

MINUTES
of the 168th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
December 9, 2021
6:00 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley invited The Reverend Gary Costa to lead the Synod Council in devotions. Pr. Costa used as inspiration for his reflections the devotion for this day from Liberty Lutheran Services' Advent devotional book. The verse for the day was 2 Corinthians 8:8, *"I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others."*

Pr. Costa noted that there is a difference between acting out of command and acting out of love. For instance, a child cleaning their room under command shoves all the clutter in the closet and closes the door. A child cleaning their room out of love will truly clean it; if you look under the bed, you'll see that nothing is hiding there.

Generosity is not measured in dollars; it is measured in the amount of love given and received. The generosity of Jesus was a gift, not from command, but from love. Do not grow weary. Do not fall into a trap that you are generous because you feel you have to give. Instead, remain in the place where you act because of the love you have received, and which you then need to share with the world.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 168th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:11 p.m.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 167th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley put forward two changes to the Agenda; to move the Forward Together in Faith presentation to after the Mission Moment, and to place the Report of the Constitution Committee after the Secretary's Report.

The Synod Council adopted the agenda for the 168th meeting as amended.

MISSION MOMENT

The Reverend Dr. Larry Smoose of the Synod's Generosity Team presented the Mission Moment. Dr. Smoose shared an overview of the upcoming Extravaganza 2022 Stewardship Event, the title of which is "Stewardship and Vitality in the NOW Normal".

This event was originally planned for January 22, 2022, but with the surge of the omicron variant of the coronavirus, it has been rescheduled for June 18, 2022. All the Keynote presenters and

Workshop leaders are on board with the new date. This will be a hybrid event, with space for people to attend in-person at Trinity, Lansdale, and others able to attend on Zoom.

The Extravaganza is a significant event. Keith Mundy, who has previously served as the Assistant Director for Stewardship Ministry of the ELCA, said our last Extravaganza was one of the largest such events held in the ELCA.

The two Keynote presenters will be the Rev. Dr. Louise Johnson, currently serving as Executive for Administration in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, having previously served as President of Wartburg Seminary, and in the development office at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and the Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, professor of Evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary. Dr. Rah was recommended by Dr. William Flippin as one who will bring an appropriate Spiritual and ecclesial response to our present-day realities.

Workshop leaders will include:

- Ryan P. Burge, author of The Nones
- Dave Daubert, author of The Hybrid Church
- Doug Powe, Jr., author of Re-vitalizing Urban and other struggling Congregations
- Tiffany Chaney – pastor/developer of Gathered by Grace, reaching out to 18 – 40 year-olds in Montgomery, AL, and Director of Development for Baptist Health System.

The Generosity Team is working to keep this event very affordable. Rather than \$200 for a comparable event elsewhere, the fee to attend will be \$40. The desire is to make it possible for as many people as possible, especially lay people, to participate. Much of the expense has been covered through a grant of \$12,000 from the Stewardship of Life Institute, support from Thrivent Financial, gifts from SEPA congregations, and the host church, Trinity, Lansdale, providing space and logistics.

Support from the Larry House Fund has made it possible for seminarians to attend for free. Larry House served the Seminary for many years in the Development office, and his wife established this fund, held jointly by United Lutheran Seminary and the SEPA Synod, to continue his work of supporting the development of leaders for the church.

Dr. Smoose called on the Reverend Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy, Mobility and Interim Ministry, and Mission Advancement, to describe the support our Synod staff will provide to make this event possible. Pr. Sease noted we have enlisted a huge number of volunteers to make this program work, particularly as it is a hybrid event. Pr. Bob Fisher is providing technical expertise. Ms. Cynta Outterbridge is coordinating registration. We may need two different registration platforms, one for in-person, one for on-line participants.

Dr. Smoose noted that on the day of the Extravaganza members of the Synod Generosity Team will be present to guide, coordinate, and lead people to the proper workshop rooms. Bishop Davenport will be preaching.

Dr. Smoose shared that we want to get the word out about the Extravaganza. Pr. Fisher and the communications team are doing great job, but it is hoped that Synod Council members will share the word. He then asked if there were any questions.

Pr. Gwen King: You said the in-person portion will be limited; do you know how many will be able to attend?

Dr. Smoose: probably 150

Pr. King: Can you say again who provided the \$12,000 grant?

Dr. Smoose: “SOLI” – Stewardship of Life Institute

Vice President Beasley thanked Dr. Smoose for his presentation.

