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ANTI-RACISM TEAM

Synod Assembly Report 2021

“You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free...” John 8:32

It’s been quite a year! Who knew that a global pandemic, coupled with the nationally televised death of George Floyd (a Black man) by a Minneapolis police officer (a white man) would spark racial unrest and peaceful protests across the country, involving people from all walks of life and racial/ ethnic backgrounds. Add to that, a contentious national election that saw voter turnout at record numbers across the country, especially within communities of Color, and interest across SEPA Synod in, ‘race’, racism, anti-racism and racial justice increased. People were seeking the truth about racism and this country. With God’s help, the members of the SEPA Synod Anti-Racism Team, all volunteers, tried to respond to this interest. Needless to say, the Team had a very productive year. As a Team, we met for meetings on 9 separate occasions, while providing 11 educational opportunities throughout the year.

The Anti-Racism Team, like others, had to adjust to ZOOM, and think outside the box, as it offered educational opportunities concerning ‘race’ to those within SEPA Synod. After first canceling and then postponing, due to COVID –19 restrictions, the last section (Part 4- Conversations) in our series of educational opportunities- “Having Healthy Conversations about Race in the Church,” we were finally able to offer this section on Saturday, January 30, 2021 via Zoom. It was well received by the 18 participants in the event. We are now in the process of planning our 2021-2022 schedule of educational events.

We continue to field e-mails and calls from congregations and individuals in the synod. This year some of our members even acted as consultants to other synods in the ELCA. Starting in January of 2021 members of the Anti-racism Team offered a variety of articles, blogs and quotes for reflection, currently on a weekly basis, on the SEPA Synod website.

During 2020-2021, via Zoom, we also added book discussions to our offerings. In June/July 2020 we offered 6 sessions of “Conversations on Race” based on the book by Jim Wallis, America’s Original Sin. There were about 30-40 participants. In January/February 2021 we offered a 4-session discussion based on the book, Waking Up White by Debby Irving. This was well attended with about 20+ participants.

Members of the Anti-racism Team still consider this “sacred work” on behalf of God’s kingdom. If you have an interest in joining us in this work please contact us thru antiracism@sepa.org. We are grateful for the support of Bishop Patricia Davenport, and members of the SEPA staff, especially the work of Mercedes Lee, who has continually supported us in our efforts. We also wish to thank the Rev. Dr. William Flippin for his support and input. We look forward to serving in the future.

Yours in Christ,

The SEPA Synod Anti- Racism Team

The Rev. Dr. Susan Kay Folks (co-chair)

The Rev. Jane Marston

The Rev. Gwendolyn S. King (co-chair)

The Rev. Raymond Miller

Deacon Kathleen Afflerbach

Karen Paulus

Janet Bischoff

The Rev. Daniel Phelps

Charles (Chase) Ferguson

The Rev. Serena Sellers

Fern Lee Hagedorn

The Rev. Nathan Krause, trainee

The Rev. Kathleen Harkness

The Rev. Dr. William Flippin, SEPA Synod Liaison

CANDIDACY COMMITTEE

Candidacy Committee Report to the 2021 SEPA Synod Assembly

“But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim

him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" – Romans 10:14-15

The ELCA candidacy process is designed to raise up leaders for our church who will proclaim the Good News. Our congregations, our synod, and the world crave leaders who are authentically and boldly witnessing to their faith in Jesus Christ and God's power to change lives. The candidates who are discerning calls to public ministry are eager to continue finding new ways to be the Church even as our religious landscape changes.

Such changes have been even more pronounced in the year of COVID-19. The candidacy committee like many others has had to pivot to a digital platform for decision interviews, learning events, and discernment conversations. We are grateful to have found ways to stay socially connected even while remaining physically distant.

Nearly 40 people are in contact with the Vocations and Leadership office about pursuing candidacy. They range from the beginnings of the Spirit's whisperings about calling to waiting for their first calls. We are proud of our candidates who have been approved (the final step of our candidacy process) since the last assembly. Congratulations to Courtney Smith and Kevin Tracey who are approved as candidates for Minister of Word and Sacrament.

We are privileged to work with a whole team of people in the communal work of discernment. We seek members of our committee to be diverse including, and not limited to, rostered ministers and lay people, age, gender, race, and sexuality.

