

**Report of the Synod Council to the Thirty-third Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, April 24, 2021**

Included:

1. Minutes of the 155<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, April 4, 2019
  - Approved by the Synod Council June 13, 2019
2. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Thirty-second Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
*Building Beloved Community* May 3-4, 2019
  - Approved by the Synod Council December 12, 2019
3. Minutes of the 156<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, June 13, 2019
  - Approved by the Synod Council September 19, 2019
4. Minutes of the 157<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, September 19, 2019
  - Approved by the Synod Council December 12, 2019
5. Minutes of the 158<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, December 12, 2019
  - Approved by the Synod Council February 27, 2020
6. Minutes of the 159<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, February 27, 2020
  - Approved by the Synod Council April 28, 2020
7. Minutes of the 160<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, April 28, 2020
  - Approved by the Synod Council June 18, 2020
8. Minutes of the 161<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, June 18, 2020
  - Approved by the Synod Council September 24, 2020
9. Minutes of the 162<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, September 24, 2020
  - Approved by the Synod Council December 10, 2020
10. Minutes of the 163<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, December 10, 2020
  - Approved by the Synod Council February 18, 2021

11. Minutes of the 164<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, February 18, 2021  
- Approved by the Synod Council April 8, 2021

**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*

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD  
OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
*Building Beloved Community*  
**May 3-4, 2019**  
**Franconia Mennonite Meetinghouse**  
**Telford, Pennsylvania**

## Friday morning, May 3, 2019

9:30 a.m.

### **Prayer, Praise, and Preaching**

Bishop Patricia A. Davenport, the Reverend Bryan Penman, the Reverend Lydia Posselt. And the Reverend Nathaniel Preisinger led the Assembly in worship based on the story of the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24. The preaching segments of the worship walked through the themes “We had Hoped,” “Was it not Necessary?,” “Stay with Us,” “Eyes Open and Hearts Burning,” and “Returned and Made Known.” In each segment the story was applied to the life of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, and our desire to build Beloved Community.

### **Order for the Opening of the Assembly**

At 10:20 a.m. Bishop Patricia A. Davenport and Vice President Tracey A. Beasley led the Order for the Opening of the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Bishop Davenport welcomed all those attending the Assembly, both voting members and visitors.

The Bishop expressed thanks to those who served as members of the worship team and those who prepared for this Assembly, namely: the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps Ollikainen, Chairperson, and members of the Assembly Worship Team: the Rev. Bryan Penman, the Rev. Linnea Clark, Mr. Andrew Long, the Rev. Dwight Mason, and the Rev. Linda Manson, who has begun a new call in another Synod; musicians, the Rev. Linnea Clark, Mr. Drew Long, and the Rev. Dwight Mason; prayer pause leaders: the Rev. Fritz Fowler, Ms. Dedra Florence-Johnson, Deacon Kathy Afflerbach, the Rev. Joey Klinger, the Rev. Christopher Weidner and the Rev. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam.; Friday morning worship leaders: the Rev. Nate Preisinger, the Rev. Bryan Penman, and the Rev. Lydia Posselt; Saturday morning preacher, the Rev. Dr. Wyvetta Bullock; Saturday morning sacristan, the Rev. Jay Mitchell, and Saturday morning prayer station leader, the Rev. Rebecca Ehrlich; thank you to the more than 50 people, who are serving as worship assistants at various times throughout the Assembly including: Communion assistants, ushers, readers, and pray-ers; and Paul’s Run for providing the font.

Bishop Davenport introduced some particular guests to the Assembly: the Rev. Dr. Wyvetta Bullock, Assistant to Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Executive Director for Administration, and our Churchwide representative this year. The Rev. Brenda Smith, ELCA Program Director of Faith Practices and the Book of Faith, who will lead a forum “**The Five Gifts of Discipleship: A Guide for Living Our Faith in Daily Life.**”; the Rev. Linda Norman, Mission Investment Fund Vice President for Administration – She, too, will lead a forum: **Stewardship in the Beloved Community: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

Welcome to the Rev. Dr. Larry Smoose, our parliamentarian; Ms. Barbara Debski from Portico Benefit Services; and Mr. Gerry Lauro, of the ELCA Mission Investment Fund.

Welcome to the Rev. Mark Wimmer, Vice President for Church Relations, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries; the Rev. Jimmy Lee Werley, Interim Executive Director of Bear Creek Camp;

Bishop Davenport recognized and thanked the Synod Officers; members of the Synod Council; the Deans; the Rev. Christian McMullan, Director of Interim Ministry; the Rev. Marcia Bell, Director of Mobility; Deacon Allison Wilcox, Director of Candidacy; and the Rev. Donna Wright, chair of the Transitional Ministry Team

Bishop Davenport expressed her appreciation and thanks to Deacon Alison Wilcox, Director of Candidacy, and the Rev. Sarah Stobie, Chair of the Candidacy Committee, for their faithful service on this Committee. Pastor Stobie has recently received a new call and relocated outside of our Synod, and is thereby no longer Chair. Deacon Wilcox will be stepping down from this committee as our new Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership/Mission Advancement, the Rev. Karen M. Sease, begins her new position. The Bishop asked the Assembly to thank Deacon Wilcox with applause.

The Bishop then invited those rostered leaders who were new to the Synod since our last Assembly to come forward and introduce themselves. We are blessed to welcome these new leaders to our Synod:

Daniel Eisenberg, Pastor, St. John's, (Mayfair) Philadelphia  
John Heidgerd, Pastor, Emmanuel Souderton  
Lauren Heywood, Pastor, St. David's, NE Philadelphia  
Timothy Knauss, Pastor, Messiah Downingtown  
Justin Nickel, Pastor, Living God Honey Brook  
Danny Phelps, Pastor, Bethany Roxborough  
Scott Staub, Pastor, New Hanover Gilbertsville  
Joshua Sullivan – Associate Pastor, St. Andrew Perkasio

Bishop Davenport then introduced the Rev. Karen M. Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership/Mission Advancement.  
The Assembly welcomed all these leaders with applause.

### **Report of the Registrar**

Ms. Cyntia Outterbridge, Registrar, reported that the total number of voting members was 438, the total number of voting members registered was 273, and the number of voting members present at the time of this report was 219. A quorum is present.

### **Report of the Secretary**

The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, presented, and the Assembly adopted, the proposed program as printed in *The Bulletin of Reports*. He then presented as information the Rules of Procedure as printed in *The Bulletin of Reports*.

Secretary Richard reminded the Assembly that all times are approximate, as things sometimes move more, or less swiftly than the time originally allotted, and that it is the responsibility of

each voting member to be present for each part of the Assembly so they can vote, act, or contribute as necessary or appropriate.

By common consent, the Assembly approved the following rule: "The Synod Assembly shall limit each speaker from the floor to two minutes, alternating *for* and *against* whenever possible, and allowing someone who has not spoken on a particular issue from the floor to speak before someone speaks a second or additional time."

Secretary Richard reported that the Synod Council approved the minutes of the 31<sup>st</sup> annual assembly on December 6, 2018.

He presented as information the reports of the various committees, task forces, organizations, and institutions of the Synod.

### **Report of the Nominating Committee**

The Rev. Lydia Posselt, Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, made the report.

#### **Synod Council**

**TICKET 1 - SECRETARY** (One to be elected for a term ending 2023; nominated by the Synod Council; one nominee required if incumbent, otherwise at least two required)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Rev. Karl M. Richard	St. Matthew, Springfield

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

The Rev. Wayne Mathias-Long moved nominations be closed. Following a second, and an affirmative vote, nominations were closed, and Bishop Davenport declared Pastor Richard **ELECTED**.

**TICKET 2: SYNOD COUNCIL, CLERGY** (Three **Ministers of Word and Sacrament** to be elected for terms ending 2022)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Rev. Gwendolyn S. King	Calvary, West Chester
Rev. Dwight Mason	Good Shepherd, Philadelphia
Rev. Kris Chandler	Trinity, Fort Washington
Rev. Joseph Klinger	Redemption, Philadelphia

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

Nominated from the floor:

Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps Ollikainen	Trinity, Perkasié
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With no further nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 2 closed.

**TICKET 3: SYNOD COUNCIL, DELAWARE CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY MALE** (One **lay male** to be elected for a term ending 2022)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Mr. David Ehret	Grace, Broomall

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor. Persons not elected on this ballot will be added to Ticket 8.*

With no nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 3 closed.  
Bishop Davenport then declared Mr. David Ehret **ELECTED**.

**TICKET 4 - SYNOD COUNCIL, NEW PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE  
REPRESENTATIVE, LAY MALE** (One **lay male** to be elected for a term ending 2022)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Mr. Adam Clark	Zion, Olney

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor. Persons not elected on this ballot will be added to Ticket 8.*

With no nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 4 closed.  
Bishop Davenport then declared Mr. Adam Clark **ELECTED**.

**TICKET 5 - SYNOD COUNCIL, UPPER MONTGOMERY CONFERENCE  
REPRESENTATIVE, LAY FEMALE** (One **lay female** to be elected for a term ending 2022)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Cheryl Detweiler	Grace, Pottstown
Sr. Jane Roper	St. James, Pottstown

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor. Persons not elected on this ballot will be added to Ticket 9.*

With no nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 5 closed.

**TICKET 6: SYNOD COUNCIL, AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY MALE, YOUNG  
ADULT** (One **lay male young adult** to be elected for a term ending 2022)  
*(A young adult is a person between ages of 18 and 30 at time of election or appointment)*

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
No nominations from the Committee	

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor. Persons not elected on this ballot will be added to Ticket 8.*

Nominated from the floor:

Mr. Daniel Graeff	Trinity, Lansdale
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With no further nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 6 closed.  
Bishop Davenport then declared Mr. Daniel Graeff **ELECTED**.

**TICKET 7: SYNOD COUNCIL, AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY FEMALE  
YOUNG ADULT** (One **lay female** to be elected for a term ending 2022)

*(A young adult is a person between ages of 18 and 30 at time of election or appointment)*

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
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No nominations from the Committee

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor. Persons not elected on this ballot will be added to Ticket 9.*

Nominated from the floor:

Ms. Suwah Davies	Faith Immanuel, East Lansdowne
Ms. Andrea Alderfer	Christ, Kulpville
Ms. Ralen Robinson	Grace, West Philadelphia
Ms. Katie Schnaath	St. Matthew, Perkasio

With no further nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 7 closed.

**TICKET 8: SYNOD COUNCIL, AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY MALE (One lay male to be elected for a term ending 2022)**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Mr. William Graham	Prince of Peace, Philadelphia

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

With no nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 8 closed.  
Bishop Davenport then declared Mr. William Graham **ELECTED**.

**TICKET 9: SYNOD COUNCIL, AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY FEMALE (One lay female to be elected for a term ending 2022)**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Lisa Hand	Good Shepherd, King of Prussia
Ms. Karen Daley	St. Petri – Hope, Philadelphia

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

Nominated from the floor:

Ms. Susan Eaddy	Immanuel, S. Philadelphia
Ms. Beth Feiss	St. Michael, Sellersville

With no further nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 9 closed.

**TICKET 10: SYNOD COUNCIL, AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY MALE, YOUTH (One lay male, youth to be elected for a term ending 2021)**  
*(A youth is a person who is under the age of 18 at time of election or appointment)*

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
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No nominations from the Committee

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

Nominated from the floor:

Mr. Tyler Emig	Calvary, West Chester
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With no further nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 10 closed.  
Bishop Davenport then declared Mr. Tyler Emig **ELECTED**.

**TICKET 11: SYNOD COUNCIL, AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY FEMALE, YOUTH (One lay female, youth to be elected for a term ending 2021)**  
*(A youth is a person who is under the age of 18 at time of election or appointment)*

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Taylor Garges	Advent, Harleysville

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

Nominated from the floor:

Ms. Hannah Malesich	Advent, West Chester
Ms. Sydney Geyer	St. Andrew's, Perkasio

With no further nominations offered from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 11 closed.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pastor Posselt for her report.

### **Bishop Patricia A. Davenport's Address to the Assembly**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley introduced Bishop Patricia Ann Curtis Davenport, the first African American woman ever elected a Bishop in the ELCA, to the Assembly, and invited her to make her address. The Assembly welcomed Bishop Davenport with extended applause.

“Magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt God’s name forever!”

Last year I heard clearly: “We elect a Pastor, and then raise up a Bishop.” So when things go well, I thank you all. When things go poorly, you have not yet trained me well.

Bishop Davenport expressed her thanks to the bishops who preceded her, the Reverend Roy Almquist and the Reverend Claire Shenot Burkat, for their wisdom and support in her transition to this office. Bishop’s training is continuing education in high definition!

The Bishop expressed her heartfelt thanks for all who participated in her installation service and celebration last September. “We called on the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit had the audacity to show up!”

Bishop Davenport thanked the membership of the Synod for allowing her to show up and represent them. She emphasized that we are called into relationship. We can do better when we know better; we can do more together than we can do alone. And her relationship with Christ informs all that she does, and we do, together.

As Bishop Davenport moves around our Synod she is regularly asked, “Bishop, what is your vision for our Synod?” Her response: “Together WE set the agenda for the mission and vision of our Synod.” Bishop Davenport wants to hear from the members of the Synod to hear the joys and dreams, challenges and concerns of our people. She is continually asking each person and group “What can we do together to build up the Beloved Community?”

Bishop Davenport is grateful for the sharing done at Conference meetings, and the ways in which the Conferences are doing innovative and collaborative ministry. She cited as examples the work of the Cobbs Creek Ministerium, conversations with several congregations in Pottstown looking to do collaborative ministry, and the agreement of Immanuel, Norwood and St. Matthew, Woodlyn, to share pastoral staff.

Bishop Davenport noted the way so many congregations are working together on issues of hunger, homelessness, the opioid crisis, and re-establishing urban – suburban connections. She stated her pleasure that “You voice a desire to do God’s Work with Your Hands, not just on one day in September, but in every day of your lives.”

The Bishop then asked the members of the Assembly to gather into “Holy Huddles,” with friendly-looking strangers, and discuss these questions:

- Who do you say we are as Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod?
- What are the needs of your local community?
- How can we, as God's Beloved Community, meet those needs?

Following conversation in these small groups, Bishop Davenport asked voting members to share some of what they had discussed.

Ms. Emma Gubonick, St. James, Limerick: As a Synod, we are all connected. We are different, but we have the Lutheran heart and belief in God.

Evangelist Elizabeth Steward, Reformation, Philadelphia, and Ms. Kathryn Addison, Trinity, Fort Washington: We have the ability to be expectant based on our work, on the spirit within us, and not on any other criteria. God is using women in ministry! Is SEPA Synod able to show a breakdown of barriers and labels that divide us?

Mr. George Miller, St. John, Mayfair: Regarding needs in the local community, we in Northeast Philadelphia are churches that are facing similar concerns and needs, but in the suburbs those needs may be "covered up." Families need to gather and put Christ forward in their dealing with each other. Poverty, hunger, addiction and alcoholism are present in both settings.

Mr. John Garden, Holy Communion, Philadelphia: The Synod is a bridge between the different and diverse congregations in our territory. We are, otherwise, stuck in our own bubbles. As for local needs, the biggest need we have is connection, basic human connection, and that is what the Church can provide.

The Reverend Bradley Gow, St. Peter, Riegelsville: We question, we don't just "go along." We have inquisitive minds. The church is not four walls; we go out of them to the community.

Ms. Evans, St. Mark, Philadelphia: The Synod is a mixture of diverse cultures and economic backgrounds, all coming together to strengthen the Kingdom. Our conversation was about diversity and our commonalities across distinctions.

The Reverend Cornelius Eaddy, Emanuel, Philadelphia: We are in a tent together, but there is a dividing line. We "in the hood" are in survival mode.

Mr. Jim Moritz, Zion, Zion Hill: In our community we see the reality that we are steeped in traditions, which can keep us isolated. We need to appeal to the younger families, and find different ways to grab their attention. When we get them in we can try to deliver the message of the Gospel. We need help finding ways to reach these younger families.

The Reverend Noah Hepler, Atonement, Philadelphia: Our communities need Jesus, community, safety, health, and engagement.

Ms. Janet Hillsmeyer, St. James, Limerick: Our community needs affordable housing and ways to address addiction, particularly among our youth.

Bishop Davenport thanked the Assembly for participating in this exercise, and said that we will need to lean into these conversations. She is grateful that she gets to be in the midst of the people as they do just that.

To illustrate ways in which we are building Beloved Community, Bishop Davenport shared the following examples:

- In her visits with Pastor Bill Davis and Pastor Craig Landis prior to their deaths, she was able to gather nuggets of wisdom and encouragement from them. “Love your people, encourage them, and show up!”
- At every funeral, or rather, celebration of life, we remember the hope that is ours.
- At the Bishop’s Convocation we had time to build community among our Rostered Ministers.

Bishop Davenport concluded by saying that her heart is strengthened and her faith is renewed as the members of the congregations of the Synod pray for her, and she emphasized that she prays for them as well. As our people pray for joys and concerns, for themselves and for the world, they keep the connections going. You build the Beloved Community in the congregations of the SEPA Synod.

The Bishop shared a video of the children of Calvary, West Chester singing a song about the Beatitudes.

“We are under construction. We are the Lutheran Tribe of the Beloved Community. And we are working on it!”

### **Portico Benefits**

Ms. Barbara Demski of Portico Benefits shared a video of Portico’s ministry. We are called to a life of service. Portico helps staff and faith-based communities care for each other and engage in service through providing various financial instruments to allow this mission to continue.

In Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod you have amazing ministries happening every day. Thank you for partnering with us, and allowing us to work with you to make this ministry a reality.

### **Extension of Morning Session**

Bishop Davenport asked the Assembly if it would be permissible to extend the morning session by twenty minutes, and placed this motion before the Assembly.

**The motion passed.**

### **Anniversary Celebrations**

Bishop Davenport recognized those Rostered Ministers who are celebrating significant anniversaries.

Celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their ordination are:

- + The Reverend Bruce T. Davis, Jr.
- + The Reverend Kevin Hilgendorf
- + The Reverend Neal A. Bond
- + The Reverend Robert J. Hopkins

Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their ordination are:

- + The Reverend Jonathan Shin
- + The Reverend James Saboe
- + The Reverend Dr. Susan Kay Folks

The following congregations are celebrating significant anniversaries:

- + St. John, Blue Bell – 250 years
- + St. Michael, Sellersville – 150 years
- + Atonement, Philadelphia – 125
- + Trinity, Fort Washington – 125

Following the recognition of these anniversaries, Bishop Davenport called on the Reverend Fritz Fowler, pastor of University Lutheran, Philadelphia, to pray before lunch.

*The Assembly stood in recess for lunch*

### **Friday afternoon, May 3, 2019**

The Assembly came back to order at 1:30 p.m. with prayer led by Ms. Dedra Florence-Johnson.

#### **Presentation of Candidates for Ministry**

Deacon Allison Wilcox and Pastor Karen Sease were called forward to introduce those candidates for ministry who are approved from, and/or assigned to, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Deacon Wilcox expressed her appreciation for the time she has been able to serve as the Director of Candidacy, and is now passing the baton to Pastor Sease, our new Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership/Mission Development. Deacon Wilcox has been pleased to be a part of this important work of the Synod. Before the presentation, she introduced and thanked the members of the Candidacy Committee: Deacon Beth Barkhau, Pastor Thaddeus Book, Ms. Diane Casey, Pastor Mukesh Cheedie, Pastor Moses Suah Dennis, Pastor Shirley Guider, Ms. Charmaine Hamilton, Pastor Noah Hepler, Ms. Bobbie Hoffman, Pastor Nathan Krauss, Ms. Margie Pendarvis-Wright, Ms. Lisa Presley, Pastor Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath, and Pastor Thomas Russert. She also expressed her thanks to the former Chair of the Committee, Pastor Sarah Stobie, who has received a call to the Greater Milwaukee Synod.

As her last act in this role, Deacon Wilcox then welcomed Pastor Sease to present the candidates. Pastor Sease read a brief biography of each of the candidates, who include:

- + Kelsey Brown, a native of Long Island, New York, who will graduate United Lutheran Seminary this month, and who is awaiting a call

- + Robert Fisher, a TEEM graduate who has been called by Synod Council as Pastor-Developer of Kairos Community
- + Dedra Florence-Johnson, a native Philadelphian and a graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, currently awaiting a call
- + Rachel Scheible, a resident of Warminster, PA, and a graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, currently serving as stated supply pastor for Living Word, Roslyn, awaiting a call

**Report of the Committee on Elections**

Bishop Davenport called on the Reverend Rebecca Schanely, Chair of the Committee on Elections, to come forward and lead the Assembly in the balloting process. Pastor Schanely asked if her report could be delayed, as there were several biographies of persons nominated from the floor which are not yet available. Bishop Davenport concurred, and moved on to the report of the Treasurer.

**Report of the Treasurer**

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, was called forward to present the Audit report.

As she began her report, Ms. Neff called to mind Mr. Dick Reimet, our former treasurer, who died this past year. As Dick was the impetus behind, and a huge supporter of, Lutheran Night at the Phillies, an event that raises money for Synod Youth programs, Ms. Neff announced that Lutheran Night at the Phillies will be June 7<sup>th</sup>. Please be sure to support this event that was so close to Dick Reimet’s heart.

Treasurer Neff then presented the Audit Report:

**Audit Report**

**Statement of Financial Position, January 31, 2019**

Total Cash and Investments	\$3,634,332
Total Assets	\$4,824,075
Total Liabilities	\$ 155,497
Total Net Assets	\$4,668,678
Unrestricted	\$3,223,070
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 735,953
Permanently Restricted	\$ 709,555

**Statement of Activities February 1, 2018 – January 31, 2019**

**Revenue**

Mission Support	\$1,798,189
Other Contributions	\$ 611,842
Registration Fees	\$ 130,372
Investment Income	<u>\$ (45,725)</u>
Total Revenue	\$2,494,678

**Statement of Activities February 1, 2018 – January 31, 2019**

## Expenses

Operating Expense	\$1,235,654
ELCA Proportionate Share (50%)	\$ 899,094
Property Management	\$ 110,835 (former congregations)
Distributions to other Agencies	\$ 169,011
Mission Expense	\$ 303,375
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 27,240</u>
Total Expenses	\$2,745,209

## Mission Support

Receipts in 2016	\$1,851,130
Receipts in 2018	\$1,798,189

2018 Mission Support as % of congregational regular giving:

Total congregations	144
Giving 10% or more	14 (10%)
Giving 6 – 9.9%	45 (31%)
Giving 2 – 5.9%	53 (37%)
Giving 0.1 – 1.9%	19 (13%)
No Support	13 ( 9%)

Ms. Neff read the following from the Auditors, Tait, Weller and Baker:

**“In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Synod as of January 31, 2019, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America.”**

She then put forward the following resolution:

**S.A.19.05.01. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly accepts the report of the auditors of the synod's financial statements for the fiscal year ending 2018.**

**The Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution.**

## Review of 2018 – 2019 Budget

In preparation for the presentation of the 2020 Budget, Treasurer Neff provided the following analysis of the 2018 – 2019 Budget

### Income:

Income was down in three key areas:

- As shown in the chart above, Mission Support was down. The Bishop, staff, and the Synod Council, all thank you for your mission support. It is needed for what we do locally, regionally, and globally. If you can increase your support by a percentage of your receipts, it can go a long way to helping all the work we do together as the Synod.
- Investment Income was lower than we had anticipated.
- We anticipated selling a property, and that did not happen.

**Expenses:**

- ELCA Mission support was lower than budgeted, as we send 50% of what we receive on to the Churchwide Organization. As our receipts were lower, so was what we sent on to the ELCA.
- Operating expenses were watched carefully, and were less than budgeted. This was in part due to the fact that we did not have a staff person in the position of Director of Evangelical Mission, as Bishop Davenport had filled that role, as well as a few other staff changes.
- Property management costs were higher than anticipated, partly because we were not able to sell one of the properties for which we have responsibility.

As a reminder, when we sell a property of a former congregation, 15% of the sale goes to the “Unrestricted” portion of our budget to assist with ongoing mission and ministry. We then pay for the accumulated expenses of maintaining the properties we have under management. The remainder then goes to the Fund for Mission, which exists to help with current ministries which could otherwise not fund themselves.

In the Mission portion of our budget,

- We provided \$20,000 in grants for African Descent Lutheran Association for strategizing ministry.
- \$10,000 was available for the Racial Justice Team – \$3,000 from last year’s offering, \$7,000 from the budget. These funds were included under “Office of the Bishop”

Ms. Neff concluded her report by expressing her thanks to Mr. Martin Schwab, our Senior Accountant, who does great work for our Synod and provides great assistance to Ms. Neff personally.

As it was Ms. Neff’s birthday on this day, the Assembly sang Happy Birthday to the Treasurer.

**Report of the Finance Committee**

Mr. Albert Glenn, Chairperson, came forward to present the proposed budget.

**Presentation of the 2020 Budget**

Mr. Glenn clarified that the budget under consideration is for fiscal year Feb 1, 2020 – Jan 31, 2021. The budget as presented builds on concerns Ms. Neff has laid forth.

The process for the preparation of the budget involves several stages. Income and Expenses are first reviewed by the Office of the Bishop, which formulates the initial budget proposal. This information is then forwarded to the Finance Committee, which reviews it and offers comment and advice. Following its deliberation, the Finance Committee forwards the proposal to the Synod Council for its review and comment. The Synod Council then forwards the proposed budget to the Synod Assembly for review and adoption.

Mr. Glenn stated that there are no significant changes from the current budget. The plan for 2020 builds on that which we are using for 2019. There have been some modifications based on projection of income sources.

## 2020 Budgeted Income

	2018 Audit	2020 Budget
Mission Support	\$1,798,189	\$1,900,000
Other Contributions	\$ 611,842	\$ 220,500
Registration Fees	\$ 130,372	\$ 209,285
Investment Income	\$ (45,723)	\$ 173,200
Sale of property of former congregation	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>\$ 825,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$2,494,678	\$3,327,985

## 2020 Budgeted Expenses

	2018 Audit	2020 Budget
Operating Expense	\$1,235,654	\$1,345,491
ELCA Proportionate Share (50%)	\$ 899,094	\$ 950,000
Property Management (of former congregations)	\$ 110,835	\$ 68,802
Distributions to other Agencies	\$ 169,011	\$ 162,900
Mission Expense	\$ 303,375	\$ 334,831
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 27,240</u>	<u>\$ 21,000</u>
Total Expenses	\$2,745,209	\$2,883,024

Mr. Glenn noted that the most significant change in this budget from the previous budget is in the expenses. As United Lutheran Seminary has offered full tuition to ELCA candidates, we have lowered by \$50,000 what we will send to the Seminary. We did this so that the money can be used for our recent graduates who have accumulated significant student loans prior to the offering of free tuition to attend the Seminary. We wish to be able to assist them in order to allow them to serve, recognizing congregational salaries are not always enough to allow these persons to cover their loans.

The Reverend Dr. John Hoffmeyer raised a question and comment. His question was “Where might I find this particular item in the budget? Could we have a grouping in the report similar to the way we have the presentation made?”

Mr. Glenn answered that the broader detail of the budget is found on pages B1 and B2.

Dr. Hoffmeyer’s comment was, “I speak in support of the budget, and support of the student debt initiative, but the budget line we receive at the United Lutheran Seminary does not cover our expenses, so please support the seminary in your congregational and personal giving.”

Ms. Kathryn Addison, Trinity, Fort Washington raised the concern that members of the Assembly cannot see this difference in the consolidated budget as presented.

Mr. Glenn responded that yes, that is true, but that is why he wanted to point this out specifically.

With no other people approaching the microphones for comment, Mr. Glenn put the following resolution before the Assembly:

**S.A.19.05.02. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly adopts the 2020 budget as presented.  
The Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the resolution.**

Bishop Davenport thanked Ms. Neff and Mr. Glenn for their presentation. She then publicly thanked Senior Accountant Martin Schwab, and called him forward to be recognized by the Assembly.

**Report of the Committee on Elections**

Bishop Davenport called on Pastor Schanely to lead the Assembly in the balloting process. The ballots were distributed, but it was discovered that there were not enough for all the voting members. While there would need to be a further delay in the casting of the ballots, the following explanations were shared concerning two items.

First, in the case of Ticket 7, Synod Council, at large Representative, Lay Female Young Adult, this Ticket will be limited to two of the four young adults who were nominated from the floor. The reason for this is our Synod Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions states that at least one of the four positions for Young Adult and Youth shall be filled by a person of color, or whose primary language is other than English. As the positions for Young Adult, Male and Youth, Male have been filled with Caucasians, and as the nominees for Youth, Female are all Caucasians, the position for Young Adult Female will have on the ballot Ms. Suwah Davies and Ms. Ralen Robinson. Ms. Katie Schnaath and Ms. Andrea Alderfer will be added to Ticket 9, at Large Representative, Lay Female.

Second, it was shared with the Assembly that Ms. Janet Neff has been re-elected to another four year term as our Treasurer by the Synod Council at its February 2019 meeting. According to the SEPA Synod's Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions, the Synod Council, rather than the Assembly, elects the treasurer.

**Keynote Address**

Bishop Davenport welcomed to the dais the Keynote speaker, the Reverend Nicole Diroff. Pastor Diroff is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and has served as the Associate Director of Interfaith Philadelphia since 2007. Among her many efforts, Pastor Diroff has overseen the organization's "Dare to Understand" initiatives, coordinates the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia, and directs the Interfaith Philadelphia's "Year of Civil Conversations" and "Passport to Understanding" projects. The Assembly welcomed Pastor Diroff.