FORWARD TOGETHER IN FAITH

Ms. Ellen Daneke presented the report on the distribution of grants from the Forward Together in Faith fund.

The FTIF team reviewed 22 grant applications requesting \$171,687 for the 2021-2022 grant year. There was one application which was denied because they are not a congregation, agency or person, affiliated with SEPA. The application was submitted from a church in Uganda.

In 2021, congregations were, and are, still dealing with covid and covid protocols. Some of the grants this year are to continue to assist congregations with improving or expanding their presence using technology. We also have many congregations/agencies looking to do new and innovative ministries as well as equipping leaders and parishioners.

We are excited and thankful for the opportunity to award 21 grants for a little over \$91,000. Applicants will be notified of the decision and the amount of the grant being awarded, in December. Synod Council will be notified of the recipients and amounts, after the above communication goes out. Checks will be mailed the beginning of January 2022.

Total Grants Being Awarded for 2021, (funds distributed in 2022) - \$91,065

Amount given by area of focus:

Networking	\$ 5,057	Communicating	\$15,162
Innovating	\$35,423	Equipping	\$35,423

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Davenport shared first and foremost her thanksgiving to Jesus that we now have Pr. Stacey-Kyle “Skyle” Rea on staff as our Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult, and Spiritual Formation. This is an important position in our Synod, and in the life of the Church. We are fortunate to have someone with Pr. Rea’s experience, and even more so, her passion, for bringing youth to Jesus.

The position of Director of Evangelical Mission remains open, but it has been posted. The hope is to have this position filled in the first quarter of 2022.

Bishop Davenport noted that her report is filled with the things that have occupied her time since the last Synod Council Meeting, including her participation in the Welcoming Event for Bishop Julius McAllister, Sr., Presiding Prelate and Mother Joan Marla McAllister, Episcopal Supervisor of the First Episcopal District African Methodist Episcopal Church, and that she preached at the installation of Dr. Guy Erwin as President of the United Lutheran Seminary.

She commented that rather than reviewing what has been shared in her written report, she would prefer to hear the questions the Synod Council has about the ministry before us.

Mr. Bert Glenn: You reference in your report the reality of “the Great Resignation.” At the last Synod Council meeting Pr. Sease noted that we have 42 congregations in need of pastors. Are these retirements? Or have pastors just had enough?

Bp. Davenport: They are leaving for many reasons. Some are moving to new ventures, some are end of year retirements, some had enough of the stress of the pandemic, and some are leaving to be closer to family, some of which is also pandemic related. Yet, while we have seen a huge loss, we are also seeing a large increase in the number of persons in candidacy. Like after 9/11, at this time some are feeling the call to enter the ministry to make a difference.

Mr. Glenn: Is this resignation common across the synod?

Bp. Davenport: Unfortunately yes, this is being seen across the country.

Pr. Gwendolyn King: Do you have a move in date yet for moving to the new offices?

Bp. Davenport: No, not a hard date; we are waiting for some renovation work to be completed. Currently we are hoping it will be AFTER Christmas!

Pr. Serena Sellers: I note you have stepped back from some areas of leadership in the ELCA. Is this self-care, or is there some other reason?

Bp. Davenport: It is partially self-care, and partially intentional. In order to live into our goal of becoming newer, younger, and more diverse, we need to make room for other bishops of color, and to develop more leadership. When I have been in these meetings I have thought “there should be others. What about Bishop Curry, Bishop Ortiz, and Bishop Malpica?” We need to make room for others, so we live into the diversity we claim we want to have.

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. Vice President Beasley noted that she accompanied Bishop Davenport to the installation of Dr. Erwin as the President of United Lutheran Seminary.

The Vice President Asked members to be sure to reply to the chairs of their respectively assigned committees. Each person on the Synod Council is also on a Synod Committee, and for the work of the church to be completed well, it is important that all reply in a timely fashion when contacted by their committee chairperson.

Vice President Beasley commented on the reality that there are many congregations in leadership transition. Since last meeting she held another Zoom conference with lay leaders. There were

30 participants, and about 90% of them were in congregations in transition. There is a lot of anger, and a lot of unhealthy feelings as we continue in the pandemic. She is aware there is a lot of frustration in our congregations, and she was glad to have a chance for lay leaders to meet without pastors present so they could speak freely and air their frustrations without concern. Please remember to pray for our pastors and leaders in this difficult time, but also pray for our congregations.

