

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
Report of the Bishop
June 18, 2020
Zoom Meeting

"I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."
1 Corinthians 1:4

Gratitude for Synod Council Members

I am grateful to you whose terms were listed to conclude with the May Synod Assembly, but have graciously consented to remain and do the important work of this synod. On behalf of a grateful synod, I say thank you. I pray that God grant each of you a double portion of strength, love and hope as we continue to lead SEPA Synod through this COVID-19 pandemic and its lingering effects on our Rostered Ministers, congregations/communities of faith and neighborhoods we serve. In addition, the pandemonium unleashed as a result of the senseless death of another unarmed Black man, Mr. George Floyd. The death of Mr. Floyd unveiled a symptom of systemic racism, a blatant disregard for Black lives exhibited by White Police officers that has erupted in protest across the globe.

Rostered Ministers and Conference Gatherings

I have a new appreciation for in-person gatherings; however, it was good to be in conversation with our Rostered Ministers via Zoom. This was an opportunity to hear where our ministers are physically, mentally and spiritually in this pandemic. Thus far, I met with two of eight conferences during COVID-19. Pr. Chris McKinstry, Dean, Upper Montgomery Conference and Pr. Norbert Hahn, Dean, Lower Bucks Conference. I appreciate that our Deans, first responders in the Office of the Bishop, have continued in the pandemic with Pericope study, accompanying congregations in transition and supporting Rostered Ministers.

Churchwide

In our LAMPa meeting facilitated by Ms. Tracey DePasquale we joined in a conversation led by Rev. Dr. Roger A. Willer, Director of Theological Ethics in the ELCA on the latest ELCA Draft Social Message, Government and Civic Engagement: Discipleship in a Democracy. Participants had an opportunity to read through the document, to gain clarity and suggest edits. The changes were welcomed and appreciated.

Becoming the Body of Christ: Condemning White Supremacy

Topic: "Becoming the body of Christ where all bodies are valued: A conversation around the ELCA's resolution to condemn White Supremacy."

This was a joint conversation with COB Theological and Ethical Concerns and Ecumenical and Interreligious Engagement committees together with members of the Worship and Theological Discernment teams within the Office of the Presiding Bishop to consider how the ELCA might

host webinars for the rostered ministers of this church to explore the topics of virtual communion, ministry, and theology during times of pandemic and physical isolation.

Considering COVID-19 the church is challenged to find new ways to do ministry and to be the church, not only in this emergency, but also in the new reality/new abnormal that we will be living in the future. Our task was to create a series of webinars on “Doing Ministry in Times of Pandemic and Afterwards.” Leaders are facing complicated questions and decisions about how to best serve their communities in ways that are effective and faithful. Our Rostered Ministers, church leaders and members are asking for guidance on funerals and care for the bereaved; proper administration of the sacraments in a virtual environment; navigate government programs, insurance companies, grant opportunities, etc. to ensure the well-being of our ministries and staff, and many more How Tos. Our members look to our synod office and our churchwide office for guidance, accompaniment and reassurance.

2020 Luce-Hartford Conference in Christian-Muslim Relations: The Agency and Vital Voices of Women: Muslim and Christian Religiosity and Scholarship.

The conference was three consecutive nights from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. More than 300 registrants entered conversations centered on “The Agency and Vital Voices of Women.” It was informational, educational, inspirational and transformational, all that I expect from any gathering of people of faith. I am grateful to have been invited to be a panelist in such times as these to lend my voice in these challenging times.

African Descent Strategy Team, ELCA

Participating in our Authentic Diversity Advisory Team. In these amazingly difficult and fortuitous times, we gather to discuss how the history of the 1616-1619 Pandemic has been exposed in ways this country has never seen, what did we learn. The mental acuity to see the virus of racism; however, as threatening as it is we also see opportunities to confront the challenges to create change. At this tipping point we are prioritizing, recommending and engaging in ways for us to focus on systemic racism and White supremacy.

