

**MINUTES**  
**of the 154<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**St. James Lutheran Church, Limerick, PA**  
**February 21, 2019**

**Welcome and Devotions**

The Reverend Christopher McKinstry, pastor of St. James and Dean of the Upper Montgomery Conference, brought words of welcome, and led the Synod Council in devotions. The devotions were an exercise of Lectio Divina on Luke 6, concluded with prayer.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 154<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:27 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 153<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Synod Council were approved as presented.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 154<sup>th</sup> meeting as presented.

**REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Patricia A. Davenport thanked the Synod Council for their ongoing work for the Gospel. She rejoices in the resilience of our leaders to proclaim the grace and light of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Davenport then highlighted the following items from her written report.

**Bishop's Academy**

Bp. Davenport was struck by conversation on climate change and global warming. The conversation really brought home the harm we have done to the planet. If we do not do something SOON we will cause irreparable harm to the planet for our children and our children's children. Please read how you can be involved, and act as you are able.

**Consultation with Seminary Presidents**

The Bishops of Color were invited to be a part of the continuing conversations regarding racism, and how we can make progress combating systemic racism in our schools and our church structure. It is good to have these conversations, and Bishop Davenport is grateful that they are ongoing. At the same time, the Bishop relayed that she can only deal with the part that is within her as a person of color, and the micro-aggressions she experiences. She stated that she believes it is incumbent on those who have privilege to examine how they can make movement in these concerns.

**Conversation on Faith and Race**

Bishop Davenport brought some of the materials from the recent program from Interfaith Philadelphia's Year of Civil Conversation. She brought this so we can consider how we are doing in these steps. How does my faith inform this conversation? How can my faith make a

difference in how I approach people and systems? We can all benefit from these conversations and opportunities for self-reflection. For example, Rabbi David Straus was present, and became aware of new areas for growth in his self-understanding. He has never thought of himself as person of privilege because he is Jewish; but still, he is white and male, and has privilege of which he was not aware. How can we continue to be open to such growth in ourselves as we strive to care for our neighbor?

### **Jewish/Christian Relationships**

The Bishop was honored to have been a part of the ELCA's delegation that went to Israel to continue the conversation of how Jews and Palestinians are learning to sit at table with each other to grow and learn from each other. This is a complex issue with no easy solution. It is good that the Church still has a role in the conversation.

### **Synod Office Space**

Conversation continues about how culture and hospitality have impacted our relationship with the Seminary regarding space. We have been invited by Dr. Green to stay as long as we wish; he hopes for the long-term. At this point we continue with a month-to-month lease until we decide on a space for our offices.

### **Holy Closure**

Several of our congregations will enter holy closure in the near future. St. John Ambler's final service is scheduled for March 31<sup>st</sup>; St. Petri-Hope will close within 3 months; Living Word Roslyn within the next 6 months to a year; and one other congregation not yet able to be named will probably end its ministry within the year. We want to empower the impact these congregations have made in the communities they have served. We want to reignite idea of rethinking vitality from "butts and bucks" to other measures of health. Whether you worship 100 or 25, you can make an impact in your community.

### **Bear Creek Camp**

Mr. Daniel Scharnhorst has taken a new call, but he shares there is a space on the Board. It would be good to fill this with a person of color from the city.

### **First Staff Retreat**

The first Synod Staff retreat was held in Lafayette Hill. This was a wonderful chance to step away and understand who we are and where we are going. The event was facilitated by Dr. Jeffrey Branch, program chair at PCOM. Bishop Davenport is planning to invest in annual staff development to increase communication and effectiveness.

Bishop Davenport then opened the floor to questions from the Council.

Ms. Elizabeth Young asked what part of the Bishop's trip to Israel she enjoyed the most. Bishop Davenport replied that it was wonderful to be with the people, experience their hospitality, and learn how to make the local food. But this joy was also tempered by seeing the level of oppression so many of them deal with on a daily basis.

Mr. Bert Glenn asked about the Bishop's meeting with United Lutheran Seminary President Green, and whether Bishop Davenport sees a shifting in the culture that may lead to something more powerful.

The Bishop said that Dr. Green has made a point to come and speak with her about both the good and the difficult concerns on campus. She feels we have been treated more like ministry partners as of late.

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

Vice President Beasley referenced the Executive Committee report.

The position of Secretary of the Synod is open for election at this year's Assembly. Nominations for Secretary are made by the Synod Council. When there is an incumbent only one nominee is needed to be placed before the Assembly. Nominations are welcome from the floor.