Bp. Davenport thanked Vice President Beasley for hosting this conversation, and said she is pleased that those who gathered felt supported. The lay leaders have said they would like to gather again for further conversation.

Mr. Glenn: Do you plan to have another session?

V.P. Beasley: Yes, I hope to offer one each month.

Agenda for 2022 Synod Assembly

Attention was then turned to consideration of the Agenda for the 2022 Synod Assembly. Ms. Beasley noted the document had been shared in the packet of materials. As it comes from the Executive Committee is comes as a motion. After a second, the Agenda was adopted as presented.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Secretary Richard's report began with consideration of a Synodical Appointment, Term Call to St. John, Hatboro. As part of the consideration of this call, the Synod Council entered **Executive Session**.

Results of the consideration in Executive Session:

S.C.21.12.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a two-year Term Call by Synodical Appointment at St. John, Hatboro, to the Reverend Stratford (Bo) Cuthbert Bannister, V, effective January 1, 2022, extending to December 31, 2023, under the Protocol for a Pastor Serving a Congregation under Synodical Appointment of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Actions on the Roster

Calls to Interim Ministry

S.C.21.12.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Gwendolyn King** to interim ministry at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church (Havertown) beginning October 11, 2021, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor King resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

S.C.21.12.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Elaine Quincey** to interim ministry at St. Peter's Lutheran Church (Pottstown) beginning December 1, 2021, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Quincey resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Renewal of Term Call

S.C.21.12.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. David Bruner as Pastor of Adult Discipleship and Intergenerational Mission (PADM) at Paoli Presbyterian Church, Paoli, Pennsylvania. This renewable term call is effective January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022. This call requires an annual report to and meeting with the synodical bishop for the length of this call.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Renewal of Call to Specialized Ministry

S.C.21.12.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the **Rev. Margaret J. Ainslie** as Director of Pastoral Care at Doylestown Hospital beginning February 27, 2022, to February 26, 2023. This call requires an annual report to and meeting with the synodical bishop for the length of this call.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

On Leave from Call Requests

S.C.21.12.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Dr. William Flippin, first year, effective September 1, 2021.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

S.C.21.12.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Susan K. Ericsson, first year, (disability) effective November 1, 2021.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Requests to move from Active Roster to Retired Roster

S.C.21.12.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Stephen A. Keiser, effective January 1, 2022

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

S.C.21.12.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend retired status to the Rev. Ronald P. Wesemann, effective January 1, 2022

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Recording of email vote to extend call for Synod Staff position.

As part of the Actions on the Roster, Secretary Richard announced the results of the email vote to call Pr. Skyle Rea to be the Assistant to the Bishop, and includes the results here for the record.

On November 9 and 10, 2021, the SEPA Synod Council was asked to consider and vote on the following resolution:

S.C.21.12.10. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Stacey-Kyle Rea as Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship beginning December 1, 2021. This position is co-terminus with the synodical bishop.

The Synod Council replied with 26 yes, 0 no votes. The resolution is adopted.
Congratulations, Pastor Rea!

Information not requiring action

Death:

The Rev. Richard (Dick) Hess, October 24, 2021

Amendments to the Constitution of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Secretary Richard put before the Synod Council several resolutions to amend the Constitution of the Synod by adding and/or modifying various Continuing Resolutions. The first proposal deals with procedures for the Committee on Reference and Counsel. The proposed change sets a deadline for when submissions to Reference and Counsel may be received and still be presented for consideration at the Synod Assembly. The proposal is to set the deadline a week in advance of any one-day Assembly, in order to provide sufficient time for Reference and Counsel to do the necessary research to make appropriate recommendations to the Assembly regarding affirming, defeating, or referring the actions of a particular resolution. To that end, the Council was asked to consider the following:

S.C.21.12.11. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council adopt the following amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA regarding deadlines for submissions to Reference and Counsel:

Proposed additions are underlined, deletions are ~~struck through~~.

S7.32.A01. *The Synod Assembly shall be governed by the following Rules of Procedure:*

1. Rule Regarding Distribution

The distribution of any materials that do not come to the Assembly through regular reports, synod committees, agencies, institutions, or Synod Council must be approved by the Committee on Reference and Counsel. Therefore, no materials may be distributed to the Assembly without the prior approval of Reference and Counsel.