I have learned over the years that context matters, so let me describe myself.

1. I am a Christian. I was baptized as an infant. I was raised in youth group and Bible study. I love conversation over scripture and food.
2. I am one year from forty. My husband I am married for 16 years. We have a home in Philadelphia, and we have two dogs and a 5 year old son. I was a senior in high school on the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, when we heard that a plane hit the towers.
3. I am an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and went to Seminary because I wanted to learn more.

4. I have an ecumenical, interfaith vocation. I started as a seminary intern, and now am associate director. I have been privileged to share stories of youth, and senior leaders, exploring faith together.

5. I am a few weeks away from a huge shift in life, as we move to Portland Maine for a new job opportunity for my husband.

I am especially grateful for this opportunity to share what I have learned about what it is to be Beloved Community, and how important it is for this to grow.

By illustration, Pr. Diroff shared that three weeks ago, the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia had a meeting hosted by Arch-Bishop Chaput. There are more than thirty traditions represented. At the end of the meeting she had to get them to take a picture of all these disparate people. She managed to make it happen. “Afterward, the new director of community relations was impressed with how I was able to take charge and make this group listen to me. I said, ‘I could do this because I love them.’” We take risks to get to know others because these connections make healthier neighborhoods, and more peaceful communities.

Pastor Diroff shared the segments of “A Passport to Understanding”

She shared that in this instrument there are five things people are encouraged to do:

1. Be Curious
2. Venture Out
3. Welcome In
4. Stand Tall
5. Stand With

### **Be Curious**

Pastor Diroff shared that several years ago she was invited by the Jewish Community Relations Council to go on a trip to the Middle East. The theme of their trip was “It’s Complicated.”

When I was asked by Jews and Palestinians why I was there, I said I needed to go to the Middle East so I could experience life there, so I could ask better questions here at home.

Sometime later, after flying to Chicago for a meeting, a three year old girl kept asking questions. Where are you from? Why are you here? Then fell silent. She cried out, “Mom! I need more questions!” Amen, sister.

There is a Buddhist concept of “mu.” It means to un-ask the question, so a better question can be asked.

### **Venture Out**

Perhaps the most obvious, but to build Beloved Community we need to venture out.

We need to put on new lenses to see our neighborhood differently. In “The Lacuna” by Barbara Kingsolver, a boy was given a pair of goggles, and went into the sea and experienced, in what seemed to be nothing but blue water, the sight of many fishes, and the feeling of creatures that kept bumping into his legs. His understanding of what “was” became broadened.

Interfaith Philadelphia runs an interfaith program for middle school youth. They enter the mosque, the church, the synagogue, and the hope is that they never be able to see their neighborhood, or their faith, in the same way again. We as Christians, as the dominant religion

in this country, have a particular need to venture out and experience what it is to be the guest, and learn to be thankful for being welcomed in.

### **Welcome In**

Our American knowledge of faith traditions is incredibly low. We do not know more than what is shown or portrayed in the news. In her progressive United Church of Christ they have an open invitation to welcome all to come to the meal. As important as it is to welcome all, as Pr. Diroff worshipped one week with friends of other traditions (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist), she realized we need to welcome people to opt out as well. We need to allow people to just be present, and to ask questions. Sometimes we need to know about other traditions to become more aware of our own.

### **Stand Tall**

Interfaith openness is not about wiping away what we hold to as true and important.

We cannot just say “all religions are one.” Ramadan matters, Passover matters, Baptism matters. We are not all one. We need to be welcoming even as we stand firm on our faith.

2 temptations of which to be aware –

It can be tempting to talk about what kind of Christian I am NOT. I do this because of the damage that has been done in the name of Jesus. But my friends do not know, or care, about the ideas of which I am not. They want to know what about my faith is important to me, and why I am so engaged by it.

It can be tempting to linger in the spaces where we have commonality. “Hey, we both have water rituals. We both have meals. We both have prayer.” We need to go to the place where we are not in sync. That is where we are stretched and can grow. Why are you pro-choice? How can you possibly be pro-life? How does our theological understanding lead us to deeper knowledge? It is in these conversations that we become, and are, the beloved.

### **Stand With**

On Saturday October 27th a shooter entered Tree of life Synagogue in Pittsburg, and shot and killed eleven people before police arrived. People called to ask how we could pray together, stand together, advocate for each other. In Philadelphia we have had a Jewish cemetery desecrated. We had a pig’s head thrown at a mosque. But we also welcomed the Pope, and saw the consecration of a Mormon Temple. How do we stand with, and say yes, to being with others in their celebrations and their sorrows? It takes relationships to stand with, and that is what builds the Beloved Community.

This work takes time. A shared commitment to stay at the table is critical. Last summer the Interfaith Religious Leaders Council gathered in a basement of an Indonesian church. When it comes to creating a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society, we still have a long way to go. At the end of the gathering, a former mayor of Philadelphia said tables like this are so important, and they do not exist in many places in this city or in this nation.

The divine is most powerfully revealed when our differences are the most harsh and dissonant, but we keep in conversation.

At the end of the Passport to Understanding is this blessing, which she shared with the Assembly:

May we have the courage to venture toward interfaith understanding.

May we be graced with curiosity and humility as we welcome the stranger into our lives.  
May we have gratitude for the opening of our minds and the expansion of our hearts.  
May we have the strength to stand in solidarity with our neighbors and find comfort in knowing we are not alone.

### **Report of the Committee on Elections**

Pastor Rebecca Schanely came to present the ballots for the vote. As there were still not enough ballots for the entire Assembly, there was a call from Ms. Cynta Outterbridge that voting members check and ensure they have signed and submitted their registration card.

Additional ballots were produced. As this was happening, Bishop Davenport issued a call for assistance for the congregation of St. Mark, Conshohocken, in light of a fire which recently impacted them and caused them a great deal of concern.

Ballots finally being available in sufficient number, the Assembly voted for the following tickets:

Ticket # 2      Synod Council, Clergy  
Ticket # 5      Synod Council, Upper Montgomery Conference Representative, Lay Female  
Ticket # 7      Synod Council at Large Representative, Lay Female Young Adult  
Ticket # 8      Synod Council at Large Representative, Lay Male  
Ticket #11      Synod Council at Large Representative, Lay Female Youth

At the conclusion of the balloting, Pastor Schanely thanked the Assembly for their patience.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel**

Bishop Davenport called on Dr. Addie Butler to present the report. Resolution 1 was placed before the Assembly for consideration:

**S.A.19.05.03. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA establish the same requirement for anti-racism training for rostered leaders, that we currently expect of boundaries training in our synod,**

**and be it further RESOLVED, that the SEPA Synod in assembly state that this training be conducted by the Synod's Anti-Racism Team utilizing the "Today's Dream, Tomorrow's Reality" curriculum of the Women of the ELCA as its foundation, and that the full training be taken biennially,**

**and be it further RESOLVED, that the Anti-Racism Team will continue its own ongoing education in Anti-Racism and be aware of updates in curricula, in order to keep the training current.**

The Reverend Tyler Rasmussen, Trinity, Pleasant Valley, asked for a point of clarification. What is our current policy for boundary training in the synod? How often is it expected?

The Reverend Dr. Dee Littleton, advisor to the Bishop on Fitness for Ministry, shared we require it any time a new person enters our synod, any time a pastor changes call, and encourage those who have not taken it for a period of 15 year to do so again.

The Reverend Susie Folks, St. John, Ridge Valley, and member of the Anti-Racism Team which submitted the original resolution, stated the team included the boundary training because it is required. As for timing in this resolution, they moved forward with what they anticipate as being a leader role in addressing this concern.

Pastor Tim Knauss, Messiah, Downingtown said in his previous Synod, they were expected to do boundary training every three years. Is that an ELCA policy?

The Reverend Wyvetta Bullock, Churchwide Staff, said she does not know the answer to that question at this time.

Mr. Adam Clark, Zion, Olney asked if we can we establish a more frequent practice.

Mr. James Nilson, Trinity, Pleasant Valley, asked if we can add boundary training to this resolution.

Sister Jane Roper, "I call the question."  
The motion to end debate passed.

The Assembly then moved to the vote on the Resolution

### **The Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the Resolution.**

Dr. Bullock shared further information regarding the ELCA's timing on this training. She said that it is not a requirement, but there is the suggestion of every three years for boundary training.

### **Forward Together in Faith Campaign Update**

Ms. Ellen Daneke, chair of the campaign, brought the report.

Last year we said we would post the first applications for grants. This year we did so, and we received applications for \$187,000. Good news: we are ready to move! Bad news: we only had \$26,000 to give away. 11 congregations and one conference received these first grants. A video describing some of the projects was shown.

1. The Welcome Church went to Boston to meet with peers to compare and learn from each other's ministries
2. Atonement, Fishtown, serves a community in transition. They live in dichotomy: there are high rates of overdose, and houses are highly priced for the area due to gentrification. They want to learn about how their neighborhood is changing, and who their neighbor is now. How do we care for neighbors of both ends of the spectrum?
3. Advent and Calvary West Chester created a Pickle Ball fellowship. People from both congregations, but also people from the surrounding community have come together, making connections and learning to play together. \$1 to play, money goes to help hunger ministry. We help the body as we exercise; we help the community as we come together, we help society as we provide some resources for the hungry. Pray and Play together.

4. St. John's, Blue Bell hosted a Martin Luther King Day of service for the community: materials purchased to have a number of craft projects available for the people of the community, especially kids, help the community – quilts, health kits, cards for vets, activity bags for children, and more were assembled. Generated publicity and good will
5. Redemption, NE Philly – communication strategy with a three prong approach
  - Live stream camera
  - Better signage. They are on a corner, but are not noticed. They chose to add flags and chalkboard signage to increase visibility.
  - Face book advertising and google maps efforts.

The Forward Together in Faith Team could not award these grants without the support of those who have supported the Campaign.

Many thanks to all on the team who had a part in this campaign. They went out and helped with MAPs assessment, assisting congregations as navigators, ambassadors, and visitors. The next round of Forward Together in Faith Grants will be posted on MinistryLink on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Be sure to look for it!

### **Fiftieth Anniversary Celebrants**

There are four individuals who have reached the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their ordination. None of them were able to be present, but the Assembly offered their appreciation with applause for them.

The Reverend Burlington B. Latshaw, III

The Reverend Charles H. Eiss, Jr.

The Reverend Charles S. Miller

The Reverend Daun E. McKee

Bishop Davenport invited Deacon Kathie Afflerbach to pray for the Assembly before the forums and dinner.

*The Assembly stood in Recess*

### **Friday evening, May 3, 2019**

The Assembly came back to order at 7:00 p.m. with prayer led by the Reverend Joey Klinger.

### **Report of the Committee on Elections**

Bishop Davenport called on Pastor Rebecca Schanely to give the report of the first round of balloting.

Pastor Schanely gave the following report:

As a point of clarification, the number of registered voting members is 405.

**Ticket #2      Synod Council, Clergy,  
term ending 2022, 3 to be elected**

<b>Total number of ballots cast:</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>Total number of invalid ballots:</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total number of valid ballots:</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>Needed to elect:</b>	<b>177</b>

<b>The Rev. Gwendolyn S. King</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>The Rev. Jennifer Phelps Ollikainen</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>The Rev. Dwight Mason</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>The Rev. Joseph Klinger</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>The Rev. Kris Chandler</b>	<b>130</b>

Bishop Davenport declared the Rev. Gwendolyn King, the Rev. Jennifer Phelps Ollikainen, and the Rev. Dwight Mason **ELECTED**.

**Ticket #5      Synod Council, Upper Montgomery Conference Representative,  
term ending 2022, 1 to be elected**

<b>Total number of ballots cast:</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>Total number of invalid ballots:</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total number of valid ballots:</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>Needed to elect:</b>	<b>172</b>

<b>Ms. Cheryl Detweiler</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>Sister Jane Roper</b>	<b>146</b>

Bishop Davenport declared Ms. Cheryl Detweiler **ELECTED**.  
Sister Jane Roper will move forward to Ticket #9.

**Ticket #7      Synod Council, at Large Representative, Lay Female Young Adult  
term ending 2022, 1 to be elected**

<b>Total number of ballots cast:</b>	<b>348</b>
<b>Total number of invalid ballots:</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total number of valid ballots:</b>	<b>348</b>
<b>Needed to elect:</b>	<b>175</b>

<b>Ms. Ralen Robinson</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Ms. Suwah Davies</b>	<b>173</b>

Bishop Davenport declared Ms. Ralen Robinson **ELECTED**.  
Ms. Suwah Davies will move forward to Ticket #9.

**Ticket #8      Synod Council, at Large Representative, Lay Male,  
term ending 2022, 1 to be elected**

<b>Total number of ballots cast:</b>	<b>359</b>
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<b>Total number of invalid ballots:</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total number of valid ballots:</b>	<b>358</b>
<b>Needed to elect:</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Mr. William Graham</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Mr. David Offult</b>	<b>137</b>

Bishop Davenport declared Mr. William Graham **ELECTED**.

**Ticket #11 Synod Council, at Large Representative, Lay Female Youth  
term ending 2021, 1 to be elected**

<b>Total number of ballots cast:</b>	<b>347</b>
<b>Total number of invalid ballots:</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total number of valid ballots:</b>	<b>347</b>
<b>Needed to elect:</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Ms. Hannah Malesich</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Ms. Sydney Geyer</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Ms. Taylor Garges</b>	<b>101</b>

There is no election. Bishop Davenport declared that Ms. Hannah Malesich and Ms. Sydney Geyer will move forward to the next round of balloting.

Pastor Schanely then had the pages pass out the ballots for Ticket 7 and Ticket 9. When the voting members had completed their ballots, Pastor Schanely concluded her report.

Bishop Davenport led the Assembly in prayer for Pastor Dan Bodine, whose wife died on this day.

The Assembly closed the day by joining in Evening Prayer

*The Assembly stood in recess for the evening*

**Saturday morning, May 4, 2019**

**9:00 Worship**

The Assembly reconvened with a Festive Service of Holy Communion at 9:00 a.m. Worship included a combined choir of people from congregations from around the Synod.

The Reverend Dr. M. Wyvetta Bullock, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Executive for Administration, preached on the texts of Micah 6 1 John 4, and Matthew 22.

“Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, are we willing to change? Are we willing to be transformed?”

**Second Report of Reference and Counsel**

Bishop Davenport called on Dr. Addie Butler to present the report.

Dr. Butler noted that one resolution had been received after the deadline had passed. The topic of the resolution is refugees and immigrants. If the Assembly would like to consider this resolution, it will require a two-thirds vote to bring it to the floor.

Bishop Davenport called for the vote. By more than the two-thirds required, the Assembly allowed the resolution to come to the floor.

The first item to come before the Assembly at this time is the Resolution on the Earth Charter. With a second from the floor, the Assembly was permitted to discuss the resolution.

**Resolution for Reference and Counsel, SEPA Synod Assembly 2019  
Memorial to the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly  
Endorsement of “*The Earth Charter*”**

*Explanatory Prologue*

*The Earth Charter* is an international declaration of values and principles that support building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It “seeks to inspire in all peoples a sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family, the greater community of life, and future generations.”<sup>1</sup> The Charter was created by a global consultation process, and it has been endorsed by organizations representing millions of people. It attempts to provide a new, comprehensive, and global framework for thinking about and addressing issues related to environmental protection, human rights, equitable human development, and peace, regarding these issues as interdependent and indivisible.

**Whereas** it is clear that this action is consistent with the commitments of the ELCA to act as stewards of God’s creation made in the social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, Justice*; and

**Whereas** *Caring for Creation* states that we are called to advance international acceptance of the principles of participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability in resolving environmental issues and these principles are evident in *The Earth Charter*; and

**Whereas** our social statement *Church in Society* calls us to support institutions and efforts that serve the common good and further calls us to exercise our baptismal vocation to work for freedom, justice, peace, environmental well-being, and good order in public life, and *The Earth Charter* specifically promotes these same principles; and

**Whereas** our social statement *Caring for Health* indicates our enduring commitment to work for and support health care for all people, and it is clear that human health is very much dependent on the health of all creation and these goals are in accord with *The Earth Charter* call to ensure universal access to health care; and

**Whereas** our social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* states that human impoverishment is incompatible with the reign of God and calls for family planning and enhanced opportunities for women, reduction of overwhelming international debt burdens, and respect for the integrity and limits of the earth. These concerns are in accord with *The Earth Charter*; and

**Whereas** our social statement *For Peace in God's World* makes clear that we are all responsible to God for earthly peace, and *The Earth Charter* recognizes that peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part; and

**Whereas** our social statements further state that humans are made for life in community—with God, with others, and with the rest of creation—so these statements are in concord, so that by becoming a signatory to *The Earth Charter*, the ELCA will become an even greater “presence for peace” by working with other signatories to pursue peace;

**S.A.19.05.04. Therefore be it resolved that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorializes the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:**

- 1. To endorse and become a signatory of *The Earth Charter*; and**
- 2. To promote the use of our existing social statements and other available materials about *The Earth Charter* and its relationship to the ELCA's social statements; and**
- 3. To encourage members of ELCA congregations to pray for the whole of creation, to respect the rights of all species, to acknowledge the integrity of all elements, and to hold what God has entrusted to this generation in trust for future generations; and**
- 4. To encourage ELCA synods, seminaries, colleges, congregations, members and other entities to join with other endorsers of *The Earth Charter* to promote its precepts and engage in collective action to accomplish its aims.**

1 Earth Charter Initiative: “What is the Earth Charter?”

(<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/What-is-the-Earth-Charter%3F.html>)

The Reverend William Shafer, one of the proponents of the resolution, came to the microphone to address the issue. Pastor Shafer believes this is a critical issue for our world, and that it fits well with the ELCA's commitment to the care of creation.

Mr. Jim Nilson, Trinity, Pleasant Valley: I googled Earth Charter. It is concerned with sustainable living. I have solar panels, I raise grass fed beef. I am a local politician who works for the environment. I am very much in favor of anything that works toward this lessening our carbon footprint.

Mr. Joseph Kovach, St. John Sumneytown: spoke in opposition. Some actions of the Earth Charter sound great. Other actions seem like socialism. In their research on contamination of the fish population, 90% of the fish affected were in one sample. Other concerns in the Charter call for limiting the size of families. Will we as Lutherans be endorsing a one child policy? While I am for solar and geo-thermal energy, there is much in the broader document that I cannot endorse.

Ms. Courtney Smith, Good Shepherd, King of Prussia: Will this do anything? We pass these resolutions, and I wonder if they actually do anything.

Bishop Davenport: it is my hope and prayer that it will.

Dr. Addie Butler stated that it is the recommendation of Reference and Counsel that we adopt the resolution.

Bishop Davenport called for the vote.

**The Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the resolution.**

Dr. Addie Butler then placed before the Assembly the Resolution on Immigrants and Refugees.

**Southeastern PA Synod Resolution and Memorial 2019:  
Advocating for Immigrants and Refugees in Our Communities**

**Whereas**, our faith calls upon us to welcome the sojourner, care for the most vulnerable among us, and reflect God's love for the stranger and "alien" in our land, and this is made clear in scripture (Matthew 25:35, Exodus 22:21); and

**Whereas**, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has researched Temporary Protected Status (TPS), granted by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to eligible foreign born individuals, who are unable to return home safely due to conditions or circumstances preventing their country from adequately handling their return, and recommends this status as a humane and essential support for immigrants to our country; and

**Whereas**, TPS means that during a designated period, TPS holders are not removable from the U.S. and not detainable by DHS on the basis of immigration status, are eligible for an employment authorization document (EAD), and are eligible for travel authorization; and

**Whereas**, TPS provides these men and women the opportunity to rebuild their lives and raise a family in safety; and

**Whereas**, the Lutheran Church throughout its history has been a church with deep roots in migration, immigration, and care for the stranger and vulnerable among us.

**S.A.19.05.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages its congregations to advocate for the protection of TPS holders and for TPS status for all those who are eligible; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod recommits to being an advocate and justice seeker for immigrants, and communicates our concerns to our Members of Congress and other federal, state and local elected officials, and encourages all congregations and their members to express their love for immigrants to their elected officials; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages its congregations to participate in LIRS Migrant and Refugee Sunday activities and pray for immigrants, for just and humane governmental policies that reflect our nation's core values of welcome and inclusivity, and for a world where no one need flee their home for fear of violence, oppression or economic hardship; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages its congregations to discern ways to lift up World Refugee Day in worship and service; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to recommit to being an advocate and justice seeker for**

**immigrants, and communicate the church's resolute commitment to the protection of TPS holders to the President and Members of Congress.**

The Committee on Reference and Counsel recommends the adoption of this resolution.

Dr. Butler clarified that in this case this is both a resolution, which speaks to us as a Synod, and a memorial, which speaks to the Churchwide Assembly.

Pastor Susie Folks asked if there is a set day for World Refugee Day, and if so, should this be stated in the resolution. If so, she would move to amend the resolution to insert this date.

The Reverend Bradley Burke, Synod Staff, clarified that the date was included in the original draft of this resolution, but it was removed to match the format for submission to the Churchwide Assembly.

Pastor Folks withdrew her amendment.

Mr. Thomas Salber, Prince of Peace, Philadelphia, spoke in favor of the resolution. Prince of Peace has been directly involved in resettling people in this country. We have seen Jesus in this care for our neighbor, and we celebrate this diversity.

Mr. Hank Merritt, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Yardley, spoke in opposition to the resolution. He expressed concern that the resolution does not include the word "legal" in relation to immigration.

Pastor Moses Dennis, Faith Immanuel, Lansdowne, spoke in favor of the resolution. We need to support this. Faith Immanuel's membership is ninety percent immigrants, and what we do as a Church in this regard is incredibly important.

Ms. Cynthia Moultrie, Christ, Upper Darby, asked about whether the date for Refugee Day was being added.

Bishop Davenport noted that Pastor Burke had already addressed that issue.

With no other voting members approaching a microphone, Bishop Davenport called for the vote.

**The Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the resolution.**

Dr. Butler stated that this concludes the report of Reference and Counsel at this time.

**Report of the Vice President**

Bishop Davenport welcomed Vice President Tracey A. Beasley to the podium to make her report to the Assembly.

“I am Grateful to be alive! Time flies when you are busy. Just last year we were here to elect our Bishop. Give some love to Bishop Davenport.” The Assembly responded with prolonged applause.

Vice President Beasley thanked the Synod Council for their work over the past year. She also thanked the Synod Staff, and asked them to come forward and be recognized.

She thanked the congregations and institutions that hosted the Synod Council this past year:

- + Trinity, South Philadelphia, host Pr. David Oppold
- + Paul’s Run Retirement Community, host Pr. Julie Dewerth
- + United Lutheran Seminary, host Dean Jayakiran Sebastian
- + St. James Limerick, host Pr. Chris McKinstry
- + Faith-Immanuel, East Lansdowne, host the Rev. Dr. Moses Suah Dennis

If you are willing to host the Council please reach out to Vice President Beasley, or Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations for the Synod.

Ms. Beasley asked the Assembly, “Do you love what we do as a Synod?” The Assembly responded strongly, “Yes We Do!”

You say you love them, but Synod support was down \$180,000. If you love these things, you need to give to support them.

I realize things are tight. And then we want to cut, especially benevolence. But we are SEPA Synod. We do amazing things. We can do more together than we can do alone. An average giving rate of 7% of regular giving would make this work happen. If you are above this, do not cut back! If you are below, can you step up?

To encourage the work we do, we want to come out and say thank you. We are not just going to come to ask for more money. We want to come to say thank you. Starting tomorrow, on the first and third Sundays, I will be going out to thank congregations.

Pr. Larry Smoose, the chair of our Stewardship team, has given out certificates. I want to give out certificates as well. And some kisses. HERSHEY Kisses! Some representative congregations, one from each Conference, will be recognized here today. Please come forward when you are called to be thanked.

- + Central Conference – University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation
- + Delaware Conference – Reformation Media
- + Chester Conference – Calvary West Chester
- + Lower Bucks Conference – St. Paul’s Doylestown
- + Lower Montgomery – Trinity Lansdale
- + North East/West Conference – St. Paul’s Philadelphia
- + Upper Bucks – Trinity Perkasio
- + Upper Montgomery Conference – Grace Royersford

At least three of these congregations are in transition and did not cut back on their partnership support.

Vice President Beasley then invited Pastor Karen Sease to say a word of thanks for the support given by the whole Synod.

Ms. Beasley concluded her report by saying, “I am honored to be your Vice President. And we can do this. Look to your neighbor and say it, “We can do this!”

### **Report of the Vitality Team**

Pastor Bryan Penman, chair of the Vitality Team, was invited forward to make his presentation. Before he began, he took a moment as the Pastor of St. Mark, Conshohocken, to thank the Assembly for the gift they collected to help St. Mark following the fire they have experienced.

Pastor Penman asked the members of the Vitality Team who are present to stand and be recognized.

One year ago we began a process for evaluating our Synod and make a Synodical Profile as we prepared to call a new Bishop. In building this profile, we discovered that 75% of our congregations reported a decline in worship attendance. We sensed this, but we had to face it head on. As we dealt with this, we also asked what our hope is for the next five years. This included growing congregations, fewer at risk congregations, congregations doing ministry together.

Do you hear Beloved Community in this? Yes. But I hear Vitality in this. We desire to be vital communities of faith. We do not know how to get there, but we want to learn. We need to find how to make this happen.

VUCA is an acronym first used by the Army war college to describe the battlefield since the end of the cold war. The business world has now adopted it to describe the economic world in which we live. VUCA: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous.

The ELCA has launched a visioning process to discover how we can be the church in this new day, with clarity of purpose and vision.

There are two emphases:

1. Leadership development
2. Vital congregations

It is not just SEPA that has this desire. It runs across the country and across our church.

What is congregational Vitality? Strong, vital congregations:

Embody God’s Presence

Invite and Welcome All

Worship in Spirit and Truth

Share Faith and Tell Stories

Promote Healing

Show Mercy and Do Justice by serving all

Demonstrate Radical Generosity

Are Rooted in their Community

Create Change

## Never Lose Hope

The Reverend Tim Johansen, pastor of Temple, Havertown and member of the Vitality Team, offered some examples of vitality from around our Synod.

### Invite and Welcome all:

Good Shepherd, King of Prussia, has installed large Welcome Signs to welcome all who pass by. Immanuel Norwood is our latest Reconciling in Christ congregation.

### Worship in Spirit and Truth

Reformation Philadelphia hosts authentic worship with their neighbors; Pastor Lydia Posselt and the people of Family of God have “Lit Liturgy”

### Share Faith and Tell Stories

The Welcome Church took a trip to Boston to share their experiences and learn from a similar ministry in that city.

### Promote Healing

Bishop’s vulnerability in issues of racial inequity; Pastor Bob Fisher and the Kairos Community are working with people in recovery

### Radical Generosity in all things

St. Paul’s Ardmore doubled size of their community garden. If your congregation has been blessed, looked for ways in which you are able to share with other congregations.

### Rooted in their Community

St. Mark Conshohocken set up a table to offer water to those in the St. Patrick’s Day parade who need hydration.

### Create Change

In all change there is loss. It is not easy, but a seed must fall to the ground and die, and God is calling us to something bigger.

## Never Lose Hope

Feast of Justice food ministry in Mayfair.

### Embody God’s presence

We set standards for diversity on purpose, particularly on Synod Council, so that we reflect the neighborhood we inhabit. I love our logo: Beloved Community. I also see in it: Be Loved, Community. God has empowered you to be vital communities of faith.

Pastor Penman continued. How do we start growing vital communities? It starts with relationships. God entered relationship with us. As we enter relationship with others, particularly those not like us, we embrace the Great Commission, “Go, therefore, and make disciples.”

Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, we will host a training day. The location is not yet confirmed, but it will be a day to discuss together how we are going to approach our process and try to determine ways to change our ways of being beloved, vital communities of faith. I am glad you are here. You are part of the Beloved community. We are in this together, and we've got this!

Bishop Davenort presented a thank you gift to Pastor Brenda Smith, who is Director of Faith Practices for the ELCA, and who was here to lead a forum.

### **Report of the Churchwide Representative.**

Bishop introduced the Reverend Dr. M. Wyvetta Bullock, and invited her to bring the report of the CW organization.

Dr. Bullock began with Scripture. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, 5 for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— 6 just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thank you for your work being Beloved Community, and for sharing Bishop Davenport, Dr. Erik Heen, Pastor Steve Keiser, Pastor Ray Miller, Ms. Hannah Knauss with the broader Church.

### **Mission Support**

Thank you for your mission support. The offerings you place in your congregation, as it is shared with the Synod, is then shared with the broader church, and allows us to be in ministry worldwide, and some even comes back to you.

SEPA Gifts to the ELCA: 50% of partnership support – \$899,094  
SEPA Gifts to the the "Always Being Made New" campaign – \$589,834?

We have received record breaking gifts of \$23.5 million to ELCA World Hunger Appeal; SEPA Synod gave \$158,000

Lutheran Disaster Response has received \$11.5 million, \$100,000 from SEPA Synod.

Mission Investment Fund has provided 27 MIF loans of \$18 million in this Synod, plus investments of \$8.8 Million by people and congregations of this Synod.

You have received support for Congregational ministry on Churchwide level, some of which has helped Faith Immanuel, East Lansdowne, the Kairos community, and the Well.

There are two foci of our Church's vision – Leadership and Congregational Vitality

ELCA Fund for Leaders Endowment has received \$52.5 million. At least 11 seminary students in this synod have been recipients of scholarships from this fund.

