

## SECTION D – REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND TASK GROUPS

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### ANTI-RACISM TEAM

#### Synod Assembly Report 2022

*“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny, whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.”*

*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Letter from a Birmingham Jail)*

This has been a year of challenge, renewal, change, adaptation, and transformation for the Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Synod Anti-Racism Team (ART). Like others, ART was dealing with the continuing challenge of the ongoing global pandemic and its variants and their effect on community building and having in-person anti-racism educational experiences. Much time was spent this year trying to best answer the question, how we (ART) could effectively and efficiently help rostered leaders meet the now synodical requirement of anti-racism education every 2-3 years. COVID-19 almost sabotaged our beginning efforts, but we adapted. After extensive evaluation of our current approach, reflecting on its pros and cons, praying for insight, discussing possibilities, and taking into account our changed reality (“the new abnormal”), we discerned that a new format was needed. Still using the approach developed by Deacon Inez Torres-Davis, former Director of Justice for Women of the ELCA, as foundational to our anti-racism educational offerings, we developed a new format for “Having Helpful Conversations about Race in the Church.” The core curriculum of Context, Connections, and Conversations remains the same, however the CONTEXT arena (an overview of history) has been expanded to now include a 90 minute introductory online (Zoom) presentation; 9 video modules, to be watched over at least a 9 week period by the participants at their own pace; with an in-person all

day session following. Handouts, question follow-up, an opportunity for feedback, article and book recommendations; along with informational links to other resources are to be shared throughout the educational experience.

Countless hours of work, both individually and collaboratively, and collectively as a team, were given by ART members to research, develop, review, and produce the 9 new video modules. Currently, approximately 30 Rostered Leaders are enrolled in this new anti-racism educational experience, which began on Saturday, January 29, 2022. We hope to meet as a group in-person, for a daylong session, sometime after Easter 2022 (TBD).

Throughout the year members of ART have served as consultants to other ELCA Synods, Associations, and Committees. We also were invited to give a presentation to our own SEPA Synod Council, for a “Mission Moment” (April 8, 2021), to give an update on ART its mission and ministry. Over the past year we have met officially 7 times as a team, along with several small group development meetings. Periodically, we have also placed articles and reflections on the SEPA Synod website and ART’s Facebook page.

As members of ART (all volunteers) our commitment to what we still consider sacred work on behalf of God’s Kingdom, is emboldened by our individual efforts to expand our knowledge base; by keeping abreast of the new book offerings and movies in the area, watching video presentations, and attending local and online conferences, just to mention a few. If you have interest in joining us in this sacred work please contact us thru [antiracism@sepa.org](mailto:antiracism@sepa.org). We are thankful and appreciate the support of Bishop Patricia A. Davenport and other members of the SEPA staff in our efforts. We look forward to continued service and pray for the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,

The SEPA Synod Anti-Racism Team

The Rev. Dr. Susan Kay Folks (Co-chair)  
The Rev. Gwendolyn S, King (Co-Chair)  
Deacon Kathleen Afflerbach  
Janet Bischoff  
Charles (Chase) Ferguson  
Fern Lee Hagedorn

The Rev. Kathleen Harkness  
The Rev. Jane Marston  
The Rev. Raymond Miller  
The Rev. Jay Mitchell  
Karen Paulus  
The Rev. Serena Sellers

## CANDIDACY COMMITTEE

### Report to the 2022 SEPA Synod Assembly

*“But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” – Romans 10:14-15*

The ELCA candidacy process is designed to raise up leaders for our church who will proclaim the Good News. Our congregations, our synod, and the world crave leaders who are authentically and boldly witnessing to their faith in Jesus Christ and God’s power to change lives. The candidates who are discerning calls to public ministry are eager to continue finding new ways to be the Church even as our religious landscape changes.

In responding to the pandemic, the candidacy committee like many others pivoted to a digital platform. We are exploring ways to safely regather for learning events and discernment conversations. Decision interviews will remain digital until masks are no longer needed to protect those who are vulnerable in our communities.

Over 35 people are in contact with the Vocations and Leadership office about pursuing candidacy. They range from the beginnings of the Spirit’s whisperings about calling to waiting for their first calls. We are proud of our candidates who have been approved (the final step of our candidacy process) since the last assembly. Congratulations to Bo Bannister, Kayla Sadowy, and Maeve Schurz who are approved as candidates for Minister of Word and Sacrament.

We are privileged to work with a whole team of people in the communal work of discernment. We seek members of our committee to be diverse including, and not limited to, rostered ministers and lay people, age, gender, race, and sexuality.