2. Rule Regarding Resolutions Not Meeting the Deadline for Reference and Counsel

The assembly, by a two-thirds vote, may grant permission for consideration of a resolution that a voting member wishes to bring to the floor, but which has not met the imposed deadline of the Reference and Counsel Committee. If the assembly is one day, whether in person or virtual, any resolution not meeting the original deadline MUST be submitted one week prior to the assembly AND be granted permission for consideration by the two-thirds vote as indicated above. NO RESOLUTION WILL BE CONSIDERED PAST THIS DEADLINE.

4. *Rules for Dealing with Memorials and/or Resolutions Submitted to the Committee on Reference and Counsel*

- (1) *The deadline for submitting memorials and/or resolutions to the Committee on Reference and Counsel shall be one month before the opening of the Synod Assembly.*
- (2) *The Committee on Reference and Counsel shall publish all memorials and/or resolutions, submitted by the deadline, at the synod website no later than two weeks before the opening of the Synod Assembly.*
- (3) *The Committee on Reference and Counsel shall make available to Synod Assembly voting members when they register at the Synod Assembly electronic copies ~~hard copies~~ of all memorials and/or resolutions, submitted to the committee by the deadline, and the committee's recommendations. For in person assemblies the committee will make available hard copies at the site.*

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

The next set of proposed amendments regard service in various capacities in the Synod. Secretary Richard noted that about five years ago the Executive Committee had proposed, and the Synod Council had concurred, that because of the level of responsibility, time commitment, and role of oversight in each of the following positions, one could serve either on Synod Council, as Dean of a Conference, or on Candidacy Committee, but not on more than one at a time. This has been reflected in the nomination letter each year. When this had been proposed, a set of continuing resolutions had also been drafted, but it appears that they were either not formally adopted, or if adopted, their adoption was not recorded. Secretary Richard brought these proposed amendments to the Council for adoption so that our Constitution and our practice are aligned. He pointed out that there are two proposed resolutions, which state the same thing, but which will be placed at two separate sections. The reason for this is to ensure they are easily accessible, as one who has a question about nominations may not think to check the section about the deans, and one who is interested in the parameters of a dean may not think to look also in the section regarding nominations. The following was placed before the Council:

S.C.21.12.12. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council adopt the following additions to the Constitution, bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA:

S9.08.01.A21. No person may serve concurrently in more than one of the following positions in this synod: member of the Synod Council, dean of a conference, and member of the Candidacy Committee. Election or appointment to one of these positions shall constitute resignation from the others.

S12.01.11.A21. No person may serve concurrently in more than one of the following positions in this synod: member of the Synod Council, dean of a conference, and member of the Candidacy Committee. Election or appointment to one of these positions shall constitute resignation from the others.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Affirmation of Board Members for Liberty Lutheran Services

We have received a request from Dr. Luanne Fisher, President and CEO of Liberty Lutheran Services, that the SEPA Synod Council affirm the election of members of that board for a second term, consistent with their practice and the bylaws of that organization. These persons were elected by the Liberty Lutheran Board at its September 21, 2021, meeting. To that end, Secretary Richard put before the Synod Council the following resolution:

S.C.21.12.13. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the following people to serve on the Board of Directors of Liberty Lutheran Services: Beverly Bortz - *Christ's Lutheran, Orland*, Paul Engstrom - *Christ's Lutheran, Oreland*, Robert Keddie - *Gloria Dei Lutheran, Huntingdon Valley*, David Stettler - *St. Peter's Lutheran-Lafayette Hill*, and Evan Speece - *St. John Lutheran, Blue Bell*.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Bert Glenn: I do not understand why we would need to do this. If it is their board, and they have voted for these people, what is our role in this? Are we giving a Synodical imprimatur without much information or background?

Pr. John Heidgerd: I have a similar feeling to what Mr. Glenn has. What level of vetting do we do of these candidates that would warrant our affirming them?

Pr. Serena Sellers: I believe it is an historical vestige of when the Social Ministry Organizations and the Synod were more closely tied, and we provided more financial support than we do now. As these are supposed to be active members of our congregations, this is more like reading the banns at a wedding. "If anyone has reason to object" is the basic point, to ensure that these people are indeed members in good standing of one of our congregations.

Pr. Heidgerd: Do we know if they are members in good standing?

Vice President Beasley: I also have a problem affirming people that I know nothing about. Also, I do not know of boards where you have more than one person from the same congregation serving at the same time. And I wonder about people of color or language other than English; is there such representation on this board? Do we have a say in this?

