

MINUTES
of the 167th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
September 23, 2021
6:00 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley invited Ms. Emily Fowler to lead the Synod Council in devotions.

Ms. Fowler began with reading from the 8th chapter of Mark, in which Jesus' challenges his disciples to take up the cross and follow him.

Ms. Fowler reflected on her time when she was a student at Susquehanna University, particularly on her Senior year. That was in 2019, pre-covid, and pre-Zoom. In that year she took a course that focused on such persons as Soren Kierkegaard, who posed the question "Are you a Christian?" and a related query, "How does one become a Christian?"

For Kierkegaard, the answer of how one becomes a Christian seems simple. "Be like Christ." The difficulty is, what does that mean? As with most things philosophical, one question leads to another, which raises yet another. Kierkegaard's basic point is that it is impossible to fully be like Christ. Taking up the cross is not just difficult; it is impossible. But it is still worth the effort to strive to do so.

How can we be like Christ? How can we take up the Cross? It may be as simple as getting vaccinated and wearing a mask for the sake of the vulnerable. As Jesus stood for and with the forgotten and vulnerable, so can we. Taking up the cross may look a bit different in 2021, but take up the Cross. Be a Christian; follow Christ, every day.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 167th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:12 p.m.

The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 33rd Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod were approved as presented.

The Minutes of the 166th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley offered one addition to the agenda that had been distributed: consideration of Ms. Pia Graham for the open seat of Upper Bucks Conference Representative. The Synod Council adopted the agenda for the 167th meeting as amended.

SEATING OF SYNOD COUNCIL MEMBER

Information about Ms. Pia Graham was brought before the Council to fill the open seat of Upper Bucks Conference Representative, Lay Woman, term ending 2024.

The Synod Council unanimously approved seating Ms. Graham. She was then invited to join the Zoom meeting.

MISSION MOMENT

The mission moment was a presentation of the ministry of Lutheran Settlement House.

Mr. David Chiles, Executive Director, brought greetings to the Synod Council, and then gave a brief history of Lutheran Settlement House. LSH was formed in 1902 by immigrants who wanted to live out their faith in this, their new home. They began working for and with the people in disadvantaged neighborhoods, bringing tangible assistance as needed and as they were able. This mission continues to this day in programs to address domestic violence, homelessness, senior ministries, and issues of food insecurity.

Those who come to LSH do so at a critical moment in their lives. They may be fleeing an abusive partner, dealing with a lack of food, be without a home, or experiencing the struggles of aging, either personally or of a family member. They come to LSH and receive support. We meet them where they are, and strive to bring them stability to stave off future concerns. When we see a neighbor in need, we are filled with love for them. When we are filled with love, we are not about judging, we are about caring and meeting their needs, so they may know transformation to a new way of being.

We want to grow our partnership with the Lutheran community so that we can make a greater impact in our work while keeping our historic ties to this community of faith.

Mr. Bert Glenn asked Mr. Chiles if Lutheran Settlement House is still based in Fishtown, and whether they have more than one site.

Mr. Chiles: Yes, we are still in Fishtown, and we also have a site at 10th and Lehigh. There is also one other site, the location of which is not disclosed, which is a shelter for those fleeing abuse.

Bishop Davenport thanked Mr. Chiles and LSH for the assistance given to at least one of our congregations dealing with an issue of domestic violence. It is truly important work.

Mr. Chiles said LSH is grateful whenever we can enter into partnership to make a difference in the lives of those who are struggling. He then introduced Ms. Vashti Bledsoe, Bilingual Domestic Violence Program Director, to describe more fully some of the programs offered through Lutheran Settlement House.

Ms. Bledsoe echoed what Mr. Chiles had shared; LSH has many programs to assist our neighbors. In addition to those listed by Mr. Chiles, LSH also has transitional housing programs. The goal is to help families become self-sufficient by the time they complete the program.

Ms. Bledsoe described the realities faced by some of the people that they are serve.

We have people serving time in Riverside correctional because they have been arrested for actions of the abusive partner, or sometimes for defending themselves from their abuser. We bring services to them in their incarceration.

We love to meet with congregations. When we do, we often meet people who are surprised by how prevalent domestic violence is. It is no respecter of income or neighborhood. We begin our conversations with encouragement that we work on how we deal with those who are victims. First, let us believe them from the start, and not have them close down for more years.