- The following people currently serve on the SEPA Candidacy Committee: the Rev. Becky Resch (Churchwide Representative), the Rev. Dr. Karyn Wiseman (ULS Representative), Deacon Kathie Afflerbach, the Rev. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam, Jonathan Bagby, Sara Calderon, the Rev. Mukesh Cheedie, the Rev. Dr. Shirley Guider, the Rev. Noah Hepler, Bobbie Hoffman, the Rev. Nathan Krause, Lisa Pressley, the Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath, the Rev. Carlton Rodgers, the Rev. Thomas Russert, and Deacon Allison Wilcox.
- Our initial interviews are conducted by the Rev. Steve Keiser, the Rev. Susan Lynch, the Rev. Tina Mackie, the Rev. Carlton Rodgers, and Deacon Allison Wilcox.
- Life Keys instruction is done by Bobbie Hoffman and the Rev. Janelle Kraus.
- A special thank you to Bishop Patricia Davenport for her support of our candidates, her prayer for the committee’s work, and her leadership with committee appointments.

The committee meets 5-6 times annually, including 1-2 gatherings spent in fellowship and formation. In between decision meetings, our committee members serve on relator teams, staying in regular communication with our candidates to provide support and guidance.

We are grateful to all for their dedication to our candidates and the Church. Please thank these leaders for the ministry and service they provide. They have given much of their time and commitment to the candidacy program here in our synod.

As always, we ask that our congregations, rostered ministers, and lay people continue to lift up future leaders within their communities and nurture their development as leaders of the church. Our world and the ELCA need strong, visionary leaders for the future who are not afraid to call on the name of Jesus, to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, and to be sent to form beloved community.

Thank you for partnering with us in this important ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Paul Neff  
Candidacy Committee Chair

and, The Rev. Karen Sease  
Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership / Mission Advancement

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## FORWARD TOGETHER IN FAITH

### 2022 Synod Assembly Report

*Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

*Isaiah 43:18-19*

The Forward Together in Faith vision is one of equipping leaders and congregation in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to be bold in the 21st century. To help **network** with other communities of faith and neighborhood to serve people in need. Help congregations think creatively about ministry as we support **innovative** new communities of faith. To develop better **communications** practices to engage social media, websites, video, and new channels that are just emerging. To **equip** leaders to empower healthy congregations by offering mission assessments, developing learning events, and more fully supporting our seminarians, who are tomorrow's leaders.

Since 2019, the Forward Together in Faith grant team has distributed over \$135,000 to congregations, agencies and individuals who met the criteria of the campaigns vision. Prior to 2019, \$17,000 in awards and \$26,956 in fees for all the congregations who wanted a congregations' assessment during the offering period.

In 2021, congregations were still dealing with covid-19 and covid-19 protocols. Some of the grants last year were used to continue to help 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. This past year the FTiF team reviewed 22 grant applications requesting \$171,687 for the grant year 2021, with funds being distributed in January of 2022. There was 1 application which was denied because they are not a congregation, agency, or person affiliated with SEPA. One congregation withdrew their application after the team communicated the awards. A total of 20 grants were awarded totaling \$87,004.

<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>Awarded – \$87,004</b>			
	Mediator	Philadelphia	\$2,500.00	Communicating
	St Peter's	Philadelphia	\$2,500.00	Communicating
	St. Peter's	Hilltown	\$1,500.00	Communicating
	Calvary	West Chester	\$2,000.00	Communicating
	St Peter's	Pottstown	\$1,661.00	Communicating
	St. John's	Ridge Valley	\$2,500.00	Communicating
	Spirit and Truth	Yeadon	\$2,500.00	Communication
	Ascension Washington	Newtown	\$5,900.00	Equipping
	Holy Trinity	Wallingford	\$2,500.00	Equipping
	St. John's	Mayfair	\$2,000.00	Equipping
	Neuavo Creation	Philadelphia	\$5,023.00	Equipping
	St. Paul's	Olney	\$11,710.00	Equipping/Innovating
	Grace	Broomall	\$11,710.00	Equipping/Innovating
	Augusta (Old Trappe)	Trappe	\$1,000.00	Innovating
	Christ	Upper Darby	\$2,000.00	Innovating
	Immanuel	Norwood	\$2,500.00	Innovating
	Sanctuary Village	Philadelphia	\$20,000.00	Innovating
	St. John's Spinnerstown	Spinnertown	\$1,000.00	Innovating
	The Welcome Church	Philadelphia	\$1,500.00	Innovating
	Grace	Hatfield	\$5,000.00	Networking

**Previous Years Grants/Awards**

<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>Awarded Grants – \$24,595</b>			
	Ascension	Newtown	\$2,000	Communicating
	Community of Love	Oxford	\$1,000	Innovating
	Family of God	Buckingham	\$500	Networking
	Grace Lutheran Church	Hatfield	\$2,000	Innovating
	Liberty Lutheran	Ambler	\$1,650	Equipping

	Lutheran Campus Ministry	Philadelphia	\$5,000	Equipping
	New Hanover - Peer Support	New Hanover	\$2,515	Innovating
	New Hanover – Incubator	New Hanover	\$1,000	Innovating
	New Life Ministries	Philadelphia	\$500	Equipping
	Redeemer	Jamison	\$1,000	Innovating
	St. David's	Philadelphia	\$1,000	Equipping and Communication
	St. John's	Blue Bell	\$500	Network
	St. John's	Sumneytown	\$1,500	Equipping
	St. Michael's	Philadelphia	\$2,500	Networking / Communication
	Trinity	Fort	\$1,825	Innovating

