

MINUTES
of the 163rd 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 163rd 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 162nd 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 163rd 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 Harring, 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 26th 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.20.10.01. 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.20.10.02. 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.20.10.03. 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.20.10.04. 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.20.10.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants Deacon Ethyl Geist retirement status, effective January 1, 2021

S.C.20.10.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. John Smolik retirement status, effective January 1, 2021

S.C.20.10.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Anita Baly retirement status, effective January 1, 2021

S.C.20.10.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Nancy Brown retirement status, effective April 1, 2021

S.C.20.10.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Rev. Frederick J. DeRasmo retirement status, effective February 1, 2021

S.C.20.10.10. 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.20.10.11. 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~~ 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 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 ~~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.20.10.12. 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