

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Bishop's Report

Virtual Synod Council Meeting April 8, 2021

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. If you have the power to do good, do it as unto the Lord. God bless and do tell the Lord thank you. Proverbs 3:27

I want to give honor to God and thanks to the Synod Council in general for their work, you, my beloved, working Council have been in place since 2019. You have prayed and pressed SEPA Synod through the darkest days of the pandemic and the harrowing pandemonium of civil unrest and racial tension in our country.

It is with much appreciation I thank those outgoing members not eligible for re-election:

Rev. Laura Tancredi
Ms. Joyce Maloney
Mr. Philip Tackett

We are blessed for those eligible for re-elections:

Ms. Tracey Beasley
Rev. Joseph F. Klinger
Rev. Serena Sellers
Mr Albert Glenn
Ms. Doreen Kinzler
Mr. J. Everett Wick
Ms. Sandra Zimmermann

Mr. Tyler Emig, Mr. Henry Geyer, Ms. Hannah Malesich, and Pastor Matthew Staniz have chosen not to stand for re-election. Ms. Suwah Davies has concluded her time with us.

"But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere."
2 Corinthians 2:14

Churchwide Happenings

Our Conference of Bishops continues to meet weekly to build relationships, share information on current events as well as to participate in educational seminars.

We held our Spring Conference of Bishops gathering on a digital platform, which went well as we were able to share a virtual happy hour welcoming and bidding farewell to

colleagues. The COB handled all of our agenda items, including legal updates, discussion on draft of Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline, Krish Vignarahah, CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) and a panel discussion on The Post-Pandemic Church. Our panelists were Pr. Peter Marty, Dr. Anthony Bateza, and Rector Mary Hinkle Shore. We had good small group conversations, which tells me we are heading in the right direction.

Authentic Diversity Advisory Team

Our primary function as ADAT is to support the Task Force for Strategic Authentic Diversity in their quest to fulfill the resolution adopted at our 2016 Churchwide Assembly to address the challenge of becoming an authentically multiethnic, multicultural church. The quest was recently attacked in the Journal of Lutheran Ethics, which was dealt with swiftly by our team calling for a meeting and a response as noted in the latest issue, see <https://learn.elca.org/jle/issues/>

Regional Happenings

The *Region 7 Bishops* meet faithful every Wednesday, it has become a strong source of support for me in these challenging times, it gives space for lament and joy. We share resources and information that will enable our Rostered Ministers and congregations to continue moving to the next level of ministry.

United Lutheran Seminary hosted a zoom anti-racism forum for faculty and board members with Dr. Drew Hart, theology professor at Messiah College, on the topic of his book “Who Will Be a Witness?” It’s focused on galvanizing the faith community to faithful anti-racism work. I offered a prayer at the end to gather us up and send us out with a charge to action. One aspect of this gathering for us both is that Dr. Hart could be a great ongoing resource for us at ULS and in the PA synods as we do anti-racism work together.

Ecumenical Happenings

Our *Religious Leaders Council* of Interfaith Philadelphia continues to meet regularly addressing the ongoing concerns facing our communities of faith. The pandemic has exposed poverty as an area not addressed along with some other root causes of food scarcity, violence and homelessness, which we discuss ways to tackle collectively. Heeding God’s Call which speaks to gun violence.

I had the privilege to participate in the Palmer Seminary Consultation: Conversations on Church and Community, virtual consultation via Zoom and Facebook, the theme: How, Then, Shall We Live? Our panel topic: DIGGING OUR OWN WELLS: CATALYZING AND COORDINATING RESOURCES TO BUILD COMMUNITIES. There is a long history within the Black Church of the importance of the church engaging in meeting the needs of the community. Today there are challenges of how this can occur in ways that both meet immediate needs of the community as well as address systematic issues that are often at the root of the need. Moderated by Rev. Dr. Alexander G. Houston, panelist: Rev. Lonnie Herndon, Senator Vincent Hughes, Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart, we were invited to share our views and experiences on the Church’s

involvement in civic affairs and community transformation at all levels. I was pleased to share the many ways our congregations are engaging with their communities, i.e., food banks and pantries, justice rallies, financial resources to those in crisis, and the launch of Sanctuary Village, the tiny house project for those experiencing homelessness to name a few.

Thomas Farley, MD MPH, Commissioner Philadelphia Department of Public Health, invited Religious Leaders to an urgent call for our advice and assistance on improving vaccination access for Black and Latinx city residents. Dr. Farley noted the large-scale vaccination effort in collaboration with FEMA offering 6,000 vaccines per day at the Convention Center. While many other vaccine sites were operating and others are planned, the FEMA site offers more vaccines each day than all other sites, so it is particularly important that this vaccination operation be conducted with equity in mind. We share the information and were happy to see that some of our Rostered Leaders and lay members were able to take advantage.