It is important to know we do not have the goal of breaking up families. Rather, our goal is to bring healing and hope when we can. Congregations often want to hide from the reality of domestic violence, and how prevalent it is. It is difficult to acknowledge and confront. The fear is that it brings a stain on the congregation as well, damaging its image as an ideal community. But the reality of domestic violence is true and it is messy. Being a neighbor, showing love, means looking at this honestly and confronting it directly.

The reality is that abuse happens to men as well as to women. We deal mostly with women, but we help men also. 95% of reported abuse happens to women, while 5% is reportedly experienced by men. It is likely more prevalent among men than the statistics indicate, but men are reluctant to report out of a sense of shame associated with being an abused man. We do not expect you to know about all this issue, but we want to be a resource and a partner with you in this work. We need to show the love of Christ by caring for these concerns. We are working toward a city-wide spiritual training program for leaders of communities of faith.

Ms. Fowler: Thank you for this hugely important work.

Bishop Davenport: We are so grateful to you. We do not shy away from this. We go forward in the name of love. Your passion for this ministry overflows. Thank you for your witness and the gift that you are.

Vice President Beasley: I am grateful for LSH's witness to the Lutheran presence. Ms. Beasley encouraged members of the Council that if your congregation is not involved with Lutheran Settlement House, have them come to your site and learn about what this team is doing. Vashti Bledsoe, thank you for your time, and we keep you in our continuing prayers!

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Davenport conveyed her appreciation for the members of the Synod Council.

"I am grateful to see all of you on the screen. Our membership sees that the work of ministry has NOT stopped because of pandemic or flood or anything. The work of this church continues. And I am truly grateful to all of you who make this happen!"

ELCA

Bishop Davenport shared that since our last meeting she had the opportunity to preach at Churchwide Chapel service, which she sees as an honor with the long list of talented preachers we have in the Church.

Bishop was also able to attend the virtual Memorial Service for Mr. Bill Horne, who died during his tenure as ELCA Vice President. We thank God for such a strong, faithful, and dedicated leader of color as we still strive to be more diverse as the Body of Christ.

Upstate New York Synod hosted a conference focused on the questions, “What I preach,” “Why I preach,” and “How I preach.” Our Bishop joined Presiding Bishop Eaton and retired Bishop Michael Buke as presenters. She found it interesting to explore the ways in which the Holy Spirit works in each person to craft the message of the Gospel.

Bishop Davenport also attended the “Solidarity and Sacred Silence Interfaith Prayer Vigil” for Afghanistan. This was an on-line service offered by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. Though on-line, these events also take time for preparation; just attending the event does not always convey the amount of work behind the scenes. In this event there was a chance to learn about, and pray for, those affected by the ongoing turbulence in Afghanistan, while recognizing that many refugees may be coming here and will need our support.

Ecumenism

Bishop continues her meetings and conversations with the Religious Leaders Council. A current issue of concern and opportunity is the request from the City of Philadelphia to assist with evacuees from Afghanistan who will be arriving in our area.

Mr. Shane Claiborne and the group “Red Letter Christians” extended the invitation to Bishop Davenport to read, “What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July,” by Mr. Frederick Douglass. This non-denominational Christian group brought together people from around the country on July 3rd to raise issues of racial justice.

Bishop Davenport then asked members of her staff to share what they are doing as a part of the Office of the Bishop.

Communications

The Reverend Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communications and Mission Interpretation, shared several items that have been happening in the area of Communications. There has been a weekly Zoom meeting of congregational leaders dealing with communications. We have had regular meetings with Dr. Tim Babinchak, an infectious disease specialist, who is a member of St. John’s in Coatesville.

A special guest will be coming soon to the Communicator’s program.

It has been rewarding for Pr. Fisher to make these connections at the intersection of communication, the virus, and ministry. As a result of these gatherings we also have gained some volunteers for the Assembly and other tasks in the Synod.

Pr. Fisher noted the primary messaging vehicle for the Synod is “MinistryLink.” We have an open rate of 42% for our communications, which may sound low, but is actually quite strong for religious organizations.

