

**Report of the Synod Council to the Thirty-fifth Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, May 5 & 6, 2023**

Included:

1. Minutes of the 170<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, April 7, 2022
  - Approved by the Synod Council June 16, 2022
2. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Thirty-fourth Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
*Hope for Today, Strength for Tomorrow, through Community in Christ*  
virtual meeting, April 30, 2022
  - Approved by the Synod Council December 8, 2021
3. Minutes of the 171<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, June 16, 2022
  - Approved by the Synod Council September 22, 2022
4. Minutes of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, September 22, 2022
  - Approved by the Synod Council December 8, 2022
5. Minutes of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, December 8, 2022
  - Approved by the Synod Council January 26, 2023
6. Minutes of the 174<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, January 26, 2023
  - Approved by the Synod Council March 30, 2022
7. Minutes of the 175<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, February 16, 2023
  - Approved by the Synod Council March 30, 2023

**MINUTES  
of the 170<sup>th</sup> MEETING  
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL  
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
Zoom Meeting  
April 7, 2022  
6:00 p.m.**

**DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:07 p.m. and invited Ms. Kendyll Ward to lead the Council in devotions. Ms. Ward used as the basis of her reflection Philippians 2:5-11 from the Palm Sunday lectionary.

*<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>6</sup> who, though he existed in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be grasped,  
<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
assuming human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a human,  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him even more highly  
and gave him the name  
that is above every other name,  
<sup>10</sup> so that at the name given to Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

Ms. Ward reminded the Council of the phrase, “April showers bring May flowers.” The rain of Spring brings with it new life. Rain can be refreshing, but rain can also bring a sense of dreariness.

While we are in the rainy season of Spring, we are also in the season of Lent. It is a time for reflecting and reimagining, a time of drawing nearer to God. Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem, and to the cross. We are approaching Palm Sunday. Holy week will end with Easter and the resurrection.

Lent is a time of renewal and repentance, and a time of sorrow as we think of how Jesus went to the cross and died for us.

The rain is all around us, but the flowers are coming.

And Lent will end soon with the resurrection of Jesus, and his ascension into heaven. Jesus is our hope, and Easter reminds us of this hope.

SEPA Synod, our work can often feel overwhelming and dreary, and there may be times when we want to give up. But Spring is in the air, the rain is ending, and the flowers are blooming. Always remember that Jesus is our living hope, our hope that shines in the darkness.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 170<sup>th</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 169<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

## **SETTING THE AGENDA**

The agenda for the 170<sup>th</sup> meeting was approved as presented.

## **MISSION MOMENT**

Vice President Beasley welcomed Ms. Carrie Schwab, Assembly coordinator for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, to bring an update on the upcoming Synod Assembly.

Ms. Schwab noted that registration for the “Day of Service” has been low. Forty-four (44) people have signed up as of the date of this meeting. The Synod Council was asked to encourage people to sign up for this hands-on day service portion of our annual Assembly.

Registration for the Assembly itself is also low. To date, approximately 325 people have registered. Financially we are “in the black,” but it would be good to have fuller representation for the work of the Synod.

Some have questioned why, if it is a virtual Assembly, there is any cost associated with the Assembly. Even a virtual Assembly has its expenses. We need to purchase services to allow for electronic voting, hire tech people to ensure interactive live streaming, and other items that are not seen, but are more than just turning on a computer and having all work in an integrated way. We are using V-poll, a company from Exton, rather than Lumi this year. While this will yield savings, their services are not free. It will also mean more work for our local team of paid and volunteer staff. Ms. Schwab stated that she is pleased that with the savings in the platform operation, we were able to decrease the expense per person by \$40.

Live orientation and a “test your tech” session will be held on April 28<sup>th</sup> to ensure we can have people try out the platforms and the process for voting prior to the day of the Assembly (April 30<sup>th</sup>).

The offering for the Assembly has been designated to go to “Children of Ukraine” through the Lutheran World Federation.