<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>Awarded Grants - \$26,000</b>			
	Redemption	Philadelphia	\$2,500	Communicating
	The Welcome Church	Philadelphia	\$3,000	Equipping & Networking
	Calvary and Advent	West Chester	\$1,000	Innovating
	St. Peter	Riegelsville	\$3,100	Innovating & Communicating
	St. John	Blue Bell	\$1,000	Equipping
	St. Luke	Devon	\$3,500	Innovating
	Tabor	Philadelphia	\$2,000	Innovating
	Trinity	Lansdale	\$3,000	Equipping
	Kairos	Quakertown	\$1,900	Innovating
	Atonement	Philadelphia	\$2,500	Equipping
	Central Philadelphia Conference	Philadelphia	\$2,500	Equipping

Grants from beginning of campaign, including raffles and support for CAT/MAP

<b>Date</b>	<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Award</b>	<b>Pillar</b>
May 2015	Christ the King Deaf	West Chester	\$1,000	Innovating
July 2016	Living Gospel	Philadelphia	\$10,000	Equipping
Dec 2016	St. Mark's Conshohocken	Conshohocken	\$4,000	Equipping
Feb 2017	Faith Philadelphia	Philadelphia	\$1,000	Innovating
Oct 2018	Mediator	Philadelphia	\$1,000	Networking
	CAT/MAP Congregations	SEPA	\$26,956	Equipping

*Respectfully submitted by Ellen Daneke, Forward Together in Faith. Chair*

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## SYNOD GENEROSITY TEAM

### 2022 REPORT

The synod Generosity Team would like to thank the congregations of our synod for their Mission Support that makes these ministries happen. Especially for those congregations that are modeling good stewardship to their members by giving at least 10% of their regular giving

towards Mission Support and those achieving 6.2% or more of their regular giving, which is what we estimate the amount needed from each congregation to reach our synod budget.

This year, despite the financial challenges facing our congregations, the Mission Support saw an increase of about \$7,000. The total amount in 2021 for Mission Support was \$1,662,489 compared to \$1,655,305 in 2020. Thank you for your faithful generosity that provides support for:

- “Ministry in the New Abnormal” as clergy and lay congregation leaders connect over Zoom and led by our **Communications Team** to troubleshoot technology, ponder the limitations of building HVAC systems, reimagine liturgy for digital spaces, and keep updated on the latest pandemic health guidelines. Sometimes we bring in experts. Other times we learn from the hard-earned wisdom of those in the room. But we remain connected in prayer and support for each other. Led by The Rev. Bob Fisher they manage our Synod’s website, email newsletter, videos, and media relations, assist congregations with crisis communications and equipping congregations to improve their communications.
- The Welcome Church’s Ministry which receives support from the Synod as well as the ELCA (half of our Mission Support dollars go to the ELCA) and benefit our ministry to those without houses.
- The **Candidacy Committee** gathers to support people who are wondering if God is calling them to be a pastor or a deacon in the ELCA. Right now, there are 36 people between the beginning stages of inquiry and waiting for their first call. They receive guidance and support from our synod staff person, The Rev. Karen Sease, and her capable team. Our synod is blessed by their faithful ponderings about how the Holy Spirit is guiding them and our congregations in the future.
- The **Committee of Deans** gathers monthly to work through congregational leadership transitions and the other needs of our 143 congregations. During the pandemic, 18 congregations have called new pastors. Another 38 are in various stages of transition, assisted by our team of synodical interim and bridge pastors.
- Our **Vitality Team** has lifted new possibilities for ministry together. We have supported congregations being renewed through the anchor church model. We have helped other congregations explore collaborative ministries. Vitality assessments remind congregations that they have value and witness beyond the number of people in worship or money in the offering plate.
- In a world that keeps trying to scatter the people of God among divisions of race and sexuality, our **Anti-Racism Team** and our **LGBTQIA+ Ministry Team** gather to remind us that each person is created in the image of God. They invite us to prayer and study, to advocacy and direct action. They have provided digital and hybrid events to draw us together and spur our communities to full inclusion and radical welcome.

All of this and much more is made possible by your generosity.

During the past year the Generosity Team decided to take advantage of an ELCA pilot program opportunity called **Six Weeks on Money**. The ELCA, working with Tim Schuster, provided a

program to help congregational members learn about financial wellness with practical strategies and helpful hints. We asked six congregations to participate and four of them have accepted, two in the suburbs and two in urban settings. The responses from those who followed the program were very positive.

We also had a zoom meeting with Keith Mundy and Jenny Lutter who work with church relations for Vanco. They shared insights on eGiving trends on our synod and the ELCA. With 59% of our congregations as Vanco clients, they have important and helpful information. Our synod eGiving has grown by 5% in the last four years, however, in that same time period giving through debit and credit cards has grown by 142%!

