

**MINUTES**  
**of the 169<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Zoom Meeting**  
**February 17, 2022**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:00 p.m. and invited the Reverend Serena Sellers to lead the Council in devotions.

Pr. Sellers shared a screen with several words for the Council to see. She asked which one resonates most for you as the Work of the Church?

Evangelism, Gospel, Relationship  
Mission, Spirituality, Service  
Stewardship, Faith, Discipleship

Council members were encouraged to share their word in the chat feature of Zoom.

Pr. Sellers used as a focus of her reflections the words of Psalm 91:

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, My refuge and my fortress; my God in whom I trust.” ...

Because you have made the Lord your refuge ... no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

The words of this psalm bring comfort to many of us, but they may be heard differently by the people with whom Pr. Sellers works in Philadelphia and her efforts with Sanctuary Village. She shared the testimony of two people who have no shelter, and their experience living without a home.

One person, a woman, described life as one of danger: of rape, of theft of the few things you have, of violence. Another person said when you become homeless you lose any identity. You lose all of who you were, and you cease to exist.

“Because you have made the Lord your shelter, no evil shall befall you.” Is this true? If shared with those living on the street, would they believe it? Would they feel protected? What role do we, as the Church, have to do to make these words real for those without a home?

The second person shared that when you live on the street you go into survival mode. You go into a kind of shock. You need someone to walk alongside you and show you a way out. The Welcome Church helped them find this way out. I am bi-racial; both native American and Black. I am also 3<sup>rd</sup> gender, part of the transgender community, feeling both man and woman, but they did not make me feel judged. They showed me love.

The Church is making the word of God true. And this is our task. Whatever word you use to describe it, this is what the church is about. Pr. Sellers closed with prayer that we might live into

the faith given to us, and that we might reveal the truth of God's word wherever we go, and in all we do.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 169<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:19 p.m.

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

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the 168<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved with one addition: on page 15, Report of the Treasurer and Finance Committee, "unrestricted investments approximately double what we had budgeted."

### **SETTING THE AGENDA**

Vice President Beasley noted that the Forward Together in Faith Team submitted a written report, and will not need time to present. We will move the report of the Reconciling in Christ Task Force to follow the Mission Moment.

The agenda was approved as amended.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

Vice President Beasley welcomed Dr. Luanne Fisher, President and CEO of Liberty Lutheran Services, to present the Mission Moment. The Synod Council had requested the opportunity to hear from Dr. Fisher. At the December meeting the Council was asked to consider affirming members of the board of Liberty Lutheran Services, and many members had questions regarding our relationship with Liberty, and our role in affirming its board. Vice President Beasley noted that she was yielding much, if not all, of her time as there is much Dr. Fisher wishes to share with the Council.

Dr. Fisher began by sharing that she has been involved in Lutheran Social Ministry for many years. She began on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday back in 1977, when it was not yet a holiday, and she began at the Germantown Lutheran Home back when it was still "Lutheran."

She came to tell the Synod Council about Liberty Lutheran Services. With much to share, she used a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the highlights.

There are four outcomes she has for tonight's presentation:

- Share overall information about Liberty Lutheran Services
- Share ELCA Guidelines and Liberty Lutheran Services bylaws
- Receive affirmation for Liberty Lutheran Board members
- Receive affirmation for Liberty Lutheran Board members serving on the Illumin Board

### **Affiliation:**

The ELCA has two different levels of affiliation. Category 1 is the stronger of the two. In Category 1 affiliation 51% of board members need to be Lutheran. Liberty Lutheran Services has been Category 1 for many years.

### **Liability:**

Even with this higher level of affiliation, Category 1 Social Ministry organizations are responsible for their own operation. As shown in Liberty Lutheran's bylaws, neither the ELCA nor the Synod is responsible for any debts or issues involved with the operation of the organization.

**Qualifications of Directors (Board members):**

In selecting members, the concern is first and foremost what skills does the person bring to the team. We try to be balanced in age. We consider the person's experience. We consider the diversity of candidates, and their community activities. 51% must be Lutheran, members of either the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod would like there to be 30% membership that is LCMS, but this has not been possible, as there are not many LCMS congregations in this area. The Lutheran members of the Board must be affirmed by the SEPA Synod of the ELCA, or Eastern District of the LCMS, as appropriate.

This affirmation has not come before the Synod Council for some time because thirteen or fourteen years ago a change was made to Liberty Lutheran Services bylaws, extending the number of three-year terms one might serve from three (3) to six (6), and as a result we have not had new members to bring before the Synod Council for affirmation. When a person has been reelected to a successive term that person has not been submitted to the Synod Council, as they had already been previously affirmed.