The Executive Committee recommends that the Synod Council place the current Secretary, the Reverend Karl M. Richard, in nomination for the position of Synod Secretary.

**S.C.19.02.01. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council place the Reverend Karl M. Richard in nomination for the position of Synod Secretary.**

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

#### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

Secretary Richard brought forward the need to affirm the email vote taken following the last Synod Council meeting to appoint the Reverend Bradley Burke as Acting Bishop during Bishop Davenport's journey to the Holy Lands. He pointed out that we received 23 affirmative votes, and no negative responses in the email correspondence.

The Reverend Serena S. Sellers made the following motion:

**S.C.19.02.02. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirm the email vote appointing the Reverend Bradley Buke as Acting Bishop during Bishop Davenport's trip to Israel.**

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

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

The Reverend Dr. Jennifer Ollikainen is unable to attend the Church-wide Assembly. The Executive Committee recommends the Reverend Dwight Mason as her successor.

**S.C.19.02.03. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirm the Rev. Dwight Mason of Good Shepherd, Philadelphia as Voting Member, Clergy to the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.**

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

Further, Deacon Rachel Bailey received a call to another Synod, and is therefore not able to attend as a Voting Member from SEPA Synod. The Executive Committee recommends Deacon Beth Barkhau as her successor.

**S.C.19.02.04. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirm Deacon Beth Barkhau of Reformation, Media as Voting Member, Lay Female to the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.**

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

### **Appointment of the Treasurer**

The term of treasurer is a four year term, which expires this year (2019). According to the Constitution, By-laws and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, the Synod Council appoints the Treasurer. The Synod Executive Committee recommends that the Synod Council re-elect Ms. Janet Neff to another term:

**S.C.19.02.05. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council appoints Ms. Janet Huber Neff as the Treasurer of this Synod for a term ending 2023.**

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

### **Actions on the Roster**

*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.*

#### *Call to Unusual Circumstances:*

**S.C.19.02.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call Mr. Robert Fisher to Serve in Unusual Circumstances at the Kairos Communities, pending approval from the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops. The actual call date will be effective with ordination.**

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

#### *Call to Interim Ministry:*

**S.C.19.02.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Wayne Shelor to interim ministry at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Exton, PA beginning January 1, 2019, until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Rev. Wayne Shelor resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

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

#### *On Leave from Call Requests:*

**S.C.19.02.08. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend David Maddox, II on leave from call status, second year, effective January 1, 2019**

**S.C.19.02.09. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Phillip Waselik on leave from call status, second year, effective March 31, 2019**

**S.C.19.02.10. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants Deacon Ethyl Geist on leave from call status, second year, effective April 1, 2019**

**S.C.19.02.11. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Nancy Brown on leave from call status, second year, effective April 8, 2019**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted these resolutions.**

### **Information Not Requiring Action**

#### ***Deaths:***

The Reverend Dr. James Echols, December 22, 2018

The Reverend William Welther, December 16, 2018

### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, made the following notes from her written report regarding our financial status.

#### **Unrestricted Funds**

##### **Revenue:**

We have a significant deficit at this time. Mission Support from congregations is \$50,000 under budget. This is a concern for us. The Bishop is seeking a person who can assist with gathering revenue.

Part of our deficit is due to market losses in our investments. While this is not a realized loss, it is still a loss on our balance sheet.

##### **Expenses:**

While income has been down, so have our expenses. We have sent less to Church-wide than budgeted, because we send 50% of what we receive from congregations to the ELCA. When receipts are lower, so is what we send on, so we have “saved” \$25,000 against budget at this time. We also have a staff vacancy in Candidacy. This, too, has lowered our expenses for the time being.

#### **Temporarily Restricted funds**

We currently have a surplus in this fund of \$227,000.

#### **Mission Funds**

While we are under budget by \$213,000, revenue to expenses, this is normal for this portion of the budget. We have not used money from the Fund for Mission to cover this, with the exception of a \$20,000 disbursement for African Descent ministry that was approved by the FFM committee. We have several sources of funds that assist with this portion of the budget. One of the sources which has not been realized is we have not had any sales of properties under Synodical management. When we sell the property of a former congregation we place 15% of the sale into the operating budget. We then cover the accrued expenses of the properties under management. The remainder goes into the Fund for Mission.

The property of the former Prince of Peace, Plymouth Meeting is under agreement, but it is not likely to close before April.

The property of the former St. Michael, Germantown is listed for sale at \$775,000, but has not yet sold.

#### **Overall Financial Position**

Unrestricted assets are approximately \$2.3 million, where unrestricted liabilities are approximately \$139,500. Our ratios are in good order.

