

**MINUTES**  
**of the 171<sup>st</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Zoom Meeting**  
**June 16, 2022**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:04 p.m. and invited the Reverend Nathan Krause to lead the Council in devotions. Pr. Krause began with the poem “Won’t You Celebrate with Me?” by Lucille Clifton. This poem is a challenge from, and a celebration of, a Black woman, and what she has become in spite of the numerous people and obstacles that tried to keep her from growing into the woman she is.

Pr. Krause noted that he was joining us from North Carolina, where he had been visiting Fort Macon, a Civil War fort. He said he could not help but to reflect that this Sunday is both Father’s Day, and Juneteenth. He asked us to consider which we will celebrate, if either, this year. Generally, in Lutheran congregations we do not celebrate secular holidays, but often Father’s Day is an exception. Juneteenth is now a national holiday as well as a commemoration of the Church. Can we celebrate Juneteenth in our congregations? Can we do so alongside whatever Father’s Day plans may exist? How can we be sure Juneteenth is not overwhelmed by what we are used to, and is instead lifted up to prominence? If we want to be an inclusive Church, we need to lift up those who are not always recognized.

Pr. Krause closed his devotion with the poem “I, Too” by Langston Hughes.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 171<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:12 p.m. The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the 170<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

The agenda for the 171<sup>st</sup> meeting with one amendment: the Report of the Bishop will be presented after the Report of the Treasurer and Finance Committee.

**MISSION MOMENT**

Vice President Beasley welcomed Dr. Kristen Gay, Executive Director of Gemma Services, to share about the ministry of Gemma.

Gemma Services is the result of a merger of Silver Springs – Martin Luther School, a Lutheran affiliated agency, and the Village, which had been affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. Silver Springs is the successor organization to the Germantown Orphans’ Home, which began in 1859, when the Reverend Dr. William Alfred Passavant, a Lutheran pastor from Pittsburgh, gave a dollar, and a challenge, to Elizabeth Ashmead Schaeffer, the wife of a

Lutheran pastor in Philadelphia. He challenged her to start an orphanage in Philadelphia as he had done in Pittsburgh. She kept that dollar and rallied the Lutheran women of Philadelphia to start such a facility, and in 1859 they accepted their first child, who, coincidentally, was named George Silvers.

At that time, it served predominantly orphans from the Civil War. Shortly after its founding there was an awareness of the need for other services, including care for seniors, and so the ministry expanded, and the Lutheran Home in Germantown was formed. In 1995 the children's portion of the ministry separated from the Lutheran Home in Germantown, and the Presbyterians took over the seniors' portion of the ministry there, while the children's services moved to Silver Springs. In the recent merger with the Village, the parallelism is striking.

the Village was an orphanage started by the women of the Presbyterian Church in Southwest Philadelphia, and so the two programs have very similar backgrounds and ministries. Both ministries started out in Philadelphia, and then moved out into the suburbs. the Village has had a campus in Rosemont. This property is being sold. There have been residential programs running out of this site, but it has become very difficult financially to continue at the Rosemont site. The Haverford School is purchasing this property, which means the legacy of education will continue at this campus.

Dr. Gay offered a brief overview of the programs offered by Gemma Services, which include: **A residential psychiatric treatment facility** for children ages 6 – 14.

These are children whose behaviors are so unsafe that they cannot live in their homes or a community setting. We are one step down from a psychiatric hospital. We have a very good rate of returning children to their communities. Even as it is terrible that 6-year-olds need such services, we are glad we can provide such key support.

**Martin Luther School**, an approved school for children with emotional and behavioral issues. Martin Luther School had been approved for children from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, but we have just been approved to go through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. It is exciting to see the growth in this school. We have invested heavily in literacy at this school, and our literacy rates are increasing significantly. It is exciting to see how children who had limited reading skills begin to reach and exceed grade level reading.

**Community Based Programs**, which include:

**Foster Care and Adoption services**, but we are unique in that we do therapeutic foster care. We deal with children with significant issues, and we have highly trained parents who work with them.

We also have a program called **Intensive Behavioral Health Services**, where we go into homes and schools to work with children with behavioral problems.