SEPA Synod has supported 6 missionary sites across the world.

### **Churchwide Assembly**

This August the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will gather for its Triennial Assembly. Among the items that will come before the Assembly are  
 The election of a Presiding Bishop  
 The election of a Secretary for the Church  
 Consideration of “Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action”  
 We are poised, as a Church, to offer an apology to the African American community for this Church’s complicity in slavery and the systemic racism that continues to exist today.

We want to encourage all our members to be active in their faith. We want to make “God’s Work, Our Hands” day a year round activity and identity.

At Bishop Davenport’s request, Dr. Bullock did not share the video from the Churchwide office, but for those who wish to see it, it will be loaded on the Assembly app.

**Report of the Committee on Elections**

Bishop Davenport invited Pastor Schanely to give the results of the latest ballot.

**Ticket #9 Synod Council, at Large Representative, Lay Female  
 term ending 2022, 1 to be elected**

<b>Total number of ballots cast:</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>Total number of invalid ballots:</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total number of valid ballots:</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>Needed to elect:</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Ms. Suwah Davies</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Sister Jane Roper</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Ms. Lisa Hand</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Ms. Katie Schnaath</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Ms. Beth Feiss</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Ms. Andria Alderfer</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Ms. Susan Eaddy</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Ms. Karen Daley</b>	<b>6</b>

There is no election. Bishop Davenport declared that Ms. Suwah Davies and Sister Jane Roper will go forward to the next ballot.

**Ticket #11 Synod Council, at Large Representative, Lay Female Youth  
 term ending 2021, 1 to be elected**

<b>Total number of ballots cast:</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>Total number of invalid ballots:</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total number of valid ballots:</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>Needed to elect:</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Ms. Hannah Malesich</b>	<b>131</b>

Bishop Davenport declared Ms. Hannah Malesich **ELECTED**.

Ballots for Ticket #9 were distributed, and when the ballots were collected, Pastor Schanely concluded this portion of her report.

### **Anti-Racism Team**

The Reverend Dr. Susie Folks was invited to bring a word from the Team. She began by introducing the members of the Team, asking them to stand if present. Members of the Anti-Racism Team include: Mr. Chase Ferguson, Pr. Chris Weidner, Ms. Fern Hagedorn, Ms. Janet Bischoff, Deacon Kathie Afflerbach, Pr. Gwendolyn King, Pr. Jay Mitchell, Ms. Karen Paulus, and Pr. Jane Marston.

I hope you have been able to stop by our table in the Mission Center, and signed up to be part of our team. We offer a two hour overview for your congregations, and an eight hour training program for people of your congregations. We want to offer this training three times a year. We thank you for your support, and for passing yesterday's resolution. We look forward to working with you as we go forward.

Bishop Davenport invited the Reverend Dr. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam to offer prayer before our mid-day meal.

*The Assembly stood in recess for lunch*

The Assembly came back to order with prayer by the Reverend Christopher L Weidner

### **Report of United Lutheran Seminary**

Bishop Davenport welcomed the Reverend Dr. Richard Green, Interim President, ULS to bring an update on the Seminary.

Dr. Green brought greetings from the faculty, staff, students, and alums of the Seminary. We are doing great things at United Lutheran Seminary. In our second year as ULS we are approaching 200 years of training pastors for the church. Established in 1828 at Gettysburg, in 1864 we had a split and formed the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and now we have come back together as UNITED Lutheran Seminary.

On May 17<sup>th</sup> of this year we will graduate 67 degree and certificate seeking students.

Full tuition scholarships are now available for all ELCA seminary students, be they full-time or part-time students. A gift of \$130 million has made it possible for us to allow our students to graduate with much less debt than in previous generations.

Uniting, Learning, Serving embodies what we are about. We have 28 denominations represented on our campus, allowing diverse conversation and learning opportunities

At ULS we have 378 students, 292 seeking degrees. 207 are women, only 170 are men. 22% are African American. 23% under the age of 30. We are working with other schools to lower the age of the students, and are partnering with Susquehanna University, Thiel College, and even Lincoln University to create a possible 3 + 2 program for a Bachelors/M.Div. program.

We need your ongoing support. Students won't need to pay tuition, but they still need support money for other expenses of the school.

We look forward to continuing to partner with you as together we serve our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Bishop Davenport thanked Dr. Green for his report, and for his service to the Seminary.

The Bishop then also shared, especially for the sake of the Rostered Ministers who planned to go to the Rostered Ministers' Gathering in Arizona, that Rachel Held Evans has died. Bishop then prayed for all who mourn her passing.

### **Final Report of the Committee on Elections**

Bishop Davenport welcomed Pastor Schanely to present the results of the final ballot of the Assembly.

#### **Ticket #9      Synod Council, at Large Representative, Lay Female term ending 2022, 1 to be elected**

<b>Total number of ballots cast:</b>	<b>323</b>
<b>Total number of invalid ballots:</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total number of valid ballots:</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>Needed to elect:</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Ms. Suwah Davies</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>Sister Jane Roper</b>	<b>61</b>

Bishop Davenport declared Ms. Suwah Davies **ELECTED**, and thanked Pastor Schanely for her faithful work on behalf of the Synod.

Pastor Schanely thanked the members of her Committee for all their assistance.

### **Final Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel**

#### **Resolution of Thanks – SEPA Synod Assembly 2019**

**WHEREAS** it is right at all times and in all places to give thanks for God's grace, mercy and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit which bless and release the people of God to serve Christ and His Church, and

**WHEREAS** the 2019 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly has earnestly engaged in prayerful discussions, deliberations and decisions, and has experienced the blessings of many gifted leaders, workers and volunteers, and

**WHEREAS** God continues to call the church to be grateful for the energy, skill, generosity, and commitment of all who have labored, both visibly and behind-the-scenes, to prosper the work of this year's Assembly;

**S.A.19.05.06. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT we offer our appreciation and thankful applause to all those who prepared for, planned, and arranged this Assembly:**

**To our Synod Event Coordinator, the Synod Communications team, the staff from CCI Communications, our floor pages and the Floor Page Coordinator, our Parliamentarian, prayer partners, sign language interpreters, food service providers, and Franconia Mennonite Church whose gracious hospitality is a true blessing;**

**To the Worship Team, and for all leaders, speakers, and musicians who opened our lips and our minds to embrace God's word and beckon God's spirit; to the Committee on Elections, the Committee on Reference and Counsel, and the Committee on Nominations, for their dedicated work and contribution to the orderly functioning of the Assembly process;**

**To our presenter, The Rev. Nicole Diroff, and our ELCA representative The Rev. Dr. Wyvetta Bullock, for faithfully inspiring and informing us of the ways the ELCA, the whole church, and people of all faiths are witnessing to faith, truth, and justice in the world;**

**To Bishop Patricia Davenport, for her faithful leadership and continued witness to the gospel both in our synod and beyond;**

**To the Synod Council and Officers of the Synod, the Synod Administrative Staff, Synod Program Staff, Synod Pastoral Staff, and Synod Part-time Deployed Staff, and Conference Deans.**

**To all assembly voting members and guests.**

**For all the gifts of God that we experienced in these holy days together, *we are grateful.***

The Assembly responded with applause.

Bishop Davenport thanked Dr. Addie Butler for her faithful service on this Committee.

### **Final Report of the Registrar**

Ms. Cynta Outterbridge presented the final report of the registrar.

**Total voting membership, 452;** total number of ministers of Word and Sacrament under call, 142; total number of retired ministers of Word and Sacrament voting, 29; total number of ministers of Word and Service under call, 9; total number of retired ministers of Word and Service voting, 4; total number of lay voting members certified, including council members, youth, and young adults, 268; total number of "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" in the previous total, 116; percent of "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" of total voting membership, 26%; number of female lay voting members, 144; number of male lay voting members, 111; number of lay Synod Council members, 16; number of youth/young adults members, 17.

**Total registered (actually in attendance) voting membership, 423;** number of ministers of Word and Sacrament under call registered, 131; number of retired voting ministers of Word and

Sacrament registered, 21; number of ministers of Word and Service under call registered, 5; number of ministers of Word and Service registered, 4; number of lay voting members registered, including Lay Council members, youth and young adults, 262; total number of "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" in previous total, 116; percent of "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" of total voting membership, 27.4%; total number of visitors and guests registered, 80.

Bishop Davenport thanked Ms. Outterbridge, and announced that the thirty-third annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod will be held May 1 & 2, 2020.

Bishop Davenport and Vice President Beasley recognized the outgoing members of the Synod Council, Mr. Emanuel Alves, the Reverend Dr. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam, Ms. Emily Fowler, and Ms. Lisa Hand.

They then installed the members of the Synod Staff:

Pastor Bradley Burke, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult Ministry, and Faith Formation; Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations; Pastor Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation; Pastor Sue Lang, Synod Events Coordinator; Ms. Mercedes Lee, Coordinator for Youth, Young Adult Ministry, and Faith Formation; Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, Database Manager, Statistician, and Synod Registrar; Mr. Martin Schwab, Senior Accountant; Pastor Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership/Mission Development.

Finally, the Bishop and the Vice President installed the new Synod Council, and prayed a blessing on those who will be voting members to the Churchwide Assembly in August.

#### **Order for the Closing of the Assembly**

Bishop Davenport led the Order for the Closing of the Assembly. The thirty-second annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod adjourned at 2:09 p.m.

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

*Approved by Synod Council December 12, 2019*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 156<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, King of Prussia, PA**  
**June 13, 2019**

**Welcome and Devotions**

The Reverend Julie Dewerth, host pastor and Dean of the Lower Montgomery Conference, welcomed the Synod Council and led devotions based on the lessons for the Day of Pentecost.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 156<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:13 p.m.

### **ACTION TO FILL AN OPEN SEAT ON THE SYNOD COUNCIL**

There is an open clergy seat on the Council, an unfulfilled term ending in 2020. The Executive Committee moves that the Rev. Joseph Klinger fill this term.

**The Synod Council approved the motion.**

Pastor Klinger then took his seat at the Council.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 155<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Synod Council were approved with two amendments: on page 7, the Audit Committee, not the Auditors, suggest a Cash flow analysis be done; on page 10, this trip may cause Pastor Sellers to be late to, not miss, the Synod Assembly.

### **SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 156<sup>th</sup> meeting as presented. Vice President Beasley then welcomed the Synod Council, especially those who are new to the Synod Council.

### **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

#### **Praise Reports**

Pastor Susan Lynch, who had been diagnosed with stage 4 cancer, has finished her chemotherapy, and the report has come back clean. The gene is still present, but a miracle has occurred!

Ms. Martha Fisher had a fall, but she is on the mend.

We now have a Director of Evangelical Mission. His name is the Rev. William Flippin, and he has been serving in Atlanta GA. He is currently in Switzerland with L.W.F.

Bishop Davenport highlighted the following items from her written report.

#### **Synod Assembly**

Thank you for all the support and participation at the Synod Assembly! No matter how much or little you could do, it made an impact. The T-shirts were a sign of an extension of the Office of the Bishop

Thank you to our Secretary, Reverend Karl Richard, and the work that he does, as he was re-elected to a second term.

#### **Women Clergy Organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)**

I have been invited to go along with Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Bishop Vivian Thomas-Breitfeld to preach and participate in the Women Clergy Quadrennial meeting June 22-26, 2019 in Tanzania (East Africa). Following this event from June 27-July 2, 2019, I will spend time in our companion synod, the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania.

Because I will be out of the country, we need to appoint an acting bishop.

**S.C.19.06.01 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve Rev. Bradley Burke and Rev. Karen Sease to serve as acting bishops from June 20 through July 2, 2019 while Bishop Patricia A. Davenport is attending the Women Clergy Quadrennial meeting and visiting our companion synod, North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania. Pastor Sease will serve solo as acting bishop when Pastor Burke leaves for Tanzania.**

**The Synod Council adopted the resolution**

**Chrism Service**

Over 100 rostered and lay ministers gathered for a time for conversation and support. The Spirit of the Lord is upon us – Luke 4 – because we are so busy in everyday life, what are the core things to which we are called? Good conversation on how to find balance, and keeping the main thing of the Gospel as the Main thing. Thank you to Pr. Bill Vanderslice for his work for this event.

**Retired Ministers event**

I was able to attend the retired leaders and spouses gathering. This is a key opportunity to keep in contact with these leaders and their spouses, let them know what is happening in the broader church, and gather their wisdom on where the Spirit might be calling us.

**Conference Meetings**

We had two Conference Gatherings. Upper Montgomery Conference had a gathering at Manatawny Manor, and Lower Bucks Conference held a program at Twinings Village. We have some wonderful assets available to us as partners in ministry.

**ELCA Event**

Faithful Innovations program will be held at Crossroads Conference Center in NJ. Dr. Dawn Alitz from Luther Seminary will lead this program for leaders from both SEPA and NJ Synods. I hope to give a taste of this program to our Rostered Ministers at our annual Rostered Minister's Equipping Event (formerly known as Bishop's Convocation).

Activities not in Bishop's written report

**Leadership in the Public Square**

I was invited to speak at a high school graduation at Lasalle University High School. My remarks focused around the theme "Be fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire" – what is that one thing that set you free, makes you whole, gives you unspeakable joy. Then don't just dream it, but put action to it!

What is Synod Council's "it"? How do we put "it" in action? The "it" for me is to make a difference in all we do as a Council.

**Churches United in Christ**

I represented the Presiding Bishop at Churches United in Christ in Montgomery AL. I attended this event with Kathryn Lohre, Albert Starr, and Judith Roberts. It is a body of the Episcopal,

AME, UMC, and UCC congregations. I was there to present our decision to leave this organization to increase our efforts in other ecumenical ventures, particularly congregations of the Historical Black Churches and others. Our conversations in this group have been about issues that we have covered, and we are full communion partners with many of them. By leaving this particular group we are freeing time and resources to enter intentional work toward the goal of dismantling racism.

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

When does Pastor Flippin arrive?

We are not certain yet. He needs to end his ministry at his current congregation. We expect him by September 1<sup>st</sup> at the latest.

Mr. Tyler Emig asked if we can add a prayer. His mother (Julie) is fighting cancer, and it would be powerful to her to be held in our prayers.

Bishop Davenport asked for other prayer concerns. Lifted were Mr. Bill Graham's wife, Jean; the Donovan family (relatives of Secretary Richard) on the death of Barbara; Pastor Flippin in this time of transition; Treasurer Janet Neff's mother, who is now 90; Pastor Susan Lynch; those travelling to Tanzania. Prayer was offered for all these joys and concerns.

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

##### ***Call to Interim Ministry:***

**S.C.19.06.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Wayne Shelor to interim ministry at Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Schwenksville, PA beginning June 17, 2019, until a pastor is called by the congregation or until the Rev. Wayne Shelor resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

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

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

**S.C.19.06.03. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Dr. Anita Baly on leave from call status, first year, effective July 23, 2018**

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

##### ***Request to move to from Active Roster to Retired Roster:***

**S.C.19.06.04. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Carol Ficken retirement status, effective July 1, 2019**

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

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

##### ***Resigned from ELCA Roster***

The Rev. Dr. Asha George-Guiser, effective June 8, 2019

The Rev. Kim Guiser, effective June 8, 2019

**Deaths**

The Rev. Edward Neiderheiser, PhD, April 17, 2019

**Housing Allowances**

Clergy Name	Housing Allowance Amount
Pastor Robert Fisher	\$17,614.00
Pastor Karen Sease	\$15,000.00

**S.C.19.06.05. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2019 housing allowance for Pastor Robert Fisher and Pastor Karen Sease, and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the recipients be reminded that the amounts so designated as rental/housing allowance are excludable from the gross income of the respective recipients only to the extent that said amounts are used to rent or provide a home. Further, the amount eligible for the Section 107 exclusion may not exceed the fair rental value of the minister’s home (including furnishings and appurtenances) plus the cost of utilities. To the extent a greater amount is designated as rental/housing allowance, the designation will be ineffectual with respect to such amount.**

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

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

**Confidentiality Agreement**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley distributed a Confidentiality Agreement, which all members of the Synod Council were asked to sign and return,

**Congregational Visits**

Vice President Beasley is making the visits to congregations which she described at the Synod Assembly. These visits are meant as “Thank you” visits, expressing her, and our, gratitude for our partnership in the Gospel, both in terms of service and financial support.

She has visited 3 congregations in three different conferences. One was having their budget meeting, and was considering cutting the Synod, but she and Mr. Henry Geyer were able to explain what we do and thank them for their support. As a result, they did not cut their support. She will be going Upper Bucks Conference this Sunday. Next up are Chester and Delaware Conferences. It is important that our congregations get to see who our leaders are on this board.

**Silver Springs – Martin Luther School**

Vice President Beasley was able to represent the SEPA Synod at the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of this school, which is the oldest Social Ministry Organization we have. It was a great celebration of great work.

**Pastoral Transition Guide**

The revised transition guide has been submitted to the Synod Council for review, and at this time Ms. Beasley asked for the Council to adopt it so it can be used by our staff and our congregations in times of transition.

**S.C.19.06.05. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the Pastoral Transition Guide as presented.**

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

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

Secretary Richard shared the following items, which were included in his written report.

##### **Churchwide Assembly**

We are well represented in the diversity of the voting members attending from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. 47% of our delegation are persons of color, or whose primary language is other than English.

We will have three resolutions considered by the Churchwide Assembly:  
Memorial on the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women (from 2018 Assembly)  
Endorsement of “*The Earth Charter*” (from 2019 Assembly)  
Advocating for Immigrants and Refugees in Our Communities (from 2019 Assembly)

##### **Reception of property of a closed congregation**

St. Petri-Hope Lutheran Church of Philadelphia experienced “holy closure” on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. To formally receive the assets of this former congregation, I move the following:

**S.C.19.06.06. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of St. Petri – Hope Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, to close, effective June 2, 2019, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of St. Petri – Hope, Philadelphia, 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, June 13, 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.**

Discussion ensued. Bishop Davenport noted that there are three parcels which were related to St. Petri-Hope; the Church, the Fellowship Hall, and an Education Wing. As with each closing, there are experiences of joy and of sorrow at its closing. Fortunately many of the members have already found new church homes, and are continuing in the practice of their faith.

A question was raised about Lydia’s Closet, and what will happen to that ministry. Another congregation has agreed to pick this up. When it comes to ministry, “Wherever you go, let’s take it with you.”

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

#### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, said that we will go into more detail on the budget in September. Please go to the website to get further information from the Assembly.

Ms. Neff reviewed that we have four segments of our budget. We have Unrestricted Funds, which are the general operational funds, Temporarily Restricted funds, which are predominantly related to events, such as the Synod Assembly, the Rostered Ministers' Event (Bishop's Convocation), youth retreats, and other similar events. The money comes in for a particular purpose, and is restricted for that purpose until that event is completed. We have Permanently Restricted funds, which can only be used for the specific purpose for which they were given, and we have the Mission funds, which cover a lot of our ministry that is not able to fund itself.

Ms. Neff described how the sale of the former Immanuel, Burholme, impacts the budget. When we sell the property of a former congregation or ministry site, 15% goes to the Unrestricted fund to assist with ongoing ministry. From the remainder, we reimburse the cost of maintaining the properties we have to manage, and after that, the remainder goes into the Fund for Mission to assist mission initiatives around our Synod.

50% of what we receive from congregations goes to ELCA as our Synod's mission support of the work of the broader church.

We also support many other causes beyond our Synod as partners in ministry.

Currently we are slightly above budget from Mission Support, but we also have been without our new staff person until this point.

## **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Albert Glenn, chair of the committee, shared the following:

The committee met on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and reviewed the funds to date.

The Committee considered the concerns raised by the Audit Committee at the Assembly:

### **Property management**

Do we need property managers for closed properties? Mr. Martin Schwab has the authority to hire as needed. It may be good to enlist someone from a neighboring congregation to look in on the properties as needs arise, as they may be closer than Martin is to the site.

### **Review of "unknown" funds**

There is an unidentified real estate asset on the balance sheet that is of unknown origin. The treasurer and the Senior Accountant will investigate what this is, and if it cannot be identified it will be removed from the balance sheet.

### **Valuation of Bear Creek and University Lutheran**

Appraisals of Bear Creek and UniLu may not be current, but they are not detrimental to our financial status at this time, since we are not looking to mortgage them or sell them.

Mr. C. Everett Wick – the question that was raised is whether there is any value to the Synod by owning these properties. Yes, Bear Creek we own jointly with NEPA. UniLu, we own and have in cooperation with campus ministry.

Ms. Elizabeth Young – value of the land, and the buildings on the land, gives a fuller picture of what our total assets are.

Mr. Phil Tackett – Our question was if there is another way to present this in the annual audit from the more liquid assets, referencing the three properties – Bear Creek, UniLu, and the “mystery” property which we need to discover what it is.

### **Cash Flow statement**

The cash flow statements accurately reflect the reconciling of accounts and are in order.

Mr. Tackett – the cash flow conversation is simply to consider if there are times when we are aware that we are really going to need to move funds around.

Ms. Neff – yes, we can, and we can also move the real estate into a separate category for clarity’s sake.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

Pastor Karen Sease, new Assistant to the Bishop, shared about her position.

Her portfolio includes three areas:

1. Candidacy - we have about 40 people in some stage of the process to become a Rostered Minister
2. Leadership – working with those who are rostered ministers and congregations in the mobility process to ensure we have the right leaders serving in the right settings.
3. Mission Advancement – seeing how we can call forth the gifts we have among us for the work of the church. Song from Assembly – “What we need is here”

I was asked to focus on this third aspect of my position for this time.

Do you like Bear Creek? Lutheran Disaster Response? Other aspects of our ministry?  
We said yes, yes, yes.

To make these ministries happen, we need resources. As you have heard, 50 % of our partnership support received from congregations goes to the ELCA, and through this avenue we support many things.

What is the IT that we are called to do? These are just some of the things we are called to do. We ask you to support the Synod directly. I know you support through your congregation. We are asking you to give directly in any number of ways. Give an amount that you will NOTICE. You do make a difference.

Questions:

Mr. Henry Geyer – do we as the ELCA support military chaplains? – Yes.

Pr. Gwendolyn King – We have Pr. Christopher Otten, who works with current chaplains, and works to recruit more chaplains, and keeps in touch with those of us who are no longer active military chaplains. He also works on connecting with those who are Lutheran in the military  
Pr. Sease – there is a need of more mainline chaplains in the ministry, who can and will willingly deal with LGBTQ military, and women in the military, because some chaplains refuse to minister to these groups.

Me. Bert Glenn – are we short of candidates? Are we at the point that we cannot fill our needs?  
Pr. Sease and Bishop Davenport – Across the ELCA yes, in our Synod, not as much. Because of our location as an urban center, and a welcoming synod, we generally have enough candidates. This is not true everywhere.

Pr. King – are you the one we contact with issues of mobility?  
Pr. Sease – Pr. Christian McMullen (Director of Interims) and Pr. Marcia Bell (Director of Mobility) are first in line to contact. I work with them.

Pr. Sease concluded her time by saying, “It is a pleasure to serve with a staff that has welcomed me and is making my transition so easy and pleasant.”

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Constitution Committee**

Vice President Beasley noted that the members of the Synod Council received a report from Pr. Tyler Rasmussen regarding this committee. She said if you wish to change you committee structure, name, or resources, please be aware this needs to come to the Bishop and the Vice President first, and the changes may need to be endorsed by the Executive Committee. Please follow proper protocol.

### **Investment Committee**

Mr. Dave Ehret, chair of the Investment Committee, shared that there are some new funds that were found to be invested. See report of where they have been invested and the current values of the funds.

## **COMMITTEE DESCRIPTIONS**

Each year in June we describe, and allow the members to select, the committee they would like to serve on, and then we make assignments based on gifts and desires. The Vice President called on those chairpersons present to give a brief description of their committee, particularly for the new members of the Synod Council. The current chairs are

Audit – Mr. Phil Tackett

Administration – Mr. William Graham

Constitution Committee – Pr. Tyler Rasmussen, not present

Finance – Mr. Bert Glenn –It is more than dollars and cents. It is the work for the Synod, and it can be very interesting to be on this team – meets at 5:00 p.m. at the Seminary

Investment – Mr. Dave Ehret

Nominating – Pr. Lydia Posselt – best committee – if you are willing to seek out the few good people to serve the Synod, this is the team to join

The Bishop and the Vice President will take your top three preferences, and try to match skills and desires of the members with the needs of the various committees. The configuration of these teams will be brought to the September meeting for confirmation

The Synod Council elects members of the Executive Committee at this meeting.

The Executive Committee meets day time on a weekday, usually Thursday from 1 – 3 or 2 – 4  
The four officers are members of the Executive Committee. The Synod Council elects three more members: one lay male, one lay female, and one clergy.

Nominations for Lay Female member of the Executive Committee

- Ms. Cheryl Detweiler
- Ms. Sandra Zimmerman
- Ms. Doreen Kinzler

Ms. Cheryl Detweiler            Elected

Nominations for Lay Male member of the Executive Committee

- Mr. Adam Clark
- Mr. Henry Geyer

Mr. Henry Geyer                Elected

Nominations for Clergy member of the Executive Committee

- Pr. Laura Tancredi
- Pr. Serena Sellers
- Pr. Matt Staniz

Pr. Laura Tancredi              Elected

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Secretary Richard noted that the Synod Council as currently configured has 23% persons of color, and 23% persons 30 years of age or younger

New Chair of Candidacy – Pr. Paul Neff – has declined his stipend. He stated that it is his privilege and pleasure to serve.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m. with prayer by the Reverend Karen Sease.

The 157<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be held on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 4:00 p.m., at Paul's Run, Philadelphia.

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

*Approved by Synod Council September 19, 2019*

**MINUTES  
of the 157<sup>th</sup> MEETING  
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL  
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
Paul's Run, Philadelphia, PA  
September 19, 2019**

**WELCOME AND DEVOTIONS**

The Reverend Jane Marston, Dean of the NEW Conference, welcomed the Synod Council and led devotions based on the lessons for the Day of Pentecost.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 157<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:20 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 156<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

The minutes of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod were received as part of the packet of materials. Vice President Beasley deferred their approval until the December meeting to ensure Synod Council members had enough time to review them.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 157<sup>th</sup> meeting, with the alteration of moving the Report of the Treasurer to the first action on the Agenda.

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Treasurer Janet Neff presented the Treasurer's report. She explained that for this meeting, she would review the detailed financial statements for the synod, rather than just the summaries that are usually distributed to the Synod Council. Treasurer Neff then went over the full and detailed synod financial statements, explaining the various accounts and categories, and invited questions.

Ms. Neff encouraged the members of the Council to compare where their congregations are in giving versus pledge made. She emphasized that regular giving is a great help to the Synod as we work to meet our expenses.

Mr. Albert Glenn, chairperson of the Finance Committee, noted that the Committee has not met since the last Synod Council meeting, and has no independent report from Treasurer Neff.

**REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

### **Gratitude for the work of the Synod**

Bishop Davenport said her gratitude truly abounds for the work we have been able to do as we mark one year of her service as Bishop. The Bishop expressed gratitude for the work of the Deans, of the committees, and of the Synod Council. Yes, members are elected, but she knows that each member has much work in their life and work, in addition to the work of the Council and the sub teams of the Council on which they serve. “The way you serve, I want to serve too.”

### **Gratitude for our new D.E.M.**

The Bishop is grateful for our new Director of Evangelical Mission, the Rev. Dr. William Flippin, Jr. We have waited for over a year for the right person to come on board, and we are excited and grateful for Dr. Flippin’s presence among us, and the ways in which he will help us see and identify the ways the Spirit is moving among us.

### **Trip to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania**

Bishop Davenport and former Bishop Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld were able to accompany Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton to Tanzania, where they were guest lecturers at the Women Theologians and Pastors Consultation. She was thrilled to be a part of a program that supported sisters in two dioceses that do not ordain women. Bishop Eaton spoke to them of governance, as ways to assist them going forward for their cause. These women were inspired to write a resolution to bring before their conference to make the ordination of women a reality. People from the floor brought it up for consideration, and it was passed. We spoke of women in prayer, we spoke of women of resistance in Scripture. It was an honor to walk alongside them as they work to make their next moves toward full inclusion and empowerment in the ELCT.

While in Tanzania, they also visited our Companion Synod, the Northeast Diocese. They were warmly welcomed by Bishop Stephen Munga and his wife, Dr. Anneth Munga. They were able to visit all our sites; it was thrilling to listen to learn, to love, to lead others to see Christ, and to serve.

The Northeast Diocese is starting 62 new ministries, 62 new sub-parishes. They recognize it is not about them, it is about the other. They are raising leaders from the ground up.

### **ELCA Convocation of Teaching Theologians**

Bishop Davenport was invited, along with Bishops Guy Erwin and Bill Gohl, to attend this Convocation, and to present on the topic of privilege and power, illustrated through Bonhoeffer’s concept of cheap grace. Bishop Davenport is pleased our teachers and theologians are identifying the ways in which the system itself is inhibiting people of color from entering ministry.

### **Churchwide Assembly**

Bishop Davenport produced a large folder filled with papers and reports to visually present the volume of materials that were before the voting members at the Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee. In her written report she listed many of the actions the church had undertaken in the Assembly. She then asked for comments about what people have heard regarding the Assembly. In particular she asked what members of the Council are hearing regarding the action declaring the ELCA a “Sanctuary Church.”