On the MinistryLink resources tab we have on information on Covid-19 to help advise congregations. We have been doing a good deal of production work on YouTube, and have been posting information and help tips. There is a great deal of information available online. We have invested significant resources in digital equipment, which was used for this year's Assembly. We are working on how we can use this equipment for the upcoming Rostered Minister's Equipping Event, and how we might use it for the 2022 Synod Assembly.

Vocations and Advancement

The Reverend Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership/Mission Advancement then gave an update on what is happening in her areas of responsibility. Pr. Sease began with the area of Vocations and Leadership.

She recently posted a video about her own sense of call. She noted that God calls us to many things: family, employment, even the voting booth. Some people have a particular calling to rostered ministry in the ELCA. We have about 30 people who are at some point in their journey to determine if rostered ministry is that to which God is calling them. As people go through the process, some discover they are not called to this. "Success" for candidacy is not getting people to the position of Pastor or Deacon, but the proper determination of where each is being called by God to use the gifts God has given.

Statistics of our Synod with regard to Mobility/Vocations:

We have 42 congregations in transition, without settled pastoral leadership

We have 30 candidates and 42 openings; the numbers do not add up.

We need you as Rostered Ministers and lay leaders to work to raise up leaders for the work of the Church. Pr. Sease noted for the Rostered Ministers that this is a part of the ordination vows. There is a Leadership crisis, and the need is great, but God will provide, as you assist in raising up people for leadership in the Church. We can start by identifying and inviting people around us to consider this call.

Pr. Sease then turned to the Mission Advancement portion of her portfolio, noting two events that are approaching which deal with stewardship and encouragement of disciples to learn to share with gladness and generosity.

First, we are preparing for our "All Saints Appeal," with the theme, "Shall we Gather at the River," from the hymn of the same name. There is a line in this hymn that says, "gather with the saints at the river, that flows by the throne of God." We recognize we need to gather as Saints across this 5 County region to do the work of ministry.

We also are planning for our Stewardship Extravaganza, which will be taking place in January of 2022. More information will be coming soon, but please mark your calendars.

Pr. King asked a question about mobility. 42 congregations in transition is a significant number. Are there any that are closer to calling a settled pastor versus those that are just beginning this process?

Pr. Sease: Naturally there are congregations at various stages in the process. Currently there are 8 congregations with names of candidates to interview.

Mr. Bert Glenn: How does the process of pastors coming from other synods play into our filling these positions, and are we angering these other synods by taking candidates?

Pr. Sease: Sometimes their home synods are upset, but mostly they want their pastors to be in the proper call also. We receive paperwork from the Churchwide office of ministers interested in coming to our synod. We have a process by which Deans will interview them to gain a sense of the persons interested in coming to our Synod. We then consider the gifts they list and how they might match with the needs of the congregations we have in transition. If there is a match, we submit their names for consideration.

Pr. Dwight Mason: following up on Mr. Glenn's concern about tension between synods, New Jersey Synod and SEPA Synod are working closely together to fill each other's needs. For instance, I am "on loan" the New Jersey Synod to assist as a bridge pastor with a congregation for a year.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley noted the minutes of the Executive Committee were included in the materials distributed for this meeting. Before entertaining questions on those minutes, Ms. Beasley presented the proposed Committee Assignments to the Council.

Committee Assignments

Vice President Beasley noted that the list of Committees does not include the Administrative Committee. We are working to revision how this team might be configured. In the meantime we are having volunteers take on some of the functions this committee has performed.

The assignments to the Committees of the Synod Council are proposed each year by the Bishop and the Vice President. Chairs of the Committees are members of the Synod Council. Several Committees have provision for members in addition to the members of the Synod Council.

This year we have several new chairpersons. Mr. Tackett had been the chair of the Audit Committee, but he is no longer on the Synod Council. Pr. Serena Sellers had been the chair of the Constitution Committee, but with her work with Sanctuary Village she has declined this role. Mr. Ehret had been the chair of the Investment Committee, but he has declined the position this year. New chairs include Ms. Cynthia Moultrie for the Audit Committee, Pr. Gary Costa for the Constitution Committee, and Pr. John Heidgerd for the Investment Committee.

The Synod Council was asked to consider the following motion:

S.C.21.09.01. 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.