Secretary Richard: What I shared with Vice President Beasley is similar to what Pr. Sellers has said. I did not have time to get a copy of their constitution prior to this meeting, and so I do not know the specifics of the relationship. One thing I am curious about is that we recently made significant changes to the description of the relationship between the Social Ministry Organizations and the Synod, and I am not sure what our ties are anymore. I had sent the proposed revisions to each of the SMOs, asking for feedback in light of current understandings and arrangements. It is my understanding that these relationships have been formally severed, due in large part to state requirements for funding streams, and that our relationship is, as Pr. Sellers noted, more historical in nature.

Dr. Luanne Fisher has indicated that their constitution calls for the Synod Council to affirm these members. I do not know if that is still needed, but according to their documents it is still a part of the process. If we still have a role to play in approving board members, we may need to revise our recent amendments.

Bishop Davenport: We do the same thing with the United Lutheran Seminary, and so, as Pr. Sellers said, it is just a part of what we have done.

V.P. Beasley: Why do we do this with some, and not with others? We do not have this provision at Lutheran Settlement House.

Bp. Davenport: It depends on their constitution.

Sect. Richard: It may be that Lutheran Settlement House has updated its constitution more recently than Liberty Lutheran Services.

Pr. Heidgerd: Bishop, is it the same with the Seminary as it is with Liberty Lutheran? It is my recollection that with the Seminary, the Synod has a role to review and recommend candidates to the Board, rather than ratify persons others have nominated.

Sect. Richard: It is a different process with the Seminary. It is my sense that the process was different when we had a closer tie with our SMOs, providing both more money and more people. Still, I do not remember ever vetting candidates to their boards. It was a method for the Social Ministry Organizations to let us know who the persons are that are serving, so that we could be aware of our connections with the SMO, and so if we wanted to know what was happening at the organization, we had board member with whom we have a contact.

Pr. Heidgerd: It is, however, a liability issue. If we approve their board members and there is some misconduct, then we are open to liability. I think there is a good reason for us not to approve this.

Mr. Glenn: I agree with Pr. Heidgerd with the liability concern. Could we do something less than approve, and perhaps acknowledge receipt of their action to seat these board members?

Sect. Richard: I am sympathetic to that. "Affirm" is different than "approve." Do I sense "affirm" is still too strong for your comfort?

Pr. Heidgerd: Yes. I think we should turn this back, and say we do not affirm, and let them deal with whatever constitutional issues this raises for them.

Mr. Glenn: We also want to be clear that we are not *dis*-approving them, or claiming that these are not good people. We just do not see the need for us to have a role in their placement.

Pr. Sellers: I understand the desire not to approve, and the liability concerns expressed. I also have more knowledge than most of the historic, supportive, and wonderful relationships we have with our SMOs, and while they may need to change their constitutions, I like Mr. Glenn's

suggestion that we acknowledge receipt and recommend that they adjust their constitution so that they no longer require Synod Council approval. This is kinder than saying “no, we do not approve; do what you have to do.” This feels a bit disrespectful of the truly supportive and good relationship we as a Synod have had with Liberty Lutheran over the years.

Pr. Nathan Krause: I also worry that receiving this and turning it back would be disrespectful of a partner in ministry, and may give the impression that we no longer want to have a relationship. It may convey, “We no longer care about the work you do.” Instead, I think we should be saying the opposite. We do care about this relationship, and we want to increase our involvement in what you are doing. For instance, The Manor at Yorktown is next to the congregation I serve, and when Liberty Lutheran bought it, they never even thought to make contact with the local congregation, asking how we can partner. The problem is we are having less of a tie than we should have. I do not understand why this is an issue.

V.P. Beasley: I do not think we are saying we want to reject this, but that we need to change the wording. How can we affirm, when we know nothing about the candidates? Can we change this wording?

Sect. Richard: I have concerns, as do Pastors Sellers and Krause, of what this says to our ministry partner. As for changing the wording, I believe “affirm” is the wording in their by-laws, and so we would not be able change that word. My preference would be to acknowledge that we have received this, and before we affirm this, we would like to have more information as to what their process is, what their documents say, and why it is important for us to affirm board members.

Pr. Gwendolyn King: I am much more comfortable with an acknowledgement of receipt than I am with an affirmation, especially in light of our commitment as a Synod to inclusion of persons of color, persons whose primary language is other than English, and LGBTQIA persons. We have statements that respond to that, and I do not know where Liberty Lutheran stands on this. They likely hold similar commitments, but until I know, I am uncomfortable with a vote of affirmation. It is not just about what they do, but how that work is carried out.