There have been several pre-Assembly sessions to assist voting members in understanding the issues to be considered. Among these have been a session on Reference and Counsel, and how to write a resolution; a session on the budget; and a session on the Resolution on Welcome and Inclusion by the Reconciling in Christ task force.

At the Assembly we will include the installation of Pr. Stacey-Kyle Rea as Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship.

The ELCA Churchwide Representative will be Pastor Nicolette Peñaranda, Program Director for the African Descent Ministries. She will also hold a workshop, via Zoom, on May 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. on the African Descent Ministries Strategy.

Bishop Davenport thanked Ms. Schwab for all that she does to make the Synod Assembly run smoothly. Bishop Davenport also noted that as for the 21 congregations that have not yet registered, we rely on the Deans and each member of the Synod Council to encourage their participation. The Assembly is the place where we do the work of the Synod, and further what we do for Jesus in this five-county region. It is also where we gather to build relationships to strengthen each other in the work of the Kingdom.

### **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bp. Davenport began with thanking the Synod Council as leaders of the SEPA Synod. She continues to boast about our leaders to the ELCA because we keep focused on what God would have us do, and then we do just that.

She expressed thanks to those who are not eligible to serve another term:

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

We are grateful for your work. We will count on your prayer support, and we will keep you in mind for other opportunities for serving.

The Bishop also thanked those who are eligible to be re-elected to another term:

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

I want you to know how much I appreciate you, and I acknowledge this publicly whenever I can.

## **ELCA**

### **Conference of Bishops**

In our efforts to dismantle racism we are exposing this sin giving space for confessions, repentance, and forgiveness that we pray leads to reconciliation. We have an issue in Sierra Pacific Synod, and the Presiding Bishop has named it for what it is. She has appointed a listening panel to gather information. She has recently received the report of the panel and will be deciding what next steps should be taken in that Synod. This is the work that we are doing, working to understand and address issues of systemic racism and its impact. We are learning how what we do in leadership positions really makes a difference. We are doing this work because this is not what we want the world to see and know about us.

### **This is who we are:**

We have given \$23 million through our congregations and social ministry organizations to help the marginalized of the world.

In addition, we support with partners through Lutheran World Relief to bring humanitarian assistance to the people in Ukraine.

When we send money through Lutheran World Relief 100% goes to help the people in Ukraine.

We continue our work of equipping our youth, young adult, and outdoor ministries. Our seminaries, colleges, and universities educate students with both academic and practical applications.

The ability to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine is so important. Bishop noted that one of her neighbors is from Ukraine, and that neighbor has shared that what we hear on the news is nowhere near as horrific as what is happening on the ground. She hears from her own family in Ukraine of the rape and violence; it is so critical that we stand with the people of Ukraine.

Bishop is pleased that the offering for the Assembly has been designated to go to Ukraine to bring some assistance at this critical time.

In the ELCA, we are 3.14 million baptized members, in 8,894 congregations, we are 96% white, 2% African descent, 1% Asian, and 1% mixed.

We in SEPA Synod make up a significant amount of the diversity in this Church. When we go to Churchwide Assembly, we shake those numbers up. “I am so Godly proud of us as a Synod for what we are doing.” We continue to not just show up and be disciples; we are also making disciples for Christ and drawing all into deeper relationship with God through word and witness.

We have some serious worship going on, which calls people into relationship, and inspires people to serve the neighbor.

Bishop Davenport expressed gratitude for the many food ministries in our Synod, like that at Emmanuel, Souderton, for the ministry to those without homes like Welcome Church and Sanctuary Village. This is what she lifts up: not that which pulls us down and tears us apart, but the Kingdom building and Kingdom builders all around us.

### **Lutheran World Federation**

Bishop is constantly reminded of the urgent need for work on climate change. We in SEPA do not have a Green Team, we don't have a Care for Creation Team. How do we leave a legacy for our children and our children's children?

### **Region 7 Bishops**

The Region 7 bishops met at Yale Divinity School. While there, Bishop was able to share about the United Lutheran Seminary's Urban Theological Institute, of which the people at Yale Divinity were unaware. The people of Yale asked what the bishops felt were the current academic and practical needs for ministry for MDiv students. Whether the bishops shared anything new or not, the fact that the question was asked was impressive.