Vanco pointed out that they have mobile and text giving as well as url for particular designated giving that show up as tiles on the congregational giving page. These upgrades are free for ELCA congregations. They are willing to give a more complete presentation for our congregations at a time of our choosing. If your congregation would like to learn more about the wide range of electronic giving opportunities that Vanco has available contact Larry Smoose at [lvsfish1@aol.com](mailto:lvsfish1@aol.com)

Most of our time was spent planning the 2022 Extravaganza, which we had originally planned for January. However in the NOW normal of new COVID strains, we had to postpone it to June 18. We have a bevy of nationally acclaimed speakers, including:

- The Rev. Louise Johnson, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop/Executive for Administration of the ELCA, and noted for her work on change leadership.
- The Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, Professor of Evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA and the author of *The Next Evangelicalism* and *Unsettling Truths*.
- The Rev. Dr. Doug Powe, Jr., the Director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership and the James C. Logan Professor of Evangelism at Wesley Theological Seminary. Dr. Powe is an ordained elder in the Baltimore/Washington Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. His newest book, *The Adept Church: Navigating Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, was the number one newly released church growth book just a month after being released.
- The Rev. Dr. Dave Daubert is a second career pastor (previously an engineer) who has served in congregational, synodical and churchwide ministry positions. Today he leads Day 8 Strategies, which works with congregations, judicatories and other organizations throughout the United States and Canada. He is recognized as a leader in the fields of church renewal, leadership, strategy and stewardship.

These are just a few of the speakers and workshop leaders that you can hear in-person at Trinity Lutheran Church, Lansdale or virtually at your own home or congregation on June 18.

We were blessed to receive a SOLI (Stewardship of Life Institute) grant for \$12,000 to help keep the cost affordable so that congregations can have teams of 4 or 5 people attend this outstanding training event.

Members of the Synod Stewardship Team are Pr. Larry Smoose, chair, Carl Reitz, Pr. Mark Singh-Heuter, Doreen Kinsler, Pr. Tim Ness, Pr. Julie Bergdahl, Yvonne Lembo, Pr. Phil Krey, and Pr. Mike Carlson. We also want to thank our entire Synod staff, and especially Bishop Patricia Davenport, Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Pr. Karen Sease, along with Mr. Martin Schwab, Pr. Bob Fisher, and Ms. Cynta Outterbridge who do so much to support congregational stewardship ministry.

Larry V. Smoose, Chairperson

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### **THE SYNOD HUNGER MINISTRY TEAM**

The Synod Hunger Team is currently in the process of revving back up, to connect some of our Hunger Ministry teams with one another, so they can share resources and we may be able to have a coordinated effort on hunger issues across our Synod.

In 2021, we reviewed the ELCA Hunger Grant Applications which were from our Synod and made recommendations.

Many of our Synodical congregations continued to step to the plate in 2021 With people being laid off and losing their jobs, more people experienced food insecurity. SEPA congregations packed meals, collected staple items, made sandwiches, and other activities, in order to help feed those who were hungry. Our food pantries continued to see a great need, and many congregations which did not previously host a food ministry began one to serve the needs of their community. Other congregations collected food and supplies for their local pantries, and/or contributed money or volunteers.

In 2022 we will be brainstorming ways to see how we can advocate for and support those who are food insecure, and those who are responding to the need.

If you would like to be part of the Synod Hunger Team, contact Rev. Bruce Davidson, [brucehdavidson@yahoo.com](mailto:brucehdavidson@yahoo.com)

Submitted by the Rev. Sandra Brown.

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### **INTERIM MINISTRY**

To say that the church has undergone tremendous “transition” in the last year is an understatement. But in spite of the pandemic, “transitional ministry” still happened, even if it was more difficult. Pastor’s left, transitional ministry pastors, consultants, and bridge pastors

helped congregations navigate the change, and new pastors were called. In spite of everything, God is Good! And I am grateful.

Intentional transitional ministry is conducted by experienced pastors and lay people who have gone through specific training to work with congregations through a transition time. In addition to the intentional interim pastors in our synod, we also have two trained lay consultants. Intentional interims and consultants are assigned by the Director of Interim Ministry in consultation with the Director of Mobility (Pr. Marcia Bell), the committee of deans, and the Bishop. Throughout the transition the interim pastor/consultant attends required continuing education meetings (known as consultations), submits quarterly reports, and at the end of each transition process an evaluation is conducted. These are some of the ways we are accountable for our work. The interim pastor/consultant guides the congregation through the transition process and the preparation of the Ministry Site Profile if it is calling a new pastor. In addition to these tasks specific to transitional ministry, the interim pastor is also responsible for all of the normal pastoral duties of the church. The interim ministers and consultants also work closely with the Transitional Ministry Development Team (TMDT), a team of interim pastors, settled pastors, and lay people.

More and more we are using interim consultants in congregations that are in transition but for various reasons, do not have an interim pastor. More and more, these congregations are being served by bridge pastors who are contracted for pastoral services. Every church is different, and this is another example of how we are being flexible in meeting the transitional needs of a congregation. Interim consultants have participated in the same training and work with congregations on a limited, part-time basis. As a group we are very intentional about being responsive to changing ministry contexts and learning new tools for the benefit of the people we serve.