- The following people currently serve on the SEPA Candidacy Committee: the Rev. Dr. Paul Baglyos (Churchwide Representative), the Rev. Dr. Karyn Wiseman (ULS Representative), the Rev. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam, Jonathan Bagby, Deacon Beth Barkhau, Sara Calderon, Diane Casey, the Rev. Mukesh Cheedie, the Rev. Dr. Shirley Guider, the Rev. Noah Hepler, Bobbie Hoffman, the Rev. Nathan Krause, Margie Pendarvis-Wright, Lisa Pressley, the Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath, the Rev. Carlton Rodgers, and the Rev. Thomas Russert.
- The Rev. Jenn Casey serves as chaplain of the Candidacy Committee.
- Our initial interviews are conducted by the Rev. Steve Keiser, the Rev. Susan Lynch, the Rev. Tina Mackie, the Rev. Carlton Rodgers, and Deacon Allison Wilcox.
- Life Keys instruction is done by Bobbie Hoffman and the Rev. Janelle Krais.
- Additional thanks go to the Rev. Maggie Ainslie who concluded her time as chaplain and to the Rev. Thadd Book who served on our committee prior to accepting a new call in another synod.
- A special thank you to Bishop Patricia Davenport for her support of our candidates, her prayer for the committee's work, and her leadership with committee appointments.

The committee meets 5-6 times annually, including 1-2 gatherings spent in fellowship and formation. In between decision meetings, our committee members serve on relator teams, staying in regular communication with our candidates to provide support and guidance.

We are grateful to all for their dedication to our candidates and the Church. Please thank these leaders for the ministry and service they provide. They have given much of their time and commitment to the candidacy program here in our synod.

As always, we ask that our congregations, rostered ministers, and lay people continue to lift up future leaders within their communities and nurture their development as leaders of the church. Our world and the ELCA need strong, visionary leaders for the future who are not afraid to call on the name of Jesus, to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, and to be sent to form beloved community.

Thank you for partnering with us in this important ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Paul Neff
Candidacy Committee Chair

and, The Rev. Karen Sease
Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership / Mission Advancement

DIRECTOR OF EVANGELICAL MISSION

Relationship, relationship, relationship, my most significant objective for my first year was to build organic relationships; my schedule had a plethora of appointments with various leaders. The monthly formal check-in opportunities with Bishop Davenport helped the personalization of feeling a connection being away physically from my home, Atlanta. Then there was COVID-19, everything shifted, I went to Atlanta to shelter in place with my wife Kedra and daughter Mellie who were anticipating a move to Philadelphia in the fall of 2020. I entered the world of sacred cyberspace and Zoom meeting.

Vitality Team

- I have the joy of working with Pr. Bryan Penman, chair, and a wonderful team. Together we assess congregational vitality to better equip Rostered Ministers and members in enlarging their ministry footprint into their communities.
- We offered conference presentations on Vitality and Breaking Bread.
- We attended the bi-annual Vitality convening in San Diego, California, with Bishop Davenport, Pastor Tim Johansen, Pastor Violet Little (Welcome Church), Schaunel (The

Well), Waverly Alston, and a cadre of many others committed to our future direction of Vitality. Our SEPA Team facilitated as well as participated in presentations and forums.

- We are in continuous conversations with Rev. Dr. Hector Carrasquillo, Director of Hispanic Ministry Support, along with Pastor Lyzette Sanchez-Rios on a Latino strategy in Philadelphia. Philadelphia has the third-largest concentration of Puerto Ricans in the world. This collaboration with Pastor Sanchez-Rios on a Latino strategy positions Nueva Creacion to be the mother church with a large focus on socio-economic realities for the community. In addition, we are exploring a possible mission start in Norristown, which has a distinct Mexican population.
- We convened an Ecumenical Equipping Day with Philadelphia's Presbytery. We affirmed as full communion partners to be involved in asset mapping in shared missions building and shaping the Beloved Community with Pennsylvania's Diocese.
- We are working on a Faith in Daily Life process birthed as we wrote a Lily grant that was denied; nonetheless, our team felt it worthy to move forward.
- We are recruiting new members for our Vitality Team in 2021. Will you consider joining us?

African Descent Strategy Team

- African Descent Rostered and Lay leaders engaged Dr. Richard Stewart to share the history of Center City Lutheran Parish in the hope that we and other constituents in our communities would work in revitalizing the Urban Parish model built on a vision statement from Acts 2:44 "all who believed were together and had all things in common." This effort is an ongoing work in progress!
- In regular listening session, I met with Rostered Ministers via Zoom giving space for laments and joys.