### **Local Support of Ukraine**

Bishop is grateful for the work of Pr. Mukesh Cheedie and Redeemer, Penndel, for taking the lead in assisting the Ukrainian community in that area, and hosting a service for them. There have been several such efforts in our Synod, for which Bishop is grateful. She encourages others to participate. Prayer is good, prayer in action is even more powerful.

### **Black Clergy of Philadelphia**

We are working with the Interfaith Community and our Ecumenical partners in hosting Heeding God's Call, gathering to say that the violence has to stop. We need good representation. When we do joint events, the Lutherans have to show up. We had a joint event with the Presbyterian Church at United Lutheran Seminary, and only two Lutherans attended.

### **Synod Staff**

Bishop expressed many of the ways in which the staff serve the work of this Synod. We cannot do the work we do without these faithful servants. She noted that Senior Accountant Mr. Martin Schwab does so much in the area of finance and keeping things in order and on track. Bishop then asked members of the staff who were present to share a bit of what they do in their work.

#### **Pr. Robert Fisher** (Communications and Mission Interpretation)

It has been a hectic but good time in the communications office.

We have continued our weekly gathering of communicators in this covid time. It is exciting to see people come together to discuss how we might approach this nearing post-pandemic time.

We have posted new covid guidelines. Please be sure to check these out on MinistryLink.

Masks and vaccines are not the only tools we have for mitigation.

Preparing for the Assembly without Lumi has been exciting.

We are learning how we may do hybrid events via Zoom Events.

We are trying to review how often we send emails so that we are informative, but not overwhelming people with our communications.

#### **Pr. Skyle Rea** (Youth and Young Adult Discipleship)

The next ELCA Youth Gathering site has been announced. We will be going back to New Orleans in 2024, so begin your preparations now!

With the cancelation of the Minneapolis event, we have been working on hosting a MYLE (Multicultural Youth Leadership Event) program locally in place of that which will not be happening this summer.

Kudos to the planning team of the Tuscarora Lutheran Youth Retreat. The event that is usually 3 days was altered to fit in one day, as many families were still leery of going for an overnight event with the uncertainty of the coronavirus variants.

If you are not aware of it, check out the free Vacation Bible School program offered by the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.

We are considering how we might do youth events on a Conference level so that the youth can meet other youth in their area.

#### **Pr. Karen Sease** (Vocation, Mobility, and Mission Development)

In personal news, we are expecting!

In Synod news, there have been 7 call votes so far this year. We are now down to 36 congregations without a settled pastor. We are looking at more call votes being scheduled this Spring and Summer. This is very good news.

We will be introducing seven first call leaders at the assembly; three from our synod, four from other synods. It is good to see new leaders coming forward to serve the Church.

Bishop noted that we have our Co-Directors for Evangelical Mission with us. She invited Pr. Bryan Penman and Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis to share a bit of what they are working on.

**Pr. Bryan Penman (DEM)**

This is a unique arrangement, as we will each have responsibilities in our congregations, in our Synod, and in the ELCA.

I will be working with established congregations and the Vitality Team. Pr. Dennis will be working with our new congregation starts.

I have resigned from my position as Dean of Lower Montgomery Conference. Pastor Sarah Aasheim of Grace, Wyndmoor, will be the new Dean. She is also a member of the Synod Vitality Team.

**Pr. Moses Suah-Dennis (DEM)**

We as SEPA are on the cutting edge of ministry as we are innovating how we will work this position. I came as an immigrant to SEPA and I found a home, as this synod is a place for mission. In 2022 we are in a place to be the church Jesus needs us to be. Jesus sends us out 2 by 2, and we are going to go out 2 by 2! I am excited for the work of mission in SEPA to go on.