- + Pastor Joey Klinger – two people approached him saying “I hope we aren’t helping “those illegals.””
- + Secretary Richard – four different people asked what this was about, but also asked, “Isn’t this what we are supposed to do?”
- + Pastor Jennifer Phelps – just questions
- + Pastor Gwendolyn King – the letter from the Bishop which explains the action has helped a great deal.
- + Pastor Serena Sellers – I heard nothing until I made it the topic of my newsletter article. We have a divided congregation, and people are not talking about it; until I raised it.
- + Mr. Phil Tackett – there is an undercurrent of fear that we are doing something illegal. We will need to reassure people that what we are doing is good and right.

Persons from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod who were in nomination for positions at the Churchwide Assembly:

Those elected:

Vice President Tracy A. Beasley – Church Council at Large  
 Mr. Frank Roth – Board of Pensions  
 Mr. Emanuel Alves – Committee on Appeals  
 Pastor Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam – Nominating Committee

Those not elected, but willing to be in nomination:

Ms. Annette Sample  
 Pastor Tim Johansen  
 Pastor Tyler Rasmussen – a top 7 nominee for ELCA Secretary out of 114 nominees.

### **Holy Closure**

Good Shepherd, Mayfair ended its ministry August 25<sup>th</sup>, and we pray for the people of Good Shepherd, and for Pastor Dwight Mason, on this emotional occasion. Bishop was pleased to be able to pray, and cry, with them. The theme of the Closing service was “Pass it on.”

### **Ecumenical Connections**

Vice President Beasley was able to join Bishop Davenport in representing the SEPA Synod at the Episcopal Elevation of Bishop Guy L. Glimp, STM, of the Church of God in Christ as we live into a deeper relationship with the Historic Black Churches in our area. Bishop Davenport also had the opportunity to preach with and before Bishop Peggy Johnson of the Philadelphia Area of the United Methodist Church.

### **Staff Change**

Bishop Davenport noted the bittersweet nature of a change on our Synod Staff. Pastor Brad Burke has left his position as Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult, and Faith Formation ministry. Bitter news, in that Brad is stepping down; sweet in that he is returning to the parish, to which he has felt a call for some time. We pray for Pastor Burke and the people of St. Paul’s, Exton, as they begin this chapter of ministry together.

Pastor Phelps asked what will happen with the First Call Theological program now that Pastor Burke is moving on. She expressed concern that this not lose momentum as we have recently

been reorienting the format. Bishop Davenport replied that Pastor Burke has assured her that all is in place for his to continue.

Mr. Bert Glenn asked about the Convocation of Teaching Theologians. Was this within the Church, or was it more broad? Bishop replied that this was for our Lutheran circle, and the many schools of higher education in our circle. They are not getting the numbers of students they would like, and they would like to know why. This is particularly true of students of color. We need these conversations so we can grow in understanding, and make changes to increase our reach and diversity.

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

Secretary Richard presented the actions of the roster.

##### ***Renewal of Calls to Specialized Ministry:***

**S.C.19.09.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one year, renewable call to the Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir to Specialized Ministry as Director of Spiritual Care at Artman and the Hearth at Drexel, beginning May 15, 2019 to May 14, 2020.**

**S.C.19.09.02. 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, 2019. *(Renewable on an annual basis.)***

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

##### ***Request to move to Retirement Roster:***

**S.C.19.09.03. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Margaret D. Frischmann retirement status, effective September 1, 2019**

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

##### ***Call to Interim Ministry:***

**S.C.19.09.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a call to Interim Ministry to the Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld for a period of one year, effective August 5, 2019.**

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

##### ***Renewal of Invitation to U.C.C. minister to serve an ELCA congregation:***

**S.C.19.09.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve entry rite renewal, Invitation to Extended Service, for the Rev. Suzanne Marie Spaulding to St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Ferndale, PA, beginning September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020. *This invitation is renewable annually by the Synod Council.***

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

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

**S.C.19.09.06. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Dwight Mason on leave from call status, first year, effective August 26, 2019**

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

**Information Not Requiring Action**

***Transfers:***

The Rev. Sarah Stobie to Greater Milwaukee Synod, effective May 16, 2019

The Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld from South Central Synod of Wisconsin, effective August 7, 2019

***Deaths:***

The Rev. John Holman, June 29, 2019

The Rev. Frederic B. Geehr, September 9, 2019

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

Vice President Beasley noted that her report was contained in the packet of materials. With no questions, Ms. Beasley shared that she is continuing her visits to congregations to bring encouragement and gratitude from the Synod Council. She welcomes any Synod Council member to join her, particularly when she is visiting a congregation in their Conference.

**Committee Assignments**

Vice President Beasley reviewed the proposed Synod Council assignments for the coming year. She thanked all the chairpersons for their past work and for their willingness to continue in their roles. The Administrative Committee now has co-chairs because of the amount of work involved to prepare for the Synod Assembly. Please be mindful that we need to be creative on how our committees meet. Make use of Skype, or conference call if not able to meet face to face. Chairs, remember that you are not set up to do all the work. Use your people. Share the load and the responsibility.

**S.C.19.09.07. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the Committee assignments as proposed by the Bishop and Vice President.**

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

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

Secretary Richard shared the following items, which were included in his written report.

**Affirmation of Electronic vote**

**S.C.19.09.08. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirm the electronic vote approving the Rev. Karen Sease to serve as acting bishop from September 1 through September 10, 2019 while Bishop Davenport is attending the Lutheran World Federation 2019 Retreat of Newly Elected Leaders in Geneva.**

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

**Reception of the property of a former congregation of the SEPA Synod**  
Good Shepherd, Mayfair, Philadelphia has experienced “holy closure.”

**S.C.19.09.09. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 7234 Erdick Street, Philadelphia, to close, effective August 25, 2019, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of Good Shepherd, Philadelphia, 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, September 19, 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**

Just prior to the Assembly, Pastor Nancy Brown was not able to attend. Pastor Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam was appointed to go in her stead.

Voting Members who attended the Churchwide Assembly from SEPA Synod include:

Mr. Emanuel Alves, Holy Communion, Philadelphia  
Rev. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam, Grace, Drexel Hill  
Mr. Matthew Banda, Faith Immanuel, East Lansdowne  
Deacon Beth Ann Barkau, Reformation, Media  
Ms. Tracey A. Beasley, Reformation, Philadelphia  
Bishop Patricia A. Davenport, Spirit and Truth, Yeadon  
Rev. Gwendolyn S. King, Calvary, West Chester  
Rev. Dwight Mason, Good Shepherd, Philadelphia  
Ms. Cynthia Moultrie, Christ, Upper Darby  
Mr. Jeffrey Nase, St. John, Hatboro  
Rev. Bryan Penman, St. Mark, Conshohocken  
Rev. Lydia Posselt, Family of God, Buckingham  
Rev. Karl M. Richard, St. Matthew, Springfield  
Mr. Thomas Salber, Prince of Peace, Philadelphia  
Ms. Katie Schnaath, St. Matthew, Perkasié  
Ms. Courtney Smith, Good Shepherd, King of Prussia  
Mr. Paul Ziegler, St. Paul’s, Glenside

Of those who attended, 47% were persons of color or whose primary language is other than English.

### **Actions at the Churchwide Assembly Election of Officers for the ELCA**

The Reverend Elizabeth Eaton was overwhelmingly re-elected Presiding Bishop of the ELCA on the first ballot, receiving 81.19% of the votes cast.

Deacon Sue Rothmeyer was elected on the 5<sup>th</sup> ballot to be Secretary of the ELCA. Our own Pastor Tyler Rasmussen was in the final seven nominees, and was able to address the Assembly.

With these elections we now have no white men holding any of the offices in the ELCA.  
A woman minister of Word and Sacrament is our Presiding Bishop (Elizabeth Eaton)  
A woman minister of Word and Service is our Secretary (Sue Rothmeyer)  
A lay woman is our Treasurer (Lori Fedyk)  
An African American lay man is our Vice President (William Horne)  
We also have 23 of 65 Synodical Bishops who are women. While not complete, signs of growing diversity abound in our Church.

### **Actions on Resolutions and Memorials submitted to the Churchwide Assembly by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod had submitted three items for consideration at the Churchwide Assembly, all of which were adopted. The three memorials submitted were:

**Memorial on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ordination of Women** (from 2018 Assembly)

**Endorsement of “*The Earth Charter*”** (from 2019 Assembly)

**Advocating for Immigrants and Refugees in Our Communities** (from 2019 Assembly)

Secretary Richard included in his written report the full text of the memorials as adopted, along with other memorials related to these which were put forward by other Synods and adopted by the Churchwide Assembly.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Constitution Committee**

Two congregations have completed revising their constitutions, and the Committee brings them to the Synod Council for approval.

**S.C.19.09.10. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the congregation constitution of Advent, West Chester.**

**S.C.19.09.11. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, pending ratification by the congregation, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the congregation constitution of St. Peter, Hilltown.**

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

Pastor Tyler Rasmussen, chair of the Constitution Committee, shared that the new revisions to Model Constitution for Congregations which were adopted at the Churchwide Assembly are now available. Please be sure to incorporate them into your constitutions, and if you have not done so recently, now is a good time to update your constitution.

### **Investment Committee**

Mr. David Ehret, chairperson, shared that since our last meeting \$650,000 has been added to the portfolio, approximately \$50,000 in each fund.

Total investment portfolio as of August 31, 2019 is \$4,157,682

### **Forward Together in Faith**

Ms. Ellen Daneke, chairperson of the Campaign, shared that \$25,000 is available in grants this year. The window for applying opened June 1<sup>st</sup>, and will remain open until September 30<sup>th</sup>. So

far only one grant request has been received, but the team does anticipate several more to arrive by the deadline. The grant committee will meet in October and November, with decisions to be made in December. There may be an ability to evaluate late requests. Distribution of funds should happen in January.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

The Rev. Dr. William Flippin, Jr., newly called Director for Evangelical Mission, was given an opportunity to address the Synod Council. He share that he is delighted to be in this Synod serving under Bishop Davenport. He officially arrived on August 7<sup>th</sup> in the midst of the Churchwide Assembly. He did not have his car for a while, which forced him to get around and see what is here. He has met with the Deans, and is looking forward to working with them.

Some questions he is working through include:

How do we address the three expressions of the Church? For instance, Synodically Authorized Worship Communities now fall to the Synod to endorse. Many things are moving in how we interact.

He is curious about the concept of an Anchor Church.

Do you spend time with churches at risk, or with the congregations showing signs of vitality?

Three areas of focus for Dr. Flippin are

1. deal with at risk congregations
2. justice ministry
3. strengthen our ecumenical relations

He also wants to be true to the Vitality Team as we move forward in collaboration.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

## **MISSION MOMENT**

For the Mission Moment, several videos from the Churchwide Assembly were viewed.

- + Apology to those of African Descent
- + AMMPARO walk to ICE office
- + Procession, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ordination of Women celebration service
- + Pastor Tyler Rasmussen's "final 7" segments

The meeting was adjourned at 6:53 with prayer by Dr. Flippin.

The 158<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be held on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 4:00 p.m., at United Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia Campus.

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

*Approved by Synod Council December 12, 2019*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 158<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**United Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia Campus**  
**7301 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA**  
**December 12, 2019**

**WELCOME AND DEVOTIONS**

The Reverend Jane Marston, Dean of the NE/nW Philadelphia Conference, welcomed the Synod Council and led devotions: Lessons and Prayers for Advent.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 158<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:14 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod were approved as presented, with one spelling correction of “McMullan.”

The minutes of the 157<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 158<sup>th</sup> meeting as presented.

**REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Davenport noted that all had received her report, and asked if there were any questions regarding the report, or any other issue whatsoever.

The Reverend Serena Sellers asked if there is a process set for the restructuring of the Synod Staff.

Bishop Davenport said there is. Job descriptions have been revised. The current staff is using a team approach so nothing falls through the cracks in the midst of the restructuring. There is a staff retreat planned to discuss this further. There is an intentional effort to take into account issues that have been raised in the Conferences at their assemblies.

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, asked “What is your greatest joy as our bishop in this season?”

Bishop Davenport replied that she is delighted to see the Synod Council here in this busy season. All but two are present, ready and willing to do the work of the Synod in this busy time.

Mr. Albert Glenn asked if members of the Synod Council have questions or ideas regarding the structuring of the Synod would that be welcomed, and to whom one would submit the inquiry. Bishop – you can submit questions or ideas to either the bishop or to Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations.

The Reverend Joey Klinger asked if the Bishop is able to keep a healthy balance in this hectic season.

The Bishop said she is.

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

Secretary Richard presented the following actions on the roster, all of which **the Synod Council adopted unanimously.**

#### ***On Leave Extension Request to ELCA Conference of Bishops***

**S.C.19.12.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT Deacon Suzanne Rigg be granted her second *On Leave From Call* extension from the ELCA Conference of Bishops Roster Committee, and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council request approval of this extension from the ELCA Conference of Bishops Roster Committee.**

#### ***Call to Specialized Ministry***

**S.C.19.12.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a three-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the Rev. DeBorah Glod as Chaplain/Spiritual at Compassus Hospice & Palliative Care in Fort Washington effective November 11, 2019 to November 10, 2022.**

#### ***Term Call Extension***

**S.C.19.12.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a three-year renewable term call to the Rev. Tricia Neale as Executive Director at Feast of Justice in Philadelphia effective December 1, 2019 to November 30, 2022.**

#### ***Request to move from Active to On Leave from Call Roster***

**S.C.19.12.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant on leave from call status to the Rev. Donna Wright, first year, effective July 2, 2019**

#### ***Requests to move from Active to Retired Roster***

**S.C.19.12.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Jonathan Shin retirement status, effective June 25, 2019**

**S.C.19.12.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Harold Evans retirement status, effective April 1, 2019**

**S.C.19.12.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Dyan Lawlor retirement status, effective December 1, 2019**

**S.C.19.12.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Joseph Varsanyi retirement status, effective January 1, 2020**

**Information not requiring action**

***Resigned from the ELCA Roster***

The Rev. Ashley Rossi effective October 10, 2019

***Transfer***

The Rev. Terrance W. Goad to Lower Susquehanna Synod effective June 20, 2019

The Rev. Amy S. Hotter to New Jersey Synod effective September 19, 2019

The Rev. Stephen B. Johnson from North Carolina Synod effective September 28, 2019

The Rev. Burlington B. Latshaw III to NEPA Synod effective Oc. 24, 2019.

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

Vice President Beasley noted that her report had been submitted to the Council, and asked for questions regarding it.

**Synod Office Space**

Mr. Glenn asked about the status of the Synod office space at the Seminary.

Bishop Davenport asked the Rev. Dr. Martin Otto Zimmann, representative and host from United Lutheran Seminary, to respond from the perspective of the school.

Dr. Zimmann shared the Seminary would like the Synod to stay as long as they can. There are still some questions about how we can make revenue streams that allow for sustainability, but there is not a definitive answer as to what that will entail. At the moment, the Seminary is grateful for the Synod's presence as long as the Synod is pleased to be on the Seminary campus.

Bishop Davenport stated that we as the Synod are looking at all options, and at various partnerships. While we like the idea of working together to remain here, the rent is too high, and we need to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us. We have looked at three ministry sites as well as some corporate sites for possible office space.

**All Saints Appeal**

We have received \$29,000 toward our goal of \$35,000 for this appeal. Receipts from previous years have been: \$18,000 in 2018; \$26,000 in 2017; \$28,000 in 2016; \$46,000 in 2015.

**Resolution from St. John's, Richlandtown**

The following resolution was received from the congregation council of St. John's, Richlandtown:

**In response to the ELCA's declaring itself a sanctuary church**

WHEREAS, we understand the church's call to be one of welcoming all people who come to our door and endeavoring to help them as we are able; and

WHEREAS, we support the church caring for legal immigrants and refugees in this country, including through churchwide efforts like the program Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, and the strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO); and

WHEREAS, we recognize that there is a problem with the immigration system as it currently exists in our country and that, in its current form, it puts vulnerable people at risk, especially children; and

WHEREAS, in the current political context, the word “sanctuary” is ambiguous and can be understood by others to mean that the church is proposing to undertake illegal activities on behalf of migrants, an assumption that could have dangerous consequences for individual congregations and the church; and

WHEREAS, the process of passing the resolution at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly to declare the ELCA a sanctuary church left out local voices and more careful deliberation and did not properly consider the reaction of the wider church and society given the current interpretation of a politically polarizing word like “sanctuary”; and

WHEREAS, it should be the position of the church to welcome all opinions and concerns and not take on a political agenda that estranges people within the church and impacts how those outside the church perceive the church; be it

RESOLVED, that St. John’s Lutheran Church in Richlandown, PA memorializes the SEPA Synod Council and Churchwide Council to promote the removal of the label “sanctuary” from the resolution adopted in the 2019 Churchwide Assembly at the next Churchwide Assembly in 2022 and replace this word with a less politically incendiary statement such as “universally welcoming”; and

Work to actively petition all members of Congress, through advocacy programs like AMMPARO and LIRS, to work together to effect changes to the current immigration laws so that migrants and U.S. citizens alike are ensured safety and security; and, until such time as the “sanctuary” statement can be changed,

Make available educational resources that target congregations and create an informational campaign that targets the national public by the spring of 2020 about what the ELCA is doing to address the migrant crisis; and

Make available discussion resources for congregations by the spring of 2020 to deliberate with the national church about what the word “sanctuary” means; and, using the results of these discussions,

Create a publicity campaign for the wider public by the fall/winter of 2020 that clarifies what “sanctuary” is and isn’t for the ELCA.

Vice President Beasley called on the Reverend Tyler Rasmussen to bring background information to the Synod Council, as he was a part of conversations with St. John’s council.

Pastor Rasmussen shared that the congregation council is afraid of how the use of “sanctuary” will be heard in the broader community. They are concerned that this will give “bad actors” in the immigrant community permission to violate the law, and they are concerned that this will give bad actors on the extreme right the idea that we are breaking the law for illegal immigrants, and will empower them in their threats to harm immigrants. Pastor Rasmussen and Pastor Kat Steinly, who serves at St. John’s, worked with the congregation council to find a measured way for them to address their issues that was proactive, and let them feel heard in the midst of their concerns.

A wide and varied discussion ensued regarding how the Synod Council should respond.

Secretary Richard shared several items related to the resolution.

It is appropriate for their congregation council to speak to the Synod Council, and for them to request that the Synod Council address the Church Council. Councils speak to councils, and assemblies speak to assemblies. However, we cannot, as councils, override the action of an Assembly. Therefore our passing this on to the Church Council will not yield a change in language that the Churchwide Assembly adopted.

Many of the actions that St. John's is requesting are a part of the resolution adopted at the Churchwide Assembly, particularly empowering AMMPARO and LIRS to work for the advancement in the immigration issues before the country, the need to clarify the meaning of "sanctuary," and the dissemination of educational materials on the issues of sanctuary, immigration, and the need for us to stand with migrants and those in need.

Secretary Richard suggested we draft two letters; one to St. John's, Richlandtown, to let them know we have received their resolution, have discussed it, and are passing it on to the Church Council, clarifying that we cannot effect the change requested at a council level, and a second to the Church Council, including the resolution from St. John's, recognizing that the Church Council cannot change the wording, but encouraging the Church Council to expedite the work on the definition of sanctuary and the dissemination of educational materials called for in the resolution from the Churchwide Assembly, noting that St. John's is not the only congregation concerned about this choice of language, and seeking clarification and assistance in applying the spirit of the "sanctuary church" resolution.

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

Secretary Richard referenced his written report, which contains the changes to the Synod constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions adopted at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. The required provisions have been incorporated, needing no action by the Synod Council or Synod Assembly, but taking affect as soon as posted. The other provisions are items that will need to be adopted by the Synod Assembly, as they pertain to sections that are not required provisions of the constitution, but contain language that needs to be incorporated to keep consistent across the entire document. There will also be some other changes to incorporate the new language and understandings in portions of our SEPA constitution that are not part of the Model constitution for Synods, but have grown out of our local context.

The bulk of the changes deal with two topics. One is the change in designation of deacons from "lay" to "clergy," and representational principles of assemblies and committees based on this change. The second is a change in language from "male" and "female" to "man" and "woman," and percentages from 50 / 50 to at least 45%. This is an attempt to make room for those who do not identify as "male" or "female", and to allow flexibility in the numbers needed to make a legal gathering.

There will be a delay for all of this to be incorporated, as there is language in the constitution and the by-laws that will need to be altered by the next Churchwide Assembly to fully change the designation of deacons as clergy. This will leave an awkward period of time for deacons and their ability to serve in certain positions, as we need to formally change the language of the constitution before we can nominate deacons for these positions.

## **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, referenced her written report. She made the following comments regarding our position as we approach the end of the year: Partnership support is down, but we anticipate that increasing as we come to Christmas and the end of the year. Congregations often send in more of their pledge with the end of year income. In the meantime, we are in good financial shape because we were able to sell some of the properties we hold under management. We continue to try to encourage partnership support by showing this money is not about what the Synod needs to receive, but how this money makes a difference as it supports the work of our congregations and the ministries of our Synod.

Ms. Neff asked if there were any questions.

The Reverend Gwendolyn King asked about numbers in the Temporarily Restricted funds, particularly an entry of monies received for Racial Justice.

Ms. Neff explained that this is money that people have given personally toward this concern. This is separate from, and in addition to, the money budgeted for the Anti-racism Team.

Pr. King shared that she did not want the Synod Council to think that the Anti-racism Team was overspending their budgeted amount.

## **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee, echoed what Ms. Neff had shared that we have gained resources from the sale of properties under management. However, he emphasized that this is not a guaranteed source of income, nor an ongoing source. We still need to support the work of our Synod through our congregations' Partnership Support.

The Finance Committee reviewed the financial reports, and all seems in order.

The Committee also reviewed the allocation of assets from the sale of properties, and can assure the Council that they are being distributed properly, including the portion that goes to the Fund for Mission.

The Committee is working on a form for seminary graduates to use to apply for monies to assist with their student loan debt. This is in line with the budgeting decision made at the Synod Assembly to reduce the amount going to the seminary in order to provide help to those who graduated seminary prior to the recent decision to offer free tuition to all incoming students.

## **MISSION MOMENT**

Vice President Beasley welcomed Dr. Martin Otto Zimmann, Director of Church Relations, Adjunct Faculty for Church and Society, and Executive Director of the Stewardship Life Institute to bring the Mission Moment.

Dr. Zimmann started his remarks by thanking Pr. King for the work of mentorship, pastoral care, and spiritual support she provides for the students of ULS, Philadelphia Campus.

He then shared an "End of Year Update" describing aspects of the Seminaries work in 2019.

Dr. Zimmann thanked SEPA Synod for its ongoing support of the Seminary, noting that the money we give goes to daily operations, not to scholarships. “This is what helps to keep the lights on.”

All degree seeking students, regardless of denomination, are now receiving full tuition scholarships. As a result, many fewer students are needing to obtain federal loans to cover their debts.

The Seminary is working hard to pay off the Brossman Center on the Philadelphia Campus, and the Seminary Ridge Museum on the Gettysburg Campus.

The Seminary community is grateful for the work of Interim President Dr. Richard Green, who left the position at the end of November. While he is missed, the community is happy for him that he is able to join his wife in Arizona to enjoy their time together in retirement.

The goal is to have the presidential search completed, and a new president in place, by the fall of 2020.

Bishop Davenport thanked Dr. Zimmann for his, and the Seminary’s, partnership, hospitality, and the dinner we are soon to receive.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Forward Together in Faith**

A written report had been submitted. Grant funds will be distributed in January.

### **Constitution Committee**

Pr. Tyler Rasmussen, Chair of the Constitution Committee, presented the following resolutions for Council approval.

**S.C.19.12.09. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, pending ratification by the congregation, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the congregation constitution as amended of Trinity, Springfield, Bucks County; St. John’s, Sumneytown; and Reformation, Philadelphia**

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

**S.C.19.12.10. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the congregation articles of incorporation as amended of Trinity, Springfield, Bucks County.**

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

Pr. Rasmussen has recently accepted a call to the Greater Milwaukee Synod. The Synod Council expresses its thanks to Pr. Rasmussen for his service to this Council, and his work as chair of the Constitution Committee. We wish him Godspeed and many years of God’s blessing in his new pastorate.

### **Investment Committee**

David Ehret, chair, presented the report.

This year our investments have done exceptionally well, with a return of nearly 20%. Next year we expect to return to a more normal rate of return of 5%.

Total investment portfolio is \$4,518,109.

### **Administration Committee**

The proposed Agenda for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Synod Assembly was presented for comment and revision. The theme is “Acuity: Seeing Mission Possibilities”.

At the 2:20 presentation of the Report of the Treasurer and Finance Committee, it should be stated that this is where the proposed budget is considered.

Service and Learning opportunities will be a part of the Assembly. We have set an opportunity for people to come and serve. The projects will include filling backpacks for those experiencing homelessness and working on quilts for Lutheran World Relief. This will give even more lay members of our congregations to see, and experience, some of the work of the Synod.

Pr. King asked if there will be any inclusion of the 50/40/10 Anniversary celebration as part of the Assembly.

Bishop Davenport said she expects so, as she has dropped enough hints to that effect.

Vice President Beasley shared that there will be a weekend celebration to commemorate the anniversary. A revival will be held on Friday, October 23, and a breakfast will be held on Saturday, October 24. The event is being coordinated by Pastor Sandra Brown and Pastor Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam.

The Proposed Agenda was adopted with the addition of the consideration of the budget, and some inclusion of the 50/40/10 celebration.

### **Nominating Committee**

The Reverend Lydia Posselt, chair of the Committee, described the open positions for which we need nominees. She noted that we will be staggering the terms on the Consultation Committee. Pr. Posselt asked the members of the Synod Council to distribute the letter, approach potential nominees, and have forms, including a picture, in by February 15<sup>th</sup>. She encouraged those members of Synod Council who are eligible for re-election to consider allowing their name to be placed in nomination, and submit their paperwork.

The Synod Council expressed their congratulations to Pr. Posselt on her recent marriage.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Please hold to timelines as we approach the Assembly, and the need for report submissions. The date for submission of reports is March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Vice President Beasley asked the chairpersons of the committees to include in their reports the date when you met, where you met, if you met remotely, and the date of your next meeting. She also asked that they be sure to sign their reports when they submit them.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

To ensure we have a process to address the concerns of St. John's, Richlandtown, Pr. King moved that **the Executive Committee draft the letters to the congregation council of St. John's, and to the Church Council regarding the issue of Sanctuary Church.**

**The Synod Council unanimously approved the motion.**

Pr. Sellers expressed gratitude to Ms. Doreen Kinzler for providing Christmas cookies to the members of the Synod Council.

Mr. Henry Geyer expressed his appreciation for Mrs. Elise Seyfried's article in the Living Lutheran. It is nice to see a person from our Synod published in the Church's magazine.

The meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m. with prayer by Dr. Zimmann.

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

*Approved by Synod Council February 27, 2020*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 159<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Perkasie, PA**  
**February 27, 2020**

### **WELCOME AND DEVOTIONS**

The Reverend Dr. Phil Krey and the Reverend Joshua Sullivan, pastors of St. Andrew, welcomed the Synod Council, and shared some highlights of the ministry of St. Andrew. St. Andrew focusses on invitation and details, delivering cookies to visitors, and trying to make "sticky contacts" when they come to encourage a connection to the congregation. St. Andrew has made small group ministry a priority in order to encourage such connections.

The Reverend Carolann Hopcke, Dean of the Upper Bucks Conference, led the Council in Devotions. Based on Jan Richardson's "Where Breath Begins," Pastor Hopcke had the members reflect on their journeys in life, as we enter this Lenten Journey

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 158<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:29 p.m.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 158<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

### **SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 159<sup>th</sup> meeting with one alteration: to move the Mission Moment to precede the Report of the Bishop.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

Ms. Phyllis Boyer, President of the Synodical Unit of the Women of the E.L.C.A., and Ms. Linda Garcia, Vice President, presented the Mission Moment.

They commented that they are pleased to note some connections with the Synod Council. Ms. Sandra Zimmerman is a Board Member of the Women of the E.L.C.A.; the Reverend Gwendolyn King will be representing the SEPA Synodical Unit of the Women of the E.L.C.A. at the next Triennial Gathering; the Reverend Dr. Jennifer Phelps has an article in the current edition of the Women of the E.L.C.A.'s magazine, "Gather;" Bishop Davenport will be the keynote speaker at the June Synodical Unit event, held at St. Matthew, Springfield, where Secretary Karl Richard is pastor.

The Women of the E.L.C.A. was formed in 1987, just prior to the merger that created the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and was voted into existence in 1988, the year of the merger. The Women of the E.L.C.A. is a separate, self-funding unit.

A goal of the Women of the E.L.C.A. is to empower women in service, as the women of our Church work to address the needs of women and children, particularly those in poverty. There are several tools the Women of the E.L.C.A. have to empower women in their faith and service. One of them is "Gather" magazine, the official magazine of the organization. The latest edition focusses on 50 years of the Lutheran Church ordaining women, and features the hands of our Bishop on the cover. Within "Gather" are Bible studies geared particularly for women, and they are very helpful for local church study.

"The Interchange" is the newsletter of the Women of the E.L.C.A., and there is also a website to make information broadly available.

The current desire is to attract more young women to join in this ministry, and so there are blogs and podcasts available to bring information and resources in this format as well.

February 24<sup>th</sup> is the second annual "Bold Women's Sunday" – intended to encourage women to act boldly in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Mission Statement – "As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in

faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.”

When women gather together, amazing things can be accomplished. We gather in congregational groups, in synodical groups, and as a church-wide entity. We are trying to make the organization more flexible by stream-lining the leadership structure and how congregational units operate to make it more possible for more women to be able to participate.