"You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God." Corinthians 9:11

Synod Happenings

Regular Deans meetings are so regular, I want to acknowledge the wonderful work of our *Committee of Deans* who have done a stellar job of working with our congregations in transition, providing needed support via interim, stated or regular supply coverage in addition to working with Ms. Curtis on congregational meetings.

Rostered Ministers Support

Rostered Minister's check-in with the Bishop, which gives me an opportunity to hear the hearts and minds of our leaders. I truly believe when we know better, we can do better. We hosted two meeting with Rev. Dr. Stephen R. Treat, DMin, MFT, Dr. Treat has been featured on numerous television and radio programs and is often quoted for newspaper and magazine articles. He has co-authored two books, *Pastoral Marital Therapy* and *Couples in Treatment: Techniques and Approaches for Effective Practice*. Dr. Treat addressed various topics including but not limited to:

- Self-Care
- Challenges of Covid
- Holding onto your Differentiation
- Anxiety and Depression as we continue to pivot in Ministry
- Pandemic proofing your intimate relationships
- Dealing with the isolation

The dialogue was rich, and it appeared beneficial to those in attendance.

A special thank you to Ms. Tracey Beasley, our VP for hosting another Zoom conversation with our lay members, including guest speakers, which was well attended and much appreciated.

Office of the Bishop Staff

Our staff meets regularly to assure that our members, Rostered Ministers, and ministry partners continue to receive the best we can provide. Much of our attention, under the leadership of Mrs. Carrie Schwab is directed toward our virtual Synod Assembly, April 24th. Mrs. Schwab has been working with all our ministry teams to make this a user-friendly digital platform to allow a good experience for our voting members and visitors.

I was grateful to celebrate in-person *the first anniversary of The E-Meal Program* at Emmanuel in Souderton with Pr. John and Ann Marie Heidgerd leading the team. I had an opportunity to work along-side members and community volunteers who have a passion of caring for others. Congregational members John and Deb were there working with their son, who is an engineer, preparing snack bags. Marge a member of Little Zion in Telford was on duty packaging baby diapers. It was a joy to see so many masked, physically distanced volunteers working to the glory of God.



ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER

Renewal - Term Call

I recommend that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council renew the call to **Rev. David Bruner** as Pastor of Adult Discipleship and Intergenerational Mission (PADM) at Paoli Presbyterian Church, Paoli, Pennsylvania, a full communion partner congregation (8.72.11 Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Church in America). This renewable term call is effective January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. This call requires an annual report to and meeting with the synodical bishop for the length of this call.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. David Bruner** as Pastor of Adult Discipleship and Intergenerational Mission (PADM) at Paoli Presbyterian Church, Paoli, Pennsylvania. This renewable term call is effective January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. This call requires an annual report to and meeting with the synodical bishop for the length of this call.

Renewal - Call to Specialized Ministry

I recommend the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to **the Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir** as Director of Spiritual Care at Artman and the Hearth at Drexel beginning May 15, 2021 to May 14, 2022. This call requires an annual report to the synodical bishop for the length of this call.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to **the Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir** beginning May 15, 2021 to May 14, 2022.

Renewal - Call to Unusual Circumstances

I recommend that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council renew a call under *Unusual Circumstance* to **Rev. Leslie M. Richard** as Spiritual Director effective June 1, 2021. Pastor Richard for the last 12 years has served as a Spiritual Director in a synodical call under *Unusual Circumstance*. Pastor Richard's gifts for spiritual formation and direction have been and continue to be a high missional priority within the synod. Pastor Richard has been ordained for 32 years and served as parish pastor, assistant pastor, interim pastor, bridge pastor, contract pastor and conference dean. Calls to *Unusual Circumstances* must be renewed annually. Her current term call ends May 31, 2021.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council, in accord with bylaw 7.41.15., in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, renew a call as Spiritual Director to the Rev. Leslie M. Richard under *Unusual Circumstance* for a period of one-year effective June 1, 2021.

Request to move from Active Roster to On Leave Roster

Rev. DeBorah Glod request 2nd year on leave effective May 1, 2021

Death

The Rev. William A. Vanderslice March 24, 2021

Bishop's Activities

Ordination: 0

Consecration: 0

Installation: 0

Worship Services: (too many to number)

Celebrations (video or zoom):

Video Messages: 3

Synod Meetings: 8

Individual Meetings with Staff: 6

Rostered Leaders: 31

Lay Leaders: 5

Full Staff Meetings: 3

Deans Meetings: 2

ELCA

- Regional Meetings: 2
- Region7 Bishops: 5
- Stewardship of Life Institute Board: 0
- African Descent Strategy Team: 1
- COB: 5
- COB Exec. Committee: 3
- Authentic Diversity Strategy Advisory Team: 2

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings: 7

Confidential Meetings/Investigations: 2

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts: 4

Funerals: 3

Days Off: 8

Medical Days: 0

Vacation Days: 0

The Rev. Patricia A. Davenport, Bishop