**Mission:**

A member of the Synod Council, Pastor Jenn Phelps, has previously served at Liberty Lutheran, and was instrumental in crafting our mission statement:

“Liberty Lutheran faithfully accompanies individuals and families facing life-changing situations through an empowering approach honoring the well-being and choices of older adults.”

“Faithfully accompanying” is a Lutheran principle that is the basis of this mission.

The organizations under the Liberty umbrella include:

Artman Lutheran Home, Paul's Run, The Hearth at Drexel (Mary J. Drexel Home) The Village at Penn State, The Manor at Yorktown, The Becoming Center, Liberty at Home, Lutheran Children and Family Services, Lutheran Congregational Services, and the Liberty Lutheran Foundation.

**History:**

Liberty Lutheran Services was established twenty-one years ago. We have over 1,100 employees. We serve in the 14 counties of Northeast Pennsylvania Synod and the 5 counties of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Our organizations are much older than Liberty Lutheran Services is. The Hearth, formerly known as Mary J. Drexel Home, was incorporated in 1887. Each organization has a deep history and identity, with roots in our Lutheran tradition.

**Our vision:**

“That God's creative and redeeming love in Christ is being lived out in our ministry with those who are in need, so that relationships based on justice, mercy, health, and wholeness are being strengthened among those who need to be lifted up and those who are led to share their gifts.”

We place a high emphasis on our staff, and when we have training, we focus not just on what it is to be Lutheran, but that Jesus was all about relationships. That is what we focus on in our work.

### **Board membership make-up**

The Board is 32% women, 68% men. 11% are people of color.

Religious affiliation: 16% are not Lutheran, 72% are ELCA, 11% are LCMS

Two congregations have more than one member on the board. They are Christ, Oreland, and Upper Dublin, Ambler. There are strong historical ties to both of these congregations, and they have been very involved in the work of Liberty Lutheran Services for many years, organizing significant fundraisers and other programs in support of our mission.

Support for Liberty Lutheran includes:

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod \$ 54,052 (congregations and synod)

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod \$107,616 (congregations and synod, plus trust gift)

ELCA donations \$114,411 (much for support of Lutheran Disaster Response)

Liberty Lutheran is the designated agency for LDR in this area. There have been numerous times when LDR has responded to hurricanes and floods in this region.

Liberty Lutheran also provides lay Eucharistic Visitor Training and Bereavement Ministry.

### **Our strategic intent:**

“To create a world-class, multi-service organization which will be a leader and model for how faith-based communities can develop and provide quality services.”

Within this intent, we do not focus our branding on “Liberty Lutheran Services.” We focus on our specific ministries, such as Paul’s Run or The Hearth, highlighting the local and specific ministry of each.

### **What can you expect from Liberty?**

First and foremost, transparency. We want you to know what is going on in our organization.

We do this through communication to our employees, our board, and our constituents.

We are consistent with Lutheran values, which means we are about serving our community, we are about love for our neighbors, we are about being a bridge organization. That is evidenced in our bridge identity with support from both the ELCA and the LCMS, but we are bridge to different constituencies. We are ecumenical. We serve the church and the world. We serve old people and young people. We make the connections that need to be made to care for those who need care. We have the Lutheran understanding of seeing work as vocation

We want to be seen as a world class organization, which means we strive for excellence in Internal Customer Satisfaction, caring for our staff with integrity; excellence in External Customer Satisfaction, being sure we are providing exceptional care to those we serve; excellence in innovation; excellence in financial position; and excellence as a faith-based organization.

### **Executive Team – Diversity**

Our Executive Team has more diversity than our Board. The Executive Team is the leaders of the organization. Where the Board is 11% persons of color, the Executive Team is 23%. The Executive Team is also 69% female, 31% male. We have a long history of promoting women, and we ensure they are paid equally with the men.

### **New Affiliation Possibility**

We are exploring the possibility of affiliating with Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries, and with Garden Spot, a Mennonite affiliated ministry. The new organization has not received all necessary approvals yet. If it goes through, it will be called “Illumin.” The Mission Statement will be, “We will create authentic community, guided by the way of Christ, where all people are encouraged and supported to live lives of purpose and impact.”

The bylaws will be very similar to those of Liberty. We will continue to be a Category 1 affiliated organization, and there will be no liability on the part of the Synod or the ELCA for the operation of Illumin.

**Recommended Board members to Illumin** from the Liberty Lutheran Services Board include: Pr. Fred Hopke, St. Paul’s, Glenside; Mr. Frank Roth, St. Paul’s, Ardmore; Mr. Evan Speece, St. John’s. Blue Bell; Mr. David Stettler, St. Peter’s, Lafayette Hills; and Ms. Pam Steitz, Upper Dublin Lutheran, Ambler.

Dr. Fisher then asked for questions or comments.