**Family Based Services**, is an initiative where we pair a Masters' level clinician with a Bachelors' level highly skilled worker, and they go into the home to work with the family and the child together. This is particularly helpful when you have a child returning from a residential program, as it assists the transition for both the child and the family. It is also very helpful when used proactively, as it can help avoid the need for residential care. The goal is to build skills within the family to keep the child in the home as much as possible.

And we have an **Outpatient Clinic**, which is a traditional, 50-minute session counseling services with experienced psychiatrists who work with the children, and manage medications and cognitive behavioral therapy programs.

We also have two preventions programs, one called **Family Empowerment**, which they call a pre-referral program, where warning signs are monitored in the effort to keep issues from

escalating and needing the intervention of Department of Human Services for issues of abuse or neglect. The second is **In-Home Protective Services**, which is designed for families where the Department of Human Services have been involved for issues of abuse or neglect, and we work to ensure that the child is safe, and that the family build skills so that the child may remain at home.

To conclude, Dr. Gay pointed out two large initiatives that Gemma is undertaking. One, they are doing a great deal of work around diversity, equity, and inclusion, and have hired a firm from Newark, NJ. They have a framework around which they are approaching this work. There are colleague committees and board committees working on this. They have also hired the Lion's Story from the University of Pennsylvania, which is teaching racial literacy; how to have hard conversations in the moment as a conflict is occurring. It is the most challenging and rewarding work Dr. Gay has done so far in her career.

And second, Gemma is beginning strategic planning. It has been extremely challenging entering a merger on November 1 of 2019, and then experiencing the pandemic shut down much of the programming on March 13 of 2020. The Management Team was on the phone every day at 9:00 and at 4:00 to navigate how to continue operating in the shut-down. They are now going to be able to do some strategic planning that was not possible at the time. Dr. Gay is looking forward to discovering what Gemma wants to be when it grows up!

Dr. Gay then opened the floor for questions.

Mr. Bert Glenn: Thank you for this overview. I was not aware of all the services you provide. Do you have an estimate on how many clients you serve in a month or a year?

Dr. Gay: I do not know the exact number, but it is thousands. We serve a lot of children in the Community Based Programs. In the residential programs perhaps 80 to 100. In the School we usually have between 180 and 200 students. But the Community Based programs are huge. We may have 400 kids in outpatient services alone.

Pr. Gwendolyn King: Is this Gemma the same Gemma that has taken up residence at the United Lutheran Seminary?

Dr. Gay: Yes, that is us!

Pr. King: Welcome to the campus. How are you finding your new digs?

Dr. Gay: They are fantastic. The chapel is called the Elizabeth Ashmead Schaeffer Chapel, who is our founder, and it would have been great to be in that space, but it is a good second place to be on the seminary side of the space. It is perfect for us. It is along public transportation, there is parking, the outpatient rooms are awesome, it is kid and family friendly, and it is so exciting to have this relationship with the seminary. It feels a little like we came home.

Pr. King: you are also now close to our Synod offices on the campus. So welcome, and I hope the relationship can continue to grow.

Dr. Gay: The Lutheran connection is strong and important. As you may know, Lutheran congregations are among the backbone of support of Gemma. We were founded by Lutheran congregations. And the amount of support we receive, financially, materially, volunteer-wise, and in board membership, is just amazing.

Secretary Richard: Would you be able to describe a bit of what our relationship is now that Silver Springs has merged with the Village? It has changed a bit, but we have at least an historical tie. Is the relationship deeper than just this historical connection?

Dr. Gay: It has meant a lot to both sides to maintain a connection to their faith communities. Historically to identify yourself as a Lutheran Social Ministry Agency, you need to have 51% of your board be Lutheran. As the world has changed, this has loosened a bit. Our by-laws state that it is preferable that three members of our board be affiliated with Lutheran congregations, and three be affiliated with Presbyterian congregations. (The support by Presbyterian congregations of the Village has been as strong as has been the support of Lutherans for Silver Springs.) I was concerned about this relationship. I am part of Lutheran Services in America, which is 300 Lutheran Social Ministry Organizations across the country that work together in advocacy, education, and connections. I wanted to be sure Gemma could continue to work with LSA, and we were able to accomplish that.