Pastors and Consultants who have served this past year: The Rev. Sarah Aasheim, The Rev. Marcia Bell, The Rev. Sandra Brown, The Rev. Katherine Cartwright-Knodel, The Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir, The Rev. Susie Folks, The Rev. David Genszler, The Rev. Gwen King, The Rev. Tina Mackie, Ms. Teri Lanan, The Rev. Ed Kane, The Rev. Michael McKilip, Mr. Karl McClellan, The Rev. Christian McMullan, The Rev. Janet Peterman, The Rev. Elaine Quincey, The Rev. Jack Saarela, The Rev. Wayne Shelor, The Rev. Stuart Luce.

This is my last report as the Dir. of Interim Ministry, having taken a settled call at St. Matthew's in Chester Springs. I am incredibly grateful to my colleagues the last several years and for the honor and privilege of serving them to the best of my ability in this role. I welcome the Rev. Wayne Shelor as the new Dir. of Interim Ministry; I'm confident that this important work in our synod is in good hands, and wish him and my colleagues all of God's blessings!

Rev. Dr. Christian McMullan- Dir. of Interim Ministry

## **DIRECTOR OF MOBILITY**

One of the major responsibilities of the Director of Mobility is oversight of the Committee of Deans. Deans are generally elected by the conference (on occasion appointed by the Bishop) and serve three-year terms. As a committee, deans meet monthly along with Bishop Davenport and her executive staff. During this past year, most meetings were held on Zoom.

The deans work on an almost daily basis to support the needs of the pastors and congregations in their conferences. This support includes conducting exit interviews when a pastor retires or takes another call, explaining the basics of the transition time, interviewing candidates interested in serving in SEPA Synod, reviewing Ministry Site Profiles, and making recommendations of possible candidates for call processes. In addition, deans conduct and assist with installations, work with congregations in times of conflict, and also walk with congregations through the steps of closing after they have voted to end their ministry.

The following pastors are now serving on the Committee of Deans: Regina Goodrich, Central Philadelphia Conference; Christopher Franz, Chester Conference; Jennifer Casey, Delaware Conference; Norbert Hahn, Lower Bucks Conference; Bryan Penman, Lower Montgomery Conference; Jane Marston NE/NW Philadelphia Conference; Erika Wesch, Upper Bucks Conference; Christopher McKinstry, Upper Montgomery Conference; and Christian McMullan who serves as the Director of Interim Ministry. I am grateful to Pastor Ronald Wesemann who served as Dean of Chester Conference and has recently retired. I also have been privileged to work closely for the past six years with Pastor Christian McMullan who has faithfully served as Director of Interim Ministry. He will soon be stepping down from that role as he pursues a new congregational call in our synod.

As Director of Mobility, I also review Rostered Ministers' Profiles from across the ELCA and review Ministry Site Profiles for congregations in our synod who are seeking to call rostered leaders. I make recommendations to the Deans of candidates to interview and review the summaries of those interviews. Together we work to find the most suitable candidates to recommend to congregational call committees.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued through 2021, the Committee of Deans accomplished their important work despite the restrictions placed on all of us because of the pandemic. We have encouraged congregations to use virtual means for interviewing candidates and for holding congregational meetings for the purpose of electing rostered leaders. I am deeply grateful to our deans and congregational leaders who have sought creative and accommodating ways to keep the mobility work of our synod going forward, despite restrictions on meeting in person. We are hopeful that in the coming year most precautions will be lifted and, we will be able to return to a more normal mobility process.

It is a privilege to work with congregations, pastors and deacons, and our synod staff in the important work of mobility. I am grateful for this opportunity to serve God and to further the mission of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Marcia G. Bell



**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA**  
**North Eastern Diocese**

**P. O. Box 10, Lushoto - Tanzania**

**Website: [www.elctned.org](http://www.elctned.org) Email: [bishop@elctned.org](mailto:bishop@elctned.org)**

**The Rt. Rev. Dr. Msafiri Joseph Mbilu**  
**BISHOP**

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DEAR BISHOP PATRICIA  
DAVENPORT, SEPA and ALL  
MEMBERS OF THE  
SYNOD ASSEMBLY OF  
SOUTHERN PENNSYLVANIA,  
ELCA.

**KANISA LA KIINJILI LA KILUTHERI TANZANIA**  
**DAYOSISI YA KASKAZINI MASHARIKI**

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**Simu. +255689426133**  
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**Date/Tarehe: \_\_\_\_\_**

**TANZANIA, NORTH EASTERN DIOCESE**

**07/03/2022**

Dear Bishop Patricia Davenport,

Dear Members of the Synod Assembly of Southern Pennsylvania, ELCA

I greet you in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We in the ELCT-North Eastern Diocese, Tanzania, are aware that you are now having this Synod Assembly 2022.

I, as the New Bishop of the ELCT-North Eastern Diocese take this opportunity to congratulate you for holding this important Synod Assembly.

May our loving God guide and lead you in all decisions and deliberations of this Assembly. Always be assured that WE, your African Partners remember you in our prayers. It is through prayers that we are miraculously united and enabled to continue serving our Lord as active members in the Body of Christ.