Synod Assembly Theme

Vice President Beasley then moved to the topic of a theme for the 2022 Synod Assembly. She noted that there were several options presented for members to consider, or members may make other suggestions. We are beginning this process now, because so many other pieces need to fit together around whatever theme is chosen. Pr. Jennifer Phelps, who coordinates worship for the Assembly around the theme, compiled the ideas of the Synod Council. Some of the comments included:

- Mr. Glenn – likes the theme of Community
- Pr. Sellers – also likes “community,” not just our own, but the community beyond who we are
- Mr. Richard Daniels – re-establishing community after Covid has torn it down is the way we need to go.
- Pr. Phelps, referencing a message from Ms. Sandra Zimmerman – Hope and Strength for Tomorrow, as We have been Changed
- Vice President Beasley – I like Hope for Tomorrow, because we are still in the midst of this pandemic.
- Pr. Phelps also suggested – SEPA Strong, Still Together
- Pr. Nathan Krause – If we are SEPA Strong, this is why we are – we are doers; we are walking the walk, not just talking the talk.
- Mr. Adam Clark – I like the theme of “Victory in Christ” – partly because I am an optimist, and partly because I hope that by then the virus will be contained.
- Pr. Gwendolyn King resonated with the 1st and the 4th suggestions on the list – God’s presence in fear and trouble, and Hope for Tomorrow. She is living in the Hope of Christ, not in the midst of the unknown.
- Pr. Heidgerd – relates to themes of community. We have drifted apart from each other in the pandemic. We have an opportunity, with 42 congregations without settled pastors, to find new ways to work beyond our own buildings.
- Mr. Everett Wick – It seems we are starting at the wrong end. If we start with a review of our congregations’ request for aid, that might be what we present on, focusing from there on what our strengths are to meet those needs.

Bishop Davenport thanked the members for their ideas and brainstorming. She noted there will be a logo contest based on the theme, and the Synod Council will get to choose the logo.

Pr. Phelps was asked if she had what she needed at this time. She said she has recorded the ideas, and the ones in the “chat,” and has plenty to work with.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Actions on the Roster

Secretary Richard presented the following Actions on the Roster. As explanation Secretary Richard noted that there are some persons for whom we are making two changes. This is due to timing of when we received the paperwork from the rostered ministers, and what we need to track to have them assigned to the proper roster for the time of its duration. For instance, when a rostered minister completes a call, that minister needs to request on-leave from call status. When we receive their paperwork, we can assign them to the proper roster. When an interim pastor completes service at that site, they need to move back to the on-call roster until such time as they

are called to another interim assignment. We are at the nexus of personal accountability of the rostered minister, and the corporate responsibility of the Synod and the ELCA.

On Leave from Call Requests

S.C.21.09.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Kathrine Steinly, second year, effective August 17, 2021.

S.C.21.09.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Dwight Mason, third year, effective August 26, 2021

S.C.21.09.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Katherine Cartwright Knodel, first year, effective March 31, 2021

S.C.21.09.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Heidi Roderick-Schnaath, first year, effective April 5, 2021

S.C.21.09.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Gwendolyn S. King, first year, effective July 7, 2021

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolutions.

Requests to move from Active Roster to Retired Roster

S.C.21.09.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Kristie L. Chandler, effective August 1, 2021

S.C.21.09.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Kristine Peterson, effective July 1, 2021

S.C.21.09.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. David Deal, effective October 1, 2021

S.C.21.09.10. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Dolores E. Littleton, effective November 1, 2021

S.C.21.09.11. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to Deacon Beth A. Barkhau, effective December 1, 2021

S.C.21.09.12. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Gerald Tancredi, effective January 1, 2022

S.C.21.09.13. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Julie B. Bergdahl, effective January 1, 2022

S.C.21.09.14. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Wayne D. Moritz, effective November 1, 2021

S.C.21.09.15. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Carol Steinhart, effective March 1, 2021

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolutions.

Renewal of Invitation of UCC Minister to serve and ELCA Congregation in SEPA Synod

S.C.21.09.16. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve renewal of entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, to the Rev. Dr. Karyn L. Wiseman at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Huntingdon Valley, PA, beginning October 1, 2021, until September 30, 2022. (This call requires an annual report to the Synod Bishop for the length of the call. This invitation is renewable annually by the Synod Council.)