**Ms. Yvonne Curtis (Director of Operations)**

Bishop noted that Ms. Curtis sends out our reports, facilitate just about everything in the Synod, including the Actions on the Roster and so many other details to keep us operating smoothly, efficiently, and appropriately. Her work speaks for her, and it is in print!

**Ms. Cynta Outterbridge (Registrar and Database Manager)**

Ms. Outterbridge does all the work for registration for the Assembly and other events of the Synod. She also assists with the communications team. She looks forward to continuing to work with everyone as the Assembly approaches.

The floor was then open for questions for the Bishop:

Pr. Gwendolyn King asked what the Bishop thought of the CROSSROADS anti-racism training event.

Bishop Davenport shared that she spoke with the convener of the event prior to going. As a person of color, she did not want to inhibit her white colleagues from speaking their truth. The convener shared that he felt it was important that she attend, and made a space for the bishops of color to be in their own group. Bishop Davenport felt the training went well. People walked away with some tools, some deep reflections, and some hard words that will hopefully help them to lead differently. She found this to be a revealing time, showing whose racism is overt, and whose is covert. While many will not admit this, it is clear that there is a racist streak in many of our bishops that needs to be dealt with.

Pr. Nathan Krause expressed concerns about the issues in the Sierra Pacific Synod. He is very concerned about what conversations will occur at the Churchwide Assembly and online. The online site Patheos has much information, but it is basically one side of the story. Yet there seem to be many facts that are hard to refute without other information. There is definitely a racial overtone, which he does not know if needs to be there, but he is not versed in everything that is going on. He is concerned of what this might lead to, and he is not sure if a Listening Panel is enough.

Bishop Davenport shared that she is very concerned about this also. It is important to keep the issue and all the people who are dealing with it in prayer. The report is in Bishop Eaton's hands, and she now needs to determine what next steps might be taken. Please surround her in prayer. Bp. Davenport also worries that, no matter what decision Bp. Eaton reaches, there will be people at Churchwide Assembly that will be upset.

All I can say is that we are responsible for Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, and how we operate. I pray that we set a good example of how we handle such situations, and how we treat people fairly, leaving aside racial overtones that can do harm to people and the Church.

Mr. Bert Glenn: This is the first I have heard of this issue. If there is some document that is somewhat objective and accurate that could be circulated to the CWA voting members, that would be helpful as we go to the Churchwide Assembly.

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

Vice President Beasley encouraged members of the Synod Council to use the ELCA Communications link to find information regarding the issues in the Sierra Pacific Synod, and some of the decisions that have been made. One issue that is being raised is whether there is equitable treatment in matters of discipline between rostered ministers that are Caucasian, versus persons of color. There is a lot of information on social media about Sierra Pacific Synod. We need to be in prayer that the truth will prevail.

Pr. Fisher included this link in the chat feature for the Synod Council's reference:

<https://elca.org/News-and-Events/8136>

Vice President Beasley noted that prayers should be offered for the ELCA as at the Churchwide Assembly we will be electing a new Vice President. Twenty-one (21) names have been identified at this time. Bishop Davenport noted that one of these names is our very own Vice President, Tracey A. Beasley! Ms. Beasley thanked Bishop for her support.

VP Beasley concluded her report by offering her thanks and gratitude for the service of those who have been on our Synod Council, and whose terms are coming to a close.

### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

#### **Churchwide Assembly Alternates**

There are two people who had been elected as voting members to the Churchwide Assembly who are now unable to attend. They are Mr. Thomas Salber and Ms. Cynthia Moultrie. As alternates, the following names are put before the Synod Council for consideration:

**S.C.22.04.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council appoints Mr. Ernest Knowlden and Ms. Veronica Britto as voting members from this Synod to the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

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

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

*Call to Specialized Ministry - renewal*

**S.C.22.04.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the **Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir** beginning May 15, 2022 to May 14, 2023.

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

*Call to Unusual Circumstances - renewal*

**S.C.22.04.10. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council, in accord with bylaw 7.41.15., in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, renew a call as Spiritual Director to the Rev. Leslie M. Richard under *Unusual Circumstance* for a period of one-year effective June 1, 2022.