Generosity Team

- Our Generosity Team, chaired by Dr. Larry Smoose and Pastor Karen Sease worked tirelessly to host a Stewardship Extravaganza that had rave reviews from Rostered Ministers and Lay members. More importantly they put into practice what they learned in their home congregations. Stewardship increased in different ways in our communities of faith. Planning for another stewardship event in 2022 is in the works.

Heeding God's Call

- We are working with an interfaith group to end gun violence. We have a shortlist of churches/clergy willing to host a *Memorial to the Lost*. You may have seen the t-shirt display of those killed by gun violence on the grounds of United Lutheran Seminary, Prince of Peace, or Tabernacle. We are looking for more congregations. We will be inviting all Rostered Ministers and interested laity to a virtual meeting to feature successes, information on projects, and education about gun violence, its prevention, and faith-based advocacy for change.

African Descent Lutheran Association

- I have actively attended the ADLA Philadelphia Chapter hearing the desires of members to inform, educate and inspire systemic change to enhance the quality of life for all people, especially people of color in poverty.

Anti-Racism Team (ART)

- Staff support to this team of awesome leaders, co-chaired by Dr. Susie Folks and Pr. Gwendolyn King have led book studies and conversations to assist in our understanding of the importance of dismantling racism. It is an ongoing conversation for such a time as this.

**Submitted by: Rev. Dr. William E. Flippin, Jr., Director of Evangelical Mission,
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

FORWARD TOGETHER IN FAITH

The Forward Together in Faith team is focused awarding congregations grant monies. These grants are awarded to help communities do God's work along the key pillars of the campaign in the form of grants to help congregation Network, Innovate, Communicate and Equip. This year was a challenging for many congregations and the campaign team was thankful that they were able to help so many congregations! While we still welcome and encourage congregations and individuals to donate to the fund, we are thrilled that we are helping and equipping congregations for the work of ministry.

This fall the team received sixteen grant applications totaling \$88,425 in requests. Many of the requests had to deal with technology as congregations were still trying to navigate being church during COVID-19 pandemic. The team would have loved to award grants to all those who applied for the amount they requested but the reality of our funds made the selection process all the more difficult. Given the amount of funds available for disbursement this year, we were able to award \$26,026 to 14 congregations and United Lutheran Seminary students.

I would like to thank the Grant Team who worked together, reviewing applications, making phone calls, following up with congregations and choosing the awards for all their hard work and dedication.

Again, this year, we would like to thank the congregations and individuals who have made donations to the campaign making it possible to live into the vision of the campaign. With your

continued help we hope to support congregations increase their networking; develop and execute innovative ministries; develop strong communications and equip leaders and lay leaders.

Ms. Ellen Daneke, Chair of Forward Together in Faith

SYNOD GENEROSITY TEAM

Welcome to our new world! Is it possible that the pandemic could be forcing the church to face the future and learning the future will be different?

How many of our congregations had never used virtual worship or any kind of online worship experience before the pandemic, but are now using it weekly and improving their online worship experience? How many of our congregations resisted using the variety of electronic giving opportunities that were available, only to discover that it made a huge difference in the offerings received during the pandemic?

Our synod has experienced the same realities in different ways, with zoom meetings for the Synod Council, many committees and the staff. It has required a lot of extra effort and time for the staff to provide support to congregations and rostered leaders in the form of training and encouragement, and various forms of financial support. This included providing information about Federal funds that were available to congregations, highlighting the amazing work that congregations were doing to help their families and their communities.

The Generosity Team would like to thank our Bishop and Synod staff members for their tremendous efforts during the pandemic.

The Generosity team reported its highly successful and well-received EXTRAVAGANZA last January in which over 250 people from our synod, NE PA synod, as well as other synods, learned about a variety of ways to encourage generosity in their congregations.

In October 2020, we offered an online workshop on Electronic Giving. We have launched a pilot program called SIX WEEKS ON MONEY. A virtual workshop to help congregational members learn the basics about handling money in a way that connects their values and their faith with their spending, saving, and giving. We will report on the outcome of this program but want congregations to know that it is available to all of you and is best conducted with a small group of 6-10 people with a facilitator (not a teacher). The synod can provide some modest grants to help with the cost of the program.