Ecumenical

Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia

While adjusting to life amidst COVID-19, we committed to virtual meetings through Zoom in light of physical distancing guidelines and to support wellness for all. Our Religious Leaders Council will continue meeting. Virtually, we welcomed Archbishop Nelson Pérez of the Philadelphia Diocese, he shared fondly of his time in Philadelphia, “it feels like coming home.” We moved forward in our collaborative ministry, including discussing the 2020-2021 budget for the RLC of which SEPA Synod represents \$2,400 annually.

Bearing Witness: A Space to Mourn and Hope

Nearly three months after the murder of Breonna Taylor and ten days after the murder of George Floyd, Philadelphia is reeling with grief, anger, and pain, faith leaders: Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart - Office of the Mayor, Dr. Marilia Marien - Philadelphia Shambhala Center, Imam Quaiser Abdullah - Quba Masjid, Kavneet Singh Pannu - American Sikh Council, Archbishop Nelson Pérez - Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Chaplain Betty White - University of Pennsylvania Health Care System, Rabbi Eli Freedman - Congregation Rodeph Shalom, Rev. Aldo Siahann - Philadelphia Praise Center, Rabbi Batya Glazer - Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation, Abby Stamelman Hocky - Interfaith Philadelphia, gather for a sacred time of lament, reflection, hope, and solidarity. We were asked to give (2 minutes) reflection on one of these questions: What do you say to a community that is out of breath? Whose breath has been stolen by racist violence and/or COVID-19? What do you say to people who won't admit that they've been suppressing the breath of others? How can we breathe out rage and grief and breathe in otherwise possibilities? On behalf of SEPA Synod, I offered Psalm 27 as a prayer for the community, we paused for 8 minutes, 46 seconds symbolic of the number of minutes police officer, Derek Chauvin held his knee on Mr. George Floyd's neck.

Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity Virtual Unity Prayers

On behalf of SEPA Synod I participated in the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity, Virtual Unity Prayers. A three-day prayer vigil, African American judicatory leaders or ministerium leaders, were asked to pray for a maximum of 2 minutes. These unity prayers can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/blackclergyphilly/>

Multifaith Vigil for Black Lives

In solidarity with our siblings from across the City of Philadelphia, I participated in a peaceful protest to eradicate systemic racism, organized by Northwest Philly Multifaith Leaders, co-sponsored by POWER Interfaith. Our group wore masks and practiced physical distancing at Oxford Presbyterian Church, 8501 Stenton Avenue (next to the Presbytery). As always, it was good to have representatives from SEPA present, I thank them all for their witness against the sin of racism.

ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER

Term Call

I recommend 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, 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, 2020 through December 31, 2020. 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, 2020 through December 31, 2020. This call requires an annual report to and meeting with the synodical bishop for the length of this call.

Request Synod Council Approval to Move from On Leave Roster to Retired Roster

Rev. David Oppold effective June 1, 2020

Request Synod Council Approval to Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster

Rev. Susan Folks effective June 1, 2020

Rev. Shirley Guider effective July 1, 2020

Rev. Cynthia Krommes effective September 1, 2020

Information Not Requiring Action

Transfers

Rev. David Brunner from Central/Southern Illinois Synod effective January 1, 2020
(pending Synod Council call approval)

Rev. Carolann Hopcke to Nebraska Synod effective May 1, 2020

Rev. Amy Hotter from New Jersey Synod effective May 26, 2020

Bishop's Activities

Ordination: 0

Consecration: 0

Installation: 0

Worship Services: (too many to number)

Celebrations: 2

Synod Meetings: 5

Individual Meetings with Staff: 9

Rostered Leaders: 8

Full Staff Meetings: 6

Deans Meetings: 2

ELCA

- Regional Meetings: 4
- Region7 Bishops: 8
- COB: 6
- COB Exec. Committee: 6

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings: 5

Confidential Meetings/Investigations: 1

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts: 7

Funerals: 0 (Praise God)

Days Off: 10 (Can anyone truly have a day off during a pandemic)

Medical Days: 0 (Praise God)

Vacation Days: 0

Submitted by,

The Rev. Patricia A. Davenport, Bishop