clergy to the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

In addition, Bishop Davenport has asked the Reverend Tyler Rasmussen attend the Churchwide Assembly as a guest of the Synod so that he can gain experience of the CWA, and we can develop leadership skills which can assist us in SEPA Synod.

Bishop Davenport commented that we need new ideas of what we do with buildings received from former congregations. The Reverend Serena Sellers suggested sending a team out into the neighborhood to see what the community might think would be a good use for the building.

#### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, was not able to be present, and the Finance Committee has not met since the last Synod Council Meeting. Ms. Neff did submit a written report.

Mr. Martin Schwab, Senior Accountant for the Synod noted that there has not been much activity, as we are only one month into the new fiscal year.

The first month has shown good response in partnership support.

The market has rebounded, so we are seeing better returns at this time.

The property that formerly housed Immanuel, Burholme, has sold. It will become a karate school and dance studio for the community. Several former members are excited about the fact that the building will be used to serve young people in the area. It feels like an extension of ministry.

Bishop Davenport noted how important an investment in congregations can be for their support of the ministry of the Synod. She referenced St. John, Tinicum, which has not contributed to the Synod for many years, but after a visit and a request for their participation, they sent a check for \$1,200.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

The Audit Committee presented the report for Fiscal Year February 1, 2018 to January 31, 2019. The Committee is comprised of Mr. Phil Tackett, Chairperson, Ms. Elizabeth Young, Mr. C. Everett Wick, Mr. Donald Gleiter, and Mr. Martin Schwab.

The Constitution charges the Audit Committee with assisting the Synod Council with its overview and audit process. To do this the Audit Committee has again retained the services of Tait, Weller and Baker.

We carefully review the nuts and bolts of the Synod finances, and determine if they are accurate. We then step back and discuss what these numbers mean for the Synod.

The audit report states that the numbers are accurate and complete.

### **Areas of interest:**

#### 1. Congregational contributions

We are now receiving \$350,000 less in partnership support from congregations than we did in 2015. The good news is that the bulk of this decrease occurred four and five years ago.

#### 2. Liquidity

As in our congregations, some months are better than others. The revenues are never consistent in their reception. We were concerned that the numbers were as low as they were. We did receive money from Immanuel, Burholme, but cannot count on a sale such as this. The Audit Committee suggests a cash flow analysis be done to assess our actual health.

#### 3. Concerns with Properties we have under management

The Audit Committee suggests that we remove the value of the properties from the budget we present to the Assembly, to give a cleaner perspective on where we stand “on our own.”

### **Some other thoughts and questions:**

Should we have a property management service to oversee the properties we have, freeing up Mr. Martin Schwab, and placing this under the care of one specifically trained for this work?

Mr. Wick shared we need to be concerned about cash flow/liquidity. With the number of churches closing, and others which are declining, we need to work on increasing cash flow as much as we can.

Bishop Davenport: This is why we have brought on Pastor Karen Sease, who will work on telling the story of who we are, and who will invite broader participation in our ministry.

Ms. Elizabeth Young stated we need to tell the Synod's story, but we also need to listen to congregation needs.

Vice President Beasley: We need you to go to your congregation and speak up, and give SOMETHING. Less than half of the Council responded affirmatively when asked if their congregations are in line with their Synod commitment. Ms. Beasley is planning to come, unannounced, to congregations across the Synod to give a certificate and to thank them for their support. Just being there and thanking them is key.

The Reverend Sarah Anderson – Rajarigam: Can we as a Council see if we can do anything about the cash flow – perhaps a conduct a bookkeeping and accounting review?

Ms. Young replied that it might be good to wait until the cash flow analysis take place.

Pastor Anderson – Rajarigam asked if we need to authorize this so we have it actually happen?

Mr. Glenn stated that this will be discussed at the next finance meeting. Many of our expenses are fixed, and there is not much we can do to change this.

Ms. Young: Yes, that is true, but are there policies that give Mr. Schwab guidance and authorization to move funds appropriately.

Mr. Henry Geyer said the Vice President should not go alone on these thank you visits. He suggested she take the Conference Representative for that along as she visits these congregations.

The Reverend Gwendolyn S. King asked how much the audit costs. The answer was \$18,500.

Mr. Wick called attention to the discussion on properties. We have some properties for which we do not know their true value. Among these are Bear Creek Camp and University Lutheran, Philadelphia. There is also another property listed that we do not know what it is. The auditors are going through their files to determine what the property is, so we can find out what it is worth.

Vice President Beasley: I believe that Bear Creek had an appraisal as part of the lease agreement we entered into about a year ago.

It was agreed that the Finance Committee would work to evaluate Cash Flow, Asset Values, and evaluate the benefits of a property manager to oversee the properties.

Bishop Davenport thanked the Audit Committee for their faithful work, and their encouragement that we all be aware of the need to invest in the work of the Church.

**S.C.19.04.12. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council submit the Audit Report to the Synod Assembly for its approval and acceptance.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Forward Together in Faith**

The team is working hard to on their presentation to the Assembly.

### **Constitution Committee**

Pastor Tyler Rasmussen, Chairperson, said there are two requirements congregations must fulfill when updating their constitutions: 1) do not violate the ELCA Constitution, and 2) match the Model Constitution for Congregations. Please start your process by contacting the Synod Office first, either Ms. Yvonne Curtis, or the Chair of the Committee. This saves many headaches later in the process.

### **Investment Committee**

Mr. David Ehret, Chairperson, shared that with the rebound in the market our Vanguard account is up approximately 10%, and our T. Rowe Price account is up approximately 13%.

The interest earned on the Mission Investment Fund was not reinvested, but was taken as a distribution.

Total value of the Investment Funds is \$3,311,085

### **Administration Committee**

Mr. William Graham, Chairperson, stated the Committee met with Sue Lang for what we need for the Assembly to be successful. He will need help from this Council to staff the registration tables. Please be there early, by 7:30, and help as we get ready for the Assembly. He distributed a sign-up sheet, and said he was confident of the Synod Council's faithful response.

He reminded those present that that they can attend the Assembly for free as a member of Council, so please come and help. Be a page, help with registration, just help! As a thank you, you will receive a T-shirt with the new synod logo!

### **Nominating Committee**

The Reverend Lydia Posselt, Chairperson, shared that which is a nearly complete ballot. We are still in need of Youth and Young Adult nominees. She reminded the Synod Council that at least one of these four seats needs to be filled by a person of color or whose primary language is other than English. Persons nominated for these four seats may be from a congregation with someone

already on the Synod Council. Give thought to people who might be good prospects. Nominations may come from the floor.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Pastor King informed the Synod Council that the Anti-Racism Team will be bringing a motion to the Synod Assembly that we have anti-racism training as a requirement of our Rostered Ministers, just as we have the expectation that they receive healthy boundary training.

Prayers are requested for St. Petri – Hope, Philadelphia, as they close their ministry on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Bishop Davenport announced that it is our Vice President's birthday. Happy Birthday to Ms. Tracey A. Beasley, and may she have many more!

Pr. Serena Sellers requested prayer as she will journey to Spain to walk the Camino de Santiago. This trip may cause her to be late to the Synod Assembly.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 p.m. with prayer by the Reverend Gwendolyn S. King.

The 156<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be held on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 4:00 p.m., at Good Shepherd Lutheran, King of Prussia.

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

*Approved by Synod Council, June 13, 2019*