The Rev. Dr. Jenn Phelps asked about the anticipated timeline for the new “Illumin” venture. Dr. Fisher: we are not sure. We are oping by June, but there are things that need to go through the office of the State Attorney General.

As a result, the Synod Council does not need to act on these Board recommendations if the Council would prefer to wait. It can happen after we receive formal approval.

Pr. Phelps: Will the new venture change much of how things operate locally, or will things continue as they are, but under a different banner?

Dr. Fisher: I do not anticipate it changing much locally, but we cannot fully know at this time. Certainly, our local agencies will continue, and so those connections will remain.

Pr. Sellers: I know you have diversity information in what you presented to us. Is there any consideration of gender diversity in either hiring, or Board leadership, or other organizational leadership?

Dr. Fisher: we have many women in our leadership, in that we have more men on our board, but more women in organizational leadership. I think we are pretty good at including gender diversity across the organization.

Pr. Sellers: My question is really more if there is any LGBTQIA representation.

Dr. Fisher: We specifically sought out a person who is gay to serve, but after six months, she said she wasn’t comfortable serving on a board where she was the only gay person.

We have not actively sought out LGBT persons of late. We do realize our board has gotten older, and so we are focused on getting people who are younger. For instance, Fred Hopke, our Board chair, is 80 years old. We are most specifically seeking people in their 40s or younger.

Pr. Gwendolyn King: Thank you for being with us and sharing this information with us. How far back does the affirmation by Synod Council of Liberty's Board selections go? Is it part of the past, and part of the tradition, or is it because you are 51% Lutheran? Can you give some clarity for us in that process?

Dr. Fisher: The affirmation of Board members by the Synod Council is an ELCA rule. It is what the ELCA expects of us as a Category 1 affiliated organization. By the way, the LCMS has the same rule. When we have a new board member, we need to have them affirmed by the Council or the District. I do not send a name to you if it is a re-election, as the Synod Council has already affirmed that person. As a result, you have not been asked to affirm people for a while, as there have been no brand-new members for some time.

Ms. Emily Fowler: Building on Pr. Sellers question about LGBTQIA participation, do you have any plans to increase this diversity? Do you help people who are LGBTQIA? Are there any struggles you are experiencing when you are helping people of that orientation?

Dr. Fisher: In all our communities we have people who are LGBTQIA. I have been in conversation with a group of LGBTQIA women about helping them to start a community. We have sometimes heard from people who do not wish to be in a community that does not have LGBTQIA people, and they would be more comfortable together. I believe we are open to helping all people who come to us. We do not have a specific plan, but we actively work to care for all people, regardless of their orientation.

Pr. Sellers: Would it be helpful to you if the Synod Council is aware of people with your desired competencies to make suggestions of who might serve, and if so, how might this best happen?

Dr. Fisher: We would welcome that. We begin in the Spring to consider candidates for the fall elections. We currently have four people whose terms are ending. We would be open to your suggestions. Is there a mechanism from your end that would be best? Who might be the best contact person?

Vice President Beasley: I can be that contact person. I have names who have already come to my mind that I can suggest to you, so you may use me as that contact.

Pr. King: Do your bylaws have a percentage of persons on the board that should be persons of color or whose primary language is other than English?

Dr. Fisher: No, we do not have a set percentage.

Pr. King: I ask because the Synod and the ELCA look to that kind of direction, and so how do you move forward in that direction if there is no "requirement" to do so?

Dr. Fisher: It only moves in that direction if we choose to move in that direction. The ELCA has not required this of us. But as I have said, we have tried on several occasions to bring other folks in, even though it has not had the outcome we had hoped. I am grateful to have the input of Vice President Beasley to assist us in this effort.

Mr. Richard Daniels: With regard to "Illumin," will each of the three organizations retain their prior independence? Or is this a merger into a new organization, with the three prior organizations ceasing to exist?

Dr. Fisher: It is neither one. It is an affiliation with the three organizations coming together with a parent over all three organizations.

Mr. Daniels: How does that help the three organizations?

Dr. Fisher: For one, it provides more career opportunities for staff. People can be trained to move from one part of the organization to another. Another is economy of scale, as we can reduce redundant expenses. We will be able to serve more people in different areas. For instance, the ministries in Allegheny are among people in some of the poorest regions in the state, and they will then have access to more resources to make a greater impact.

Pr. Phelps: Beyond leadership and board members, how can congregations be supportive of the work of Liberty Lutheran?

Dr. Fisher: They can volunteer. We strive to be local, so we can use local help. For instance, when we bought the Manor at Yorktown in 2018, I knocked on the door of Redeemer Jamison, and said, “we are here, what can we do together to help the community?” We can use volunteers for the work of LDR. Many congregations are already helping with the “mud buckets” and other aspects of this work.

Vice President Beasley thanked Dr. Fisher for her presentation, as Dr. Fisher took her leave from the meeting.