The Women of the E.L.C.A. works for social justice in many areas, particularly issues of women and children in poverty. Among the areas of focus are: AMMPARO, the effort of the E.L.C.A. to address needs of migrant minors; “Thursday’s in Black,” an initiative of the World Council of Churches which works to bring awareness to the issues of women experiencing gender-based violence; Lutheran World Relief quilts; and advocating against the scourge of Human Trafficking.

The next Triennial Gathering, entitled, “Just Love,” is scheduled for July 16 – 19, 2020, in Phoenix, AZ.

A focus from the last triennial was the need to provide potable water to Flint, and to recognize domestic violence in our areas of serving. In kind gifts were received for food pantries, supplies for Haiti, and domestic violence shelters.

At the 2019 SEPA synodical gathering the focus was also on water for Flint. \$15,000 was raised to send to our sister synod in Michigan, along with many notes of encouragement. The speaker addressed issues of water in our own area, and the efforts we can take to keep our water safe and secure.

In SEPA Synod there are 30 congregational units. Many meet monthly. They do many things, including making LWR quilts, and collecting clothing for domestic violence shelters. They give mutual support to other congregational units, encouraging one another on the work that each does.

The Synodical Organization assists in collecting the quilts for LWR, and provides the money and transportation to get the quilts to the distribution site in Maryland.

The Synodical organization is on the SEPA Synod website; down at bottom of list with the “W”s.

This year’s Synod Gathering, “This is My Story,” will be June 6<sup>th</sup> at St. Matthew, Springfield. Bishop Davenport will be the speaker, and we will celebrate and honor the women pastors within our Synod.

## **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Patricia A. Davenport began by asking if there were questions for her from her report.

### **Assignment Process**

The Reverend Joey Klinger asked how committed the Church is to the Assignment process for seminary graduates who are candidates for call as it is currently structured, or how might it change?

Bishop Davenport said the Church is aware that the process needs to be changed, as it reflects dynamics and demographics from thirty years ago, and which do not reflect the reality of our graduates and candidates today. Different situations call for different approaches, and this is being considered by the broader Church leadership.

### **End of Year Thanks**

A small staff luncheon was held at Christmas time to thank them and spend time together. We need to respect family and friends, and cultivate personal relationships as much as we do our professional relationships.

### **Conference of Bishops**

The Conference of Bishops has decided to pull “Trustworthy Servants,” the potential successor to “Visions and Expectations,” from consideration. The goal will be to create an entirely new document, developed with a broader constituent base involved, and allowing for more discussion on this important topic.

Bishop Davenport has been elected Vice Chair of the Conference of Bishops. This has increased the number of Zoom meetings, but has not meant significantly more travel. One of the benefits of this position is the ability she has to build deeper relationships with other bishops of the Church. She is working on dividing the bishops into groups for prayer and support. It is not easy, but it is coming together.

### **AME Church Founder’s Celebration**

Bishop Davenport was asked to preach for this event, 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop noted that the AME has a reverence for their leaders that was overwhelming. Though it was the AME’s anniversary, the occasion was intentionally ecumenical. This was a good opportunity for us as the E.L.C.A. to live into our desire to intentionally connect with the historically black churches in the United States.

### **United Lutheran Seminary**

The Seminary is exploring the possibility of developing Congregational Ambassadors to develop better ties between congregations and the Seminary, to describe what is happening at ULS, and to ask congregations for support. An ongoing conversation is being had to see if we can coordinate an understanding of giving support between the Seminary and the Synod so we that we can know what our congregations are giving in direct support to ULS, in order to celebrate the total of what is given by both the Synod and our congregations.

### **Muhlenberg College**

The college’s search for a new president is on hold for two years, as they work to live into the vision set by the most recent president.

### **Leadership for Faithful Innovation**

Bishop Davenport called on Pastors Jennifer Phelps and Joey Klinger to describe a bit of what is happening in this program.

Pr. Phelps shared that one area of focus is to create lay guiding teams which will experiment with how to break old habits, and to listen to what God might be saying to the Church today. For instance, Trinity, Perkasi, is engaging young families to see how they might be better engaged in the church.

Pr. Klinger added that it is important to give permission to continually try new things.

Bishop Davenport concurred, saying her motto is “fail fast, fail forward, fail often.”

There are eight congregations that are invested in this program, and we are curious to see what they will do.

### **Stewardship Extravaganza**

This was a wonderful two day event hosted by Trinity, Lansdale. Due to the support of congregations who helped to underwrite this program, we hosted a world class event for just \$50 per person. There were great speakers who kept telling us about how to keep this vision of ministry, and to remind us that Jesus is the focus, not just paying the bills. Many thanks to The Reverend Karen Sease, Synod staff, the Reverend Larry Smoose, and the Stewardship team for their work in coordinating this event.

Those who attended are very excited to have another event like this. We need to broaden the participation and the representation so that leaders of all types are involved, not because of their ethnicity or gender, but because they have gifts to bring to this important work.

### **Holy Closure**

Grace, Norristown, ended its ministry January 12<sup>th</sup>. These events are always bittersweet, as on this day the church is always full, and there is great celebration of what has happened in the congregation’s history, leaving one wishing things could be different. It is good that Grace “visioned forward,” and planned their ending well, including sharing their resources in ways that will bless the Church. Bishop Davenport is grateful that nearly all the members of Grace have found homes in other congregations; they have not quit on the church!

### **Urban Seeds**

This program, which gives micro-loans to members of our congregations, held a Youth Financial Expo at Grace, Philadelphia. Approximately 40 youth learned about money management, starting a business, and the need for generosity. Bishop Davenport was able to speak with several adults at this event.

### **Martin Luther King, Jr., Service**

The Philadelphia Chapter of the African Descent Lutheran Association hosted this service at Grace, Drexel Hill. Bishop Davenport was the preacher for the event. Sister Tracey Beasley, Pastor Cornelius Eaddy, and the Reformation Gospel Choir sang as a part of the celebration.

### **Staff Retreat**

The staff had its first overnight retreat. It was a good time to grow and vision together. The discussion centered in Simon Sinek’s concept of the “Golden Circle:” Why, What, and How.

Bishop asked that we hold our staff in prayer as they continue to plan for the ministry we do together in SEPA Synod.

### **Silver Springs – Martin Luther School and The Villages**

These two organizations have joined forces in order to maximize their impact, and receive further funding streams. Silver Springs has been affiliated with the SEPA Synod, and The Villages had been affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA). They are now incorporated as Gemma Services. This has changed the official affiliation, as the new organization no longer has its 501.c.3 status through SEPA Synod.

Pastor Phelps shared that this does not change our history of affiliation or our ministry association. Please realize that this is a difficult decision to create the funding streams that are necessary, but the work they do still continues. They still need our support.

### **Congregational Vitality Event**

Bishop Davenport, the Reverend Dr. William Flippin and the Reverend Tim Johansen were among leaders from across the E.L.C.A. who attended a training event in San Diego. There were great speakers, great workshops, and a hopeful spirit as we live into “Mission 2025” of the E.L.C.A.

AMMPARO had a large contingency at the conference. As part of the event there was a service at the border at Tijuana. At this point the wall between the U.S. and Mexico extends well out into the sea. It used to be possible to touch hands through the slats of the wall. Now a second series of slats has been added, so one can only touch pinkies through the wall. Very sad and moving experience, as U.S. Federal helicopters flew overhead during the entire service.

### **Two Significant Deaths**

Bishop Davenport noted with particular sadness the death of two leaders of the Church. The Reverend Dr. Herbert Michel, who had served in SEPA Synod, and The Reverend Dr. Herbert Chilstrom, the first Presiding Bishop of the E.L.C.A., both died recently. We thank God for their service to Christ’s Church. Please keep their families in prayer.

### **Sanctuary Church**

Bishop Davenport read an email from Mr. Brett Shaw, a member of St. Paul’s, Applebachsville, expressing his support for the direction the Church has taken regarding Sanctuary Church. Mr. Shaw had attended a gathering of the Upper Bucks Conference addressing the concerns raised by St. John’s, Richlandtown. While there is some consternation over the action of the Churchwide Assembly, it is refreshing to hear such a strong affirmation of what we are doing from one of our members. Within his message, he wrote, “How can we ever separate this word [sanctuary] from JESUS CHRIST and the Church of Jesus Christ!” Mr. Shaw ended his email with these words: “If ‘sanctuary,’ a Holy and Sacred place, is ‘dangerous’ if it means Advocacy and Protection for vulnerable refugees, then I’m all in. I cast my lot with Jesus.”

### **Actions on the Roster**

*At this time the Synod Council went into executive session to consider the actions on the roster. This is done because the actions may include changes in call that rostered ministers have not yet*

*been able to share with their ministry site. They are included in the minutes because by the time of posting, notifications will have been made.*

Secretary Richard presented the following actions on the roster, all of which were **unanimously adopted by the Synod Council.**

***Call to Specialized Ministry***

**S.C.20.02.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the Rev. Margaret Ainsley as Director of Pastoral Care at Doylestown Hospital in Doylestown, effective February 27, 2020 to February 26, 2021.**

***Request to move from Active to On Leave from Call Roster***

**S.C.20.02.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant on leave from call status to the Rev. David Oppold, first year, effective December 27, 2019**

**S.C.20.02.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant on leave from call status to the Rev. Susan Lang, first year, effective February 27, 2020**

***Requests to move from Active to Retired Roster***

**S.C.20.02.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Janice Vogt retirement status, effective February 1, 2020**

**Housing Allowances**

**S.C.20.02.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2020 housing allowance for Bishop Patricia Davenport, Pastor Robert Fisher, Pastor Violet Little and Pastor Karen Sease, and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT that the recipients be reminded that the amounts so designated as rental/housing allowance are excludable from the gross income of the respective recipients only to the extent that said amounts are used to rent or provide a home. Further the amount eligible for the Section 107 exclusion may not exceed the fair rental value of the minister's home (including furnishings and appurtenances) plus the cost of utilities. To the extent a greater amount is designated as rental/housing allowance, the designation will be ineffectual with respect to such amount.**

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

**Information Not Requiring Action**

**Transfers:**

The Rev. Linnea K. Clark to New Jersey Synod effective December 7, 2019

The Rev. Nathaniel Preisinger to Rocky Mountain Synod effective December 8, 2019

**Death:**

The Rev. Dr. Herbert Michel (*Former Retired Pastor of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Member of Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod as of February 17, 2009*)

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

Report was received as presented.

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, referenced his written report.

**St. John's, Richlandtown**

A letter was drafted and sent to St. John's Congregation Council sharing the Synod Council's response to their resolution regarding Sanctuary Church from the discussion at the last Synod Council meeting.

A letter was also drafted and sent to Presiding Bishop Eaton, E.L.C.A. Secretary Rothmeyer, and the Church Council regarding this concern.

A letter was received from Bishop Eaton in response.

All letters were shared with the Synod Council, and Bishop Eaton's response was also forwarded to the Congregation Council of St. John's, Richlandtown.

**Changes to bylaws and continuing resolutions unique to SEPA Synod**

Secretary Richard reviewed proposed amendments to the portion of our Synod Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions that are unique to SEPA Synod. These involve changes to language and grammar to bring these provisions into alignment with the changes to Synod Constitutions adopted by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

One provision that is still being clarified is S6.03.14., which describes our relationship as a Synod to the Social Ministry Organizations on our territory. Secretary Richard expressed his thanks to the Pr. Jennifer Phelps for her assistance in this language. Pr. Phelps had previously served Liberty Lutheran Services, and had a strong understanding of the current structure and relationships of the SMOs and the Synod. The proposed revisions are being shared with each of the many SMOs on our territory to ensure they concur with the way in which we are amending this section.

**Reception of the property of a former congregation of the SEPA Synod**

Grace, Norristown has experienced "holy closure." To formally receive the assets of this former congregation, I move the following:

**S.C.20.02.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of Grace Lutheran Church, Haws Ave., Norristown, to close, effective January 12, 2020, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of Grace, Norristown, 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, February 27, 2020, 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.**

Bishop Davenport shared that Grace, Norristown, had suggested that it might be a good site for the Synod offices. The Synod had used space at Grace several years ago, and it is a property of the Synod. Bishop is grateful for the suggestion, but as with so many of our former congregational sites, deferred maintenance makes this impractical. There are concerns at Grace with asbestos, security, water issues, and other concerns which do not make this a feasible choice.

Mr. Adam Clark shared an observation about our former congregations. He noted that for several of them, their on-line presence is still active. This may cause concerns if someone sees their site and tries to attend worship, only to discover later that the congregation is closed. Bishop Davenport said this will be shared with Pastor William Vanderslice, who works with congregations in the process of Holy Closure.

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

Ms. Janet Neff reviewed the financial reports, and outlined the budget for 2021 (fiscal year ending 1/31/2022). Mr. Albert Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee, was not available this evening. Pastor Sellers and Mr. Everett Wick, members of Finance, are here to assist with the report.

Main points of the budget:

Mission support from congregations is down by \$132,000. This is the lowest response we have had to budget in five years. We are hopeful the Stewardship Extravaganza and other efforts by Pr. Karen Sease, Pr. Larry Smoose, and the Stewardship Committee will bear positive results. We agree with the theme of the Extravaganza: it is not about the budget, but about ministry.

At the moment we anticipate a budget deficit (fiscal year ending 1/31/2022) of \$108,554. This deficit is in part because of the Mission portion of the budget, which is never expected make a profit due to the nature of what we do in this segment of our spending.

This past year (fiscal year ending 1/31/2020), ended with a surplus, but this was because we were able to sell six properties we had under management.

There is a cost of living increase for the staff. The staff did not include this in their budget proposal, but the Finance Committee felt it is important to do this to properly care for our staff. If we are in deficit at the end of the fiscal year we will need to apply to the Fund for Mission for the difference.

Money from the sale of the property of the former St. John's, Quakertown is a receivable; we sold the property on the last day of the fiscal year, January 31, 2020.

The Finance Committee has a concern regarding the sale of the property of St. Petri-Hope. It appears as though the congregation may have made an inappropriate designation of funds from the sale of the building. According to our practice, congregations may designate funds from their cash assets to bless other ministries, but they cannot designate money from the sale of the property. This is because when the property is sold, it is no longer in the possession of the

congregation. It is the asset and responsibility of the Synod. The congregation no longer exists to make a determination of the sale of property, or of the use of the proceeds from the sale.

This concern has both legal and relational ramifications. The interdependent nature of our structure, congregation, synod, and churchwide organization is based on trust of each other, and a need to hold each other accountable. We do not want to set a precedent that allows former congregations to believe they have continued say over assets they once owned.

Pr. Gwendolyn King asked for clarification of which properties were sold.

Ms. Neff stated that they are the properties that once housed Immanuel, Burholme; St. Michael’s, Germantown; Prince of Peace, Plymouth Meeting; St. Petri-Hope, NE Philadelphia; Good Shepherd, Mayfair; and St. John’s, Quakertown.

Mr. Adam Clark moved that the Synod Council approve the following resolution:

**S.C.20.02.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the budget for 2021 (fiscal year ending 1/31/2022) for presentation to the Synod Assembly for adoption.**

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

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Forward Together in Faith**

The written report submitted to the Council show where the latest round of grants has been submitted. They include:

Total Grants awarded for 2020 (\$24,595), by area of emphasis:

Networking	\$1,750	Communicating	\$4,250
Innovating	\$9,340	Equipping	\$9,255

<b>Ministry Site</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Area</b>
Ascension	Newtown	\$2,105	Communicating
Community of Love	Oxford	\$1,000	Innovating
Family of God	Buckingham	\$ 500	Networking
Grace	Hatfield	\$2,000	Innovating
Liberty Lutheran	Ambler	\$1,650	Equipping
Lutheran Campus Ministry	Philadelphia	\$5,000	Equipping
New Hanover – Peer support	New Hanover	\$2,515	Innovating
New Hanover – Incubator	New Hanover	\$1,000	Innovating
New Life Ministries	Philadelphia	\$ 500	Equipping
Redeemer	Jamison	\$1,000	Innovating
St. David’s	Philadelphia	\$1,000	Equip/Comm
St. John’s	Blue Bell	\$ 500	Networking
St. John’s	Sumneytown	\$1,500	Equipping
St. Michael’s	Philadelphia	\$2,500	Net/Comm

Trinity

Fort Washington \$1,825

Innovating

### **Constitution Committee**

The Reverend Tyler Rasmussen has moved to a new call in Michigan, and is no longer the chair of this Committee. The Reverend Serena Sellers has agreed to take over the chair. The Committee will meet in the next week or two to reorganize itself and review the status of the congregations that are revising their constitutions. These congregations will be made aware of this change in leadership, and what they still need to do in the process.

### **Investment Committee**

Mr. David Ehret, chair of the Investment Committee, shared that they met in early February. They have scheduled the investment of the approximately \$421,000 received from the sale of the building of the former St. Petri-Hope. This may need to be revisited, as there are questions about restrictions that may be on these funds.

The Vanguard funds are slightly (-\$14,000) down after the first month of the calendar year.

The T. Rowe Price funds are up significantly (+569,500), but this also includes new investments added to these funds.

The overall value of our investments mid-February is \$5,356,032. We are anticipating growth of 7% this year.

### **Nominating Committee**

The Reverend Lydia Posselt, chair of the Nominating Committee, distributed copies of the Nomination Report as of this date. She asked members of the Council to check it for accuracy, and inform her of any changes they see that may be needed. She asked that if any Council members are eligible for reelection, and have not yet submitted their paperwork, to please do so as soon as possible. She further requested that members of the Synod Council work to identify suitable persons to fill the open slots, and encourage them to submit their forms. All nominations need to be in by March 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Old Business**

None

### **New business**

Mr. Henry Geyer noted that Pr. Flippin is in Living Lutheran, and Pr. Lydia Posselt is in the Christ in our Home devotional booklet.

Pr. Sellers inquired about our 501.c.3. status. Congregations are considered 501.c.3. organizations through the Synod, and the Synod forms expire next month. Are we OK with this?

Mr. Martin Schwab, Senior Accountant, said yes we are, the paperwork has been filed at Harrisburg.

### **Unfinished Business**

#### **Position Description for Synod Council Members**

Mr. Geyer addressed an issue he had broached in the Executive Committee meeting. A question has been on his mind as to what his job is as a synod council member. Is it just to go to this meeting? He hasn't been to all the congregations in his conference. He has not met with the

Dean of his conference. He thinks the lay members' job is to represent the Synod at the Conference. To that end, he feels we need a fuller description of what the role of this position is. It was echoed by Vice President Beasley that we also need to have a description of the role of clergy members on Synod Council as well. We may want to compare it with the Dean's description to see that we overlap appropriately. This idea will be addressed more fully through the Executive Committee.

#### **Help Needed at Assembly**

Administration team will be asking for people to help at Assembly. A team is coming together to discuss this, as the Assembly will be a bit different this year, incorporating a day of service along with the business of the Synod. There will be more than just registration, as we have the service project portion that will need coordination.

Meeting adjourned at 6:27 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Phelps

Respectfully submitted,  
The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, E.L.C.A.

*Approved by Synod Council April 28, 2020*

**MINUTES  
of the 160<sup>th</sup> MEETING  
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL  
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
Zoom Meeting  
April 28, 2020**

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 160<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:07 p.m.

The Reverend Dwight Mason began the meeting with prayer.

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, called the roll. A quorum was declared.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 159<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

#### **ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER**

Secretary Richard presented the following actions on the roster, all of which were **unanimously adopted by the Synod Council**.

*Call to Interim Ministry*

**S.C.20.04.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Gwendolyn King to interim ministry at St. Stephen's in Feasterville, PA beginning January 6, 2020, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor King resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

*Renewal - Call to Specialized Ministry*

**S.C.20.04.02. 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, 2020 to May 14, 2021.**

*Renewal - Call to Unusual Circumstances*

**S.C.20.04.03. 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, 2020.**

*On Leave from Call Requests:*

**S.C.20.04.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. David Maddox, II, third year, effective January 1, 2020**

**S.C.20.04.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Phillip Waselik, third year, effective March 31, 2020**

**S.C.20.04.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to Deacon Ethyl Geist, third year, effective April 1, 2020**

**S.C.20.04.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Nancy brown, third year, effective April 8, 2020**

**S.C.20.04.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to Deacon Suzanne Rigg, sixth year, effective May 31, 2020**

**S.C.20.04.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Donna Wright, second year, effective July 2, 2020**

**S.C.20.04.10. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Dr. Anita Baly, third year, effective July 23, 2020**

***Request to Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster***

**S.C.20.04.11. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Paul Townsend retirement status, effective July 1, 2020**

**No Action Required**

***Invitation Ended with U.C.C. minister to serve an ELCA congregation***

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at its September 19, 2019, meeting renewed an invitation to the Rev. Suzanne Marie Spaulding, a U.C.C minister, to serve as part-time pastor at St. Luke's in Ferndale, PA beginning September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020. On December 24, 2019, Pastor Spaulding ended her ministry with St. Luke's to accept a U.C.C. full time call.

***Deaths***

The Rev. Charles H. Eiss, Jr., which occurred March 1, 2020

The Rev. Cindy Ray, notified April 3, 2020

**PRESENTATION OF THE AUDIT AND THE REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Mr. Phil Tackett cited the constitution as to the parameters of the Audit Committee's responsibilities. Mr. Tackett noted the Committee's responsibility began with the signing of the contract with the auditors, and concludes for the year with the SC reception of this report.

Mr. Tackett offered the following observations:

Congregational contributions declined by 4.5%, or \$81,651

Two concerns from last year have been resolved.

1. Liquidity and available cash reserves for general operations, which had been a concern last year, is no longer an issue this year.

2. Last year we had identified that we hold an item of real estate on our books, but we did not know the identity of that holding. We now know that is a property the synod purchased on Tioga Street, which houses the mission site of New Creation. The value listed in our financial statement is \$110,000. The current assessment is \$300,000. We may need to investigate whether we should alter the amount listed in our reports.

The Auditors identified two areas that warrant attention. The first needs to be corrected, and the second is a suggestion.

1. We need to adjust the way in which we assign and track interest from two different trusts to ensure it is properly accounted for in our financial statements. This issue has been resolved.

2. A suggestion of how we use our Endowment Fund. We may wish to set a policy that will enable the synod to use between 2% and 7% of the market value of the Fund for our general expenses. Without such a policy the synod may only use the interest and the dividends of the Fund. Setting such a percentage allows this Fund to be an ongoing source of revenue, in the understanding that over time the Fund will outperform the amount withdrawn.

Vice President Beasley asked for questions. Hearing none, Mr. Tackett put forth the following motion to receive the audit:

**S.C.20.04.12. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council receives the Audit and the Report of the Audit Committee for submission to the Synod Assembly.**

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

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Ms. Janet Huber Neff began by asking members of the Synod Council how their congregations are doing in terms of offerings and financial security in light of the coronavirus.

Secretary Richard noted that so far St. Matthew, Springfield, was holding on fairly well. Though there has been a decrease in offerings, there has also been a decrease in expenses, including a scaling back on some personnel as well as savings on materials and utilities. He noted that online giving using Tithe.ly has increased significantly.

The Reverend Joey Klinger has sent a Pastoral letter to his congregation, Redemption, NE Philadelphia, with a stamped envelope to facilitate offerings. The response has been good. They also received an unexpected gift from an estate whose funeral he had performed last year.

Ms. Neff also asked if any congregations had been applying for funds from the federal Payroll Protection Program.

Some congregations had, some had not.

Treasurer Neff then shared the following regarding the status of the synod. March receipts were good. Preliminary response for April is down \$60,000.

The basic expenses of the synod – payroll, stipends for the Deans, utilities, and licenses – amount to approximately \$70,000 per month. This does not leave room for support of agencies we help to sponsor, nor does it include our rent to Seminary. We need an additional \$14,000 for these expenses.

In this time we also want to be able to offer as much assistance as possible to the congregations of our synod, particularly those that work with our most vulnerable communities. There is some money from the sale of the former St. Petri-Hope that may be able to help congregations in NE Philadelphia.

We currently have cash on hand of about \$350,000, which can keep us going for about three months.

We are prioritizing our expenses according to our values and needs. We will run decisions past the Executive Committee as needs arise.

For general information, Ms. Neff shared that under the recently passed CARES Act, Church employees can apply for unemployment; this is not usual, as churches do not generally pay into unemployment insurance.

Ms. Doreen Kinzler asked what might be available to assist Feast of Justice, as this ministry is providing food for significantly more families in the midst of this pandemic. From whom might they request assistance for this ministry?

Bishop Davenport assured Ms. Kinzler that the synod is working on a few things to help Feast of Justice, because we know how significant this ministry is in this region.

### **PROPOSAL TO CANCEL MAY MEETING OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

Secretary Richard stated the intention of the Executive Committee that we cancel the May 2020 meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly.

Reasons for this intention were recounted:

- Governor Wolf has placed Pennsylvania under a state ordered shut-down of non-essential businesses, and has limited gatherings to no more than 10 people.
- Franconia Mennonite Church, our host site, is following this guideline, and will not host any events until the virus has passed, and the Governor and health department have given clearance to meet. Franconia Mennonite is also not considering rescheduling any events until it is clear that the threat of this pandemic is gone.
- We need to be concerned first and foremost with the safety of our people, and of the people of the broader communities in which we serve. Therefore it does not make sense for us to expose each other to possible harm from the coronavirus

### **Concerns of cancelling the assembly:**

An in-depth conversation ensued, covering the following topics and responses:

#### **Must we have an Assembly?**

The Model Constitution, By-laws, and Continuing Resolutions for Synods call for a triennial meeting of the synod. The Constitution, By-laws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod call for an annual assembly.

According to PA State Law (15 Pa. C.S. § 5755(a)), one is supposed to have an annual meeting if the by-laws call for one, however a “failure to hold the annual meeting at the designated time does not “work a dissolution” or “affect otherwise valid corporate acts.”” In other words, if we do not hold the annual assembly, we still exist and function legally as an organization.

#### **What happens to Synod Council seats whose terms are set to expire at the end of the Assembly?**

According to PA statute 15 Pa. C.S. § 5724(a), “[e]ach director of a nonprofit corporation shall hold office until the expiration of the term for which the director was selected *and until a successor has been selected and qualified* or until the director's earlier death, resignation or removal.” (emphasis added). So until the election of successors, the current council members continue to serve, unless they choose to resign the position.

### **Should we plan to have an Assembly in the autumn? Would this be a possibility?**

This is problematic for many reasons, including:

- We cannot know at this time what the status of the pandemic will be in the fall.
- As noted, Franconia Mennonite Church will not consider rescheduling until the pandemic has passed, and planning an alternate location often takes a year to arrange.
- The economic toll this crisis is taking on many of our congregations may make it impossible for them to afford an Assembly in the autumn, especially if we will come together the following May for our regularly scheduled meeting of the synod.

### **What about a “virtual Assembly?” Is this permissible or possible?**

While permissible, it is difficult to arrange. All voting members will need to be able to fully participate in the discussion and voting, and have equal access to the technology employed. As we have had many of our voting members unable to use the Assembly App since they don't have smart phones, the ability to ensure all will have equal access to a virtual assembly poses both logistical and financial impediments to this arrangement.

### **What is on the Agenda that absolutely has to happen this year?**

Nothing on the agenda needs to happen this year. Among the actions before the Assembly are elections to Synod Council and Synod Committees, the receipt of the Audit Report, the adoption of the budget, and updates to the Constitution, By-laws and Continuing Resolutions. As stated above, the elections can be postponed. The Audit Report can be received at the next Assembly. The budget can also be adopted next May, even as it will be in the midst of the fiscal year for which it has been prepared. The Synod Council, as the legislative body of the synod between assemblies, is authorized to oversee expenditures in line with the priorities of the Assembly (§S10.02., S.15.13.). And the changes to the constitution are also able to wait, as they are essentially “housecleaning” items to bring us in conformity with the changes made at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, but not significant changes to the way in which we operate as an organization.

### **What are other synods doing in light of the virus?**

The advice from the ELCA church office is if you do not have to meet this year, such as for the election of a Bishop, and if you are able to postpone or cancel your meeting, it would be good to do so. Consult your constitution and your synod's attorney to determine what is permissible in your state.

Most synods that do not have an election for a bishop have followed this advice, and have decided to cancel their assemblies for 2020.

As discussion came to a close, the following resolution was placed before the Council:

**S.C.20.04.13. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, in light of Governor Wolf's orders closing public gatherings because of the corona virus pandemic, and in conformity with the practice of most synods in the ELCA, the SEPA Synod Council approves the cancellation of the May 2020 meeting of the Synod Assembly.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution**

Secretary Richard will work with Pastor Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communications and Mission Interpretation, to convey this action to the synod, the reasons behind this decision, and our intention not to meet in Assembly until next May. This communication will happen in the next two days, as the Assembly was scheduled for this upcoming weekend.

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

Vice President Beasley thanked the Synod Council for its engagement in this issue. She asked the council members whose terms would end this year to prayerfully consider continuing in their respective positions until next year, and to let her or Secretary Richard know their decision by May 5<sup>th</sup>, if possible.

Vice President Beasley thanked Secretary Richard for the work he and Synod Attorney John Gordon did to research the issues regarding the Synod Assembly, and what options there are for cancelling or holding it. She also noted the many conversations held with the Deacon Sue Rothmeyer, the Secretary of the ELCA, regarding many questions surrounding the work of the Synod if we do not hold the Assembly.