Pr. Joseph Klinger: Do they need this affirmation right away? Can we table this and get the information we need, and consider this at our next meeting?

Sect. Richard: This would be an option. They are already appointed, and have been serving since September, and so I would presume we can wait on this.

Pr. Klinger: could we also ask that they be the Mission Moment, so that we can hear directly what it is that they do?

V.P. Beasley: Yes, we can do this.

Bp. Davenport: I am all about maintaining relationship. I have been around long enough to know that this is not just rubber stamping. It is about relationships. Some of the choices before

us would give the impression that we no longer care about this relationship, and so I agree with Pr. Klinger that we table this, and seek more information and understanding.

Mr. Everett Wick: Merely approving their board members seems to be just a formality. A relationship doesn't depend on approving or not their members. Other actions, such as inviting them into our meeting, will do more to build the ties. I am in favor of tabling until we have more information.

Pr. Krause: Will we continue to cut ties? We recently approved action of the Bear Creek Board. How is this different?

Pr. Heidgerd: Let me clarify my position. My comments were not to cut ties, but to remove formalities that expose us to liabilities we do not need.

Mr. Adam Clark: With regard to the issue of Bear Creek, there was an issue of eminent domain, and if we did not endorse, the pipeline would have won anyway, and we would not have received anything from the transaction. We had no other real choice.

Pr. Krause: Just a different type of liability.

Pr. Sellers: We are not talking about beginning, or ending, a relationship. We are *in* a relationship, and I do not want to see us damage a relationship we already have.

Sect. Richard: We have different relationships with each of these institutions: the seminary, the camp, and each of the SMOs. As there are unique aspects to each of these relationships, perhaps it would be best to table this until we can gather more information.

Pr. Klinger: I move we table this until the next meeting, and that in the meantime we gather more information, and invite a representative from Liberty Lutheran join us for our next meeting.

The Synod Council approved the motion, and the resolution is TABLED.

2022 Housing Allowances for Rostered Ministers on Synod Staff

The housing allowances for the staff were shared in the information sent to the Synod Council. Secretary Richard put forward the following resolution to affirm the allowances to fulfill provisions in the tax code.

S.C.21.12.14. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2022 housing allowance for Bishop Patricia Davenport, Pastor Robert Fisher, Pastor Violet Little, Pastor Stacey-Kyle Rea, 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 adopted the resolution.

Resolution from the Reconciling in Christ Task Force

Secretary Richard shared that the following resolution comes from the Task Force, and was received Monday. Some time was needed to gain some understanding of what is being proposed, and so the Synod Council did not receive this item until late in the week.

He read the background to the Council, as all may not have had time to see it. The desire of the Task Force is to enact new provisions that have been adopted by ReconcilingWorks for those congregations and synods who have been granted status as Reconciling in Christ organizations. SEPA Synod had been recognized back in 1995, and there have been changes to the expectations of ReconcilingWorks since then which we have not yet implemented. To that end, the Task Force brings the following resolution to the Synod Council for comment, so that if there are revisions to be adopted, they can be completed in time for presentation to the Synod Assembly. Ms. Gail Penman, a member of the Synod Council, is also a member of the Task Force.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod adopt the following welcome statement:

We, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA, rooted in Jesus' gospel of liberation, unconditional love, and hospitality, welcome all into fellowship and community. This welcome includes those who have traditionally been marginalized in society inclusive of all sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, physical or mental ability, or station in life. As God's beloved, we are committed to the work of racial equity and to the pursuit of justice in our communities. We encourage all of our congregations to this work of the gospel, creating safe spaces for their members to bravely be their full selves. We celebrate and affirm all of God's children just as they are with all of their differences and gifts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod provide annual financial support to ReconcilingWorks, as required by ReconcilingWorks guidelines;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod commit to providing resources and equipping programs for congregations and leaders throughout the synod, to financially support these initiatives, and to regularly evaluate the inclusivity of the ministries of the synod;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the above resourcing, equipping, and evaluating be done through the creation of an Inclusive Communities Committee at the synodical level.