Dr. Gay then made a “plug” for Lutheran Services in America. She is on the Board of LSA, and they are having a series of fireside chats with various congregations, to share what the work of Lutheran Services in America encompasses. If any of the Synod Council are interested, she feels it amazing what is happening at the national level, and she would love to share how much impact there is as this work filters down to the local level to organizations like Gemma.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Dr. Gay shared some background on a resolution before the Synod Council regarding consolidating funds.

Historically Silver Springs was responsible for two foundations. One was the Silver Springs Foundation, and the other was the Lutheran Home at Germantown Foundation. When the Lutheran side of the Lutheran Home at Germantown was closed, a foundation had been established in honor of that ministry, and many gifts and bequests were given to that Foundation. With the merger of Silver Springs and the Village, a new foundation was created, called the Gemma Foundation. At the time of the merger, the Silver Springs Foundation was assimilated into the new Gemma Foundation. The Lutheran Home at Germantown Foundation has remained post-merger. There is now no activity in the Lutheran Home at Germantown Foundation, and the desire is to merge it into the Gemma Foundation. These funds will not go away; they will be managed through the Gemma Foundation. Per the bylaws, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod needs to affirm this change in the Foundation. A document describing this action, and a resolution pertaining to it, were included in the Synod Council packet of materials.

Secretary Richard then put this resolution before the Synod Council.

**S.C.22.06.15. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the Agreement and Plan of Merger of Gemma Foundation and the Lutheran Home at Germantown Foundation.

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

Vice President Beasley thanked Dr. Gay for her presentation, and for the work Gemma Services does for children in the Philadelphia area.

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

Vice President Beasley shared that, while it was mentioned in the minutes of the Executive Committee, Pr. Stacey-Kyle Rea will not be presenting her proposed revisions to the policy for youth workers at Synod youth events at this meeting.

### **Confidentiality Agreement**

Vice President Beasley directed the Synod Council to the sheet included in their packets and informed the Council members of the need to sign and return this form to her by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Synod Council Committee Assignments**

She also noted the Committee Sheet, and asked the members to fill out his sheet, indicating the areas in which they would most like to serve. While there can be no guarantee that members will be placed in their first choice, the Bishop and Vice President will take these preferences into consideration as Committee assignments are made. It is requested that this preference sheet also be returned to the Vice President by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Introduction of Synod Staff**

As there are several new members on the Synod Council, Vice President Beasley asked the members of the Synod Staff present to introduce themselves and share a brief description of their area of service.

**Ms. Cynta Outterbridge** has served for over 20 years on staff. She is the data base operator and is the registrar for the Synod Assembly and the Rostered Ministers Event.

**Pr. Bryan Penman** is the Co-Director of Evangelical Mission. His area includes shepherding the work of the Congregational Vitality Team. Pr. Penman focuses how to bring renewed life to existing ministries and see what type of innovation may be possible to bring new life and vitality to our congregations.

**Pr. Moses Suah-Dennis** is the other Co-Director of Evangelical Mission. His area of focus is on new mission starts, seeing where the wind of the Spirit may be blowing, and how we can make a new witness to Jesus in a new space. He also is responsible for the AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) and Sanctuary Synod efforts of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

**Pr. Stacey-Kyle Rea** is responsible for Youth and Young Adult discipleship. This has been challenging after the pandemic. There is always a changing clientele, for instance, Council member Kendyll Ward is moving on to college. With the pandemic there is not as much overlap across the years as there would ordinarily be, and so it is like beginning over. She is reaching out to those who have not been part of the SEPA youth community, as well as encouraging those who had once been to reengage.

**Pr. Karen Sease** is responsible for Vocations and Leadership, and Mission Development. Her work involves shepherding people through discernment to rostered ministry, as well as calls to ministry sites. She is also the point person to encourage giving to the work of the Synod by congregations and individuals. Her most current new venture, however, is that she and her husband, Pr. Axel Kaegler, are expecting their first child in September.

**Mr. Martin Schwab** has been the Synod's Senior Accountant for 8 years. He does most of the day-to-day financial work – depositing checks, paying bills, processing payroll. He also works with the treasurer and other staff to form the draft budget for Synod Council to review.

Bishop Davenport expressed her deep gratitude for the staff and noted that we are truly blessed by these faithful servants of Christ.

### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

Actions regarding from the Assembly were explained in the Secretary's written report. One item that needs to be addressed involves the action for paid leave for rostered ministers.

#### **Resolution on Paid Leave for Rostered Ministers**

The 2022 Synod Assembly passed a resolution encouraging paid family leave for rostered ministers, particularly at the time of the addition of a child to the minister's family. As the question was called in the middle of the consideration, discussion was ended, and the vote taken on the resolution as currently before the house. This led to a resolution with differing expectations of how long such paid leave should extend. With the concurrence of the Executive

Committee, the secretary proposes the following alteration to the resolution adopted by the Assembly to resolve the discrepancy while honoring the intent of the Assembly:

**S.C.22.06.16. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council modifies the language of the resolution on Paid Leave for Rostered Ministers as follows, inserting the portion that is underlined, and removing the section that is ~~struck through~~:

“It is recommended that congregations develop a program for parental leave which includes childbearing and childcare leave. The program should include both the birth and adoption of children and cover full salary, housing and benefits with the understanding that the individual would return to work for a minimum of six months after taking the leave. It is recommended that any time a child is added to a household of a pastor [*deacon*], congregations provide at least 12 paid weeks of child-bearing leave for the birthing caregiver and at least 8 paid weeks of childcare leave for the non-birthing caregiver. This allows time to recover from the physical demands of childbirth, as well as for parents to spend time bonding with the child. A minimum of 6 weeks leave with full compensation is strongly encouraged. Congregations are also encouraged to consider the provisions of the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which allow for up to 12 weeks leave (which can be a combination of paid and unpaid leave). FMLA leave can be used for personal or family member care situations.” ~~A minimum of 6 weeks leave with full compensation is recommended.~~

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

Secretary Richard noted that the fourth “resolved” of this action directed the Synod to set up a fund to assist part-time call and struggling congregations with the increased cost. He referenced the explanation in his report that the Executive Committee will convene a task force to consider the implications of this action, and to make recommendations for implementation back to the Executive Committee.

He then asked if there were any further questions regarding the actions of the Assembly. Pr. Serena Sellers asked about the status of the Urban Ministry Task Force.

Pr. Richard shared that the Executive Committee plans to bring a list of recommended persons to the September Synod Council meeting for the Council’s affirmation.

#### **Affirmation of Churchwide Assembly Alternates**

There are two persons, Pr. Jennifer Phelps and Mr. Candido Silva, who were elected as voting members to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly who cannot attend. The Executive Committee is placing before the Synod Council the following persons as alternate voting members: Pr. Lauren Heywood Bruno, and Mr. Matthew Lovett. Their nomination forms were included in the packet of materials for this meeting. Sect. Richard asked if there were any questions regarding these nominees.

Mr. Glenn: I note that the lay person has an address in Maryland. Is he eligible to serve as a voting member from our synod?

V.P. Beasley: Mr. Lovett lives in Maryland, but he is an active member of Mediator Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, with Pr. Regina Goodrich.

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

**S.C.22.06.17. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council appoints Pr. Lauren Heywood Bruno and Mr. Matthew Lovett as voting members from this Synod to the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

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

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

##### ***On Leave from Call Requests:***

**S.C.22.06.18. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Timothy Ness 1st year effective January 1, 2022

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

**S.C.22.06.19. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Janet Peterman 2nd year effective June 18, 2022

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

**S.C.22.06.20. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. Susan Lang 1st year effective June 20, 2022

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

##### ***Requests to Move to Retired Roster:***

**S.C.22.06.21. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant retired status to the Rev. DeBorah A. Glod effective April 1, 2022

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

**S.C.22.06.22. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant retired status to Deacon Karen S. Matthias-Long effective July 1, 2022

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

**S.C.22.06.23. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant retired status to the Rev. Wayne A. Matthias-Long effective July 1, 2022

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

**S.C.22.06.24. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant retired status to the Rev. Deborah A. Wolfe effective September 1, 2022

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

##### ***Renewal of Invitation to UMC Minister to Serve ELCA Congregation in SEPA***

###### ***Synod:***

**S.C.22.06.25. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve entry rite renewal, Invitation to Extended Service, for the Rev. Brendan Galvin at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Doylestown, PA beginning July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.