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Renewal of Call to Specialized Ministry

S.C.21.09.17. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year, renewable call to the Rev. Sabrina LaBelle as Protestant Chaplain at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, PA, beginning August 1, 2021, to July 31, 2022

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Calls to Interim Ministry

S.C.21.09.18. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Wayne Shelor to interim ministry at St. John's, Phoenixville beginning September 1, 2020 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Shelor resigns this call, whichever comes first.

S.C.21.09.19. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Katherine Cartwright Knodel to interim ministry at the Lutehran Church of the Resurrection, Yardley, beginning July 12, 2021 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Cartwright Knodel resigns this call, whichever comes first.

S.C.21.09.20. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Heidi M. Roderick-Schnaath to interim ministry at Christ's, Oreland, beginning August 22, 2021 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Roderick-Schnaath resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolutions.

Information not Requiring Action Transfers

Pastor Thaddeus Book *to* Grand Canyon Synod, effective January 1, 2021
Pastor Russell Crouthamel *from* Northwestern PA Synod, effective March 1, 2021, called as pastor of St. Mark's, Pennsburg
Pastor Charles Romanowski (retired) *to* New Jersey Synod, effective April 28, 2021
Deacon Laura Book *to* Grand Canyon Synod, effective April 29, 2021
Pastor Sarah Aasheim *from* Northwestern PA Synod, effective June 4, 2021, called as pastor of Grace, Glenside (Wyndmoor)
Pastor Christopher L. Weidner (retired) *to* Metro DC Synod, effective July 7, 2021
Pastor Bradley Burke *to* Virginia Synod, effective July 11, 2021
Pastor Bruce Thorsen *to* Northern Great Lakes Synod, effective July 27, 2021
Pastor Joshua Sullivan *to* New England Synod, effective August 16, 2021
Pastor William Coleman *from* Northwestern PA Synod, effective September 1, 2021, called as pastor of St. Paul's, Telford
Pastor Eric Reimer *to* Upstate New York Synod, effective September 1, 2021
Pastor Robert Matthias (retired) *from* Lower Susquehanna Synod, effective September 3, 2021

Deaths

These three lay leaders served their congregations, synod, churchwide, and internationally. They are listed for their honor of their contributions to the beloved community.

Mrs. Phyllis Linn – February 3, 2021

Mrs. Janet Weachter – July 23, 2021

Dr. Lois Leffler – August 6, 2021

Synodical Administration for Trinity, South Philadelphia

Secretary Richard described the situation at Trinity, South Philadelphia, and that the leadership of that congregation has made the request that the Synod take over administration of this ministry.

Background:

Trinity, South Philadelphia, has a long history in our Synod, and for many years it was a flagship congregation. Over the past several decades, Trinity's strength and security have waned. This decline has occurred for many reasons, but regardless, at this point Trinity has dwindled to a point where it is struggling to continue as a viable congregation in our Synod. The congregation now averages fewer than 15 in Sunday worship.

On July 19th, the leadership of the congregation asked for the Synod to assume administration of the congregation, in line with S13.25.

The intent is to enter this administration to see what can be done to reorganize and rejuvenate Trinity Church. This congregation is not only historically significant; it is also the only remaining Lutheran Christian presence in this region of Philadelphia. There are many families with children who could benefit from receiving the Gospel of Christ, and by being served in Christ's name.

The following resolution is presented for the Synod Council's deliberation and vote:

S.C.21.09.21. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorizes the Office of the Bishop to assume administration of Trinity Lutheran Church, 18th and Wolf Streets, South Philadelphia, in accordance with S13.24. of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, effective as of the date of the passage of this resolution.

The floor was opened for discussion.

Pr. Phelps: Is the congregation friendly to this motion?

Vice President Beasley: yes, they are in favor of this.

Ms. Moultrie: What is the hoped for outcome?

VP Beasley: the hope is to reinvigorate the ministry. There are many families in the area. We won't know what is possible until we get in. The Administrative Council will walk alongside the members of Trinity to see if ministry can happen. We believe there is a lot of potential.

Mr. Clark: Sometimes getting the people of a congregation to do the work of evangelism is very difficult. If the Synod tries to help the church and the people do not go along, what is the next step, or if they do and fail, what is the next step?

