

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop's Report Virtual Synod Council Meeting June 17, 2021

**Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.
—Proverbs 16:3**

Let us welcome those newly elected to Synod Council:

Graeme Brown, Christ Ascension
Richard Daniels, Christ's Oreland
Emily Fowler, St. Luke Devon
Cynthia Moultrie, Christ Upper Darby
Kendyll Ward, Trinity, Havertown
Damar Wilson, Reformation, Mt. Airy, Philadelphia
Rev. Gary Costa, Peace-Tohickon, Perkasie
Rev. Julie DeWerth, Good Shepherd, King of Prussia
Rev. John Heidgerd, Emmanuel, Souderton
Rev. Nathan Krause, Redeemer, Jamison

Let us celebrate the return of those re-elected!

Albert Glenn
Doreen Kinzler
Everett Wick
Sandra Zimmermann
Rev. Joseph Klinger
Rev. Serena Sellers

SEPA Synod Assembly

Praise the Lord, I am grateful to have witnessed the Holy Spirit at work as She moved throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod before, during and after our Synod Assembly on a digital platform. We thank our staff, Synod Council and Executive Team, Worship Team, Volunteer Tech Team, Voting Members, Lumi and our partners at United Lutheran Seminary for successfully completing all the business of our assembly in sacred cyberspace in record time. I am very appreciative of the collaborative spirit that was present at every assembly meeting convened by Ms. Carrie Schwab, Assembly Coordinator, to assure that everything and everyone connected to any phase of the assembly was prepared for the work at hand.

I had no idea of the investment of time to assure that hospitality was extended to all who virtually participated. Our team was tasked with making sure access was user friendly, our presentations and videos were welcoming, engaging and informative, in addition to tending to the people physically in the space on April 24th. On-line offering during

worship was such a blessing, your generosity to the Sanctuary Village Tiny House Project to provide community for those of our siblings experiencing homeless was amazing. Again, to all of SEPA Synod, job well done!

These have been very stressful times for *our Rostered Ministers and laity*, we pray and act collectively in ways to accompany all our leaders on this journey to renewed strength as people who have endured the pandemic through faith and acts of service. We have offered and our staff has hosted:

- a conversation with Dr. Tim Babinchak, an epidemiologist with 40 years' experience and now retired chief of infectious diseases at Thomas Jefferson University. Dr. Babinchak, a member of St. John's in Phoenixville. Dr. Babinchak did a wonderful job of sharing pertinent information in laypeople terms on the vaccine and some protocols returning to in person worship.
- A 3-part workshop series for Rostered Ministers on leading through trauma, with the LeaderWise organization.
- A Journey through Grief with Ms. Sylvia Havlish, MED, Coordinator for Bereavement Ministries, Lutheran Congregational Services. (Three-sessions)

Committee of Deans

Our Committee of Deans have worked tirelessly to journey with congregations in transitions. Our Deans/Interims/Stated Supply Pastors have been attentive to the needs of these communities in this ongoing pandemic. I can only attribute the number of candidates and Call votes to the teamwork that occurs with Ms. Curtis and our Deans. We had a Dean's Retreat with Dr. Dolores Littleton guiding us through thinking systematically and unpacking different case scenarios which were very helpful.

African Decent Lutheran Association (ADLA)

Attending The Philadelphia Chapter meeting is always a joy to see them at work on issues that are important to the Body of Christ, especially the Lutheran tribe as she works toward being younger, and more diverse. ADLA is currently reviewing the Churchwide Assembly's Authentic Diversity Strategy that we are asked to live into now, moving us forward in the Future Church Design more importantly the body of Christ.

For your information:

https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Strategic_Authentic_Diversity.pdf

ELCA

“The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11:2

Conference of Bishops (COB)

Our work in the COB continues at a steady pace, the pandemic has not slowed the demands in the Office of Bishop. We continue to meet every Thursday to deal with concerns, topics or issues pertinent to our work together as church. Our topics have included: Theology of Ministry - Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs); President Biden’s actions on climate/environment; Immigration challenges; Anxiety of pandemic, racism, economic impact on congregations/synods. Recently we zoomed with Bishop Azzar to get an update from the Holy Land and lend prayer support during the ongoing upheaval between Israel and Palestine. Our COB dedicates time for affirmations and at times we simply check-in and “Dwell in the Word.”

The *Region 7 Bishops* continue weekly meeting to discuss ongoing regional happening, i.e., First Call Candidates, in person worship, synodical challenges and joys but mostly for weekly support. I attended the installation of Bishop Chris deForest in Northeastern PA Synod with my colleagues as a sign of support. I also was a speaker/preacher via video at both New England and Upstate New York Synod Assemblies.

Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity Advisory Team

As a part of our ongoing work we entered dialogue with leaders across the ELCA for an overview, update on how we expand the Educational Grant Program to draw leaders into mission and ministry in the ELCA. Under the umbrella of Christian Community & Leadership Home Area, we looked at TEEM history and current enrollment numbers, we posed the question, will this program assist in our goals of younger, more diverse and inclusive. We are evaluating the Fund For Leaders history, current funding data and the future FFL strategy to financially resource TEEM candidates. TEEM applications are available May to February, anyone interested this is your time. I found this breakdown of students in all our Lutheran Seminaries listed below very enlightening:

African America/Black 72
African Caribbean 2
African National 3
American Indian/Alaska Native 6
Arab/Middle Eastern 2
Asian/Pacific Islander 40
Latino/Hispanic 75
Multi-racial 12
Other 35

Total 247 (31 are TEEM Candidates)

Boards of Directors

I have the privilege of serving on the Stewardship of Life Institute (SOLI), Deaconess Community and the Muhlenberg College Boards, which all have met since our last Synod Council meeting. I have observed one thing consistently, “We have never done this before.” All board leadership is having deep conversations on how they have functioned over the past year and now with this new pandemic learning, how can the institutions and organizations move forward with this understanding of not returning to “We have always done it this way.” There is a new appreciation for doing missional ministry differently.

Ecumenism

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits. Psalm 103:1-2

Religious Leaders Council

The religious leaders gathering on a digital platform has become our new abnormal, I believe we have been more present to support and encourage one another in these challenging times that are impacting our communities of faith across the five-county area. I have had more “off-line” conversations with our Full Communion Partners, two leading to vaccinations for our Rostered Ministers with these numbers.

I was pleased to participate in the Philadelphia Faith Leaders Election Round Table with Philadelphia City Commissioners, Forum Philly livestreamed it on Facebook. We wanted to promote this collaboration on voting to the benefit civic engagement and democracy, especially given the rise in conversation around voter suppression. We want our members to be informed as they fulfill their civic duty.

Black Clergy of Philadelphia

On April 23rd, some of our Rostered Ministers participated in the first City-wide Prayer Vigil to end gun violence, joining with faith communities from across the city for a noteworthy and meaningful event! This is not a one and done, it is a monthly initiative which is tentatively called *First Friday City-wide Prayer Vigil* as it occurs on the First Friday of each month at 1:00 PM in front of or near our various houses of worship. The prayer dates for First Friday City-wide Prayer Vigils are: June 4, July 2, August 6, September 3, and October 1. For November 5, and December 3, (exercise the option of being outside or inside).

I had the privilege to represent our Lutheran tribe at my first in person ecumenical event the launch of the *All Faiths Vaccination Campaign (AFVC)*. It was good to see so many faith leaders vaccinated and present to encourage people to participate for the sake of the other. <https://phillychitchat.com/2021/05/26/all-faith-vaccination-campaign-in-philadelphia-announced/>

Leadership Interview for Seminary Class

The Rev. Dr. Andrea Walker interviewed me as part of a course on leadership at the United Theological School of the West Indies, it was the school's first attempt at teaching gender justice and leadership. It was interesting to participate as witness to how room was made for my leadership, how did I find my leadership voice and what is my leadership style. I came to find my answers evolved as we conversed, I understand why God laughs when I ask, really do I need to do this.

ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER

Request to move from Active Roster to On Leave Roster

Rev. Janet Peterman effective June 19, 2021

Death

The Rev. Luther M. Johnson June 7, 2021

Bishop's Activities

*"My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word."
Psalm 119:28*

Ordination: 1

Consecration: 0

Installation: 1 (Bishop deforest)

Worship Services: (too many to number)

Celebrations (video or zoom): 2

Video Messages: 7

Synod Meetings: 7

Individual Meetings with Staff: 11

Rostered Leaders: 14 (telephone) 8 (Zoom)

Lay Leaders: 3

Full Staff Meetings: 4

Deans Meetings: 3

ELCA

- Region7 Bishops: 9
- Stewardship of Life Institute Board: 1
- Conference Of Bishops (COB): 9
- COB Exec. Committee: 1
- Authentic Diversity Strategy Advisory Team: 2

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings: 4

Confidential Meetings/Investigations: 2

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts: 3

Funerals/Memorials: 1

Days Off: 16

Medical Days: 0

Vacation Days: 0

The Rev. Patricia A. Davenport, Bishop