## **Forward Together in Faith**

Gifts and pledges to the Campaign amount to \$850,000.

## **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Bert Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee, brought the Committee's report, including presentation of the 2020 budget for consideration.

Mr. Glenn stated that the Committee has reviewed the financial statements, and all were in order. They had a discussion of the Fund for Mission, and have changed the way in which gains and losses will be assigned.

Assets apportioned to University Lutheran were discussed, including the appropriateness of "UniLu" keeping the proceeds from rentals, particularly the air rights from the cell tower in the building. No change in this arrangement was seen as necessary at this time.

Money from the sale of former congregations was discussed, and particularly the value of setting a separate fund to clarify what expenses are covered when we close out the expenses of properties under management. There is no decision at this time. The proposal put forward in the Finance Committee's minutes was not endorsed by our auditors.

## **Budget**

The budget for the Fiscal Year February 1, 2020 – January 31, 2021 was described. Mr. Glenn clarified that, though sometimes confusing due to the fiscal cycle we follow, at this Assembly we will approve the budget for the following year (2020), not the current year (2019).

The primary change that is contained in the budget is a reduction of our support of the Seminary by \$50,000. This money would instead be used to assist seminary graduates, who were not able to benefit from the recent action of the Seminary to offer free tuition for full-time ELCA students, with their remaining student loans.

The Reverend Gwendolyn King asked where one would find the money for particular programs or teams, and specifically the money for the Anti-Racism Team.

Mr. Martin Schwab, Senior Accountant for the Synod, answered that it is under the Office of the Bishop, line #21.

Ms. Elizabeth Young asked how we can make this clear for the people at the Assembly.

Vice President Beasley asked that we receive the full excel spreadsheet at least twice a year so the Council can see what the Finance Committee sees.

The Reverend Serena Sellers asked that we have the detailed budget available for people to reference.

Bishop Davenport noted that this would then potentially give the details of salaries, which should stay confidential.

Vice President Beasley said that it is possible to create a spreadsheet with salaries "blacked out" so they are not able to be attributed to specific persons.

Ms. Doreen Kinzler requested that we have a break-out of the funds under each category.

The Reverend Brad Burke asked if we could leave time in the agenda at the Assembly for people to bring their questions prior to the consideration of the budget so that the presenters can have

the answers available at the time of the budget presentation. Perhaps such a time could be added to the announcements, and a time and place could be set where people could raise these questions.

Ms. Elizabeth Young affirmed Pastor Burke's suggestion.

The Reverend Tyler Rasmussen asked if the Power Point of the budget presentation can be on the app as well as the spread sheet. In the past it has just been the spreadsheet, and the Power Point may help bring clarity.

Secretary Richard asked about the reduction of the support to the Seminary. Will this reduction have a negative impact on our relationship with the Seminary at a time when we are requesting a closer working relationship with the school?

Bishop Davenport responded that she does not believe this will be the case. We are all in a situation where we need to make alterations based on the reduced resources we receive.

Mr. Everett Wick asked if the money to support the seminary graduates is solely for those who graduated from United Lutheran Seminary.

Bishop Davenport replied no, it is for all Rostered Ministers on our territory.

After the discussion concluded, the Synod Council was asked to vote.

**S.C.19.02.12. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the budget for the 2020 -2021 fiscal year to be presented to the Synod Assembly for adoption.**

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

#### **MISSION MOMENT**

The Reverend Bryan Penman, chair of the Vitality Team, along with the Reverend Dwight Mason, the Reverend Kris Chandler, and the Reverend Mary Ann Siefke, members of the Vitality Team, were present for the Mission Moment.

Pastor Penman provided the Synod Council with a handout which defined the concept of Vital Congregations: "Vital congregations are communities of Jesus that nurture life-changing relationships with God, one another, and the world."

One of the goals of the Vitality Team is to help congregations move from quantitative metrics, such as money and attendance, to qualitative metrics such as energy and impact as the way to measure their health and vitality.

Congregational Vitality has become the umbrella under which Development, Re-development, Innovative ministries, collaborative ministries, and holy closure of congregations reside.

Pastor Chandler noted we need to figure out how to do things differently so that we do not wither and die. We encourage people to look at things differently, but too often we then continue to work the same way. We need to find ways to support one another, and this does not always have to be with money. Sometimes we need to "go there," and then determine how we resource the idea.

Some small congregations are doing good things, and if they go away a Lutheran Christian presence may no longer be present in their community. How can we identify the needs of such congregations, and get to them sooner?