VP Beasley: we need to take one step at a time, sweet Jesus. We need a steady supply pastor, and then a bridge pastor to come in, and then take baby steps. Start praying that we can get a bridge and steady supply there, and we will worry about "what if" when and if we need to. Right now, let's deal with what we need now for this time. Lord, bring the right leadership.

We may start with door hangers, not even conversation. This congregation is 172 years old. A witness needs to continue there.

Mr. Clark: I know of other congregations that are facing similar concerns, and I worry for them.

Bp. Davenport: You are right to have these concerns. We are optimists, but we are also realists. If nothing happens, we will follow the process to close. But for now, we are doing as Vice President Beasley has said to strive to keep the ministry active.

Pr. Sellers: Adam, I think there was a presupposition in what you said that the Synod will come in and tell them what to do. We are not doing that. We are coming alongside to help them to determine what they are wanting to do, and what they are able to do.

Pr. Costa: I am reminded of Jesus' passion prediction that he will undergo suffering, die, and rise on 3rd day. Jesus rebukes Peter for setting his mind on human things not divine things. The greatest tragedy may not be the closing of a congregation, but the missed opportunity to do ministry. May this ministry die so a new ministry can begin here. One Step at a Time, God can do amazing things, even in the midst of what seems to have died.

As discussion concluded, the vote was called.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Treasurer Janet Neff was unable to attend this meeting. Mr. Martin Schwab, SEPA Synod's Senior Accountant, presented highlights from her report.

In the General Expenses portion of the budget:

Mission support from congregations is above budget by \$19,000

Investment income is up by over \$225,000

Expenses are under budget

The Temporarily Restricted portion of the budget has a surplus of \$27,000

The Mission portion of the budget shows a surplus, but this is due to high performance of our investments, and in particular, the sale of a property held under management. Without the sale of the property, there would be a deficit of nearly \$26,000.

The Restricted portion of the budget also shows a surplus as we have received a trust fund from the former Grace, Norristown. This money is earmarked for use by congregations in Montgomery County.

Our overall ratios of assets to liabilities are very good.

In August the Synod received a gift of \$10,000 from St. Mark's, Pennsburg. The Synod Council is the body to decide how this gift will be used.

Bishop Davenport suggested that \$5,000 go to the Bishop's Fund to assist rostered ministers in times of hardship. This Fund is usually supported by offerings from ordinations and installations. As there have been few of these since the pandemic, this fund could use support at this time when the hardships for ministers are particularly high.

She further suggested that the other \$5,000 be used for the Rostered Ministers Equipping Event. This event is usually paid for by ministers and their congregations, but we would like to provide this event this year for free as an act of support for our rostered ministers.

S.C.21.09.22. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorizes the \$10,000 gift from St. Mark's, Pennsburg, be used in equal measure for the Bishop's Fund and the Rostered Minister's Equipping Event.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Mr. Schwab asked members of the Synod to review their congregation's giving, and if they have any questions about these numbers, to let him know.

Mr. Glenn noted that the Finance Committee has not met since the last meeting of the Synod Council, and as such the Committee does not have a separate report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Investment Committee

Mr. Dave Ehret reported on the Investment Committee. As of August we added nearly \$550,000 to the portfolio from the sale of the property of the former Grace, Norristown. He noted that the Investment Committee now has a new Chair, Pr. Jon Heidgerd, and so in the future he will be making this report. Mr. Ehret thanked Mr. Schwab for his assistance with the work of this committee.

Year to date we have an investment gain of \$1,901,278 or about 17%.

Total Investment Portfolio - \$11,004,765

Constitution Committee

Pr. Costa, new chair of the Constitution Committee, shared that he has received a word from Trinity, Fairview Village, that they are beginning the process of revising their constitution. When the Committee has received the revisions, and conducted its review, he will bring this to the Synod Council.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Clark will send updated contact information for the Synod Council Roster.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

Announcement – the Synod Staff will be returning to the office on October 6 so that they can pack to move to the Brossmann Center. The offices will be on the 3rd floor, West Wing, the same floor where President Guy Erwin's offices are located.

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Costa.

The next meeting of the SEPA Synod Council will be December 9, 2021, at 6:00 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 9, 2021