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

#### **Information not requiring action**

##### ***Removed from the Roster***

Deacon Suzanne Rigg effective June 1, 2022

##### ***Deaths***

The Rev. Carol Ann Steinhart – April 19, 2022

The Rev. Susan P. Lynch – May 27, 2022

## **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Martin Schwab, Synod Senior Accountant, made the report in her stead.

**Mission Support:** As of April 30, our mission support from congregations was \$394,000, which was about \$1,200 less than last year. As of May 31, we are at \$509,000, which is \$5,000 ahead of last year. Our mission support is remaining strong.

**Unrestricted Fund:** Unrestricted revenue was \$365,000, which is \$158,000 below budget, due to unrealized losses in our investments. Unrestricted expenses are \$472,000, which is \$30,000 under budget. We are showing a deficit of \$106,000 in the unrestricted portion of our budget, again due to losses in our investments.

**Temporarily Restricted and Mission** portions of our budget are also showing deficits, once again related to investment losses.

Page 5 of the financial statement shows the list of the expenses and income related to the Temporarily Restricted funds.

Page 6 of the financial statement is the **Statement of Financial Position**. As of April 30, we have \$8.4 million in unrestricted assets and investments, and liabilities of \$123,000. We have a strong asset to liability ratio.

Page 7 is a list of our **designated and temporarily restricted funds**. On the top third of the page you can see some of the unrealized losses by category.

The final report in the packet of materials is the **report on congregational giving** as of April 30<sup>th</sup>. Please review the giving of your congregation, and of those in your Conference, and let Mr. Schwab know if you have any questions.

Mr. Schwab asked for questions. With none raised, he yielded to Mr. Bert Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee.

## **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Glenn noted that the Committee reviewed the most recent statements available, those of April 30, 2022, and found no issues with the reports.

### **Seminary Debt Relief**

A few years ago, Bishop Davenport suggested we budget money to assist rostered ministers with seminary debt. This year we had budgeted \$25,000. We received 13 requests, and after consideration, made recommendations for grant relief to the Bishop. When approved by the Bishop, the Synod then makes the payment to the holder of the debt, not to the rostered minister, to reduce the debt by the amount of the gift.

### **Fund for Mission**

While the Finance Committee does not oversee the disbursements, we do follow the Fund to evaluate its strength. The figures have been shared with the Synod Council in a separate document.

### **St. Petri-Hope Funds**

The committee confirmed that funds previously received from the sale of property of the St. Petrie-Hope congregation when it closed are within the Fund for Mission, though separately accounted for. These funds are designated for appropriate projects in Northeast Philadelphia. Because the funds came to the Synod through the sale of the property of a closed congregation, they are under the umbrella of the Fund for Mission. They may only be spent after being allocated by the Trustees of the Fund for Mission.

## **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

### **New Synod Council Members**

Bishop Davenport welcomed Pr. Marie Sager, St. Timothy's – Aston; Ms. Dorothy Wilson, Faith – Philadelphia; and Mrs. Abee L. Tabolo, Faith Immanuel – East Lansdowne; and expressed her delight to have these new folks as part of the team. As this is a working Synod Council, she is grateful for the gifts and willingness to serve that each member offers to the whole.

### **Assembly Highlights**

We met together in Assembly and the work of the Synod was done; thanks be to God! The Day of Service portion of the Assembly was wonderful. "A picture is worth a thousand words," and Bishop conveyed her encouragement that members check the pictures shared in her report and posted on MinistryLink. Bishop expressed her deep appreciation for the work of Ms. Carrie Schwab as she coordinated the events of the Assembly, and the Day of Service.

### **Director of Interim Ministers**

Bishop Davenport noted that the way in which we do what we do is empowered by the relationships we cultivate. This is true in our meeting, in our serving, and in our administration. To that end, we now have a new Director of Interim Ministers, Pr. Wayne Shelor, and we are grateful for his work. Bishop attends the meetings of the Interim Ministers to build on this relationship, and to assure the Interim Ministers that they are an extension of the work of the Office of the Bishop.