Let our greetings reach you with our annual Bible verse from Psalms 32:8 **“I will instruct you and teach you the way which you shall go: I will guide you with my eye.”**

God bless you all! Amen.

Regards,



Bishop Dr. Msafiri Mbilu

ELCT – North Eastern Diocese

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## **TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

### **Report for Synod Assembly April 2022**

The TMD is, a team of clergy and lay leaders who have experience in congregations in transition. Our work is to support congregations and pastors as they move through pastoral transitions. We review quarterly reports and conduct exit interviews when transition pastors have finished their work in a congregation.

A key aspect of our work is ensuring that our transition practices are flexible in order to suit varying needs and situations, while maintaining integrity and quality of Interim Ministry practice. Review of standards and practices for transition ministry in our Synod is very important to us. We review and adapt the handbook and resources used by transition pastors, transition consultants and congregations as we learn from congregations and from the experience and expertise of transition professionals in the national arena.

2021 continued to present new challenges for transitional pastors, as it has for pretty much every aspect of our lives as we endured the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the COVID pandemic. Together with one another and the congregations we serve, we are learning new ways to do our work using virtual platforms. As you have all experienced in your ministries, some of the learnings and adaptations created in response to COVID have meant looking with new eyes. No doubt much of what we have learned out of necessity will help our ministry into the future.

In 2021 although TMDT did support the needed Exit interviews as interims finished their assignments and members attended the Interim consultations, TMDT did not officially meet this past year. We are hopeful in 2022 as the pandemic subsides and as resources/priorities/members become available, that TMDT may resume its work beyond just Exit meetings.

We are grateful to the pastors who have received training to serve as transitional pastors in our synod assuring many congregations to welcome new pastoral leadership, and to the congregations who have worked with them.

We are also grateful to Pastors Christian McMullan and Ghislaine Cotnoir for their contributions to TMDT. Both have now transitioned to other roles. Finally, we welcome Pastor Wayne Shelor, the recently appointed Director of Interims.

Current TMDT members: the Rev. Marcia Bell, the Rev. Sandra Brown, the Rev. Regina Goodrich, Ms. Teri Lanan, Mr. Karl McClellan, & the Rev. Wayne Shelor

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## VITALITY TEAM

Report for the 34th Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

### Purpose

The Vitality team seeks to foster life changing relationships with God, each other, and the community. Working with established and emerging ministries we seek to help communities of faith foster the key marks of congregational vitality while they build and grow their abilities to form relationships.

### Director of Evangelical Mission

In August of 2021 we said goodbye to The Rev. Dr. William Flippin who had been serving as our DEM since 2019. We thank him for his ministry among us and the work he was able to do with the Vitality Team. Together we were able to work on building up the Body of Christ. The Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM) position works both at the synod level, but also the national level as deployed churchwide staff. That structure of this position will be changing in the coming years, which has allowed us to think creatively about how this position works in our synod. In 2022 Bishop Davenport asked The Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis and The Rev. Bryan Penman to share this role – bringing different gifts to this position. Having previously been a mission developer, Pastor Suah-Dennis will be the DEM for New Mission starts working closely with our emerging communities of faith and their mission developers. Pastor Penman will be the DEM for congregational vitality working with established congregations to foster a deeper focus on how we might create strategies and programs to foster the key relationships that lead to vitality. Both Pastors Suah-Dennis and Penman are excited for this new way of equipping the communities of Jesus to nurture life changing relationships with God, each other and the world.

### Emerging Ministries

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#### *The Welcome Church*

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The Welcome Church, our church without walls, is a community of believers who are between permanent housing. Gathering on the Parkway for worship, they not only are a community that

support one another, they advocate for one another. This is a community that is supported largely by our Synod from our Fund for Mission as a collective ministry of the Synod.

*Mission Developers: Pastor Violet Little & Pastor Schaunel Steinnagel*

*Funds Received in 2021: \$8,000 from Churchwide for a special ongoing project with the members of the Welcome Church, \$500 for continuing education for mission developers working with the Homeless and Justice Network.*

*Also The Welcome Church is largely funded from our Fund for Mission budget.*

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### *The Well*

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The Well is a special housing program born out of the Welcome Church. The Well is an ecumenical partnership between the Presbytery of Philadelphia and our Synod.

*Mission Developers: Pastor Schaunel Steinnagel*

*Funds Received in 2021: \$9,000 from Churchwide for developing this community, \$500 for continuing education for mission developers working with the Homeless and Justice Network.*

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### *Kairos Communities*

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Kairos Communities is an experiential faith community that seeks to model gathering as the early Christians did in small group communities. Often called a “house church” model of ministry, these small groups form relationships that help people nurture their spiritual lives, honor their doubts and questions, and engage in actively making a difference in the world through acts of service.

*Mission Developer: Pastor Bob Fisher*

*Funds Received in 2021: \$8,000 from churchwide as community under development*

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### *Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creación*

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Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creacion is a Latine community in North Philadelphia. Serving their community, they offer ministry to their surrounding communities with the support of many partner congregations and organizations. Over the last year they have really supported families who have been adversely affected by the pandemic - either because of loss of job, loss of income, or other health emergencies. They are also working to combat the growing Opioid

pandemic and received a grant to broaden the work they are doing to help families and individuals find a “Spiritual Pharmacy.”