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

*On Leave Roster Renewal Request*

**S.C.22.04.11. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend on leave from call status to the Rev. DeBorah Glod, third year, effective May 1, 2022.

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

**Information Not Needing Action**

*Death*

Deacon John Daniel Charles died October 9, 2021

At the December meeting of the Synod Council, the Council authorized the placement of the Rev. Stratford Cuthbert “Bo” Bannister, V, to serve by Synodical Appointment at St. John, Hatboro.

Since that time, we have been advised by the Office of the Secretary that this designation is not possible for Pastor Bannister. While he has served in pastoral ministry for some time, because Pr. Bannister comes to us from a tradition with which we are not in full communion, he is considered by the ELCA as a first call pastor in our tradition. Our structure does not provide for pastors designated as “first call” to serve under Synodical Appointment.

The recommendation from the Office of the Secretary is to change the language of this call from a call under Synodical Administration to a Synod Call as a Mission Developer. This designation does fit the situation, as the hope for this time of Synodical Administration is to redevelop St. John into a healthier congregation.

**S.C.22.04.12. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a call to the Rev. Stratford Cuthbert “Bo” Bannister, V, to serve as Mission Developer at St. John Hatboro, for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2022, extending to December 31, 2023. At the conclusion of this term, this call may be extended on an ongoing basis with the agreement of Pr. Bannister and the congregation of St. John.

Discussion:

Pr. King: Does Pastor Bannister have sufficient background to act as a mission developer, as this is the designation that he will be given.

Bp. Davenport: Yes, he does have the gifts for development coming from his previous tradition, and even more so, in talking with Pr. Phil Hirsch who oversees this work for the ELCA, Pr.

Bannister has been welcomed into that cohort for two reasons: 1, because he is new to the ELCA this will give him an immersion experience, and 2, he will be working with Pr. Penman and Pr. Suah-Dennis as part of the mission developer cohort here as well.

Pr. King: I ask because if the designation has changed, is there sufficient background for this vote.

Bp. Davenport: To further clarify, before this change in designation could be made, it needed to be agreed to by Pr. Hirsch, who asked the same questions as you are raising.

Mr. Graeme Brown: Pr. Richard, you noted the similarities in the timeline and support, but what if any, are the differences in this designation, or is it just in name only?

Pr. Richard: It is my understanding that it is primarily a name change so that it is possible for Pr. Bannister to serve in this place in this capacity, although as Bishop has noted he did need to be vetted to have this different designation apply to him. In terms of the work we are hoping he will do, it is similar to what we were expecting of him under Synodical Appointment, which was to redevelop St. John's into a healthier site for ministry. Part of the skill set we feel he brings to this call is discernment and insight to redevelop St. John, and so it seems to us a similar task, even as it is now a different designation.

Pr. Krause: Does this mean that St. John will now be recategorized as a redevelopment site?

Bp. Davenport: We are no longer using that language. We are using the term "holy innovation." We stopped using the term "redevelopment" because of the "re" attached to it, and we don't want to "redo" some things. We are looking at holy innovation, and what is the Spirit now calling you to do.

With no further discussion, the vote was called.

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

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

Treasurer Janet Neff noted that we are only one month into our new fiscal year, so there is not much of a trend to analyze.

The Unrestricted portion of our budget is strong.

Income is less than budgeted, but this is due in part to losses in our investments.

We still have decreased expenses as staff is still not traveling as much, and more work is being done remotely.

The Temporarily Restricted portion of the budget had a loss of \$33,000, due to expenses related to two cemeteries, and losses in the Grace, Norristown endowment.

The Mission portion also has a deficit, amounting to just over \$250,000. This is also due to the decrease in investment income.

The Permanently Restricted portion has no surplus or deficit. The income received was distributed.

Our balance sheet is still strong, even as investments are down. The unrestricted current assets and investments total \$9,105,253. Our liabilities total \$137,008. Therefore, our current ratios are in good order.