Vice President Beasley stated she believed the majority of the questions raised in December by the Synod Council had been addressed by Dr. Fisher’s presentation. Are there any further questions or points that anyone wishes to raise?

Pr. Sellers: I am pleased that Liberty Lutheran has chosen to be more affiliated than less so with the Synod. And knowing that the rule of approval is one that comes from the Lutheran Services in America and not this individual organization, and is not easily changed for them, makes it easier for me to say yes, we can affirm the board members they have put forward. But it also creates an opportunity for us to offer names and encourage greater diversity on their board.

Mr. Bert Glenn: I concur with Pr. Sellers, and believe that using “affirm” rather than “approve” is more helpful language for us.

VP Beasley: I believe “affirm” is the language we have before us. Am I correct, Secretary Richard?

Sect. Richard: Yes, the language says “affirm.”

Pr. King **MOVED that the Synod Council bring back from the table the resolution from the December 2021 meeting for consideration.**

Following a second by Pr. Sellers, the motion **PASSED**, and the following resolution was brought for consideration:

**S.C.22.02.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the following people to serve on the Board of Directors of Liberty Lutheran Services: Beverly Bortz-Christ’s Lutheran, Orland, Paul Engstrom-Christ’s**

***Lutheran, Oreland, Robert Keddie-Gloria Dei Lutheran, Huntingdon Valley, David Stettler-St. Peter's Lutheran-Lafayette Hill, and Evan Speece-St. John Lutheran, Blue Bell.***

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

### **Reconciling in Christ Task Force**

Pastor Alina Gayeuski and Pastor Jay Mitchell, co-chairs of the Task Force, were present to address questions that had been raised by the Synod Council at its December 2021 meeting, and to present the current, refined resolution to the Synod Council.

Pr. Mitchell began the presentation.

You received the report last meeting. There were three questions that came to us since then.

1. How much support should the Synod provide for ReconcilingWorks
2. Questions regarding the wording of the Welcome Statement
3. Questions regarding the makeup of the Inclusive Communities Committee that would be created to assist the Synod in living into the Welcome Statement.

We tried to address these in our revised report, and we are happy to answer questions today. As for the first question, we did not put an exact number in the resolution, as we wanted the Synod to have flexibility in this matter. If in any given year the Synod can give more, that is great, if the Synod has to scale back that may also be the case. We do suggest \$2,500 as what seems to us a fair “synodical” level of support. Still, this is a suggestion. We recognize it is the role of the Synod Council to determine this amount.

As for the second question, there were questions about language which we have tried to address. In the 5<sup>th</sup> “Whereas” we have clarified that the designation of Reconciling in Christ was achieved by action of the Assembly in 1995. At that time the only action needed was to say we wanted to do this, and that was the action taken.

There were some questions raised regarding language within the Welcome Statement itself, particularly concerning racial language and inclusion of marginalized people. We as the task force agree with the concerns, and realized after it was raised that we had not, in fact, included such language when we thought that we had.

We took the suggestions, some specific, some more general, and considered them, and the needs of the statement from the perspective of ReconcilingWorks, and we have included edits to the statement. We are trying to have this statement as concise as possible so that it can be posted and read quickly without it being an extended thesis paper.

The last question regarded the final resolved of the motion, asking for clarification of this Committee. We have added an addendum to the proposal which outlines what this committee would do, and how it might function. It will oversee the implementation of the Welcome Statement, in part by coordinating the various offerings we have already in place, such as the In God's Image Event and the Pride event that occurs in the Spring, as well as other events that we would like to implement for the Synod. We will be better able to plan if we have authorization and a budget line with which to work.

The process to move forward is to request the Synod Council to endorse this resolution, and then have it presented to the Assembly, if Council concurs.

Mr. Graeme Brown: the 3<sup>rd</sup> whereas reads “the ministry of Jesus and committed to his disciples.” Should that read “the ministry of Jesus and commitment to his disciples?”

Pr. Mitchell: the language there is talking about the ministry of Jesus, and the *ministry* is committed to the disciples.

Pr. Sellers: Would this be an appropriate time to offer suggested edits?

Pr. Gayeuski: Yes, we would welcome them so we can have this acted on.

Pr. King: First, thank you for your work. Your timeline was helpful for me to get a sense of how long you have been working, and your goals in this process. I have some suggestions that I hope will be viewed as “friendly amendments,” that I feel will strengthen the Resolution.

In the Welcome Statement, where it says “inclusive of all sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, racial or ethnic background, physical or mental ability, or station in life,” I would like to change the “or”s to “and”s. The reason for “and” is to recognize the intersectionality of those particular aspects, rather than an either/or relationship between them.

Pr. Mitchell welcomed this as a friendly amendment.