*Mission Developer: The Rev. Lyzette Rios – Sahnchez*

*Funds Received in 2021: \$18,000 from churchwide as a community under development*

## Strategic Ministries

Strategic ministries are those communities of faith who serve ethnic minorities, in diverse socioeconomic neighborhoods, or whose worship language is other than English. Currently we have one formal strategic ministry and are working to create a second.

- *Atonement Lutheran Church, Philadelphia*
  - *Received \$6,000 ELCA funds for Strategic Ministries*
- *St. Michael’s Lutheran Church, Philadelphia*
  - *Received \$6,000 from Fund for Mission*

## Anchor Church Ministries

Anchor Church ministries seek to partner congregations together to share both resources and energy as they work to develop or stabilize another congregation. Currently in our Synod we have one Anchor Church partnership with Temple and Grace. Temple is working to help Grace develop a renewed sense of mission and purpose as they work to transform a ministry that was a nursery school into a wellness center to better suit the needs of the community. This was the first year of their partnership together as part of a multi-year process. The Anchor Church program is a national program recognized and supported by ELCA’s churchwide offices. There is coaching and funding available for partnering congregations looking to do this work. The Temple-Grace partnership is our pilot Anchor Church program and we are eager to expand this program throughout the synod.

- *Temple, Havertown & Grace, Broomall*
  - *Funds received in 2021: \$25,000 from Churchwide for Anchor Church, \$15,000 from the Fund for Mission*

## Vitality Consults

Throughout the year the Vitality Team is asked to come and speak with congregations to help them focus on forming new relationships in their community. Many of the congregations that call feel stuck and the Vitality Team can help them get unstuck and focus on what really matters to help form new relationships to foster a deeper sense of vitality. The Vitality Team can help you focus on your purpose and discover how your congregation can be a unique piece of your community.

- *St. Matthew, Woodlyn*
- *Faith, Philadelphia*

## Holy Closure

In 2021 our team lost a key ministry partner in Pastor Bill Vanderslice with his passing in March. Prior to his death, he was the Bishop's appointed consultant on Holy Closure and worked closely with the Vitality Team to help congregations navigate the process of closure. The Bishop has recently appointed The Rev. Paul Jann to help with the process of Holy Closure and are thankful that he worked closely with Pastor Vanderslice on how to hold this process with a sense of care and respect this process demands as we walk with grieving congregations. Holy Closure at its heart is about the process of resurrection. Throughout the process care is given to tend to the remaining members of a congregation and how they might join a new faith community after their church closes. Holy Closure also helps the congregation think about leaving a legacy of their ministry – by directing the remaining funds at the closure, they can help plant the seeds of future ministry that has yet to be born in our synod. We currently do not have any congregations working through the process of Holy Closure.

## Life of Faith

In 2021 SEPA Synod was selected to be one of two synods to pilot an ELCA Holy Innovation project helping create a synodical strategy for helping synods implement the Life of Faith process. Our Vitality Team helped to select 5 congregations to participate in this pilot program for our synod. St. Peter's Riegelsville, Mediator Philadelphia, St. Paul's Ardmore, St. Mark's Conshohocken and Messiah Downingtown. In the fall of 2021 the teams participated in training in the process and will be working to implement the process of helping congregations focus their ministry on forming the daily faith lives of their congregations. The process will continue for these congregations over the next two years as they work to create change and foster a renewed sense of vitality by helping people connect their faith to their everyday life.

## Presentations & Conferences

The vitality Team had a chance to make several presentations this year:

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### *SEPA Communicators Call*

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The first was with the SEPA Communicators in October hosting one of their Thursday calls. You can view the presentation on the Synod's YouTube [HERE](#). In it we covered the basic principles of vitality and how we can work with congregations to cultivate a renewed sense of purpose and mission within their communities. We also talked about how the pandemic has changed us, both in good ways and not so good ways!

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### *Upper Bucks Conference Learning Event*

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The second presentation we were able to offer was in collaboration with Upper Bucks conference facilitating a conversation around less than full time leadership arrangements. Many of our congregations (close to 40%) are served by less than full time leadership. During the presentation we explored the “spectrum of options” out there to creatively meet the ministry needs of congregations whose resources have dipped below synod guidelines for full-time ministry. Make no mistake, there are part-time and thriving congregations out there! You can see the keynote presentation from the Upper Bucks Conference, delivered by Pastor Penman [HERE](#).

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*Stewardship / Generosity Team*

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The Vitality Team was asked to join our Stewardship and Generosity Team in planning for another of our annual Extravaganza events that we hold with a variety of ministry partners (Northeastern PA Synod, Stewardship of Life Institute). This event was supposed to occur in January of 2022, but due to the rise in COVID, we have rescheduled this event for Saturday June 18, 2022, as an in person and hybrid event happening at Trinity Lansdale. During the conference we will explore ways to cultivate participation in the “now normal” of the pandemic.

