

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop's Report Virtual Synod Council Meeting September 23, 2021

"How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Hebrews 9:14

We serve a living God, yes, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside such dedicated people in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Beloved, we have been through some challenging times of pandemics, tornadoes, and floods. We have been tasked as a Synod Council to give sound advice in our fiduciary responsibilities and model good leadership even as we make known our choice to meet on a digital platform to keep others safe. I take this occasion to say, "thank you!" for continuing to meet in your sub-groups to facilitate the work of SEPA Synod. I believe that it is due to your faithfulness and the diligence of our Office of the Bishop staff in its entirety that we are financially stable and able to consistently move ministry forward. A special word of thanks to our Executive Team that meets with me to tackle sensitive concerns that need immediate attention.

ELCA

*"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."
1 Corinthians 3:9*

I was privileged to be asked to preach at **Churchwide Chapel** service, I consider this an honor given we have so many gifted preacher/leaders on the list. Here's the link for your consideration <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6936604/video/580442515> I also, attended the virtual Memorial Service for our ELCA Vice President, Mr. Bill Horne. As much as I appreciated that Bishop Eaton along with three other staff members from churchwide attended, it was a glaring reminder of the lack of diversity in the churchwide Office of the Bishop. Nonetheless, here is the link to the message and service: https://youtu.be/gj7vjCfyK_8

Upstate New York hosted a 4-day conference: "Why I preach", "What I preach" and "How I preach." I was excited to be included with Presiding Bishop Eaton, and Retired Bishop Michael Burke. It was interesting to unpack and share how the Holy Spirit works in crafting a message for all God's people. I found I have maintained the same preparation process; however, when I was in the congregation my messages were more intimate with the members; nonetheless, always gospel centered with the intent of drawing people into a deeper relationship with Jesus.

“Solidarity and Sacred Silence Interfaith Prayer Vigil: Afghanistan,” was an on-line service offered by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. Prayer is always good, it is what we are called to do; however, I felt given the need and possibilities of refugees from Afghanistan resettling in our area I would attend also to glean foundational information to be a support upon their arrival. Please see the below link:

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/id/AAQkADQxYzdjZTIyLTFhODEtNDdmZi1hYTRkLTYzZjM5NDA4OTUzZQAQADVHETHFae1NrdgHqlw6Vz4%3D#:~:text=To%3A%20Patricia%20Davenport-.Thank%20you%20for%20registering%20for%20the%20Solidarity%20and%20Sacred%20Silence,you%20can%20help%2C%20visit%20our%20A0Help%20Our%20Afghan%20Allies%20A0page.,-DONATE>

Ecumenism

“Therefore, we ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers with the truth.” 3 John 8

Our **Religious Leaders Council** continues to meet on-line, as well as through listserv as a means of regular communication and information sharing between meetings, information sharing includes: Black Clergy’s First Friday Prayer requests; a request from the City of Philadelphia as evacuees from Afghanistan land in Philadelphia, the city reached out to us to help fill needs. We in turn posted the information in MinistryLink to give others an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Shane Claiborne, a member of **Red-Letter Christians**, invited me to participate on July 3rd in *the reading of “What, To The Slave, Is The Fourth Of July”* by Mr. Frederick Douglass. Red-Letter Christians “constitute a non-denominational movement within Christianity. “Red-Letter” refers to New Testament verses and parts of verses printed in red ink, to indicate the words attributed to Jesus without the use of quotations.” I note that many of the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) hail Juneteenth as their day to celebrate freedom. Check it out: <https://www.facebook.com/redletterchristians/videos/136656415209769>

SEPA Synod

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

I am not complaining, I am explaining the number of conversations I have had with our Rostered Ministers in which many have been exhausting and lifegiving. Our **Rostered Ministers** are weary, they literally have come through a storm, a storm of expected cataclysmic events. Our leaders have had to contend with COVID-19 and Delta Variant, buildings closing, opening, and closing again, mask versus no mask,

vaccinated and non-vaccinated members, the ebb and flow of financial resources, worship on a digital platform as a new worship mandate by the accrued on-line worshippers and a storm. In addition, to the responsibilities of caring for spouses and children who are also weary due to the social limitations of physical distancing. I am grateful for the opportunity to listen, and pray for, and with those overwhelmed. I love my call, most times.

I had an opportunity to Zoom with Rostered Ministers who happen to be women, we met for a time of sharing and prayer. I also, had an opportunity to gather on Zoom with members of our LGBTQIA+ community to check-in and offer prayer.

I was grateful to have the pleasure of participating in the **50th Anniversary** celebration for Dr. Richard Stewart who is not on our synod roster, but on our territory with his wife, Deacon Dawn Stewart who is on our roster. Dr. Stewart has served SEPA Synod well over the years.

I served as a panelist for the **2021 Convocation of the Association of Teaching Theologians Convocation** “Called to Preaching, Teaching, and Service: Women’s Transformative Leadership in the Church, the Academy, and the World.” A sampling of the questions asked, *“A lot of things we suspected were true about America have now become pretty undeniable when we look over the last five years and see the normalization of Trumpism, the injustices and contempt toward neighbor amplified by the pandemic, the lethality of racist policies and policing, and the lenience toward sexism and misogyny. How can theological educators help church leaders speak THEOLOGICALLY into this culture?”*

ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER

On Leave from Call Renewal Requests

Pastor Katherine Steinly 2nd year beginning August 17, 2021

Pastor Dwight Mason 3rd year beginning August 26, 2021

Request to move from Active Roster to On Leave Roster

Pastor Katherine Cartwright Knodel on leave beginning March 31, 2021

Pastor Heidi Roderick-Schnaath 1st year beginning April 5, 2021

Pastor Gwendolyn S. King 1st year beginning July 7, 2021

Request to move from Active Roster to Retired Roster

Pastor Kristie L. Chandler beginning August 1, 2021

Pastor Kristine Peterson beginning July 1, 2021

Pastor David M. Deal beginning October 1, 2021

Pastor Dolores E. Littleton beginning November 1, 2021

Deacon Beth A. Barkhau beginning December 1, 2021

Pastor Gerald Tancredi beginning January 1, 2022

Recently the Office of the Bishop was updated on the health status of **Pastor Carol Steinhart**. Following this contact and initial research it was discovered that Pastor Steinhart's request to move to the retired roster was never presented to Synod Council. While she is retired with Portico Benefits, she is still officially listed as active with the ELCA Office of the Secretary. Therefore, to correct her status, before you is this request that she be moved from the active to retired roster effective March 1, 2011.

Renewal Request of Invitation to UCC Minister to Serve ELCA Congregation in SEPA Synod

A minister of Word and Sacrament of a full communion partner church may be invited by the synod bishop to serve as pastor of an ELCA congregation, under contract with the congregation, for an extended period of time. Upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and approval by Synod Council, the synod bishop authorizes an extended service ministry. With such authorization the minister of Word and Sacrament enters service in the ELCA through the entry rite, "Invitation to Extended Service," which acknowledges the service of the minister of Word and Sacrament as pastor in a congregation or ministry of the ELCA.

Upon the request of the congregation council of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church (Huntingdon Valley, PA), I recommend the **Rev. Dr. Karyn L. Wiseman**, a minister in good standing with the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference - United Church of Christ (UCC), to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council for entry rite renewal of an, Invitation to Extended Service, at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Huntingdon Valley, PA beginning October 1, 2021 until September 30, 2022. This call requires an annual report to the synodical bishop for the length of this call. Extended service is renewable annually by Synod Council.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve renewal of entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, for the **Rev. Dr. Karyn L. Wiseman** at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Huntingdon Valley, PA beginning October 1, 2021 until September 30, 2022. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.

Renewal - Call to Specialized Ministry

I recommend the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the **Rev. Sabrina LaBelle** as Protestant Chaplain at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, PA beginning August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022. 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. Sabrina LaBelle** beginning August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022.

Call to Interim Ministry

I recommend that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Wayne Shelor** to interim ministry at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church (Phoenixville) beginning September 1, 2020 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Shelor resigns this call, whichever comes first.

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

I recommend that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Katherine Cartwright Knodel** to interim ministry at The Lutheran Church of the Resurrection (Yardley) beginning July 12, 2021 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Cartwright Knodel resigns this call, whichever comes first.

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

I recommend that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Heidi M. Rodrick-Schnaath** to interim ministry at Christ's Lutheran Church (Oreland) beginning August 22, 2021 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Rodrick-Schnaath resigns this call, whichever comes first.

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

Information Not Needing Action

Transfers

Pastor Thaddeus Book **to** Grand Canyon Synod January 1, 2021

Pastor Russell Crouthamel **from** Northwestern PA Synod effective March 1, 2021 called as pastor to St. Mark's (Pennsburg)

Rev. Charles Romanowski (retired) **to** New Jersey Synod effective April 28, 2021

Deacon Laura Book **to** Grand Canyon Synod effective April 29, 2021

Pastor Sarah Aasheim **from** Northwestern PA Synod effective June 14, 2021 called as pastor to Grace Glenside (Wyndmoor)

Pastor Christopher L. Weidner (retired) **to** Metro DC Synod effective July 7, 2021

Pastor Bradley Burke transferred **to** Virginia Synod effective July 11, 2021

Pastor Bruce J. Thorsen transferred **to** Northern Great Lakes Synod effective July 27, 2021

Pastor Joshua Sullivan transferred **to** New England Synod effective August 16, 2021

Pastor William (Bill) Coleman **from** Northwestern PA Synod to called as pastor to St. Paul's Telford effective September 1, 2021

Pastor Eric Reimer transferred **to** Upstate New York Synod effective September 1, 2021

Pastor Robert F. Matthias (retired) **from** Lower Susquehanna Synod effective September 3, 2021

Death

These three lay leaders served their congregations, the synod, churchwide, and internationally, I list them in my report in honor of their contributions to the beloved community.

Mrs. Phyllis Linn – February 3, 2021

Mrs. Janet Weachter – July 23, 2021

Dr. Lois Leffler – August 6, 2021

Bishop's Activities

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

Ordinations: 1

Installations: 2*

Worship Services: 5 in-person (Digital platform - too many to number)

Celebrations (video or zoom): 2

Video Messages: 5

Synod Meetings: 5

Individual Meetings with Staff: 11

Rostered Leaders: Zoom: 11 Telephone calls: 63

Lay Leaders: 2 Telephone calls: 6

Full Staff Meetings: 4 Telephone calls: 59

Deans Meetings: 4

ELCA

- Region7 Bishops: 8
- Stewardship of Life Institute Board: 0
- Conference Of Bishops (COB): 7
- COB Exec. Committee: 1

- Authentic Diversity Strategy Advisory Team: 1
- Churchwide Staff: Telephone calls 11

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings: 2 Zoom; Telephone calls: 2

Confidential Meetings/Investigations: 2 Zoom: 1 Telephone Call

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts: 9

Funerals/Memorials: 4

Days Off: 12

Medical Days: 0 Praise God

Vacation Days: 16

*Ordination and installation

The Rev. Patricia A. Davenport, Bishop