

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop's Report Virtual Synod Council Meeting April 7, 2022

“But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33

God bless you Synod Council members, I am thankful for your leadership and participation that has afforded Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to keep God first in all we do. With all the world's distractions, because of your faithfulness we continually show up representing Jesus Christ! You show up in worship, in the food pantry, on the parkway, at the prayer services, with Lutheran Disaster Response and here to fulfill our obligations. Your witness is to be commended in these challenging circumstances of pandemics, climate change, violence in our streets, congregations in transition, pastors retiring, financial insecurities, war in Ukraine, and the list goes on. I appreciate and applaud your service to those who we have been elected to serve, thank you!

I thank those outgoing members ineligible for re-election:

Mr. Adam Clark
Ms. Cheryl Detweiler
Mr. David Ehret
Mr. William Graham
Ms. Gail Penman
Pastor Dwight Mason

We are blessed for those eligible for re-election:

Mr. Graeme Brown
Ms. Emily Fowler
Pastor Gwendolyn King
Pastor Jennifer Phelps

ELCA

In our recent **Conference of Bishops** gathering in Chicago we participated in the CROSSROADS Anti-Racism training. Through this training, we hope as leaders to better understand how racial bias impacts our actions, the decisions we make or our silence on critical issues and how they influence the ELCA. In our efforts to dismantle racism we are exposing the sin giving space for confessions, repentance, and forgiveness that we pray leads to reconciliation. The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center spent time with the bishops in retreat to assist with mending relationships. We have witnessed the pain, been challenged with allegations of complicity, and accused of maintaining the status quo, beloved this is not who we are!

This is who we are, we are making a difference across the globe with over \$23 million in donations through our congregations, social ministry organizations/agencies, advocacy organizations reaching those people in need in the margins of society. In addition to raising funds, we are collaborating closely with the following partners in the humanitarian response to the crisis in Ukraine:

- German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine (GELCU)
- Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland (ECACP)
- Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania (ECACR)
- Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia (ECACS)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary (ELCH)
- Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
- ACT Alliance
- Church World Service (CWS)
- Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA)
- Phiren Amenca

With these contributions 100% go directly to support the almost four million that have fled Ukraine. For more information, please visit: www.elca.org/disaster

We continue our strong work with equipping our youth, young adults, and outdoor ministries. Our seminaries, colleges and universities continue to educate students with academics and practical applications. Innovation lab is not just a project, it is infused in every ministry, new starts or established. These few are noted to keep us on track, for additional examples visit: www.elca.org. Our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has approximately 3.14 million baptized members in 8,894 congregations. We are 96% white, 2% African Descent, 1% Asian and 1% mixed. We in SEPA Synod continue making disciples for Christ, drawing all who will come into a deeper relationship through word and witness.

“God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” Genesis 1:31

The Lutheran World Federation recognizing the urgency of climate crisis, especially as it relates to women’s human rights and their ability to participate in climate action offered a 90-minute Zoom Panel. The opening remarks were given by Rev Anne Burghardt, LWF General Secretary and Ms. Ruth Ivory Moore, ELCA, served as moderator. Highlighted in the discussion is the fact that women and girls are fourteen times more likely to die because of disasters resulting from climate change than men and boys. One hope of our talk is to expand awareness of climate change, gender equality, and empowerment. I was blessed to participate as a panelist. Here is one of the questions I answered: **Why does it matter that the church is part of Climate Justice Action?** Below is my full response:

“Approximately 2.38 billion people practice some form of Christianity globally. This means that about one-third of the world's total population is Christian. We make a difference on the planet when we live out our faith. No matter, the version, biblical scriptures brims with reminders that creation belongs to God and reveals God’s goodness. God instructs us to “cultivate and care” for creation. God also tells Moses in Leviticus 25 to make sure the Israelites let their land lie

fallow every 6 years, giving the land itself a Sabbath, or time to rest. Throughout scripture we hear, in the very beginning of time, God created all that is, and proclaimed it good “According to Genesis 2:15, our role within creation is to serve and to keep God’s garden, the earth. “To serve,” often translated “to till,” invites us again to envision ourselves as servants, while “to keep” invites us to take care of the earth as God keeps and cares for us. We are called to name the animals. As God names Israel and all creation and as the shepherd calls by name each sheep, naming unites us in a caring relationship. Further, we are to live within the covenant God makes with every living thing, and even with the day and night. We are to love the earth as God loves us.” The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has outlined its commitment to environmental justice in its social statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice, which is grounded in a biblical vision of God’s intention for the healing and wholeness of creation as noted in the scriptural texts.