Pastor Sellers: Creativity needs kindling. What if your team was able to get answers to the 3 questions from each congregation? Then share the ideas from all congregations with each congregation, so that this kindling is there to perhaps catch a spark?

Pastor Penman: This is a great idea, but we need to find ways to do that. There are not enough hours to do that on our own; how we can empower this will take time.

Mr. Emanuel Alves: I know this Team is new, but what steps are you taking to market your team so people can know you exist and can be called on?

Pastor Penman: Communications strategy is a part of our work. We are trying to find some really engaging success stories, which will help with this marketing. We are also working to establish relationships with our Deans, as they know the congregations in deeper ways than most people do.

Pastor Reuben Duran, Executive Director of Congregational Vitality for the ELCA, is exploring ways in which congregations can work in partnership and collaboration with each other. It may be in the same town; it may be urban/suburban partnership; it may be ministry efforts and connections. Redevelopment is now looking at “anchor” congregations that can help smaller congregations be supported and strengthened.

Mr. Bert Glenn: Do you have a way of entering congregations to bring some of these options to them?

Pastor Penman: Yes, but it is an intentionally slow roll into this ministry, even as we recognize the urgency of the needs. Trying to flip the paradigm from strengthening buildings to supporting the witness and work that congregations are providing in their area is a large, and gradual, undertaking.

Mr. Alves: – what resources do you have?

Pastor Penman: We don't want the Vitality Team to be seen as a money resource team, but a team that connects you to the resources that you need.

Pastor Chandler: Our work is that of connecting, not providing.

The parochial report is important, but it is not the full story of vitality. There are larger churches have no energy, and there are smaller churches that are vibrant. We rejoice in the energy and enthusiasm that comes as we reach out to minister alongside one another. One of the examples of this is the partnership between Holy Trinity, Narberth and Grace, Philadelphia, where they combine in a very effective feeding program. The more we can build this kind of innovation and love for the work of Jesus in this place, the more vital our congregations will be, and the more the Gospel will continue to be proclaimed.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Forward Together in Faith**

Vice President Beasley stated that the report is before the Council. Are there any questions?

Mr. Everett Wick noted that the grants for 2018 totaled \$26,000. What accountability is there to ensure the grantees have used the funds appropriately, and how successful their efforts were?

Vice President Beasley responded that measures of accountability were a part of the application process. They vary depending on the ministry being funded, but they are a part of the process.

### **Constitution Committee**

The Reverend Tyler Rasmussen, chair of the Constitution Committee, brought forward one congregation constitution for approval by the Council.

**S.C. 19.02.13. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution for God's Love, Newtown, Pennsylvania. The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

### **Nominating Committee**

The Reverend Lydia Posselt, chair of the Nominating Committee, referenced the draft of the nominations so far received. She noted that if any member of Synod Council notices that a person they had put forward is missing, please let her know. She also noted that the Committee is still seeking candidates for Lay Male, Young Adult; Lay Female, Young Adult; and Lay Male, Youth. Please consider who may be good candidates for these seats on Synod Council.

### **Investment Committee**

Mr. David Ehret, chair of the Investment Committee, shared that as Ms. Neff stated in the Treasurer's Report, we did have a loss at the end of the past year. Fortunately the market has been rebounding in January, and we have regained some of that loss.

### **Audit Committee**

The Audit will be completed, and a Report ready to share with the Synod Council, at the next meeting.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Reconciling in Christ**

Ms. Emily Fowler asked if we are an RIC (Reconciling in Christ) Synod. Bishop Davenport replied that we are. Ms. Fowler expressed some concern that as such we should be aware of the sites we use for ministry, as some places used for Youth Events do not share our acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community.

Vice President Beasley suggested that if Ms. Fowler is aware of a concern or has a question, the first place to go with this is to Pastor Brad Burke, who is the staff person who deals with Youth Ministry for the Synod.

### **Synod Council Retreat**

Bishop Davenport stated that the staff retreat was such a positive experience and a helpful tool for building a team that she would like us to investigate the possibility of holding a Synod Council retreat. The Council is a good working council, and it would be good to strengthen the ties we have so we can do even better work together.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Pastor Serena Sellers shared some good news that is happening on our territory. An organization is being incorporated that will build “Tiny Houses” for the homeless. This effort is part of a program in Philadelphia to address the needs of those experiencing homelessness.

Meeting adjourned at 6:39 with prayer by Pastor Brad Burke

The 155<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be held on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 4:00 p.m., at Faith Immanuel Lutheran, East Lansdowne.

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

*Approved by Synod Council April 4, 2019*