Vice President Beasley suggested that each member of the Council pick a person you can email perhaps once a week, or call or text. This can be a huge help in your congregations. We need to lift up each other on this board as well. Reach out to your pastor, or a pastor in your Conference to offer encouragement and help as they may need it. Reach out to neighboring congregations, particularly those in transition. She expressed her great appreciation for this board, and what we do together.

## **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Davenport reminded us that as we go through this health crisis, “We are sheltered in place and sheltered in God!”

The Bishop and the Staff continue to be active in the work of the synod. Among the many ways they continue to serve the work of the church include:

### **Ministries:**

The Office of the Bishop is checking in to see how we are connecting with our various ministries – congregations, food ministries, outreach efforts, etc.

We are working through call processes remotely, and with an eye to appropriate social distancing.

Our Executive Committee is working on grant applications for funding to ensure our vital ministries can continue, particularly those which work with people on the margins of society.

### **Meetings:**

Invitations to attend events and meetings have not stopped, but have been moved to virtual gatherings:

Bishop is continuing to meet with black clergy

Dr. Flippin and Bishop Davenport meet with faithful innovation teams across the ELCA.

She is still attending meetings of the Muhlenberg College board.

**Making Connections:**

Bishop Davenport has been in contact with Bishop Stephen Munga, and his wife, Dr. Annette Munga, of the Northeast Diocese of Tanzania to offer prayer and words of support. She has been working to keep in touch with all the rostered ministers in our synod. The Staff has created several videos with words of encouragement. Bishop has made 86 personal calls of encouragement to Rostered Ministers.

**Re-opening:**

Our area of Pennsylvania will be returning to our new “abnormal” in stages: red, yellow, green, according to the process set by Governor Wolf. The make-up of our five county region is unique. We have different levels of density and risk in different areas of our synod. Rather than promoting a “one size fits all” program for our synod, we can provide questions to consider as each site takes the process of re-opening seriously in its own context. We will all need to listen to our governor, the CDC, be practical, and use science and common sense.

Some of the items congregations will need to talk through:

- How do we care for vulnerable people among us?
- Many of our members are 60 and older.
- Consideration of all the particulars of re-opening needs to be shaped in each local context.
- Perhaps Conferences can work together to determine what we will do in this region.
- The need for physical distancing will last long beyond the time we are “able” to return.
- Our priority is the health and safety of the members of our congregations, AND the people in our surrounding communities.

We need to pray for the Wisdom of Solomon, and a good dose of Common Sense.

Bishop Davenport opened the floor for questions.

Pastor Serena Sellers asked, “What in particular do you need us to pray for you?”

Bishop Davenport responded “Sabbath.” We all need to be sure to take some down time. And pray for the care of our Rostered Ministers.

She added that it is also important that we, who are gainfully employed, do what we can to assist others. We can be a blessing to others who are not as secure as we are. So pray for a spirit of generosity to be among us.

Pastor Gwendolyn King shared that, as one who received one of the personal notes from the Bishop, “you have no idea how much that meant, so thank you.”

Mr. Bill Graham conveyed the same sense of gratitude for the note he had received.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Henry Geyer asked if we should reach out specifically to those who were in nomination to thank them for being willing to serve.

Ms. Beasley suggested we wait until we know who is willing to continue serving on the Council. We may need to tap some of these people to fill open seats.

Meeting adjourned with prayer by Bishop Davenport at 6:00 p.m.  
The next meeting of the SEPA Synod Council will be June 18, 2020 at 4:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

*Approved by Synod Council June 18, 2020*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 161<sup>st</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Zoom Meeting**  
**June 18, 2020**  
**4:00 p.m.**

**DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley invited the Reverend Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop, to lead the Synod Council in devotions. The devotions were based on Isaiah 58:6-12, through which Pr. Sease offered prayer for the world and the troubled times in which we live. All were invited to offer their petitions in the chat feature of Zoom, which were read by Pr. Sease for the benefit of all.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 161<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:15 p.m.

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, called the roll. A quorum was declared.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 160<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 161<sup>st</sup> meeting as presented.

**REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Patricia A. Davenport began by expressing her thanks.

She thanked the Synod Council members who are willing to continue to serve, even as their terms would have expired, as we move forward in this time of the corona-virus.

She thanked the Deans and all Rostered Ministers for their faithfulness, their creativity, and their willingness to work in new ways forced on us by the pandemic. Deans and Conferences are meeting virtually and continuing Pericope Studies via Zoom. Bishop Davenport noted the level of “care fatigue” many of our Rostered Ministers are experiencing. We are facing both the opportunities, but also the challenges that come with the use of so much virtual meeting space. We are adjusting to the reality that we will need to continue this into the future, likely beyond the time we can gather again in person.

### **Churchwide Conversations**

Bishop Davenport expressed her gratitude to LAMPa and Ms. Tracey DePasquale, who facilitated a conversation on the Draft Social Message, Government and Civic Engagement: Discipleship in a Democracy.

The Conference of Bishops joined in a conversation on “Becoming the Body of Christ: Condemning White Supremacy.” With a focus on Micah 6: What does the Lord require? That we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, Bishop reminded the Synod Council we cannot just quote scripture: we need to LIVE scripture.

The Conference of Bishops also held a wide-ranging conversation about re-opening buildings. The Conference invited people from across the ELCA with expertise in various areas to discuss how we can open as safely as possible. Topics discussed included virtual communion, physical isolation, and how to continue being the Church in this time of the pandemic.

We as a Synod are encouraging our congregations to wait until at least July 1<sup>st</sup> before reopening our buildings, but we are paying attention to the trends across the nation as we consider the safety of the people of our Church

The Authentic Diversity Advisory Team met. This team is working to recommend ways in which we can prioritize the discussion of, and focus on work to fight, systemic racism and white supremacy.

### **Ecumenical Conversations**

Bishop Davenport and other leaders have been holding conversations across the five-county area to speak not only about the COVID-19 pandemic, but also about the issues of race relations. Bishop was able to be a part of several multi-faith prayer vigils and a peaceful protest for Black lives.

Bishop Davenport then opened the floor for questions:

Pastor Jennifer Phelps asked what the Bishop feels are the most amazing things happening in ministry in the Synod in this pandemic time.

Bishop Davenport listed many things:

- There is a lot of good preaching and good music that is offered on various virtual platforms. She has been able to see the many ways in which congregations are worshipping by entering numerous virtual worship experiences.
- Emmanuel Souderton has been engaged in an impressive food ministry.
- It is wonderful to see the number of people making masks for use in this time.

- Cases of materials have been collected and shared with the Welcome Church.
- Congregations are receiving new members virtually.
- The Holy Spirit is always at work. In the midst of the pandemic, in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd, our rostered leaders are stepping up and making their voices heard.

Bp. Davenport called on Mr. Bill Graham, who shared how his church had a worship service to commemorate the “Emanuel 9,” those members of the Bible Study at Mother Emmanuel AME Church in Columbia, SC who were killed by a white supremacist. Mr. Graham’s daughter is a reporter with the Philadelphia Inquirer that was arrested at a recent protest for racial justice, even as she was wearing her press credentials. He and his wife are very proud of her.

Pastor Gwendolyn King stated that she is bursting with pride as she listens to the Bishop speak both ecumenically and across the community, presenting the gospel with grace and the power of the Spirit. She asked when we might hear details of the ideas the Conference of Bishops has been discussing regarding virtual communion and the other topics Bishop had mentioned.

Bp. Davenport shared that everything we have is and will be posted on MinistryLink. Ultimately the choice of what to do regarding communion is yours. There is a division in the Conference of Bishops, where some Synods welcome offering virtual communion, and others are holding the line that “I will not commune until all can commune.” Each Pastor will need to work with their congregation’s leadership to see what they choose to do.

Pr. Phelps affirmed what the Bishop expressed. She noted there is a wide range of opinion in the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. She suggested it may be useful to tell the stories of why people have made the choices they have made to further the conversation and the decision making process.

Bp. Davenport encouraged people to connect with Pastor Robert Fisher to share this information so we can all benefit from the collective deliberations. For instance, if you choose to do remote communion, share how and why you are doing what you are doing. There are ways to approach this so there is a sense of respect and awe, not chaos and confusion.

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

Vice President Beasley referred the Council to the report in their packets. She noted that it was the decision of the Executive Committee to leave all committees and boards the same as they have been. Since we did not have the Synod Assembly, and therefore did not have elections, this board has not significantly changed, so the proposal is to not change the Committee assignments at this time. She asked if there were any questions or concerns with this arrangement. With no objections raised, she thanked the members of the Council for continuing in their current assignments for the coming year.

At a meeting with the Synod Vice Presidents there was a lot of conversation regarding opening congregations and how to keep budgets going. Ms. Beasley asked that as you pray for our Synod, please continue to pray for our congregations as well.

Ms. Beasley noted that in this time of virtual meetings and working from home she is having a hard time closing off from work, and this is not helpful. She expressed her thanks to the Synod staff for the amazing amount of work they are doing, even as we are working remotely. She encouraged the staff to not overwork.

Ms. Beasley also expressed her thanks to those of the Synod Council who are supporting other members of this board and the deans of their Conferences. She encouraged members to continue to offer such signs of support to each other.

She thanked Council members who are willing to stay on the board; your ongoing service is incredibly helpful to the Synod. Vice President Beasley also thanked Ms. Elizabeth Young, who has decided she is not able to continue beyond this meeting. Ms. Beasley stated Ms. Young has been an asset to this board.

Vice President Beasley concluded by reminding all to take care of each other, wear your masks, and continue to be safe.

## **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

Pastor Karl M. Richard, Secretary, began his report by presenting the Actions on the Roster.

### **Actions on the Roster**

#### ***Term Call to congregation of a Full Communion Partner denomination:***

**S.C. 20.06.01. 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.**

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

#### ***Request to Move from On Leave Roster to Retired Roster:***

**S.C.20.06.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. David Oppold retirement status, effective June 1, 2020**

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

#### ***Requests to Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster***

**S.C.20.06.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Susan Folks retirement status, effective June 1, 2020**

**S.C.20.06.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Shirley Guider retirement status, effective July 1, 2020**

**S.C.20.06.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Cynthia Krommes retirement status, effective September 1, 2020**

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

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

##### ***Transfers:***

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

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

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

#### **Affirmation of email votes**

Two votes had been taken via email since our last regular meeting of the Synod Council. One resolution was put forward to establish and account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, and a second resolution was put forward to authorize signatories for this account. Both resolutions had received approval by more than two-thirds of the membership of the Synod Council, with no negative votes presented.

**S.C.20.06.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the email votes that established an account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, and the authorized signatories of Bishop Patricia A. Davenport, Ms. Janet Neff, Mr. Martin Schwab, and Ms. Yvonne Curtis.**

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

#### **Proposed Amendment to the By-laws regarding Annual Synod Assembly**

To honor the spirit of our constitution, by-laws, and continuing resolutions, while recognizing the impact events such as the current pandemic bring to fulfilling the letter of this governing document, the Executive Committee presents the following resolution:

**S.C.20.06.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the following amendment to by-law S7.11.01. for presentation to the Synod Assembly for adoption:**

A regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be held annually unless performance becomes impossible or impracticable, especially as a result of an event or effect that could not have been anticipated or controlled, such as a public health crisis; severe acts of nature or weather events including floods, fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, or explosions; war, acts of terrorism, and epidemics; acts of governmental authorities such as expropriation, condemnation, confinement orders/recommendations; strikes and labor disputes; or other such events that make the meeting impossible or impracticable.

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

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

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, shared the following from her written report.

Our receipts from congregations are down but we understand the difficulties many of our congregations are facing at this time. We have also had losses in our investments which has impacted our ability to meet our ministry goals. The loss in investment income has had an impact across our budget.

We have received funds from the Paycheck Protection Program in the amount of \$168,000. This came not from the ELCA Federal Credit Union, but from Wells Fargo.

We received a grant of \$7,500 from the ELCA to assist congregations during the pandemic. We also received \$35,000 from Lutheran Disaster Relief to assist congregations with their feeding ministries.

Mr. Albert Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee, made his report.

The Committee met in its capacity as providing oversight to the Synod's finances. They reviewed financial statements, and found no concerns. Thanks were expressed to Mr. Martin Schwab, the Synod's Senior Accountant, for his faithful work.

### **St. Petri-Hope**

The Finance Committee discussed the concerns regarding the funds from the sale of the building of the former St. Petri-Hope. As opposed to the way our policy is established, St. Petri-Hope sent notes designating how the money from the sale of the congregation should be used. Our Synod policy that states that when a property of a former congregation is sold, 15% of the proceeds are placed in the Synod's general fund, and then, following the payment of expenses of the remaining properties under management, the remainder of the other 85% goes to the Fund for Mission. The Board of Trustees of the Fund for Mission is then tasked with determining where those funds are used. The Committee discussed whether the designation from the former congregation should be seen as binding, or as a recommendation. The Committee does not see a need to ask for any action from the Synod Council in this matter. The Committee is looking at this in terms of oversight and transparency. One expenditure has gone to the desired purpose of the former congregation: funds of the Fund for Mission from the former St. Petri-Hope were tapped to assist a congregation in NE Philadelphia.

Mr. Schwab shared that the portion that covered the outstanding expenses of the other properties under management has been deducted.

Mr. Dave Ehret expressed his concern that, if we acquiesce to this arrangement, it may set a precedent, allowing other congregations to then determine what they want done with the money from the sale of their former buildings.

Mr. Everett Wick, member of the Finance Committee, stated the Committee has decided we do not want to accept money with restrictions.

Pastor Serena Sellers said that this has happened in the past, close to the time of the founding of the Fund. We do not want to encourage it, but we want to be sensitive in the midst of the difficult process of closing a congregation

### **Approval of funds from the Fund for Mission**

Mr. Glenn described that, for some time, we have been using money from the Fund for Mission for the 03 Mission portion of our budget. We have drawn from the Fund for Mission to close the gap for this portion of the budget without approval of the Board of Trustees of the Fund for Mission.

The Committee discussed two issues regarding this:

1. Should this be happening without such authorization?
2. Should we use Fund for Mission money when there has been a surplus in the overall receipts of the budget, or should such surplus funds be used for the 03 Mission portion of the budget?

The purpose of the Fund for Mission is to fund new ministry initiatives that are brought to the Trustees of the Fund for Mission. The Committee did not make a decision on issue “2.” The Committee did address issue “1,” concurring that the process laid out in the Fund for Mission guidelines should be followed.

Bishop Davenport said there is a reason for process. We do want to follow the process and guidelines for future expenditures.

Mr. Ehret asked whether, or where, there is there an accounting of this Fund for the Council.

Ms. Sandra Zimmerman inquired as to how many years we have been using money from the Fund for Mission to close the deficit in the Mission portion.

Treasurer Neff said these expenditures have been in the 03 category of the budget. None of the money has been used for anything other than mission items. She said the reason it has not been approved by the Trustees of the Fund for Mission is that the Trustees have not met for a long time. Ms. Neff stated that we have not had any other expenses that were approved by the Trustees, as they have not met.

Bp. Davenport shared that in the past money from the Fund for Mission was used to cover staff salaries. That is no longer happening. We will now follow the process to build transparency and trust.

### **Seminary Debt**

Mr. Glenn reminded the Council that in the current budget we have \$50,000 designated for assistance for rostered ministers saddled with seminary debt. The Finance Committee has developed a formula for distributing this money to those with need. Eighteen rostered ministers applied, and sixteen were eligible according to the guidelines adopted. The money will be allocated to each in proportion to the amount of current outstanding seminary debt. As the new budget continues to allocate \$50,000 for this purpose, we will be able to receive additional applications for debt assistance next year.

Vice President Beasley asked for a copy of the governing documents for the Fund for Mission so she can be clear about the requirements for the Trustees.

### **MISSION MOMENT:**

Pastor Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communication and Mission Interpretation, presented the Mission Moment.

Pr. Fisher picked up on the question asked earlier in the meeting: “What exciting things are occurring in ministry around our Synod?” Pr. Fisher shared that many things are happening.

- He feels it is particularly exciting to see how leaders with no previous experience with technology have been creating wonderful virtual worship experiences.
- Many people from out of the area have been able to come into our congregations, and so evangelism is happening on-line.
- There has been an increase in on-line giving, to the point where some of our congregations are actually ahead of expenses at this time.
- Many congregations have stepped up their quilting efforts, and have been making masks for health care workers and fellow members in order to battle the corona-virus.
- And many food ministries have been stepping up to provide for those in need. For example, “Welcome Bread,” a program which started out of the Welcome Church, has been collecting so many sandwiches that they cannot use any more at this time.

To emphasize the power of these feeding ministries, Pr. Fisher shared video segments from four different programs in SEPA Synod.

### **Feast of Justice**

Pastor Tricia Neale, Executive Director of Feast of Justice, which is based at St. John’s, Mayfair, shared about their ministry. As the pandemic came upon the nation, and the danger to staff and clients was seen to be so profound, the question was raised, “Do we close our doors? Or do we step up our efforts?” When they saw the great need in the Northeast, they knew they could not stop.

This program has exploded in size. Pre-pandemic, Feast of Justice fed 285 households each week. They are now one of the City’s “supersites.” The supersites are assisting 800 households, and Feast of Justice is serving an additional 900, for a total of 1,700 households per week. This has been an amazing faith journey. “Initially there was enormous doubt, but God told us that this is what we are here for, for such a time as this.”

### **Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities**

Barbara Wilhelmy, Executive Director, described this program. They formed 50 years ago as many religious organizations discovered they were all helping the community in similar ways. They focus on food security, housing stability, and a variety of educational efforts. They have learned that if the worship community and the community in general work together, they can have a greater impact. Pre Covid, they had 400+ families come to their site. Post Covid, they have seen a decrease in people coming to their site, and so they pushed their food distribution out to the neighborhoods that most need it. Pottstown school district provides free lunches to all

children who need them. When the schools closed, the district set up 4 feeding sites at the 4 elementary schools around town. The Cluster paired with the schools, realizing that families with kids that need food also have adults that need food. So they set a program to bring food to those families.

The Lutheran congregations have been a strong part of this effort, especially Emmanuel, Pottstown which is a site for the program's community meals. Emmanuel opens its building every Friday evening for these community meals. Originally these were served inside, but since the restrictions on gatherings have been implemented, they have been offering take away meals so people who rely on this meal can continue to receive it.

### **Emmanuel Lutheran, Souderton – “E-meals”**

Pastor John Hiedgerd shared how Emmanuel, Souderton has played a large role in meeting the needs of food insecurity in the time of the shutdown. They decided to make paper bag meals to distribute, for free, to the community. Donations came in, and the ministry began quickly and organically. Partnerships were formed with community groups like the Indian Valley Boys and Girls Clubs to work together to help feed the community. This program has not only helped those in need by distributing 17,000 meals so far, it has also energized the congregation around a signature ministry. This ministry has not been at the expense of Emmanuel's regular operation. People of the congregation have been supporting this ministry with gifts in addition to their regular offerings. In fact, Emmanuel has had an increase in regular offerings over last year. People in the community and in other churches have also supported this effort, and Emmanuel received a grant from SEPA Synod to make this happen. Through social ministry this has been marketed to the community, and the community has responded.

### **Christ, Upper Darby**

Pastor Stephen Keiser shared the work they are doing in Eastern Delaware County. Even before the pandemic they had programs established with PhilAbundance to provide fresh produce to the community. Prior to the pandemic they were serving about 200 people each Friday morning. Post pandemic that number has grown to 300. PhilAbundance provides the food; they provide the volunteers.

Christ Lutheran also has an emergency food cabinet providing groceries to individuals in the community. Pre pandemic they assisted 3 households per week. They are now up to 10 households per week. They have received money from the Synod to assist with this so food can be available.

One new program since the pandemic is a Hot Meal program they are offering in cooperation with the Upper Darby Community Outreach Corporation. Every Tuesday and Thursday they either give out or deliver over 200 hot meals to the community. The money from the Synod has helped with this as well. Each evening's meal costs between \$400 and \$500.

God has been seen in the generosity of people in a most stressful time. Even as people have experienced deep grief and anxiety, they have still opened up to care for others in this time. Synod support and local support has been generous and helpful. In the midst of pandemic, and in the aftermath of the protests around George Floyd, we are helping people rebuild.

Vice President Beasley thanked Pr. Fisher for sharing about these ministries.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Constitution Committee**

Pr. Sellers, chair of the Constitution Committee, said the committee did meet, has reviewed several constitutions, and has sent word back to congregations as to next steps needed. They are waiting to hear back from the congregations, and so do not have any need for action at this time.

### **Investment Committee**

Mr. Dave Ehret, chair of the committee, shared that the Investment Funds have made a surprising comeback.

- As of May 31 we have seen a year to date increase of \$87,000 in our Vanguard unrestricted fund.
- Vanguard restricted funds are at \$875,000. A few expenditures were made for cemetery expenses.
- Including money added to the investments in January, investments in T. Rowe Price funds are up \$1,141,000.

The total portfolio of the Synod is valued, as of May 31, at \$6,903,638.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None

Meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m. with prayer by Pr. King

The next meeting of the SEPA Synod Council will be September 24, 2020 at 4:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

*Approved by Synod Council September 24, 2020*

**MINUTES  
of the 162<sup>nd</sup> MEETING  
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL  
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
Zoom Meeting  
September 24, 2020  
4:00 p.m.**

## **DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley invited the Reverend Dr. William Flippin, Director for Evangelical Mission, to lead the Synod Council in devotions. Dr. Flippin spoke of the changing times in which we live and encouraged the Council to discern the times, and then be adaptive to the times. We need to continue to revise our practices to be relevant. We should be like the tribe of Issachar in 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 12:32: “from Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.” This tribe was able to see where the culture and the times were going, offering early support to King David, having as a leader a woman, Deborah, when others would not. We need to move from our previous metrics and way of operating, and adapt to the new times. We need to move away from despair, and embrace enthusiasm for what God is doing. We need to recognize that God is restoring God’s appointed time.

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 162<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:15 p.m.

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, called the roll. A quorum was declared.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 161<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

## **SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 162<sup>nd</sup> meeting with the addition of the Nominating Committee to the Committee Reports.

## **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Davenport thanked Dr. Flippin for his devotions. She highlighted that we need to let all people know that God is in control of this. But we are also people of action, and we need to be faithful in how we live in this time.

### **Meetings attended – questions solicited**

Bishop Davenport shared that the days are busy and full of meetings, even as they are held remotely. On one day she had a communicator Zoom meeting, followed by a Faithful Innovation meeting, which then went to a meeting of the Conference of Bishops and then a special meeting of the Muhlenberg College Board, to a meeting with the African Descent Lutheran Association. The reality is that we all have so much going on. Bishop is mindful of this, and encourages each person of the Council to keep a healthy balance. Even as we need to step up our game in new ways to meet the current challenges, we should work hard to stay grounded.

Bishop said that her report is a reporting of these various meetings, which she attends on our behalf. So what questions does the Synod Council have about them that she can answer?

The Reverend Gwendolyn King asked if there is anything that has given the Bishop joy in the busy-ness.

Bishop is grateful for this Council, and the way in which the congregations of the Synod are actively living out the faith. Bishop asked about what our communities of faith are doing to combat the violence and racial injustice that is so present in our nation.

Some of the responses included keeping our doors open through feeding programs, recovery programs, and providing safe places for children to be off the streets. Conversations are being held with the police community to strengthen ties and understanding, to learn what is happening in our neighborhoods, and determine how we can be present for the vulnerable among us.

On October 8<sup>th</sup> there will be a rally “Taking a Stand against Violence.” Information will be available soon.

The issues we face are global. There are fires and floods in our nation, and there are fires and floods in Sudan. The pandemic and climate change are affecting not just the United States, but the world. We need to push and to pray, until something happens.

The Reverend Serena Sellers asked if there is an update on Bishop Munga and our companion synod, the North East Diocese of Tanzania.

Bishop said that the word on Bishop Munga is good. A video of his progress was shared with her, and showed him up and walking around the yard. As for the Diocese, we have not yet heard about the progress regarding the election of their next bishop. The pandemic is certainly impacting them and their ability to meet. The amount of fresh air meeting space they have will be helpful for them.

Bishop also noted that the at the Churchwide level strategies are still moving forward to address the reality and effects of systemic racism. Among the items that have been discussed is the possibility of supporting reparations as a part of the response.

### **Sexual Misconduct Policy**

As part of her report, the Bishop yielded her time to the Reverend Dr. Delores Littleton, advisor to the Bishop on fitness for ministry, who led the Synod Council in a conversation on the latest draft revisions to the Sexual Misconduct Policy. Dr. Littleton leads the Healthy Boundaries workshops for Rostered Ministers, and this document is a key piece of her work on behalf of the SEPA Synod.

Dr. Littleton shared that not much of the content has changed. It has been revised to fit current language of rostered ministers, and has removed language from the former “Visions and Expectations,” which is no longer in effect. In place of the language from “Visions and Expectations” language from the document “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” has been added. She then asked the Council for their questions and comments.

Mr. Phil Tackett questioned the last line on the first page, where it says “the synod reserves the right to depart from these policies and guidelines whenever the synod deems appropriate.” He stated this allowance feels overly broad.

Dr. Littleton replied that there are 10 responses the bishop does follow, but each case is unique, and so we need to be able to work through these with as much discretion as possible. One size does not fit all situations.

Pr. Sellers suggested we revise the sentence to read, “the synod will follow the guidelines in this document whenever possible, and yet there will be times when we need to depart from them.”

The Reverend Matt Staniz suggested it may be a more simple change to add the words “necessary and” before “appropriate.”

Bishop Davenport noted that whenever we feel a need to depart from the guidelines we consult ELCA general counsel Tom Cunniff before proceeding.

Mr. Albert Glenn asked if the definitions under “*Sexual Matters*” are set, or if we have some discretion in the wording. He expressed his feeling that they do not make provision for non-married persons.

Bishop Davenport responded that we are not able to alter that section, as it is from an ELCA document. We do, however, have some discretion in how we apply these expectations.

Mr. Glenn replied that this is helpful, but he believes there is a difference between something over which we have discretion, and something that is a violation of the guidelines.

Dr. Littleton noted that the last line on the first page, which is currently under discussion, gives the bishop leeway to deal with this issue as seems necessary.

Mr. David Ehret asked if there is anything that alerts another synod if there is an instance of sexual misconduct.

Dr. Littleton answered yes. The bishops have a process to send word to each other regarding issues of misconduct, both sexual and other instances of misconduct beyond this document’s concern.

Bishop Davenport reiterated this, saying the bishops have an understanding among themselves, “if you know something, say something.” It is a part of the mobility process.

**Pr. Staniz moved: that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council amend the draft SEPA Synod Policy Statement on Sexual Misconduct by adding to the last sentence on the first page the words “necessary and” prior to the word “appropriate.”**

**The Synod Council adopted the motion.**

Dr. Littleton asked if there were any further questions or items to discuss. As there were none, she thanked the Synod Council for their consideration, and said she will use this document as amended in her ongoing work with the Synod.

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

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley referenced the three reports that had been submitted to the Council in their packets. She asked if there were any questions regarding them. There were no questions raised.

Vice President Beasley then asked the Council “What joys or concerns are you experiencing in this time?”

Pr. King said the congregation she is serving (St. Stephen’s, Feasterville) is working well to consider how they will be open and active. Pr. King shared that she has been working with many people in her congregation, colleagues across the Synod, and making inquiries beyond the Synod with colleagues in Chicago, California, Colorado and Texas, to gather information from a wide variety of sources to help make grounded and informed decisions.

Ms. Joyce Maloney shared that Trinity, South Philadelphia, has been opened as a facility where families with children may have a place to go.

The Reverend Dr. Jennifer Phelps shared that she and the folks at Trinity, Perkasie are seeing much of the stress that is hitting families as the fall comes, the pandemic continues, and school begins, but are also seeing signs of hope that folks are still working to remain strong.

Pr. Sellers noted that information from Lutheran Disaster Response says that after 6 months people hit a wall. Knowing this helps us to normalize this stress, and we can say “yes, this is normal.” That can help us know we are OK.

Ms. Doreen Kinzler shared that St. John’s in Mayfair is continuing its partnership with Feast of Justice food ministry, and continuing to care for people in the neighborhood as well as in their congregation.

Mr. William Graham shared that Prince of Peace has been back to in-person worship since the first Sunday in July. The only conflict: the congregation wants to sing. Mr. Graham was not in favor, but the congregation is singing with masks. Pr. Cornelius Eaddy is doing a great job, and everyone loves Pr. Eaddy.

Mr. Adam Clark shared that Zion in Olney is still doing worship on-line only, via zoom, and people can call in as they wish. They are discussing when to come back in-person. Many members of the congregation are elderly, and are at high risk. They have voted to stay on-line, but after Zoom worship those who wish may come to the church to receive communion from the pastor. They are discovering that many people do not know how to properly wear a mask, and they feel they cannot put people at risk this way.

Vice President Beasley thanked all for sharing their experiences. She also noted that Pr. Bob Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communications and Mission Interpretation, has been hosting a gathering of people to share what is being done across the Synod, so all can learn from each other. Thank you, Pr. Fisher.