The Generosity Team is also in the beginning stages of planning another EXTRAVAGANZA for 2022. We will report on this effort at the synod assembly in April.

The synod Generosity Team would like to thank the congregations of our synod for their Mission Support that makes these ministries happen. Especially for those congregations that are modeling good stewardship to their members by giving at least 10% of their regular giving towards Mission Support and those achieving 6.2% or more of their regular giving, which is what we estimate the amount needed from each congregation to reach our synod budget.

This year, despite the financial challenges facing our congregations with the need to transition to virtual worship and thereby relying on mail-in or electronic giving, our Mission Support had mixed results. Some congregations had significant increases and even some conferences showed a total increase when compared to 2019! However more congregations sent in fewer dollars for Mission Support resulting in an overall decrease for the synod and the ELCA. Here are the numbers for the past five years:

2020 - \$1,655,305; 2019 - \$1,705,394; 2018 - \$1,798,189; 2017 - \$1,859,319; 2016 - \$1,847,979

So in a year of crisis, while we received \$50,089 less than the previous year, it is the smallest decrease since 2017's slight increase.

In addition, our congregations provided \$94,642 in special offerings! These included the All Saints Fund with \$37,996; the special COVID appeal received \$37,010; and Healing the Heart effort provided \$16,636!

These special offerings support vital ministries in our synod, including: financial aid to seminarians, new ventures in congregations and our youth ministry's Tuscarora retreat (All Saints); they provided grants to congregations helping with meals for those in need and assistance to purchase needed electronic equipment for congregations to worship virtually (COVID); and in an outpouring of compassion supported the NE Diocese of Tanzania's (our partner synod) effort to help Bishop Munga receive life-saving heart surgery. (Healing the Heart)

These special gifts also show that money is available when the cause is clear and the need is apparent. Telling the story of our synod to your congregation through the outstanding stories told in our Ministry Link newsletter will spark generosity to the work of the synod without hurting your own congregational giving. In fact, generosity triggers greater generosity. The only way to experience that is to try it.

Our synod sends half of our mission support dollars to the ELCA in support of the work of national church. The specific uses of these funds are outlined on annual report covers used by many congregations for their annual meetings, and additional reports on how your Mission Support dollars are used by the ELCA can be found at www.elca.org. The ELCA also provides Stories of Faith in Action, including bulletin inserts that can help your congregation appreciate the tremendous work we do together as an ELCA.

Members of the Synod Stewardship Team are Pr. Larry Smoose, chair, Carl Reitz, Pr. Mark Singh-Hueter, Doreen Kinsler, Pr. Tim Ness, Theresa Haenn, Pr. Julie Bergdahl, Yvonne Lembo, Pr. Phil Krey, and Pr. Mike Carlson. We also want to thank our entire Synod staff, and especially Bishop Patricia Davenport, Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Pr. Karen Sease, Pr. William Flippin, along with Mr. Martin Schwab, Pr. Bob Fisher, and Ms. Cynta Outterbridge who do so much to support congregational stewardship ministry.

Larry Smoose, Chairperson

THE SYNOD HUNGER MINISTRY TEAM

The Synod Hunger Team is in the process of re-forming. In 2020, we reviewed the ELCA Hunger Grant Applications which were from our Synod and made recommendations.

Many of our Synodical congregations stepped to the plate in 2020 and continue to do so in 2021. With people being laid off and losing their jobs, more people experienced food insecurity. SEPA congregations packed meals, collected staple items, made sandwiches, and other activities, in order to help feed those who were hungry. Most of our food pantries saw their activity and need increase greatly, and they continued to operate and became creative in finding food to distribute. Other congregations collected food and supplies for their local pantries, and/or contributed money or volunteers.

The Synod Hunger team will really get going in the next year, to see how we can advocate for and support those who are food insecure, and those who are responding to the need.

If you would like to be part of the Synod Hunger Team, contact Rev. Sandra Brown brownsj@msn.com

DIRECTOR OF MOBILITY

One of the major responsibilities of the Director of Mobility is oversight of the Committee of Deans. Deans are generally elected by the conference (on occasion appointed by the Bishop) and serve three-year terms. As a committee, deans meet monthly along with Bishop Davenport, Pastor William Flippin, Director of Evangelical Mission, and Pastor Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership / Mission Advancement. The Deans hold their monthly meetings in the various congregations in which they serve.