Pr. King: Then further down in the document, where it says “We encourage all of our congregations to this work of the gospel, creating safe spaces for their members to bravely be their full selves...” I propose “We encourage all our congregations to” then add the word “engage” “in this work of the gospel, creating safe spaces for” then strike ~~their members~~ and insert “all people” “to bravely be their full selves.” This makes it broader, by moving beyond the congregations to include all people. You had mentioned above that it is to welcome all into fellowship, and this would make a more consistent statement. I suggest “engage in” because we want people to actually be involved in this work.

Pr. Mitchell: I do see this as a friendly amendment, including the word “engage,” but to give background, we crafted this resolution recognizing that it is needed for the sake of those who have been marginalized, and often hurt, by the church. We did not want to overcommit congregations to anything. As a statement of the Synod, this statement says that at the Synodical level, at Synodical events, meetings, and gatherings, all are welcome and can expect to be treated as so. But we cannot make that happen at the congregational level. We can, as a Synod, say what we will do as a Synod. To give the impression that what we say has thereby made every congregation a safe place is beyond what we can promise in this statement.

Pr. King: I understand, but the line is stating that we encourage our congregations to engage in this work. The congregations do not have to follow through, but I believe we are able to say we encourage them to do this work.

Pr. Mitchell: I believe we can encourage them, but I am describing why we went from “all people” to members, as we do not have full control over how far this can be implemented. The Council can choose what language it wishes; I am simply describing the reasoning behind our choices.

Pr. King: My final suggestion is a small word change, in the sentence above the one we have been discussing, “we are guided by the Holy Spirit, committed to the work of racial equity, called to the pursuit of racial justice in our communities.” I would propose “throughout our communities.” I am seeing “throughout” as a way to, again, broaden the statement.

Pr. Gayeuski: Thank you Pastor King, I have made those changes and posted them in the chat. Please check if they match what you have proposed.

VP Beasley: As we make these changes, I just want to be sure that Brother Brown’s question has been fully addressed.

Pr. Mitchell: I agree, and we want to be sure to catch these concerns.

Pr. Sellers: I also want to be sure we address the concern of Mr. Brown in the 3<sup>rd</sup> whereas, and here is my suggestion if this fits with what you intend:

“Whereas the ministry of Jesus and his disciples is centered on the marginalized, welcoming the outcast...”

Pr. Mitchell: we could remove “committed to” and it may be more clear. The focus is on the ministry being Jesus’s, and Jesus committing it to his disciples, in order to center on the marginalized, etc.

Without the “committed to” it would read,

“WHEREAS, the ministry of Jesus and ~~committed to~~ his disciples is to center the marginalized, welcome the outcast, and love all people,”

Pr. Sellers: That makes much more sense.

Sect. Richard: I have a few questions for clarification, if I may. The first: Am I correct in assuming this change to the third whereas is a friendly amendment, so no vote is needed?

Pr. Mitchell: yes, we are fine with this.

Sect. Richard: Second, we are in agreement with the first proposal to change “or” to “and?”

Pr. Mitchell: correct

Pr. King: with the appropriate changes to the grammar that this will necessitate.

Sect. Richard: Are we OK with the change of “in” to “throughout?”

Pr. Mitchell: yes

Sect. Richard: then the only one in which I sense a question is the one to add “engage in” and change “members” to “all people.” While Pr. Mitchell has indicated a willingness to go along with what Synod Council feels on this, if this is something that the Task Force approves, it is a friendly amendment, which does not need our action. If it is “whatever the Council chooses,” then we need to vote on whether we agree with the language Pr. King proposes, as she does not yet speak for all of us.

Pr. Mitchell and Pr. Gayeuski agreed that this also is a friendly amendment.

Sec. Richard: Vice President, those were my questions, and the document as amended is ready for action, if there are no more amendments.

VP Beasley: It is fine to go forward.

Pr. King asked if we need to bring this from the table for consideration.

Sect. Richard: We do not need to bring this from the table. At the last meeting it was brought for our input and comment, not for our action, and so the proposed resolution as amended is what is now before us.

## **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS, we are encouraged by the prophecy of Micah to “Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8);**

**And WHEREAS, we are taught in Paul’s letter to the Galatians that “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28);**

**And WHEREAS, the ministry of Jesus and his disciples is to center the marginalized, welcome the outcast, and love all people;**

**And WHEREAS, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod is committed to living into our discipleship by providing a welcome rooted in God’s welcome to all people and by advocating for the vulnerable;**

**And WHEREAS, one way that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod has sought to offer this welcome has been through our designation as a Reconciling in Christ (RiC) Synod which was achieved by the Synod met in Assembly in 1995;**

**And WHEREAS, as of 2020, ReconcilingWorks has requested additional commitments to retain RIC status - including the creation of a formal welcome statement, commitment to racial equity, and financial support of their work in the church;**

**S.C.22.02.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod adopt the following welcome statement:**

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

**Be it further RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod provide annual financial support to ReconcilingWorks, as required by ReconcilingWorks' guidelines;**

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

**And be it further RESOLVED that the above resourcing, equipping, and evaluating be done through the creation of an Inclusive Communities Committee at the synodical level.**

Sect. Richard called for the vote:

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution**

## **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

### **Logo Contest**

The winner of the logo contest for the Synod Assembly is Ms. Nicki Young, director of children, family, and youth ministry at New Hanover Lutheran Church. She has chosen to give the \$250 prize to New Hanover's Vacation Bible School.