## **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

### **Actions on the Roster**

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, presented the following actions on the Roster:

#### ***On Leave Extension Request to ELCA Conference of Bishops:***

**S.C.20.09.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT Deacon Laura Book be granted Family Leave from the ELCA Conference of Bishops, and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council request approval of this Family Leave from the ELCA Conference of Bishops Roster Committee.**

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

#### ***Invitation to UCC Minister to Serve ELCA Congregation in SEPA Synod:***

**S.C.20.09.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, for the Rev. Dr. Karyn L. Wiseman at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Huntingdon Valley, PA beginning October 1, 2020 until September 30, 2021. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.**

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

#### ***Call to Specialized Ministry:***

**S.C.20.09.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the Rev. Sabrina LaBelle beginning August 1, 2020 to July 31, 2021.**

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

#### ***Call to Interim Ministry:***

**S.C.20.09.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Susan M. Lang to interim ministry at Christ, Trumbauersville, PA beginning June 1, 2020, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Lang resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

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

#### ***Requests to move from Active Roster to On Leave from Call Roster:***

**S.C.20.09.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Dwight Mason, second year, effective August 26, 2020**

**S.C.20.09.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld, first year, effective Augst 5, 2020**

**S.C.20.09.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Katherine Steinly, first year, effective August 17, 2020**

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

### **Information Not Requiring Action**

#### ***Transfers:***

The Rev. Cynthia D. Muse *to* Southwestern Washington Synod effective June 30, 2019

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

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

The Rev. Sabrina LaBelle *from* Pacifica Synod effective Aug.1, 2020 (*pending Synod Council call approval*)

The Rev. Harold W. Bixby *from* Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod effective Aug. 31, 2020

The Rev. Adrienne Meier *to* Indiana-Kentucky Synod effective September 8, 2020

### **Virtual Meetings for Congregations**

Secretary Richard shared with the Synod Council that a set of Guidelines is being developed to assist congregations with how to hold virtual meetings and votes to continue their work safely during the pandemic. As it is developed it will be shared with the Deans and posted for congregations to access.

### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER:**

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, highlighted the following from her written reports.

#### **Mission Support**

Mission Support from congregations through August is below projections by \$98,000. She believes this is due largely to the financial constraints from the pandemic. By comparison, Mission Support from congregations through August 2019 was below projections by only \$7,000.

Ms. Neff will be hosting a Zoom meeting for treasurers to check in and see how they are doing. The hope is that as people begin to return to their buildings there may be an increase in support. In this meeting with treasurers Ms. Neff will be mentioning about our Covid-19 fund, and share with them how they can apply if they need assistance.

#### **Paycheck Protection Program**

We have received \$168,000 from the federal Paycheck Protection Program, and that is helping with the day-to-day expenses of the Synod, particularly salaries.

#### **Investments**

We have had significant gains in our investments, and that has helped our revenue stream. We have also had a reduction in expenses, particularly in travel and other items, which have saved about \$49,000.

Overall we are in good financial position, with assets of \$7.6 million, versus liabilities of \$66,000.

### **Healing the Heart Fund**

We have had a strong response to this fund, with nearly \$17,000 contributed to date. Most of this money has been disbursed to assist Bishop Munga. The rest will be sent as we are able to determine to what agency we need to send it.

### **Designated Funds**

Mr. Ehert asked about the status of the \$7,000 in scholarships for members of the former Resurrection, Havertown.

Ms. Neff shared that we have moved this amount to the Fund for Leaders, per the guidance of the original document regarding these funds.

Mr. Ehret asked further if there is a way to put a sunset provision in other such restricted funds so we can move them after a period of time.

Ms. Neff answered that it depends on how the fund was established. Generally if there is to be a change to a restricted fund it would need to come to Synod Council for a vote to change its allocation.

Mr. Ehret said he wanted to make sure there are not funds that are lost in the shuffle, and suggested this be considered for future funds as they are established.

### **Expense for Property in Norristown**

Vice President Beasley asked about the note of a \$43,000 expense for the property of the former Grace, Norristown.

Ms. Neff shared that the code enforcement officer of the borough hit us with fines if we did not do certain improvements to the facility, specifically painting the exterior of the building.

### **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee, shared the report.

The Finance Committee met in September and reviewed the financial statements. All the reports and transactions seemed in order.

### **Fund for Mission**

The main topic of discussion at the meeting was whether there should be a reconsideration of how we are using the Fund for Mission. In particular, the conversation centered around the question of whether this Fund should be transitioned to an Endowment.

The Fund for Mission had been established by action of the Synod Council. Would changing this Fund to an Endowment too drastically alter the way this fund was intended to be used? Would such a change limit the availability of funds? There is no recommendation from the Committee at this time.

Secretary Richard and Pr. Sellers gave clarification of how money is placed in the Fund for Mission. After a property of a former congregation is received by the Synod, the Bishop is authorized to designate the sale of the property. When a property is sold, 15% of the net sales price (that is, following closing costs) goes to the general, Unrestricted Fund of the Synod. From

the remaining 85%, the debts incurred for all properties under management are cleared. Then the amount remaining from the sale goes to the Fund for Mission.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

The Reverend Dr. Guy Erwin, former Bishop of the Southwest California Synod, ELCA and newly elected President of the United Lutheran Seminary, was welcomed to give the Mission Moment.

President Erwin began his remarks.

Thank you – and it is great to be in this position. I feel like I have landed on my feet, even as it has only been 7 weeks. Currently I am living in an apartment over the Synod Office. Bishop can tap on the ceiling with a broom and I will be there.

It is a great joy to be in one of the 5 diverse synods in the ELCA. I hope we can make some “Good Trouble” together as the Church. My husband and I have not yet found a church home, but are looking for one.

I have met your ADLA chapter, and was thrilled to be asked to be a preacher for the Martin Luther King, Jr. program. We are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Urban Theological Institute. We have a wake-up call to our very white church to confront racism at every level. We are starting the process to bring on a person to deal with issues of diversity and inclusion.

As an institution coping with the Pandemic I believe we are doing well. We have been entirely on-line this semester, something that began last semester. While this is going well, we long for the day when we can be together. It was quite a time to for my husband and me to move across the country to this area. We are being cautious, but venturing out to see the area and get a feel for it. I am grateful for the partnership with SEPA Synod.

As we go forward as a seminary we want to both raise the salaries, and increase the diversity, of our faculty. We are rethinking what theological education means in this time. We want to make lifelong learning opportunities available to more people – lay as well as rostered.

When the board asked which of the honorary named chairs I wanted with my name, I said the Ministerium of Pennsylvania chair. It is the second oldest chair, but it emphasizes the long-standing relationship we have together in this area. I am most proud of this title.

Mr. Glenn asked how enrollment is this year, both in terms of numbers and diversity.

President Erwin shared that we are slightly higher in enrollment, although some students have deferred because of the pandemic. We are hoping for them to return next year. I am pleased with how strongly our D. Min program has been received at this time. I look forward to a long and healthy relationship.

Bishop Davenport thanked President Erwin for his presentation, and prayed for him and the Seminary community.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Forward Together in Faith**

Vice President Beasley gave a reminder that the deadline for grant applications for the coming year is October 31<sup>st</sup>. Grants will be distributed January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

### **Constitution Committee**

No report

### **Investment committee**

Mr. Dave Ehret, chair of the Investment Committee, shared we have a current gain of \$636,000. \$383,820 was reinvested in the beginning of September.

The total Investment Portfolio stands at \$7,770,836

He asked the Council for any questions.

Vice President Beasley noted the portion of the T Rowe Price funds dedicated for the Synod Vitality Team. Is that new?

Mr. Ehret replied that this is about 2 years old. It has been held in a money market account.

### **Nominating Committee**

The Reverend Lydia Posselt, chair of the Nominating Committee, noted we have many positions to fill. We need names for last year's open seats, this year's coming changes, and voting members for the next Churchwide Assembly in 2022. We will need all hands to help to fill the many positions. We need to reflect the diversity of our Synod in all these positions. She reminded the members we cannot accept more than one nomination from any one congregation on Synod Council. She further reminded them that according to our policy, a person may serve on Synod Council, as a Dean, or as a member of the Candidacy Committee. If they are in one position and are nominated to serve in another, they will need to choose in which area they wish to serve.

Mr. Henry Geyer asked about those who filled out forms last year – do they need to re-submit for the upcoming Synod Assembly?

Pr. Posselt said the Committee will follow up with those people to see if they are still willing to be considered. If they are, she does not expect they will have to re-submit their forms. All members of the Council whose terms are ending are encouraged to consider if they are willing to serve another term and if so, to submit their paperwork to the Committee.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Pr. Gwendolyn King asked if it is appropriate to offer an announcement as new business. She was given permission, and she announced that members of the Synod Council should check the United Lutheran Seminary website for an event recognizing the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women of color and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women.

Bishop Davenport requested a moment of personal privilege: She said, "Thank you for your holding the synod staff in prayer in these unusually difficult times." She expressed profound

thanks to Sr. Accountant Martin Schwab; Director of Operations Ms. Yvonne Curtis; Assistants to the Bishop Pr. Sease, Pr. Fisher, and Director of Evangelical Mission Dr. Flippin; Ms. Cynta Outterbridge and Ms. Mercedes Lee for doing double duty – assisting Dr. Flippin, but also covering Youth ministry while we have a vacancy in this area.

Bishop also expressed thanks to Pr. King for representing not just her congregation but also the Synod Council in so many ways; and Mr. Bert Glenn and the Finance Committee for considering how we can more effectively work with what we have as a Synod.

Mr. Bill Graham encouraged the Synod Council to get out and vote. This is our greatest constitutional obligation. All the veterans want is not flowers, but that we get out and vote.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

Pr. Phelps closed meeting at 6:10 with prayer.

The next meeting of the SEPA Synod Council will be December 10, 2020 at 4:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

*Approved by Synod Council December 10, 2020*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 163<sup>rd</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Zoom Meeting**  
**December 10, 2020**  
**4:00 p.m.**

### **DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley invited the Reverend Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communications and Mission Interpretation, to lead the Council in devotions. The devotions were based on Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” The Breath of God is breathed into us each day. This breath transforms and renews us in ways we cannot imagine and empowers us to work for God’s vision for the world. Those who are mourning are given garlands of gladness and anointed to rebuild that which has been devastated. The prophet reminds the people of God not just of what is lost, but of what God is calling them to. God lifts people so they can proclaim liberty and enact justice.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 163<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:31 p.m.

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, called the roll. A quorum was declared.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 162<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved with one change: Redemption, Havertown should be Resurrection, Havertown.

### **SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 163<sup>rd</sup> meeting with the following changes: the Forward Together in Faith report will be made following the Report of the Bishop, and the report of the Nominating Committee will be added to the Committee Reports.

### **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Davenport expressed her joy in this council, and the spirit that our youth members Tyler Emig and Hannah Malesich bring to it. She expressed her gratitude for the work of the Deans and the rostered ministers of this synod. She is grateful for this call in the midst of this pandemic, and is blessed by the assistance of Ms. Yvonne Curtis in this work.

Bishop Davenport reminded the members that this is a working council, and she is grateful for all the ways in which the members take that to heart and help the synod lean into the work of God in this area. Some highlights of the items from her written report included the following which she shared with the Council.

#### **Conference of Bishops**

In this time when we are needing to be more agile as a Church, the Conference of Bishops is learning to meet virtually, doing more in less time, and striving to be good stewards of the resources available. Live, in person meetings, can cost \$10,000 per day. Bishop Eaton has the bishops meet every Thursday for support and encouragement.

#### **Muhlenberg College Board**

The Board is working with the new president, Kathleen Haring, the faculty, staff, and students as together they are striving to keep the college community safe in the pandemic.

#### **Stewardship of Life Institute**

Bishop Davenport serves on this team, which serves the Church through its seminaries by exposing leaders to practices of stewardship. They spend a great deal of time reading and reviewing grant proposals.

#### **North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania**

At its November 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Diocese elected a new bishop, the Rev. Dr. Msafiri Joseph Mbilu. The Rev. Dr. Stephen Munga was named bishop emeritus. We are awaiting word from Rev. Benyam Hasshun, ELCA Global Missions, on the status of the Diocese given the election and transition.

#### **Ecumenical Activities**

Bishop Davenport is working with members of the various ecumenical organizations in Philadelphia to address gun violence and work for peace in our neighborhoods, particularly following the shooting of Mr. Walter Wallace, Jr. There are also efforts to get out the vote, and encourage people to receive the corona-virus vaccine when it is available, and not avoid it.

The pandemic is allowing the bishop to be in many different places across the country, including to participate in an Adult Forum on issues of race at Holy Spirit, Emmaus. This was a very frank and honest conversation, but very hope filled as the discussion centered on how we can move forward in our goal for multi-racial diversity.

### **Feeding Ministries**

Bishop Davenport continues to be full of joy and pride in the feeding and recovery ministries of our congregations and ministry sites. The work of the Welcome Church, distributing over 100,000 sandwiches, Emmanuel, Souderton, which has exceeded 70,000 meals given to the community, and the ongoing work of Feast of Justice is inspiring and necessary.

Bishop Davenport continues to work to assure our rostered ministers that they are not alone, and that they should not grow weary. She has been speaking with congregational council leaders to let them know how our rostered ministers are not doing less, but doing more, in this pandemic. It may be different, and may not be as visible, but it is hard work that they are doing. She then opened the floor for questions.

The Reverend Serena Sellers put forward not a question, but a thank you for the support Bishop Davenport has given to Sanctuary Village, the tiny house project underway in Philadelphia to provide transitional housing for those experiencing homelessness. Such support is helping this project become a reality.

Vice President Beasley encouraged Bishop Davenport to “Do as you say,” being sure to take some time off also, and not overwork in this busy season.

Bishop Davenport agreed, noting that the computer can make it seem like we are available all the time. We do need to take time, and she thanked Vice President Beasley for this reminder and encouragement.

### **REPORT OF THE FORWARD TOGETHER IN FAITH TEAM**

Ms. Ellen Daneke, chairperson of the Forward Together in Faith Team, shared the report of the Team with regard to the grants being awarded from the fund this year.

Sixteen grant requests were received, with a total of \$88,000 requested.

Generally only the interest from the monies are used. This year, with the approval of Bishop Davenport, the Team will use an extra \$1,024 from the principle of the account.

Letters will be sent next week to those who will receive grants, how much they will receive, and from which pillar the grant was allocated. The recipient congregations will be posted after the

award letters are sent. Two requests were denied, as they were for salaries. Such ongoing support is not in the parameters of the grant process.

Total awards in each area of emphasis include:

Networking – \$1,250

Communicating – \$7,000

Innovating – \$8,374

Equipping – \$9,400

Total awarded – \$26,024

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

Vice President Beasley focused on the 2021 Synod Assembly. Note that the date is changed to April 23 and 24. The Assembly will be held virtually this year due to the ongoing pandemic. The Administrative Committee will be gathered soon, as the responsibilities of this team will be different this year compared with an in-person Assembly.

Pastor Bob Fisher shared that we have identified a voting platform that has been used by other Synods. We are considering how we can provide American Sign Language interpreters as part of the Assembly. An ironic part of this year's Assembly is that we will need much more technology, even as we have fewer people physically together for the event. Because there will be so much pre-production activity to make this work, the deadlines for submissions are likely to be earlier than in previous years.

Ms. Beasley directed the Synod Council's attention to the Agenda, asking for comments or additions.

The Reverend Jennifer Phelps, D.Min., stated that the agenda as it stands seems to have long sessions for a Zoom meeting. Could shortening the screen time be considered as part of the final schedule?

Vice President Beasley said yes, we will consider this, but particularly with the number of elections we have this year, we will need to ensure we have all the time we need.

Pastor Sellers asked if we could shorten the time by posting some of the items that do not need action so they may be viewed either before or after the Assembly.

Because this will be an electronic meeting, and people will be viewing it online, we can post many items as videos to be viewed, rather than presented live.

Because of issues of credentialing for voting, the Zoom meeting will be for voting members only. Visitors will be watching online via live stream, or viewing the recording of the meeting posted later.

Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations, shared that ELCA Secretary Sue Rothmeyer held a helpful meeting on how synods can hold online assemblies. We will have another planning meeting to include her suggestions and revise our schedule in light of that information.

Mr. Albert Glenn, chairperson of the Finance Committee, noted that we should list adoption of the 2022 budget as part of the Finance Report.

Secretary Richard noted that we should also include the adoption of the 2021 budget, which was approved by the Synod Council, but not the Assembly.

Mr. Glenn asked what other issues are left from last year.

Secretary Richard: elections and constitutional amendments.

Ms. Doreen Kinzler asked if electronic balloting will provide faster results.

Pastor Fisher: yes, they should be much quicker.

The Reverend Gwendolyn King asked how we can ensure participation in discussion.

Pastor Fisher: This is part of the service we are planning to use. The people who run the platform will monitor the chat and the screens, and inform the chair of who is requesting the floor, and who is in the queue to be recognized.

It was noted that the name of the chairperson of the Nominating Committee needs to change to the Reverend Joseph Klinger, not the Reverend Lydia Posselt.

Pastor Klinger moved that the Synod Council approve the Agenda for the 2021 Synod Assembly. Ms. Doreen Kinzler seconded the motion.

**The motion was adopted.**

### **Future Church Design**

There has been a great deal of change in the structure of the ELCA in light of the Future Church Design plan. 5% of the Churchwide staff lost their positions, but it was feared that may be as high as 30%. Many job descriptions have been re-written. The three priorities of the initiative are that we be Welcoming, Thriving, and Connected. These priorities have played a key role in the restructuring of how many positions, and what types of positions, are needed at the Churchwide level.

The loss of personnel was not easy, and not unanimous, but the care of those let go via severance paid made it easier to accept. Changes in staffing will also reflect the emphasis to cultivate a younger and more diverse set of leaders for the ELCA's future.

Our desire is to have someone come to our Assembly to describe the Future Church Design more fully. Bishop Davenport noted that she looks forward to having a conversation about the Future Church Design in our synod. She is grateful that Vice President Beasley will be a part of that discussion as she has been at the table from the beginning. Bishop hopes we will be inspired to change how we do business as the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in light of this initiative. She would like us to find some strategic markers to help us in our progress.

Mr. Everett Wick noted that in the birthing process, there is always pain.

## REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

### **Actions on the Roster**

Secretary Richard presented the actions on the Roster. As information for one request, the following information is provided:

#### **Conference of Bishops Vote to Approve On Leave Extension Request**

The ELCA Conference of Bishop VOTED: CB20.10.16 To approve, as provided in bylaw 7.31.07.d in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, extension of on-leave-from-call status, renewable by the Synod Council on an annual basis up to a maximum of two years for, **Deacon Laura M. Book.**

#### ***Requests to move from Active Roster to On Leave from Call Roster:***

##### **Extension of on leave status:**

**S.C.20.12.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to Deacon Laura M. Book, fourth year, effective February 16, 2021**

**S.C.20.12.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. DeBorah GLod, first year, effective May 1, 2020**

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

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

**S.C.20.12.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Tina Mackey to interim ministry at Zion, Spring City, PA beginning August 3, 2020, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Mackey resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

**S.C.20.12.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Sandra J. Brown to interim ministry at Good Shepherd, Southampton, PA beginning January 1, 2021, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Brown resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

Pastor Sellers asked if these pastors have received the interim ministry training. Pastor King, who is one of our interim ministers, responded that they had.

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

#### ***Requests to move from Active Roster to Retired Roster:***

**S.C.20.12.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants Deacon Ethyl Geist retirement status, effective January 1, 2021**

**S.C.20.12.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. John Smolik retirement status, effective January 1, 2021**

**S.C.20.12.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Anita Baly retirement status, effective January 1, 2021**

**S.C.20.12.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Nancy Brown retirement status, effective April 1, 2021**

**S.C.20.12.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Frederick J. DeRasmo retirement status, effective February 1, 2021**

**S.C.20.12.10. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Michael J. Carlson retirement status, effective January 1, 2021**

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

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

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

Rev. Harry “Skip” W. McDowell, II – October 11, 2020

Rev. Howard Wiedemoyer – November 12, 2020

##### ***Transfers:***

Rev. Paul E. Chapman to Central/Southern Illinois Synod effective 11/8/2020

Rev. Lynette Chapman to Central/Southern Illinois Synod effective 11/16/2020

#### **Update on Guidelines for Virtual Congregational Meetings**

Secretary Richard announced that there are now four pastors who have held or assisted with remote meetings who are willing to serve as resources for other congregations as they navigate this effort. They are Pastor Jennifer Casey, Holy Trinity, Wallingford, and Dean of Delaware Conference; Pastor Alina Gayeuski, Reformation, Media; Pastor Laura Tancredi, St. Paul’s, Ardmore; and Pastor Warren Weleck, Augustus, Trappe.

#### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, pointed out that the numbers shared with the Council reflect activity through the end of October, not the end of November.

She noted that receipts from congregations are down compared to pledges made and in comparison to receipts of last year. She asked members of the Council to check their congregation’s response, and also that of congregations in their area, and encourage, without chastising, support of the work of the Synod.

While Partnership Support is down, money received from the federal Paycheck Protection Program has helped. Our investments have also rebounded, which helps our overall picture. Expenses are also lower, particularly due to fewer travel costs during the pandemic.

We received a \$35,000 grant from Lutheran Disaster Response to assist congregations with feeding programs. To date we have disbursed \$30,000 of this money.

We still have money available in the “Blessed to be a Blessing” account for congregations struggling because of the pandemic. Please let congregations know that this resource is available.

The “Healing the Heart” fund received money for expenses related to Bishop Munga’s heart condition. If it is not all needed for his situation, we can reallocate this money for the North Eastern Diocese. In this way we will be changing the designation from one restriction to a related one.

The Mission portion of the budget shows a surplus. This is due to fewer expenses related to Youth Ministry, investment gains, and grants received.

We have several Restricted funds which we continue to use for specific needs, provided the need is related to the parameters of each fund. This has also helped our financial position.

Bishop Davenport thanked Treasurer Neff for raising up the need for having conversations about Mission Support that are not about blame, but about ministry. We need to seek ways in which we can come alongside these communities of faith, particularly those that are struggling. She encouraged members of the Council to inform the Office of the Bishop if they are aware of challenges in congregations. Particularly in this time of pandemic, we need to be the Church together.

### **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Albert Glenn, chair, presented the report. He began by commenting that we are fortunate to have such good recording and reporting of our financial statements.

The Committee focused its discussion on two issues. Both issues concerned the Fund for Mission, and how we can effectively and appropriately use the Fund.

1. Our Mission portion of the budget is supplemented from the Fund for Mission, but without following the procedures of requesting permission from the Trustees. We can do this, but we have not been fully clear or transparent with this allocation, and it does not necessarily meet the goals of the Fund to promote new and innovative ministries.
2. Should we use the Fund for Mission as an endowment so we are spending what would be earned annually, or perhaps 5% of the Fund, so that the Fund continues to grow and be available more long term?

### **MISSION MOMENT**

For the Mission Moment Secretary Richard presented, on behalf of the Executive Committee, a proposal to realign the Synod Council to reflect the demographics of who we are as a Synod now, rather than who we were 25 years ago. This proposal would make the total number of members on the Synod Council 21, rather than the current membership of 31.

The reduction would come from the following changes:

Reduce the number of rostered ministers from 9 to 6

Reduce the number of Young Adult members from 2 to 1

Reduce the number of Youth Members from 2 to 1

Reduce the number of at large members from 6 to 1

Retain the provision of one member from each conference, totaling 8

This, plus the 4 officers of the Synod, would make the Council 21 members.

This realignment, if agreed to, would impact the bylaws of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's Constitution, By-laws, and Continuing Resolutions, and would be proposed with the presumption of the acceptance of the recommended changes to the by-laws for Synods from the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

The resolution brought before the Synod Council is the following:

**S.C.20.12.11. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the Proposal to Realign Synod Council, and the amendments to the by-laws of the Constitution, By-laws, and Continuing Resolutions of the SEPA Synod, ELCA contained therein for presentation to the Synod Assembly for adoption,**

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this proposal be enacted beginning with the terms ending in 2021.**

The entirety of the changes would include the following:

**Constitution as currently in effect:**

**Chapter 10.**

**SYNOD COUNCIL**

**†S10.01. The Synod Council consisting of the four officers of the synod, 10 to 24 other members, and at least one youth and at least one young adult shall be elected by the Synod Assembly.**

**a. Each person elected to the Synod Council shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod, with the exception of ministers on a roster of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod. The process for election and the term of office when not otherwise provided shall be specified in the bylaws. A member of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, unless otherwise elected as a voting member of the Synod Council, may serve as an advisory member of the Synod Council with voice but not vote.**

**b. The term of office of members of the Synod Council, with the exception of the officers and the youth member, shall be three years.**

**S10.01.01.** General Membership.

a. With the exception of the officers, the youth members, and the young adult members, the general membership of the Synod Council shall consist of nine ministers of Word and Sacrament, one layperson from each conference of this synod, and six at-large laypersons, three male and three female.

b. The terms for the general membership of the Synod Council shall be staggered so that the terms of three ministers of Word and Sacrament, approximately one-third of conference lay positions, and two at-large lay positions, one male and one female, expire each year. None of the general membership of the Synod Council shall be eligible to serve for more than two consecutive terms. The lay position assigned to each conference shall alternate every two terms between male and female.

c. At least three members of the general membership of the Synod Council shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.

d. The general membership of the Synod Council shall consist of no more than one member of the same congregation at the same time. Exceptions may be made to this requirement only if necessary to meet the requirements of S10.01.01.c.

**S10.01.02.** The Synod Council shall include two youth members, one male and one female, and two young adult members, one male and one female. At least one of the youth or young adult members shall be a person of color and/or person whose primary language is other than English. The terms of the youth members shall be two years and shall expire at the same time. The youth members may serve two consecutive terms if eligible. The terms of the young adult members shall be three years and shall expire at the same time. The young adult members may serve two consecutive terms if eligible.

#### **Already proposed changes to align with 2019 CWA revisions**

**S10.01.01.** General Membership.

a. With the exception of the officers, the youth members, and the young adult members, the general membership of the Synod Council shall consist of nine rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament, one layperson from each conference of this synod, and six at-large laypersons, three male men and three female women.

b. The terms for the general membership of the Synod Council shall be staggered so that the terms of three rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament, approximately one-third of conference lay positions, and two at-large lay positions, one male man and one female woman, expire each year. None of the general membership of the Synod Council shall be eligible to serve for more than two consecutive terms. The lay position assigned to each conference shall alternate every two terms between male man and female woman.

**S10.01.02.** The Synod Council shall include two youth members, one male man and one female woman, and two young adult members, one male man and one female woman. At least one of the youth or young adult members shall be a person of color and/or person whose primary language is other than English. The terms of the youth members shall be two years and shall expire at the same time. The youth members may serve two consecutive terms if eligible. The terms of the young adult members shall be three years and shall expire at the same time. The young adult members may serve two consecutive terms if eligible.

**Changes to realign synod council membership to a proportionate size with regard to the Synod – presumes adoption of above**

**S10.01.01.** General Membership.

a. With the exception of the officers, the youth members, and the young adult members, the general membership of the Synod Council shall consist of ~~nine~~ six rostered ministers, one layperson from each conference of this synod, and ~~six~~ a sufficient number of at-large laypersons to ensure at least 60% of the Synod Council is laypersons, ~~three men and three women~~. The number of conferences and at large members shall be enumerated in a continuing resolution.

b. The terms for the general membership of the Synod Council shall be staggered so that the terms of ~~three~~ two rostered ministers, and approximately one-third of ~~the conference~~ the conference lay positions, both the conference representatives and two ~~the~~ at-large lay position(s), ~~one man and one woman~~, expire each year. None of the general membership of the Synod Council shall be eligible to serve for more than two consecutive terms. The lay position assigned to each conference shall alternate every two terms between man and woman. The at-large positon(s) shall also alternate, as needed, every two terms between man and woman to effect a membership with at least 45% men and 45% women.

c. At least three members of the general membership of the Synod Council shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.

d. The general membership of the Synod Council shall consist of no more than one member of the same congregation at the same time. Exceptions may be made to this requirement only if necessary to meet the requirements of S10.01.01.c.

*S10.01.A20. There shall be eight (8) conference representatives, and one (1) at large member as lay positions in the general membership of the Synod Council.*

**S10.01.02.** The Synod Council shall include ~~two~~ one youth members, ~~one man and one woman,~~ and ~~two~~ one young adult members, ~~one man and one woman.~~ ~~At least one of the youth or young adult members shall be a person of color and/or person whose primary language is other than English.~~ The terms of the youth members shall be two years ~~and shall expire at the same time.~~ The youth members may serve two consecutive terms if eligible. The terms of the young adult members shall be three years ~~and shall expire at the same time.~~ The young adult members may serve two consecutive terms if eligible.

**Clean copy, if adopted:**

**S10.01.01.** General Membership.

a. With the exception of the officers, the youth member, and the young adult member, the general membership of the Synod Council shall consist of six rostered ministers, one layperson from each conference of this synod, and a sufficient number of at-large laypersons to ensure at least 60% of the Synod Council is laypersons. The number of conferences and at large members shall be enumerated in a continuing resolution.

b. The terms for the general membership of the Synod Council shall be staggered so that the terms of two rostered ministers, and approximately one-third of the lay positions, both the conference representatives and the at-large lay position(s) expire each year. None of the general membership of the Synod Council shall be eligible to serve for more than two consecutive terms. The lay position assigned to each conference shall alternate every two terms between man and woman. The at-large position(s) shall also alternate, as needed, every two terms between man and woman to effect a membership with at least 45% men and 45% women.

c. At least three members of the general membership of the Synod Council shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.

d. The general membership of the Synod Council shall consist of no more than one member of the same congregation at the same time. Exceptions may be made to this requirement only if necessary to meet the requirements of S10.01.01.c.