Respectfully Submitted,

The SEPA Reconciling in Christ Task Force,

The Rev. Alina S. Gayeuskki and The Rev. Jay C. Mitchell, Co-Chairs

Pr. King shared her appreciation for the work of the Task Force. She expressed her desire to not undermine the work done, but she has many concerns regarding the wording of the Welcome

Statement. If this is to be a truly welcoming statement, then each of the “categories” listed could use expansion. She said she has many suggestions.

Pr. King stated that some of the areas that could use strengthening are in the area of being the Beloved Community, welcoming people of color and all ethnic and racial backgrounds. We should also encourage all our congregations to embrace the work of the Gospel by welcoming the stranger.

If this is not the appropriate time, is it possible to share her concerns and suggestions with Ms. Penman to take to the Task Force?

Ms. Penman said that she and the team would welcome any and all suggestions for consideration.

Mr. Glenn shared that he is fully supportive of the direction you are taking, but as the chair of the Finance Committee, what financial support are we being asked to commit to this? It is important to know, as we are building the budget for presentation at the Assembly.

Ms. Penman shared that there is no explicit number, just an encouragement to lend financial support.

Mr. Glenn stated that it would be most helpful to have a number suggested for inclusion in the budgeting process.

Bp. Davenport noted that the ReconcilingWorks website suggests \$50 per individuals, \$75 for organizations, and \$1,000 for a lifetime gift.

There was also some questioning regarding the make-up and expenses associated with the establishment of the proposed Inclusive Communities Committee.

Pr. Sellers shared that we, and the Task Force, recognize there is a need for revision, and further discussion would be better done after revisions can be made from this input.

Sect. Richard agreed, noting that the Task Force was not asking for action at this meeting. They are seeking input, so that a refined resolution can be submitted next meeting to garner Synod Council’s affirmation prior to the Assembly.

Constitution Committee

The Reverend Gary Costa, chair of the Constitution Committee, stated that the Committee is working with six congregations that are revising and updating their constitutions. Of these six, there are two congregations whose constitutions have been reviewed, and are ready to be approved by the Synod Council. These include Church of the Trinity, Fairview Village, and Grace, Royersford. He moved that the Council adopt the following resolution:

S.C.20.12.15. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the changes to the constitutions of Church of the Trinity, Fairview Village, and Grace, Royersford.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, felt unwell and needed to leave the meeting early, so Mr. Martin Schwab, Senior Accountant for the Synod, asked if anyone had questions about her written report. He also shared that we are doing well, with unrestricted investments approximately double what we had budgeted. This is due to the performance of our investment funds, and receipts from the sale of the property of the former Grace, Norristown, and because our expenses continue to be lower in the ongoing pandemic.

Mr. Bert Glenn, Chairperson of the Finance Committee, presented his report.

The Committee met in November and reviewed the role of the committee with the new members. The Committee also reviewed the financial reports and found no issues or irregularities.

The Finance Committee was informed that the Fund for Mission Trustees had met, and authorized a grant of \$15,000 to Grace, Broomall, to supplement a mission pastor. This is a partnership with Temple, Havertown.

The Committee learned of the action of the Executive Committee to form a team to review the Fund for Mission Guidelines. The Finance Committee wonders if there should also be discussion of policies and procedures for other funds the Synod holds. Among these funds are St. Petri-Hope money, targeted for congregations in NE Philadelphia, a fund received from the former Grace, Norristown, designated for congregations in Montgomery County, and the Fisher Trust, to assist congregations in Bucks County with building/property issues.

Would it be good to have the Synod Council set some protocols for these funds? Unlike the Fund for Mission and Forward Together in Faith funds, it does not appear as though there are clear parameters for their usage.

Bp. Davenport noted that we need to have flexibility to access funds, but that does not mean there should not be any oversight.

Pr. Sellers noted that some Conferences have more structure than others. Consideration of such structures may be helpful in considering the allocation of such funds.

Sect. Richard shared that the Task Force to review the Fund for Mission Guidelines is schedule to meet on January 11, 2022.

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Pr. John Heidgerd, Chairperson of the Investment Committee, shared the report.

A meeting has not yet been called, but Pr. Heidgerd has been reviewing the investments. We have nearly \$11 million in assets under management, including \$550,000 added from the former Grace, Norristown.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Pr. Joseph Klinger noted that responses have been slow to the open seats available. Please be intentional in considering, and inviting, people to be placed in nomination. We are looking to be intentional in seeking persons of color, primary language other than English, and LGBTQ persons.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Stacey-Kyle Rea

The next meeting of the SEPA Synod Council will be February 17, 2022, 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 February 17, 2022