Other relationships she works to nurture are those with Dr. Chiles and Lutheran Settlement House, and with Dr. Gay and Gemma Services. Bishop also noted the desire to strengthen the relationship with the Women of the ELCA, and was glad to attend their gathering at St. Matthew, Springfield in June.

### **Committee of Deans**

The Committee of Deans is another extension of the Office of the Bishop. We now have 29 congregations in transition. We are looking at the possibility of creating a plan for Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs) to accompany some of our smaller and more rural congregations with leadership, as we are in a clergy desert at this time. We have some great lay leaders, and we are seeing how we can empower them and use their gifts. A proposal will come to the Synod Council for consideration.

### **Bear Creek Camp**

Bear Creek Camp is our Camp in partnership with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. This year's summer counselors came to our territory for a commissioning service. They also met with Pr. Rea in a program, "Lutheranism 101," where they could ask questions and deepen their faith as they begin this summer journey. Bishop was inspired by this spirited team of leaders.

### **Support for Ukraine**

In further indication of the impact of our relationships: we are helping to support 18 people from Ukraine. Two of our congregations, St. Stephen's, Feasterville and Immanuel, Somerton hosted a Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine, where we were not only able to pray for, but also make a donation to, these folks who are fleeing the war.

### **Offices have Moved!**

We are grateful that we are in our new space, and we hope to have an open house soon.

### **Conference of Bishops**

The Conference of Bishops continues to meet, as does the Executive Committee of the Church. They continue to address the issues surrounding the Sierra Pacific Synod. For those

who are not familiar, please visit the Sierra Pacific Synod website and you learn the basics of what is occurring. These issues remind Bishop Davenport not just of our purpose, but of our power, as a Synod Council. We have the power to impact lives as we gather and make decisions, and that cannot be taken lightly. There are changes that are being proposed that will alter how the Office of the Presiding Bishop operates. These changes will also affect how the Office of the Synodical Bishop operates. More will be shared as the details emerge.

### **Sanctuary to the Streets**

It was a blessing to have many Lutherans present, in person or online, recognizing the problem that we have with violence and shootings in our streets in Philadelphia. We prayed together, we visited a site of a recent murder, and we went to City Hall to call for action.

Bishop then asked for the Council to ask any questions they may have for her.

Pr. Joseph Klinger: As you raised the concern of Sierra Pacific Synod, I note that there is a person from our Synod, Ms. Suzanne Riggs, who was removed from the roster. As part of the issue in Sierra Pacific revolved around the removal of a rostered minister, is there anything we should know about this?

Sect. Richard: The process currently in the ELCA is that one can be on-leave from call for three years, and then, if one wishes to remain on-leave from call, one needs to petition for an extension. This extension can last for another three years, after which another process needs to be followed. If one does not ask for this further extension, one “times out” from being on the roster. It is my understanding that this is the case for Deacon Riggs. She chose not to follow the extended process and, after six years on-leave from call, was content to leave the roster. There was no conflict or issues of discipline involved.

Pr. Gwendolyn King: Thank you Bishop, for how you show up and represent us publicly. It was meaningful to hear you address the issue of gun violence. The consistency and grace with which you bring the voice of the Lutheran “tribe” is truly appreciated. I am also grateful for your keeping the rostered ministers “in the loop” with the events of the Sierra Pacific Synod. It has helped us to answer some questions with a more informed voice than would otherwise be possible.

Pr. Serena Sellers: Regarding the Sierra Pacific situation, there are likely to be repercussions at the Churchwide Assembly in August. Is there a plan in place for dealing with this, particularly if the media become involved, so that we can put information out prior to, or during, the Churchwide Assembly? Do we have a strategy for our Synod as to how we might respond as this issue is considered and acted upon?

Bishop Davenport: We had a meeting with the voting members from our Synod and informed them that they are voting members of the Church. As such, they need to speak and act as they feel the Spirit leads them. We will share with them the facts of the situation, and just the facts, so they can make informed decisions. The Conference of Bishops has determined to secure a crisis communications team for the Churchwide Assembly, and there will be additional security in place. We are trying to get ahead of the issue to be properly prepared for whatever may come. We learned from the 2019 Assembly, when “Sanctuary Church” was raised, that we cannot be caught off guard. We were not prepared then for how to get information out fairly and accurately. So, a communications team will be on hand to help disseminate any information we need to distribute.

