

**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*