Our hope is that these texts and biblical stories taught from the cradle to the grave will impact the way we live in creation, that we will be Christian witnesses of what it means to steward the earth, to leave a legacy for our children’s children. There is power in scripture and our stories, working with Ms. Julia Menzo, from Lutheran Disaster Response she reflected on Hurricane Maria, because we easily forget trauma to Black, Brown and Indigenous people. Hurricane Maria in 2017 left Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and other northeastern Caribbean Islands in ruins. It is the worst natural disaster recorded in history to affect those islands. 100% of the island was without power and over two thousand fatalities were recorded. More than 130,000 left Puerto Rico between 2017 and 2018. More than 6,000 of those survivors came to Pennsylvania. While many stayed with family and friends after arrival, and others were provided hotels from FEMA, those situations were not sustainable long term. For most, returning to Puerto Rico was also not an option. Finding affordable housing became a top priority. A collaborative effort to assist families in identifying affordable housing, included many women on a grassroots level, to assure needs were met and resources secured throughout the relocation process. Ms. Nilda Ruiz, Ms. Carmen Febo, Ms. Nydia Lugo, and Ms. Mabel Negrete, these local women from different agencies spent two years identifying housing and wrap around services for eighty families who relocated to Philadelphia where I live.

In addition, women came together to offer Camp Noah (a camp designed to help children overcome the trauma of disaster) and the upheaval of relocating to Philadelphia. This effort was led by: Pastor Lyzette Rios, Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creacion in North Philadelphia; Pastor Kathleen Kerin, St. Paul’s Olney; Chaplain Julie Stumpf, and Ms. Ellen Daneke, these women served over forty children at Camp Noah.

Let me conclude the stories with a portion of our ELCA statement: We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America answer the call to justice and commit ourselves to its principles— participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability. In applying the principles to specific situations, we face decisions made difficult by human limitation and sin. We act, not because we are certain of the outcome but because we are confident of our salvation in Christ.

Human behavior may change through economic incentive, guilt about the past, or fear about the future. But as people of biblical faith, who live together in trust and hope, our primary motivation is the call to be God’s caregivers and to do justice. Visit www.elca.org social statement: Caring for Creation to get the full statement with scripture references I noted.”

Regions 7 Bishops continue to meet weekly for support and encouragement which continues to be a personal blessing for me in these ongoing pandemics in the church and world. We had our first seminary visit in two years, we visited Yale School of Divinity, New Haven, CT to learn about the new opportunities the school is offering incoming students. The bishops shared what we see as the current academic and practical ministry needs of Rostered Ministers in congregations/communities of faith post pandemic.

“I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!” John 16:33

Ecumenism

We partnered with the **Presbytery of Philadelphia** (PCUSA), **Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod** (ELCA), and **United Lutheran Seminary for Soul Talk**, a virtual interactive equipping event led by author, pastor, teacher, and speaker, Rev. Dr. Kirk Byron Jones. Dr. Jones noted in this pandemic pastors and church leaders often feel overwhelmed because of the task at hand, Dr. Jones proposes taking utmost care of our own souls is a benevolent act. Pr. Rea, Pr. Penman and I were invited to an intimate dinner with Presbyter Ruth Santana-Grace, Dr. Jones, and a few staff from the Presbytery for more conversation on how caring for our soul prompts great creativity and imagination for what God has in store for our lives and the life of our community.

Standing in solidarity with Ukrainian people across the globe, with Archbishop Borys Gudziak, Archbishop Nelson Perez, the Reverend Glenn McDowell, Rabbi David Straus, and members from the **Religious Leaders Council and Interfaith Philadelphia** joined together in care and prayer with leaders of the Ukrainian community at Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchial Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia. That Sunday was a Chesse-fare Sunday, also called Forgiveness Sunday. We gathered to ask for forgiveness toward our God and toward each other. It was a wonderful time to get reconnect with our Lord and with each other.

Our Rostered Ministers across our Synod regularly partner with community leaders to care for their neighbors. Our congregations/communities of faith are hosting or attending **interfaith services** to support the people of Ukraine. I had the privilege of joining Pr. Mukesh Cheedie and the Saints at Redeemer in Pennel, a Catholic Priest, Pastors from Regenerate, a mega Ukrainian church in Fairless Hills for a prayer service. By invitation of our Ukrainian partners to support another fundraiser, I was compelled to purchase homemade perogies as a “taste of home” for my next-door neighbor.

“So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.” Acts 16:5

The Interfaith Philadelphia Religious Leaders Council continue meeting to discuss how we can strengthen our collective faith witness across the five-county area to combat ongoing violence, poverty, and social suffering. RLC co-convener, Rabbi David Straus and Bryan Miller, Exec Director of Heeding God’s Call, the faith-based and grassroots organization known for

forcing the closure of the city's most notorious gun shop and the colorful and portable Memorial to the Lost tee-shirt campaign to End Gun Violence, honoring those taken by gun violence and their families are leading our efforts to host a worship service. The proposed date is June 12th, we are still working on the logistic; SEPA synod has contributed \$500.00 toward this event. We are fortunate to have Pr. Fritz Fowler's voice at the table and Pr. Fisher working on providing sound equipment for the outside portion. Our hope is this event would demonstrate publicly the commitment of the Philadelphia faith community's resolve to address of the devastation of gun violence, calling for amelioration. Also, grateful to have our Co-DEMs joining these important conversations.

Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity continue meeting to strategize on continuing the call for vaccinations as too many Black and Brown people are still not fully vaccinated. Also, there is a push against voter suppression that is already being experienced in some areas. We are hosting conversations with potential candidates to help people make an informed decision.

The Black Clergy had its program for Women's History Month where I was blessed to be one of seven women recognized at *First in Philadelphia/Pennsylvania: Honoring Our Sheroes*. It was a spirit-filled virtual Town Hall lived streamed on Facebook.

Firsts in Philadelphia & Vicinity
Honoring a Few 'Sheroes'
MARCH 31 @ 6:30 PM

HONORING

Helen Gym
Philadelphia City Councilmember

Rebecca Rhynhart
Philadelphia City Controller

Rochelle Bilal
Philadelphia Sheriff

Bishop Audrey Bronson
First Female President of Black Clergy

Bishop Patricia Davenport
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Rev. Dr. Marsha Brown Woodard
First VP of Baptist Pastors & Ministers Conference

Rev. Carolynn Cavaness
President of Mainline Black Interdenominational Ministries

MODERATED BY

HOSTED BY

Thera Martin
Radio Host, Journalist

Rev. Maxcine Collier
Chair of the Town Hall, Black Clergy of Philadelphia

Rev. Robert Collier Sr.
President, Black Clergy of Philadelphia

Join us on Facebook Live at: [Facebook.com/BlackClergyPhilly](https://www.facebook.com/BlackClergyPhilly)

For more information: Maxcines32@aol.com

*“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”
Colossians 3:23-24*

Synod

The ELCA numbers mentioned earlier reflect us; SEPA is 70,000 baptized members in 143 congregation. We are faith-filled, blessed to be remarkably diverse, very generous, and very service-oriented people. We are Kin-dom builders, building the beloved community one person at a time for the glory of God! We are fortunate to have a skilled and gifted team to support and accompany our Lutheran Tribe in making a difference in notable life changing grassroots ways. Let me count the ways: Senior Accountant, Mr. Martin Schwab; Communications and Mission Interpretation, Rev. Robert Fisher; Communications Assistant and Database Manager, Ms. Cynta Outterbridge; Youth, Young Adult Faith Formation, Rev. Stacey-Kyle Rea; Vocations and Leadership and Mission Advancement, Rev. Karen Sease; Directors for Evangelical Mission, Revs. Bryan Penman and Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis; and Director of Operations, Ms. Yvonne Curtis.

ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER

Renewal - Call to Specialized Ministry

I recommend the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to **the Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir** as Director of Spiritual Care at Artman and the Hearth at Drexel effective May 15, 2022 to May 14, 2023. This call requires an annual report to the synodical bishop for the length of this call.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the **Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir** beginning May 15, 2022 to May 14, 2023.

Renewal - Call to Unusual Circumstances

I recommend that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council renew a call under *Unusual Circumstance* to **Rev. Leslie M. Richard** as Spiritual Director effective June 1, 2022. Pastor Richard for the last 13 years has served as a Spiritual Director in a synodical call under *Unusual Circumstance*. Pastor Richard's gifts for spiritual formation and direction have been and continue to be a high missional priority within the synod. Pastor Richard has been ordained for 33 years and served as parish pastor, assistant pastor, interim pastor, bridge pastor, contract pastor and conference dean. Calls to *Unusual Circumstances* must be renewed annually. Her current term call ends May 31, 2022.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council, in accord with bylaw 7.41.15., in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the*

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, renew a call as Spiritual Director to the Rev. Leslie M. Richard under *Unusual Circumstance* for a period of one-year effective June 1, 2022.

On Leave Roster Renewal Request

Rev. DeBorah Glod request 3rd year on leave effective May 1, 2022

Information Not Needing Action

Death

Deacon John Daniel Charles died October 9, 2021

Bishop's Activities

Ordinations: 0

Installations: 0

Worship Services: 5 In-person 6 on-line

Celebrations (video or zoom): 0

Video Messages:

Synod Meetings: 8

Individual Meetings with Staff: 10

Rostered Leaders: Zoom: 5 Telephone calls: 10 In person: 2

Lay Leaders: In person: 1 Telephone calls: 4

Full Staff Meetings: 3 Staff Telephone calls: 51 In person: 2

Deans Meetings: 1

ELCA

- Region 7 Bishops Zoom: 6
- Stewardship of Life Institute Board: 0
- Conference Of Bishops (COB): 4 Formal: 2
- COB Exec. Committee: 6 ELCA Bishops: 13
- Deaconess Community Board: 0 Executive Committee: 0
- Muhlenberg College Board: 0 Student Life Committee: 0

- Churchwide Staff: Zoom: 5 Telephone calls: 2 In person: 1

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings: Zoom: 4 Telephone calls: 4
Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity: 2 Nominating Committee: 0
Confidential Meetings/Investigations: Zoom: 0 Telephone Calls: 0
Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts: 11
Funerals/Memorials: 0
Days Off: 12
Medical Days: 0
Vacation Days: 0

The Rev. Patricia A. Davenport, Bishop