Pr. Sellers: Would it be worthwhile to put out information to our congregations before the Assembly, so they can be aware of what is being discussed?

Bp. Davenport: How about we make a prayer list of concerns for the Churchwide Assembly that congregations can raise before the Lord?

Pr. Sellers: That would be great.

V.P. Beasley: The information Bishop sent to the rostered ministers should have been available to the lay people also. It has been sent to more than just the clergy, and it has been posted on MinistryLink. This may be how our people have heard, and why they are asking questions of their pastors.

Bp. Davenport: MinistryLink is where we will post the prayer list for Churchwide Assembly as well.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Investment Committee

Pr. John Heidgerd, chairperson, referenced the submitted report. He noted that the numbers speak for themselves. As the markets fluctuate, they give and take, and at this point they have taken back much of what we earned last year. We should begin to rebound, but with the increase in interest rates, we are likely to just tread water by the end of the year. The recommendation of the Committee is to hold steady until the markets rebound, as we do not need to withdraw money at this time, and the unrealized loss is just that until we sell.

### Constitution Committee

Pr. Gary Costa brought forward two congregation constitutions for ratification by the Synod Council.

**S.C.22.06.26. Therefore, be it resolved that** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution of the Saints United Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, and be it further

**resolved that** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Hilltown.

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

## OLD BUSINESS

None

## NEW BUSINESS

### Election of Executive Committee

Vice President Beasley presented the need to elect members to the Executive Committee. This Committee meets with the Bishop to discuss issues to come before the Synod Council, and any other issues on which she may wish advice. The Executive Committee is composed of the four officers of the Synod: the Bishop, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer; and 3 other members from the Synod Council, one clergy person, one lay man, and one lay woman.

Ms. Beasley began by asking for nominations for the Clergy position.

Pr. John Heidgerd nominated Pr. Joseph Klinger

Pr. Klinger accepted the nomination

Ms. Doreen Kinzler nominated Pr. Gwendolyn King

Pr. King accepted the nomination

Mr. Bert Glenn nominated Pr. Serena Sellers

Pr. Sellers accepted the nomination.

Nominations were closed. V.P. Beasley noted that Pr. Karen Sease is overseeing the voting, which is being conducted via the Zoom polling feature. She asked that each member of the Synod Council vote for one of the three nominees.

Results of the poll:

- Pr. King – 50%
- Pr. Klinger – 30%
- Pr. Sellers – 20%

Vice President Beasley declared **Pr. King elected.**

Ms. Beasley then opened the floor for nominations for the Lay Woman position.

Pr. Sellers nominated Ms. Kendyll Ward

Ms. Ward declined, as she will be attending Susquehanna University this fall.

Pr. Richard nominated Ms. Doreen Kinzler.

Ms. Kinzler accepted the nomination.

With no other nominees, the Vice President Beasley closed nominations, and declared **Ms. Kinzler elected.**

Vice President Beasley then opened the floor nominations for the Lay Man position.

Pr. Sellers nominated Mr. Bert Glenn.

Mr. Glenn accepted the nomination.

Pr. Richard nominated Mr. Everett Wick.

Mr. Wick accepted the nomination.

With no further nominations, the Vice President closed the nominations, and asked the Council to vote in the Zoom poll.

Results of the poll:

- Mr. Glenn – 50%
- Mr. Wick – 50%

Question from Sect. Richard: is the vote exactly 50 – 50, or is that rounded off?

Pr. Sease: It is exactly even, but we did just have a person rejoin the meeting who is eligible to vote, if you would like to reopen the poll.

Vice President Beasley asked Pr. Sease to do so, and the Council was asked to vote a second time.

Results of second poll:

- Mr. Glenn – 67%
- Mr. Wick – 33 %

Vice President Beasley declared **Mr. Glenn elected.**

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Vice President Beasley noted that there have been several events lately, such as ordinations, installations, and funerals, after which there been fellowship events. There have been cases of Covid-19 reported after these events. Please be mindful of how we gather together. Covid has not passed entirely, and we need to consider how we keep each other safe.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m. with prayer by Pr. John Heidgerd. The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be September 22, 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, September 22, 2022*