### **Anti-Racism Training**

They have developed a curriculum for Rostered Leaders to complete. Pr. King will speak on this.

Pr. King: the program has begun. There are nine modules that the leaders will complete on their own, and then at a future date, when it is safe to do so, we will gather in-person to further the education that has begun. This is the first round of this new procedure, and we hope it will be a positive one. We have chosen Context, Connection, and Conversation as the three main areas of focus. Context focuses on history and the question of "how did we get here?" If this works as intended it will make it easier for Rostered Ministers, and others such as this Council, to embark on this journey.

Bp. Davenport: this work is so important because racism is hurting the church and the broader community, and we want to take this step of Kingdom Building on purpose, for a purpose, so that we can one day be the Beloved Community.

### **ELCA Talks at the Table**

Please take the opportunity to view this program hosted by Pr. Nicolette Peñaranda, Program Director for the African Descent Ministries. In this program she is not just lifting up our current leaders, but also encouraging other leaders.

### **Religious Leaders Council**

We continue the work to dig deeper in the issues that impact our communities, including the reality of the "Great Resignation." We in the Church, or in SEPA Synod, are not immune from the "Great Resignation." But there is some good news even in the midst of this struggle. Pr. Karen Sease has an update for us.

Pr. Sease: I have some numbers for you. In 2022, in January, one call vote was scheduled, and has occurred, and the pastor has accepted the call. We have four call votes scheduled for

February, and there are several more congregations that are very close to scheduling their call votes. This is very good news, and represents a great deal of effort on the part of your Deans, the call committees, the congregation councils, and all who participate in this process of discernment. This will remove many congregations from our transition list.

Also, in January we “entranced” one candidate, and are expecting to “approve” another candidate soon, which would put this person in the mobility process. I have also had conversation with two other people inquiring about entering the candidacy process, and so there are more new leaders on the way.

Bp. Davenport: Praise God and Hallelujah!

### **Showing Up**

I speak often of the importance of showing up. Dr. Fisher this evening showed us places where we can show up and help Liberty Lutheran. It is important that we show up, and it is important as to what we say when we do. For instance, I was at a meeting of the Deaconess community, and I mentioned Dr. John Hougen and his great work with Zones of Peace. Then, when I was at a meeting of the Religious Leaders Council, Dr. Hougen told me the Deaconess Community sent them a check for \$14,000, simply because I shared their story. I did not make a request; I did not submit a proposal. I just told the story, and they wanted to come alongside this work.

I want to thank Dr. Susie Folks, the chair of our Anti-Racism team. She attended “Racial Reckoning Work” with me, a conversation in which we were extended an invitation to host a gathering to ensure that Philadelphia has a significant role and contribution to this work of dismantling racism and building the Beloved Community. I am excited to be a part of this effort.

Please check the Link of the worship we did with our siblings in Israel.

### **Black Clergy of Philadelphia**

There are various committees that do important work in our area. There is a Health Committee, a Criminal Justice Committee, a Political Action Committee, an Education Committee, and an Adult Education Committee, each of which address issues directly affecting our communities.

### **Youth Ministry**

We are living into our baptismal vows. We lift our voices for justice because it is part of our baptismal covenant. I ask Pr. Skyle Rea to share how we are living into these vows with our efforts from cradle to grave, and with our youth and young adult ministries.

Pr. Rea: I just returned from the ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza. This is the largest youth ministry event in the ELCA. The Youth Gathering has been canceled for 2022. Some have asked if the next Gathering will be in Minneapolis, and the answer is no. There will be a March Madness style event to announce where the next Gathering will be held,

With the cancelling of the Gathering was also the cancellation of the MYLE and the Table events. The planning team for MYLE is putting together an alternative to this that will be held at the same time, and we are looking to see what we can do as SEPA Synod.

The biggest thing that happened at the extravaganza is that Pr. Regina Goodrich was celebrated, winning the best award you can receive in Youth Ministry, the Tom Hunstad Award, affectionately called “the Tommy.” It is presented each year to someone who has had a significant impact on the children, youth, and family ministry in the ELCA. Pr. Goodrich has

done marvelous things, particularly with the Multi-Cultural Youth initiative. She is a well-respected person in the ELCA. She is the first African American to win this award. Bp. Davenport: Another first for SEPA Synod. But there is a second “first,” in that we are the first synod to have two winners of the Tommy award! Ms. Susan Pursch was the first.

