

MINUTES
of the 157th 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 157th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 4:20 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

The minutes of the 32nd 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 157th 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 25th, 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, Perkasio
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 5th 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 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)

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 1st, and will remain open until September 30th. 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 7th 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, 50th 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 158th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be held on December 12th, 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