### Vitality Team Members

Kayla Sadowy	Grace, Broomall
Sandra Brown	Good Shepherd, Southampton
Don Stevenson	Mediator, Philadelphia
Dwight Mason	
Tom Salber	Prince of Peace, Philadelphia
Tim Johansen	Temple, Havertown
Bradly Gow	St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Riegelsville PA
Wayne Goerlich	Good Shepherd, Southampton
John Heidgerd	Immanuel, Souderton
Sara Aasheim	Grace, Wyndmoor
<i>Mission Developers</i>	
Violet Little	The Welcome Church, Philadelphia
Schaunel Steinnagel	The Well, Philadelphia

Bob Fisher	Karios Communities
Noah Hepler	Atonement, Philadelphia
Lyzette Rios Sanchez	Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creación, Philadelphia
Danny Phelps	Bethany & St. Michael's, Philadelphia

**Conclusion**

We are excited for the way the Spirit is expanding the work of this team and look forward to partnering with you in 2022. If you would like to find out how the vitality team can help your ministry – be in touch with one of our DEM’s (Dr. Suah-Dennis [mdennis@sepa.org](mailto:mdennis@sepa.org) or Pastor Penman [bpenman@sepa.org](mailto:bpenman@sepa.org)) or a member of the Vitality Team.

**WOMEN OF THE ELCA  
IN THE SOUTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD**

**Report for SEPA Synod Assembly 2022**

The past two years have been very different than we had envisioned. Our board president Phyllis Boyer, who had been debilitated and not able to perform her presidential duties, died on October 13, 2021. We know she is blessed to be with the Lord but will miss her knowledge and giving.

Our SEPA Synod Women of the ELCA convention was canceled in 2020 and in 2021, but is planned for this spring, Saturday June 4, 2022. We look forward to meeting in person as well as virtually to keep the Women of the ELCA mission and ministries active and vibrant.

Our board has been meeting, but virtually, these past two years. On September 18, 2021, we sponsored an in-person, outdoor gathering with the theme, ‘Snack, chat and bring back.’ Women of our synod have been at work providing food and meals for the homeless and those in need during the pandemic; meeting together virtually for Bible study; meeting outdoors to give support to each other; sending emails, calling each other on the telephone; and sending cards to support each other. So many prayers have been lifted-up by all of us.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Garcia  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Women of the ELCA Board President

## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

We give thanks for the ministry of Ms. Mercedes Lee in the office of Youth and Young Adult Discipleship. In January 2021, Mercedes began a new venture at University of Pennsylvania as the Administrative Coordinator – Social Equity and Community. She shared her creative and administrative gifts with our youth, young adult and adult leaders. We appreciate her work and commitment to SEPA Synod.

In December 2021, I was called to be the Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship. I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with our synod's many fine youth, young adult and adult leaders. Realizing that COVID-19 put a long pause in this ministry, I have been meeting with our adult leaders to determine opportunities for gathering and reconnecting with our young people. A majority of those who served on our SEPA Youth Leadership Team graduated or are about to graduate from High School, and we look forward to reconnecting with them as young adults. AND we have young adults throughout our synod who need a community with peers as well.

It's time to rebuild! How can you help?

- We will be accepting applications for youth in grades 9-12 to serve on our SEPA Youth Leadership Team. Encourage your youth to apply. It is a wonderful way to strengthen leadership skills AND grow in their journey with Jesus.
- Encourage young adults in your congregation (ages 18-30) to email me at [srea@sepa.org](mailto:srea@sepa.org). We want to know and help them in their journey as well. A young adult retreat or servant trip is certainly a possibility!
- If you have adults who are great with young people, encourage them to volunteer with SEPA Youth/Young Adult ministry. God works in amazing ways in and through adult leaders.
- Encourage your church to keep fund raising to go to the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering. We can help your church find another church to travel with if you want a bigger group. AND there are young adult servant companion positions so that our recent graduates can find a way to participate, too.

We know when the 2021 ELCA Youth Gathering was postponed and the 2022 Gathering was cancelled, many were disappointed. Yes, there will be another Gathering in 2024 (location will be announced soon!). But for those who were seniors last year, as well as current seniors and juniors, that is another missed opportunity in their high school lives. I hope these young people will check out young adult servant opportunities at the Gathering that are equally as rewarding, such as Servant Companions. ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission is also a transformative experience, year-long experience of global service (ages 21 – 29).

Finally, I encourage your church to participate in Multicultural Youth Justice experience this summer, July 21 – 23 2022. MYJ22 is a virtual faith-forming experience for youth. Instead of traveling, you can participate in small, local in-person gatherings right at your own church. Daily resources are provided, and each day ends with a live virtual celebration including music,

speakers and worship. Look for more information about a synod MYJ22 gathering site soon. Or plan your own: [www.2022myj.com](http://www.2022myj.com)

It is truly my honor and privilege to serve God and serve in SEPA Synod in this role.  
In Christ,  
Pastor Stacey-Kyle “Skyle” Rea