### **Vaccine Awareness**

Fun Times magazine has asked me to lend my face and my voice to vaccine promotion, and so if you see my face on a bus, that is indeed me. We want to continue to push the vaccine even as cases go down, because in neighborhoods of poverty the vaccination levels are still quite low.

Pr. Fisher will share about our new Covid-19 protocols.

Pr. Fisher: Yes, we have put out new information of what we are recommending. The last posting was in the peak of the omicron variant, and we are definitely in a better place now. We want to thank all our people for the faithful work they have been doing throughout the pandemic. There has been much learning and growing in the past two years. We can start to take our foot off the brake, but we can't quite put it on the gas.

I spoke by email with our friend Dr. Tim Babinchak, who wants to remind us that singing is a congregational choice, based on who we are trying to protect. But as we make such choices, we need to consider all the mitigating factors that can be taken into account as we care for each other.

### **The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Service**

Thank you, Vice President Beasley, for coordinating this wonderful service for us again in partnership with our siblings in Southeast Michigan. We had a wonderful preacher in Dr. Gladys Moore. The link is available for you to experience this service. Thank you, Vice President Beasley!

### **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

My report is in your packet. Unless there are questions, we will move to the Report of the Secretary.

### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

#### **Actions on the Roster**

#### ***Call to Interim Ministry:***

**S.C.22.02.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Wayne R. Shelor to interim ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church (Fairview Village) beginning February 1, 2022 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Shelor resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

#### ***Request to move to Retired Roster:***

**S.C.22.02.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant retired status to the Rev. Dwight Mason, effective May 1, 2022.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

## Information Not Needing Action

### *Death:*

The Rev. John Jorgenson December 24, 2021

### **Fund for Mission Proposals**

A Task Force had been convened to review the use of the Fund for Mission resources. The report is before you. The Task Force found the use of monies from the Fund to be appropriate, but feels there needs to be steps taken to clean up some of the process for the allocation of these funds. To that end there is the following resolution placed before the Synod Council, which comes from the Task Force, with input from the Fund for Mission Trustees.

**S.C.22.02.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the following changes to the Guidelines of the Fund for Mission: that the date determining the amount of funds available be changed from February 1st to January 1st, and**

**Be it further resolved that the Team that makes proposals to the Board of Trustees be changed from the Evangelical Outreach Team to the Vitality Team, and**

**Be it further resolved that the Synod Vice President and Synod Secretary be added to those who are Trustees of the Fund for Mission.**

Mr. Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee and a Trustee of the Fund for Mission, spoke to the resolution. The Executive Committee wanted a review of the use of the fund, which led to the Task Force. The change of the date for determining the amount of the 5% of the Fund which is available is to make it possible for the Trustees, when they meet in January, to have an accurate number with which to work. The Task Force thought it would be helpful to include the Vice President and the Secretary as part of the Trustees. I am happy to answer any questions if there are any.

With no questions, Sect. Richard called for the vote.

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Treasurer Janet Neff shared that our Mission Support is \$7,000 over what we have received this far in 2020. The rest of the information is in the written report, but she wanted to highlight information concerning the Fund for Mission and the Mission portion of our budget.

### **Fund for Mission**

Some information regarding the Fund for Mission for those who may not know:

Whatever the balance of the Fund is from the previous year, 5% is available for use for mission purposes. A part of this is used for the Mission portion of our budget, and the remainder is available for use for projects recommended by the Vitality Team.

Ms. Neff shared some of the types of money we received for the Mission portion of the budget. We get grants from the ELCA for Mission Congregations such as the Welcome Church. Last year we received \$56,000 from these grants.

We also receive grants from the ELCA for non-mission congregations that have applied for assistance. That amount was \$7,000.

In addition to this we have investment gains. We have Forward Together in Faith investment income. We have the St. Petri-Hope investment income.

Last year we had the sale of a building, the former Grace, Norristown.

We have mission partners, some contributions, and a trust that we have for mission.

All those sources amounted to about \$1,200,000.

Treasurer Neff then shared what expenses we have in the Mission portion of the budget.

The Forward Together in Faith Grants are run through this portion of the budget. This amounted to \$87,000 in grants.

We have congregational support, which includes conference support, new creation, building capacity training, and pastoral support. We spent \$17,000 in this area.

In Global Vision we spent \$1,000.

In mission congregations, salaries and benefits we spent \$57,000.

In Vitality Outreach we spent \$21,000. \$15,000 went to a new ministry in Grace, Broomall, and \$6,000 to a venture in Kensington and Roxborough. These were made in response to the request of the Vitality Team.