**S10.01.A20.** *There shall be eight (8) conference representatives, and one (1) at large member as lay positions in the general membership of the Synod Council.*

**S10.01.02.** The Synod Council shall include one youth member and one young adult member. The term of the youth member shall be two years. The youth member may serve two consecutive terms if eligible. The term of the young adult member shall be three years. The young adult member may serve two consecutive terms if eligible.

**Rationale for this change:**

Secretary Richard shared that among the reasons for this change is the changing demographics of our Synod, the difficulty of filling the positions of the Synod Council as it is currently configured.

In 1995 we had 182 congregations, spread across 9 conferences, with a combined baptized membership of 107,660. Today we have 143 congregations, spread across 8 conferences, with a combined baptized membership of approximately 64,000.

We have regularly had open seats on the Council which have been difficult to fill. Those most difficult to fill have been the Youth and the Young Adult positions, but other seats have been open as well. We believe this is not because there are not good and faithful people in our Synod, but that the lower number of congregations makes the pool of candidates able to serve smaller.

We also feel that it would be easier for all to participate in the conversation and activity of the Synod Council if the body were smaller. We have heard frequently over the years that people feel they have no real role on the Council other than to vote. With 21 persons on the Council rather than 31, the hope is that we will both be more able to fill the seats, and that those in them will feel more able to participate.

The desired result will be a council that is more agile, more participatory, and more complete with less chance of perennially unfilled positions, while continuing to have at least 60% lay persons and a representational balance of across the territory of the synod.

The structure of the committees of the Synod Council could be revised so more persons who are not on Council can serve, we can get the value of their expertise, and the commitment of those persons can be less intensive than those serving on both the Council and a committee.

After his opening presentation, Secretary Richard asked for comments and questions.

Mr. Glenn expressed concern about the elimination of so many at large positions, and the affect that will have on the breadth of representation from across the Synod. He also expressed concern that many who would like to serve are often eliminated from serving at-large by the process of those not elected on previous tickets moving forward to the at large ballot.

Secretary Richard noted that there will still be representation across the Synod as there will be someone from each conference. With one at large position instead of 6 we will keep the ratio of 60% lay to 40% rostered ministers.

Pastor King asked about what this will do to encouraging diversity on the Synod Council. In a time when we are trying to bring more diversity to the table will this be a further limit to this goal.

Secretary Richard answered that the goal will still be to have at least 20% persons of color or whose primary language is other than English to be on the Council. We are not limited to 20%. We can have more. We can also have more than one Youth member, or one Young Adult member.

Mr. Wick agreed that downsizing by attrition makes sense, but he would rather do so over a longer period of time, perhaps over three years, so we are not limiting people from serving quite so abruptly.

Ms. Kinzler shared the observation that by going to one at large position rather than at least two we eliminate the balance of one man and one woman at large member.

Secretary Richard noted that with the realignment there would still be balance between men and women. There are 8 conferences, and they happen to be balanced with a rotation of men and women such that four conferences are men, and four are women at any given time. The new provision in the Synod Constitution is to have “at least 45% men and 45% women.” This gives Synods some flexibility in filling seats, and also allows for someone who may not identify as “man” or “woman” to serve. As a result the at-large position could then conceivably be either a man, or a woman, or anybody. The balance of rotating between man and woman at large members would come into play more if, in the future, we were to reduce to 7 conferences and need to have 2 at large members.

With no further questions being raised, Secretary Richard read the above resolution.

Mr. Wick seconded the resolution.

**The Synod Council adopted the resolution; vote 19 yes, 3 no**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Nominating Committee**

Pastor Klinger, chair, directed the members of the Synod Council to the written report included in their materials. He shared that the committee is diligently working to find candidates for the many positions to be filled this year, which include positions remaining from last year when there was no assembly. The Committee is reaching out to the Deans and key influencers, posting the information on our Synod’s website, and using social media to encourage nominations. This is a huge task, which has just begun. Pastor Klinger encouraged all members of the Council to be a part of this effort, raising up potential nominees for these positions of leadership in the Church.

### **Constitution Committee**

Pastor Sellers, chair, stated that their work of reviewing congregation constitutions moves forward. At this meeting she had four congregations whose work needs to be approved by the Synod Council for final ratification. These Committee recommends the amendments to indemnification be approved for the following congregations:

Upper Tincum Lutheran Church, Upper Black Eddy  
Messiah Lutheran Church, Downingtown  
The Lutheran Church of God's Love, Newtown  
St. John's Lutheran Church, Mayfair

**S.C.20.12.12. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the changes to the constitutions of Upper Tincum, Upper Black Eddy; Messiah, Downingtown; God's Love, Newtown; and St. John, Mayfair.**

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

#### **Investment Committee**

Mr. Dave Ehret, chair, shared that the gain in the investments for 2020 is \$769,054. There has only been one change in our portfolio since the last Synod Council meeting. A money market fund designated for Vitality has been moved to different fund, still within T. Rowe Price.

Bishop Davenport thanked Mr. Ehret and the Committee for their faithful stewardship of our investments.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Bishop Davenport repeated this is a working council, and at Christmas there is something that you can be doing. Could members of the Synod Council reach out to rostered ministers to offer support? It would be more impressive if we each reach out, rather than sending a form letter from the Vice President or the Bishop. Ms. Sandra Zimmerman said she is a yes. If anyone else is willing to do so, please let Bishop Davenport know.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

Vice President Beasley expressed her hope that all had a great Thanksgiving and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. She shared that she continues to be proud of the ways in which we are the cutting edge synod, and we are blessed in the way we are living and leaning into ministry.

Meeting adjourned with prayer by Pastor Joey Klinger at 6:40 p.m.

The next meeting of the SEPA Synod Council will be February 18, 2021 at 4:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

*Approved by Synod Council February 18, 2021*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 164<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Zoom Meeting**  
**February 18, 2020**  
**4:00 p.m.**

**DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley invited the Reverend Matt Staniz to lead the Synod Council in devotions. Pastor Staniz based his devotion on an encounter by Dietrich Bonhoeffer had while making an address in London. His host spoke with him, saying “You are a German. Your church is on fire. It is your job to go home and put it out.” Pastor Staniz shared words from Bonhoeffer: “All human life is transformed by the fact the Jesus is only there for others. The Church is the church only when it is there for others.” Pr. Staniz further reflected that *we* are only the Church when we are here for others, and conveyed to the Synod Council, “‘ELCA, your church is on fire.’ White supremacy and racism is on fire. It is our job to work to put it out. Might it be our calling in Lent 2021 to move from insurrection to resurrection?” Pastor Staniz then led the Council in a bidding prayer.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 164<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:23 p.m.

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, called the roll. A quorum was declared.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 163<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved with the following changes:

- on page 2, section on Muhlenberg College, “working” with the new president
- on page 8, section on Finance Committee, “good” instead of “food”
- on page 13, section on Mission Moment, under rationale, “men” instead of “mane”

The minutes were approved with these changes.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

The Synod Council adopted the Agenda for the 164<sup>th</sup> meeting as presented.

**REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

As the meeting occurred in the midst of a winter storm, Bishop Davenport commented on how we are blessed by the technology we have in this time, allowing us to continue the work of the church via Zoom and other vehicles.

Bishop Davenport noted that Ms. Cynta Outterbridge's father-in-law, who was not considered "in-law," but father, has died. Please keep our sister and her family in prayer in this time of deep loss and mourning.

Bishop noted that the staff is in a time of transition. Ms. Mercedes Lee has begun a new position with the University of Pennsylvania, and that has left a hole in the synod staff. It also provides an opportunity to reimagine what staffing we need as we move into the future. Noting that the ELCA is engaging in such reimagining with the Future Church Design, it is a good time for us to do a similar redesign in light of the Church's areas of focus. Please pray for the staff in this time of transition, and particularly for the Reverend Dr. William Flippin, our Director for Evangelical Mission, as he is facing transition on both the ELCA and the Synod level.

### **Rostered Ministers**

We need to be in prayer, for each other, for our rostered ministers. Our ministers are feeling a great deal of stress these days with Ash Wednesday, Lent and all the pressures of leading the Church in this time. There is also stress from trying to lead in these days of civil unrest, insurrection, and racial injustice. Fortunately, prayer is our super-power.

We as a Synod provided the rostered ministers a chance to meet together with the Bishop in sacred cyber-space to share with each other and support each other in the tasks before them. There was great personal sharing, honesty, and vulnerability on display in this time together, and for that the Bishop is grateful.

Ms. Barb Debski offered a program on "sabbath" to encourage our leaders to do self-care as much as "other" care. Two opportunities are scheduled with Dr. Stephen Treat, moderated by the Rev. Dr. Dee Littleton, to assist rostered ministers with the stresses of ministry in this time. Many lay people think that the work of the rostered minister has lessened with the pandemic, as there are not the same visible meeting schedules and contacts being made and seen. The work has not lessened; it has ramped up. Everything is harder. As you pray for our ministers, please also pray for our Presiding Bishop.

### **Conference of Bishops**

Please pray for the Conference of Bishops as well. They continue to meet weekly, learning from each other, and striving to faithfully implement the Future Church Design for the ELCA. A reminder of the areas of emphasis that have been affirmed:

1. Prioritize the engagement of new, young and diverse people.
2. Unite all expressions of the church (congregations, synods and the churchwide organization) into one church—together.
3. Align decision-making, accountability and leadership where best suited.
4. Operate in agile, flexible and speedy ways.
5. Act based on data and measurable impact.
6. Eliminate silos and divisions."

### **African Descent Strategy Team**

There have been deep conversations among the leaders of this team. There is concern regarding the number of persons of color that were released from Churchwide staff in the downsizing that resulted from implementing the Future Church Design. It seems incongruous that, when we are looking to be newer, younger, and more diverse, we would lose as much of our diversity as we have. We have a gap in what we say, and what we do. Bishop Davenport is grateful to be at the table to point out these discrepancies.

### **Authentic Diversity Team**

Bishop continues to serve on this team as well. In her written report she shared the resolution from the Churchwide Assembly describing the work of this team. She did so to remind the Synod Council of the important task before us all as we continue to be the whitest denomination in the United States, even as we have stated we want to rectify this, and intentionally work to become more diverse.

### **Muhlenberg College Board**

The board is still working and walking along with President Haring, the faculty, the staff, and the students to keep the college functioning well in this time of the pandemic. Bishop Davenport is grateful for the work of our former bishop, the Reverend Claire S. Burkat, as she serves as the interim chaplain for the college. Applications are being processed for the settled chaplain. If anyone knows of someone who is interested, please let them know.

### **North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania**

The newly elected bishop, the Rev. Dr. Mblilu, has begun his duties, and is building his staff. Until we can meet in person, social media has been quite helpful as a tool to keep in contact in this time.

### **Religious Leaders Council**

This group represents another gathering where we can work together for justice and peace. Dr. Flippin has taken up the “Heeding God’s Call” initiative to address gun violence, a task of particular importance following the most recent shooting in the Olney neighborhood of Philadelphia. This shooting took place only a few blocks from Bishop Davenport’s house. Systemic racism keeps people in poverty, and that continues to keep them from other services, and so what they don’t have, they feel a need to take. The Religious Leaders Council is working with government and community leaders as they strive to address these crucial issues.

### **Other Meetings and Gatherings**

The Black Clergy Association continues to meet, as do too many other meetings to count. Bishop Davenport thanks Vice President Beasley for her work with the Philadelphia Chapter of the African Descent Leadership Association, and particularly for her efforts coordinating the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration in conjunction with the Detroit chapter of ADLA and the Southeast Michigan Synod, our domestic companion synod.

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

The Reverend Gwendolyn King asked if recordings of the programs from Ms. Demski and Dr. Treat will be available for those who cannot join the online events.

The Reverend Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communication and Mission Interpretation, said that Ms. Demski's program is already online. It will need to be determined if Dr. Treat's will be made available, as this program may be more personal than presentational, and there may be a need to be sensitive to the privacy concerns of the participants.

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

Noting the report had been distributed beforehand, Vice President Beasley asked if there were any questions or comments. As there were none, Ms. Beasley called on Ms. Carrie Schwab, Synod Events coordinator, to give an update on the plans for the upcoming Synod Assembly.

Ms. Schwab noted that the comments and concerns expressed by the Synod Council at its December meeting were taken into account at the next meeting of the Assembly planning team. The Assembly will now be a one-day assembly to limit the amount of screen time in an online assembly. It will be predominantly a business meeting, but it will include inspirational words from the Bishop.

Ms. Schwab shared two documents with the Council: one a block schedule, and one a "cast" schedule. The cast schedule noted the minute-by-minute plan for the Assembly. This will not be shared with the entire Assembly so voting members do not get too caught in times that are hoped to be accurate, but by nature are approximate.

There will be several workshops prior to the Assembly to allow for conversations to occur in depth, but which will save time on the actual day of the meeting. These will include a discussion of the proposed Constitutional changes and the proposed Budgets for 2021 and 2022.

Training videos will also be posted, and there will be a live "Test your Tech" training for all people the day before the Assembly.

There will be five tech people available the day of the Assembly.

We will create a virtual mission center where agencies and organizations can post videos or other information to share their story.

The members of the Council were invited to ask any questions they might have.

Mr. Bert Glenn felt it might be helpful to include some of the time markers to allow people to have a sense of what is going on and when.

Ms. Schwab stated that we do want people to have a sense of the flow and the timing. What the team is trying to avoid is members missing votes because they expect them to happen at a specific time, while in reality the times to vote may be moved up or down the schedule depending on how many votes are needed, and how long the tabulations may take.

Pr. King asked about the time for the presentation from our Churchwide representative. It is a desire of the Synod Council that the Future Church Design be a part of the presentation. Will 15 minutes be enough time?

Bishop Davenport said we will have a conversation with him about this. We may want to have something in the pre-assembly videos to allow voting members to have a background on the Design before his presentation at the Assembly. There is already a recording of the conversation with the Presiding Bishop that can be posted as part of the pre-assembly materials.

Pr. King asked if we would be able to ask questions at the Assembly. Ms. Schwab asked if this was of the Churchwide representative, or of the Assembly in general. Pr. King indicated “both.” Ms. Schwab said that we will have people monitoring the group to allow participants to speak to issues on the floor.

Vice President Beasley thanked Ms. Schwab for her faithful work, and her explanations to the Council.

## **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

### **Housing Allowances**

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, presented the following resolution regarding Synod authorized housing allowances:

**S.C.21.02.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the 2021 housing allowance for Bishop Patricia Davenport, Pastor Robert Fisher, Pastor Violet Little and Pastor Karen Sease, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the recipients be reminded that the amounts so designated as rental/housing allowance are excludable from the gross income of the respective recipients only to the extent that said amounts are used to rent or provide a home. Further the amount eligible for the Section 107 exclusion may not exceed the fair rental value of the minister’s home (including furnishings and appurtenances) plus the cost of utilities. To the extent a greater amount is designated as rental/housing allowance, the designation will be ineffectual with respect to such amount.

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

### **Actions on the Roster**

Secretary Richard then presented the following actions on the roster:

#### ***Call to Specialized Ministry:***

**S.C.21.02.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year, renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the Rev. Margaret J. Ainslie as Director of Pastoral Care at Doylestown Hospital effective February 27, 2021 to February 26, 2022.

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

***Calls to Interim Ministry:***

**S.C.21.02.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Stuart Luce to interim ministry at St. Michael's (Unionville) beginning January 4, 2021 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Luce resigns this call, whichever comes first.

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

**S.C.21.02.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Christian McMullan to interim ministry at St. Luke's (Zieglerville) beginning January 25, 2021 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor McMullan resigns this call, whichever comes first.

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

***Request to Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster:***

**S.C.21.02.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant retirement status to the Rev. Kristina V. Ahlman effective March 1, 2021.

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

***Request to Move from On Leave Roster to Retired Roster:***

**S.C.21.02.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant retirement status to the Rev. Andrena Ingram effective May 1, 2021.

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

**Items Not Requiring Action**

***Transfers:***

The Rev. Stuart Luce *from* Delaware-Maryland Synod effective January 4, 2021, *pending call through Synod Council*

The Rev. Bruce Davidson (retired) *from* New Jersey effective February 2, 2021

The Rev. Michael McKillip (retired) *to* New Jersey effective February 5, 2021

**Bear Creek Camp Easement**

Secretary Richard shared as information that Bear Creek Camp is considering an easement for another pipeline across an unused portion of its property. The Camp entered into such an agreement in 2017. The Camp is jointly owned by the Northeastern and Southeastern Pennsylvania Synods, and so each will have to sign off on the agreement when it is prepared. SEPA Synod holds the deed, and so this Council will be key in its approval.

Mr. Glenn felt prior to approval we should know if there is any community opposition to the pipeline in the area.

The Reverend Serena Sellers asked if there is any protocol for the Camp if there is a leak, and who is responsible for the clean-up: the Camp, or the Company?

Mr. David Ehret asked if we can request a copy of their disaster recovery plan, as this may clear up some of these issues. If there is not a recovery plan, that itself may not be a good sign.

### **Amendment to Synod Bylaws Proposal**

Secretary Richard shared with the Synod Council that since the December Synod Council meeting there have been several conversations, some with the Assembly Planning Team, some with the Nominations Committee, and most recently with the Reverend Becky Schanely, chair of the Elections Committee, Vice President Beasley, and Bishop Davenport. The subject of these last conversations was a concern regarding the timing to implement the proposed restructuring of the Synod Council, which was approved at the December Synod Council meeting.

Upon further reflection, as we have so many slates to elect at this Assembly, and as there are many steps that would need to be taken to alter those slates if the Assembly does adopt the proposed realignment with the timing as previously adopted, it is the recommendation of the Secretary that we amend the time when this realignment would be put in effect from the terms ending at this Assembly to the terms ending at the next Assembly. He proposed the following change to the December resolution, alteration underlined:

**S.C.21.02.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council amends the **“AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED”** that this proposal be enacted beginning with the terms ending in 2022.

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

Secretary Richard also brought forward the following proposal to be added to the changes to be presented to the Assembly in April of this year:

### **Proposed Bylaw Change to allow for a virtual Assembly**

According to state law a non-profit is allowed to have remote meetings unless its governing documents prohibit them. Our Constitution and By-laws do not prohibit such meetings, but neither do they give explicit permission for them. The following is a proposed change, based on the existing language allowing Synod Council and its committees to meet remotely, to allow the same for the Assembly and its committees.

**S.C.21.02.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the following addition to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the SEPA Synod for adoption by the Synod Assembly to provide for electronic meeting of the Synod Assembly:

S7.13.10. Notice of the time and place of the regular meeting or of an adjourned meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be sent by the secretary not less than four weeks preceding the meeting. Notice of the time and place of a special meeting shall be sent by the secretary not less than two weeks preceding the meeting. To the extent permitted by state law, meetings of the Synod Assembly and its committees may be held electronically or by telephone conference, and notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

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

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

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, reviewed the financial report of the past year. She noted the following:

Mission support from congregations was under budget by \$144,000, but we had other income that aided our ministry.

We had proceeds from the sale of a building from a former ministry, St. John, Ambler. To review, 15% of the sale goes to the Unrestricted portion of the budget. The expenses related to the care for the properties we have under management from former ministries are then reimbursed. The remainder of the proceeds are placed in the Fund for Mission.

We received \$168,000 from the Federal Paycheck Protection Program.

We had a good response to our special appeals, including the Blessed to be a Blessing covid relief fund, the Have a Heart fund for Bishop Munga's surgery, and the All the Saints annual appeal.

We are budgeting \$1.7 million as income for the current year (FY ending 1/31/2022), and \$1.75 million for coming year (FY ending 1/31/2023).

There is a pending sale of another property under management, that of the former Grace, Norristown.

Expenses were down this year. Some of this was due to less travel during the pandemic, some was due to fewer retreats and other meetings, and some was due to the fact that we sent less to the Churchwide organization, since we also received less in our offerings from congregations. Each year we send on to the ELCA 50% of what we receive from our congregations. When we receive less, we send less.

When you see the "bottom line" you will notice an overall surplus. A great deal of this is due to the performance of our investment portfolio.

Bishop Davenport noted how well people of our Synod have stepped up for the special offerings of this past year. Even in the midst of a pandemic, when we ask them, our people deliver.

Mr. Bert Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee, shared highlights from his written report, and presented the budget for the coming year for the Council's review and approval.

**Seminary Debt Relief**

The 2021 budget includes \$50,000 for assistance for rostered ministers with debt from their seminary education. \$51,000 was awarded for such relief last year. The process has just begun for rostered ministers to apply for assistance this year.

### **Policy for use of Restricted Funds**

The Synod's auditors have recommended that the Synod adopt a spending policy setting the maximum rate of annual withdrawal from our permanently restricted funds (endowment) to 7%, in compliance with the general requirements of PA Act 141 (applicable to non-for-profit organizations in PA). Currently we spend the annual earnings on the funds. Heeding the advice of the auditors, the Finance Committee brought the following resolution to the Synod Council:

**S.C.21.02.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council adopts the following policy for the use of permanently restricted funds:

In accordance with Act 141, realized and unrealized gains on Synod endowment assets may be expended for the purposes stipulated by the donors only to the extent that the total of such expenditures, including dividends and interest and less fees, do not exceed 7% of the average of the three most recent fiscal years' fair values of the net assets with donor restriction held in perpetuity. Realized and unrealized gains in excess of the annual limitation would be included in the statements of activities as increases in the net assets with donor restriction. Such restricted amounts may be released to net assets without donor restriction in future years based on authorization of the Synod only to the extent of the 7% limitation applicable to the year in which they are to be released.

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

### **Presentation of the budget for 2022 (FY ending 1/31/2023)**

The budget as presented is very similar to the budget for the current year.

It includes a modest increase in staff compensation.

It anticipates the sale of properties under management.

It also anticipates a reduction in Seminary debt relief from \$50K to \$25K.

We will be more transparent in the fact that much of the Mission portion of the budget is being covered by the Fund for Mission, even as conversations continue as to the proper process for the use of money from this Fund.

Pr. Sellers asked why administrative costs were so much lower.

Mr. Martin Schwab, the Synod's Senior Accountant, said it was because we have fewer properties that we have to manage, therefore we have fewer expenses.

Pr. Klinger asked if the need is for seminary debt relief actually that much less than last year.

Mr. Glenn said this number is based on the amount of the requests the committee has been receiving. There may be less need now that the seminary offers free tuition.

Ms. Neff said that we are fortunate to have many people who are generous and are not requesting assistance.

Secretary Richard asked which property was anticipated to sell as part of the budget.

Ms. Neff said it was the former Grace, Norristown, which is anticipated to sell in April of 2021.

The following resolution was placed before the Synod Council:  
**S.C.21.02.10. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the proposed budgets for 2021 (FY ending 1/31/2022) and 2022 (FY ending 1/31/2023) to present to the Synod Assembly for adoption.

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

### **MISSION MOMENT**

Vice President Beasley welcomed the Rev. Marcia Bell to present the Mission Moment. Pr. Bell is the Director of Mobility and convener of the Committee of Deans. She came to give the Synod Council an update on the status of congregations in our Synod that are in transition, and updates on the transition process.

#### **New Deans**

Pr. Bell noted that there has been a transition to a new Dean in two of our Conferences. She noted with great thanks the work of Dean Leslie Richard, who brought her gifts of Spiritual Direction and awareness to the process of the Deans' work. Pr. Richard has completed her second term and has been succeeded in this office by Pr. Jenn Casey of Holy Trinity, Wallingford.

Dean Carolann Hopcke has relocated to the Nebraska Synod, after serving Christ, Trumbauersville for 20 years. Pr. Hopcke is succeeded by Pr. Erica Wesch of Little Zion, Telford.

Both previous deans are missed, but the Committee is very pleased to welcome the new deans, even as they, to this point, have only met on Zoom.

#### **Transitions in Ministry**

In 2020 the Synod Council extended 3 calls to interim ministry, 1 call to a Lutheran pastor to serve a Presbyterian congregation, and retirement status to 11 ministers.

There have been 10 new calls to congregational ministries. All of these have been to pastors; no deacons. Several of these calls were to pastors who are already serving in these congregations. There has been a transition from second staff to lead pastor, from lead pastor to second staff, and a transition from full-time to part-time ministry.

The Committee of Deans has been impressed with and grateful for the document on Guidelines for Virtual Meetings created under the direction of Secretary Richard. Congregations have been incredibly resourceful, creative, and nimble in finding legal ways to gather to call pastors.

A list of the numbers of congregations in transition by Conference:

Central Philadelphia	4
Chester	5
Delaware	0
Lower Bucks	6
Lower Montgomery	5
North East/West	2
Upper Bucks	7

Upper Montgomery	4
Total congregations in transition:	33

### **Trends affecting mobility:**

Several pastors have left after a brief pastorate – fewer than 4 years. Some have stayed less than 2 years. In times like this it is difficult to follow the interim process as we have it. There are many reasons why these short stays happen, generally logical and valid reasons, but it has an impact on the congregation. In conversations with councils, there is a shudder – do we have to go through the whole interim process again? The process takes so long; what is the value of doing this again so quickly?

We are working on a “fast track” version for congregations in these situations, putting a little less emphasis on the history and other portions of the process. There is potentially work that still needs to be done and so we are not cancelling the process entirely, but we are trying to be more focused in this time on the issues that most need to be addressed.

This trend toward shorter pastorates is something other synods and other denominations have also experienced. What we are experiencing is not peculiar to SEPA Synod. We do not yet know what impact there may be post-covid.

We are also seeing more congregations seeking part-time pastors than we have in the past. This is usually related to income. Most congregations do not want part-time ministry, but this is the financial reality they face. With this as the reality congregations face, both congregations and Deans are being creative and resourceful.

Dean Christopher McKinstry has worked with Pr. Finney to fill a ¾ tie call to St. Paul’s, Sassmansville, and contracted to serve at Christ, Niantic.

In Pottstown, Emmanuel and Grace are looking at a similar possible configuration. This is not seen so much as a “yoking” as it is a sharing of clergy. Still, there is the hope that these congregations will grow together over time, and not just share a pastor, but grow into sharing ministry as well.

In Upper Bucks, where 3 congregations are looking to call part time pastors, seeds are being planted to help congregations realize that while a full-time pastor serving just them is not possible, several congregations sharing clergy can strengthen each congregation.

### **Need for Interim and Bridge Pastors**

We are working on cultivating more interim and bridge pastors to serve in the transition process. We have had great support from several of our retired pastors, but others just want to be retired, and so we have a shortage in interim and bridge ministers. We do have two new lay people who have taken the training and are serving as interim consultants. Please pray for more people to feel the call to interim ministry, even as we recognize that interim ministry is changing, and will not likely be as secure a position as it has been in the past.

Mr. Glenn thanked Pr. Bell for this information. He noted she has focused on need side, the congregations in transition. He is curious about the supply side; are there enough pastors in the pipeline to provide ministers for congregations?

Pr. Bell replied that SEPA Synod has not had trouble finding pastors to interview. Congregations that have been difficult to fill have often been those calls that are unusual, such as the situation in Pottstown. A minister may interview, but then one congregation or the other says no; or sometimes, as the process unfolds, the candidate says no.

We have some graduates who would like a call, but they have reasons as to why they cannot relocate, and so it becomes difficult to place those candidates. We find that many pastors across the ELCA will list SEPA Synod as one of their top choices. We interview them before we bring them into our Synod. Sometimes we feel they are a good fit. Sometimes we interview them and choose not to bring them in.

The Reverend Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy, Mobility and Interim Ministry, and Mission Advancement, noted that there is a clergy shortage across the ELCA, but we have not experienced this. This is in part because we are a major metropolitan area which is attractive both culturally and as a place for employment for spouses of clergy, and in part because we are not a Synod that places restrictions on candidates because of race or gender identity.

Vice President Beasley thanked Pr. Bell for her presentation and her service to our Synod.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Forward Together in Faith**

Ms. Ellen Daneke, chair of the Team, shared a brief summary of the activity of the Fund for this year.

Fourteen grants awarded for total of \$26,024.

Half of the grants were for equipment to improve streaming.

One grant was approved for an Anti-racism program, some were for food programs.

A United Lutheran Seminary student applied to go to an Immersion Program.

Balance in the Forward Together in Faith fund is \$553,800.

### **Investment Committee**

Mr. David Ehret, chair of the Investment Committee, shared two reports:

The first described actions in the month of January. There was a slight decrease due to market correction. The Committee decided to make some slight adjustments in our portfolio. The T. Rowe Price Real-estate fund will be liquidated, with the proceeds split between the existing Science and Technology Fund and a new fund, Blue Chip Growth. Both

The second portrayed the activity of the past year. The gain for 2020 was 15.9%.

Total value of the portfolio as of 1/31/2021 is \$8,861,441.

### **Nominating Committee**

The Reverend Joseph Klinger, chair of the Nominating Committee, shared that there are still a few positions for which the Committee have found no nominees. These include 2 lay men and 2 lay women voting members to the Churchwide Assembly.

Pr. Klinger noted that there is diversity reflected in the slates that will go to the Assembly, but he reminded the Synod Council we could always do better in this regard. He asked the members of the Council to continue to reach out to people, particularly people of color and/or whose primary language is other than English, to consider serving the Synod and the broader Church by standing for one of the many seats we have open this year.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pr. Klinger and the Committee for the thoroughness of their efforts. She sees the request everywhere: on the website, in emails, and on social media, and for that she is grateful.

Mr. Henry Geyer asked if it is permissible to serve both on Synod Council and the Consultation Committee. Pr. Klinger replied no, it would be a conflict of interest.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

Meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m. with prayer by the Pr. Karen Sease.

The next meeting of the SEPA Synod Council will be April 8, 2021 at 4:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

*Approved by Synod Council April 8, 2021*