The deans work on an almost daily basis to support the needs of the pastors and congregations in their conferences. This support includes conducting exit interviews when a pastor retires or takes

another call, explaining the basics of the transition time, interviewing candidates interested in serving in SEPA Synod, reviewing Ministry Site Profiles, and making recommendations of possible candidates for call processes. In addition, deans conduct and assist with installations, work with congregations in times of conflict, and also walk with congregations through the steps of closing after they have voted to end their ministry.

The following pastors are now serving on the Committee of Deans: Regina Goodrich, Central Philadelphia Conference; Ron Wesemann, Chester Conference, Jennifer Casey, Delaware Conference; Norbert Hahn, Lower Bucks Conference; Bryan Penman, Lower Montgomery Conference; Jane Marston NE/NW Philadelphia Conference; Erika Wesch, Upper Bucks Conference; Christopher McKinstry, Upper Montgomery Conference; and Christian McMullan who serves as the Director of Interim Ministry. I am grateful to Pastor Leslie Richard who served two terms as Dean of Delaware Conference.

As Director of Mobility, I also review Rostered Ministers' Profiles from across the ELCA and review Ministry Site Profiles for congregations in our synod who are seeking to call rostered leaders. I make recommendations to the Deans of candidates to interview and review the summaries of those interviews. Together we work to find the most suitable candidates to recommend to congregational call committees.

During 2020, the Committee of Deans was committed to continuing their important work despite the restrictions placed on all of us because of the COVID pandemic. The Committee continues to hold their monthly meetings virtually. We have encouraged congregations to use virtual means for interviewing candidates and for holding congregational meetings for the purpose of electing rostered leaders. I am deeply grateful to our deans and congregational leaders who have sought creative and accommodating ways to keep the mobility work of our synod going forward, despite restrictions on meeting in person.

It is a privilege to work with congregations, pastors and deacons, and our synod staff in the important work of mobility. I am grateful for this opportunity to serve God and to further the mission of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Marcia G. Bell

TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The TMD is, a team of clergy and lay leaders who have experience in congregations in transition. Our work is to support congregations and pastors as they move through pastoral

transitions. We review quarterly reports and conduct exit interviews when transition pastors have finished their work in a congregation.

A key aspect of our work is ensuring that our transition practices are flexible in order to suit varying needs and situations, while maintaining integrity and quality of Interim Ministry practice. Review of standards and practices for transition ministry in our Synod is very important to us. We review and adapt the handbook and resources used by transition pastors and congregations as we learn from congregations and from the experience and expertise of transition professionals in the national arena.

This year has presented new challenges for transitional pastors, as it has for pretty much every aspect of our lives. Together with one another and the congregations we serve, we are learning new ways to do our work using virtual platforms. As you have all experienced in your ministries, some of the learnings and adaptations created in response to COVID have meant looking with new eyes. No doubt much of what we have learned out of necessity will help our ministry into the future.

We are grateful to the pastors who have received training to serve as transitional pastors in our synod assuring many congregations to welcome new pastoral leadership, and to the congregations who have worked with them.

Members, the Rev. Marcia Bell, the Rev. Sandra Brown, the Rev. Regina Goodrich, Ms. Teri Lanan, Mr. Karl McClellan, the Rev. Christian McMullan, the Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir

WOMEN OF THE ELCA (SEPA SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION)

This past year, 2020 has been a challenge for us. Our board continued to meet virtually throughout the year. Our individual units continued with their missions of donating food to local food pantries, supporting each other through virtual Bible studies, letters, and telephone calls. We had to cancel our 2020 convention. We continue to look for ways to move our mission forward during this time of keeping everyone safe by social distancing.

Our main project in 2020 was honoring the women pastors serving in our synod by sending each one a letter and a certificate of recognition of the 50 years of Lutheran women being ordained in the United States, 40 years of women of color being ordained, and 10 years of LGBTQIA+ individuals being able to serve freely. We also donated money in their honor to the United Lutheran Seminary.

The churchwide Women of the ELCA had to reduce the hours of the executive staff due to financial constraints. We continue to engage in ministry, take action through advocacy, promote healing and wholeness, and support one another in our callings.

Submitted by,

Linda Garcia

Vice President

Women of the ELCA Southeastern Pennsylvania Synodical Women's Organization Board

YOUTH, YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

See the Bishop's Report for updates on Youth, Young Adult Ministry and Spiritual Formation.