We have support for the Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult, and Spiritual Formation salary, which was \$17,000, and the expenses for that ministry, which was \$13,000.

We support Mission Congregations with about \$67,000, which includes The Well for \$9,000, Grace, Broomall for \$25,000, Kairos Communities for \$8,000, The Welcome Church for \$17,500, and New Creation for \$7,900.

Total expenses come to a little over \$280,000.

We have a certain amount (5% of the Fund) available from the Fund for Mission, some of which is then allocated to this Mission portion of the budget.

The Trustees are limited to the 5%, but if Vitality Team should have a proposal that would require more than that amount, such as a request for a new Mission Developer, the request can be brought to the Synod Council for consideration.

Beyond this information about Fund for Mission, Treasurer Neff concluded her remarks by stating that we are in a good financial position, even with the volatility in the markets.

Mr. Bert Glenn then presented the Report of the Finance Committee.

As usual, the Committee reviewed the Financial Reports, and found no issues with them.

The Committee also reviewed the budget for the next fiscal year, which begins February 1, 2023.

The process starts with Synod Staff, particularly Senior Accountant Martin Schwab, creating a preliminary budget. This is then reviewed by the Finance Committee, and then presented to the Synod Council. The Synod Council then considers the budget and approves a budget to be presented to the Synod Assembly for adoption.

The packet of materials you received has the proposed budget in it. It is in the document that has the financial reports dated January 31, 2022, and the far-right column has the proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

Mr. Glenn shared he will not go over all the entries, as they track pretty consistently with our previous budget, but there are two areas to highlight. One is that there is a new entry, \$2,500 for Reconciling Works, at the request of the Task Force and agreed to by the Bishop, and the second is the amount for Seminary Debt relief, which has decreased from \$50,000 to \$25,000, but the line is still in the budget.

There have been a few modest adjustments to the budget reflecting the finance staff's best estimations of income and expenses.

Mr. Glenn welcomed any questions regarding the proposed budget.

With no questions raised, the following resolution was placed before the Synod Council:

**S.C.22.02.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning February 1, 2023, for presentation to the Synod Assembly for its adoption.**

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Investment Committee**

Pr. John Heidgerd, Chair of the Investment Committee, shared that the written report is before the Synod Council, and includes the performance of the portfolio through 2021, with an ending total balance of \$11,078,232. Pr. Heidgerd stated that, as Treasurer Neff had mentioned, January's balance, due to the activity in the market, has declined by about \$600,000, but that should start picking up again in February. He then asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Glenn asked about the thoughts behind the Committee's consideration of going with professional management.

Pr. Heidgerd: The portfolio has grown from about a million dollars four years ago, to 11 million dollars now. There is some exposure we bear by not having a seasoned professional looking at these funds. We are doing an RFP to see what might be available. This does not commit us to using a management company, but it seems prudent to see what is out there.

Mr. Glenn: Do you have any guess as to what the cost of that might be?

Pr. Heidgerd: It will depend on the model of cost: whether a percentage of the portfolio, or on time, or by a fixed fee. This is part of what will be requested in the RFP.

### **Constitution Committee**

Pr. Gary Costa shared a verbal report. He has met with Pr. Sellers and Pr. Ray Miller about the scope of the work of this committee. In terms of work, there have been a couple of inquiries, but no paperwork yet. These include Redeemer, Penndel, and God's Love, Newtown.

There is pending activity with Saints United, Grace, Hatfield, and Christ, Upper Darby.

And finally, the Committee has completed all the necessary work to recommend the approval of the constitutional revisions for two congregations: Trinity, Lansdale, and St. John's. Melrose Park.

**S.C.22.02.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution of Trinity, Lansdale, and be it further**

**RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution of St. John, Melrose Park.  
The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

#### **Nominating Committee**

Pr. Joseph Klinger, chair of the Nominating Committee, noted we are still needing people for several positions. As of this meeting we have no nominees of color. We have one nominee who is openly LGBT+. If you know of people who would be willing to serve, please reach out to them. We need lay people. We have received many clergy nominations but are short on lay nominees. Please help!

#### **Forward Together in Faith**

You have the written report for information.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Bp. Davenport reported on the search for a Director of Evangelical Mission. While it cannot be publicly announced who is filling the position, she shared that we will have *two* people share this position. We are waiting for final paperwork and approval from Churchwide, but we will soon have in place one African National, and one member of the LGBTQIA+ community sharing the DEM position, while also continuing in their respective congregations. We are being innovative and creative in how we meet the needs of the Church in these changing times.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

None

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Robert Fisher.

The next meeting of the SEPA Synod Council will be April 7, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

*Approved by Synod Council April 7, 2022*