Mr. Bert Glenn noted that the Finance Committee has not met since our last Synod Council meeting, but he had two updates with regard to the work of the Committee.

1. Seminary debt relief: We set a fund to assist those who have burdensome levels of debt. This year there is \$25,000 available. We have sent word out to let people know that this money is available and what the process is for seeking assistance. We currently have 6 requests. The deadline is May 2.
2. Fund For Mission: The Trustees can use up to 5% of the fund for mission, both to close the gap on the Mission portion of the budget, and to be available for other ministry initiatives. A summary of the Fund was attached to the report. The amount of money available for 2022 – 2023 is approximately \$361,000. \$214,000 is designated for the Mission portion of the budget, \$147,000 is available for Trustee approved proposals from the Vitality Team.

Ms. Cynthia Moultrie: How is the money for Seminary debt relief allocated? Is it in the budget?

Mr. Glenn: Yes, it is a line in the budget.

Ms. Moultrie: With how high debt seems to be, is it possible to increase that amount?

Mr. Glenn: We are not certain what other opportunities are out there for relief. This is a way to provide some assistance, while not perhaps full relief.

Ms. Neff: This money is for those who have already graduated and are serving in our Synod. New seminary students receive free tuition, where those who graduated some time ago did not have that benefit.

Pr. Joseph Klinger: Do we keep track of average debt load, to have that inform how much we may need to budget?

Ms. Neff: We are not tracking this. We are also not relieving college debt, but seminary debt.

Mr. Richard Daniels: Is this recent debt, or debt from 20 years ago.

Mr. Glenn: We have not tracked this.

Ms. Neff: We can guess by how long they have been in ministry, and so it can be surprising that there is still debt.

Mr. Daniels: So, there are some from 20 years ago?

Ms. Neff: Yes.

Mr. Daniels: That is a shame.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Audit Committee**

Ms. Cynthia Moultrie, chair of the Audit Committee, directed members to the report in their packet. She noted that the entire team is new, and so this process is new for them, but we have a clean audit report.

Mr. Everett Wick further commented that the clean report indicates that the auditors had no issues with the Synod's financial activities of last year.

**S.C.22.04.13. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the Audit Report to be submitted to the Synod Assembly for reception. **The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

#### **Investment Committee**

Pr. John Heidgerd, chair of the Investment Committee, shared that we have had a decline of 8% in the portfolio, which represents about half of the gains we made last year. This is not a surprise as we see how the markets are moving at this time. Our loss at this time is "unrealized," which means we still have the same investments, and we expect the portfolio to rebound as the year goes forward. The current balance, as of March 31, 2022, is \$10,107,813.

#### **Constitution Committee**

Pr. Gary Costa, chair of the Constitution Committee, shared that the committee has two congregational constitutions that are ready for Synod Council ratification. They are for God's Love in Newtown and Christ in Upper Darby.

**S.C.22.04.14. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution of the Lutheran Church of God's Love, Newtown, and be it further **RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the revised constitution of Christ, Upper Darby. **The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

#### **Nominating Committee**

Pr. Joseph Klinger, chair of the Nominating Committee, shared that the slates are not complete, but the deadline to make nominations before the Assembly has now passed. The Committee has been able to find nominees for 12 of the 18 slates. Nominations can still be made from the floor, so please continue to seek out and encourage qualified people to stand for election. The Nominating Committee has decided that in the coming year it will begin the process earlier. There will be a meeting after Easter to de-brief this year, and get a head start on next year's nomination needs.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

None

#### **UNFINISHED**

None

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Moses Suah-Dennis

The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be June 16, 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, June 16, 2022*

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD  
OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
*Hope for Today, Strength for Tomorrow, through Community in Christ*  
**Online Assembly  
April 30, 2022**

**Morning Session**      9:00 a.m.

**Prayer, Praise, and Preaching**

Bishop Patricia A. Davenport gathered the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly by acknowledging that we gather on the ancestral lands of the Lenni Lenape people, which were taken by means of the Walking Purchase of 1737. Bishop honored the people of the Lenni Lenape, past and present, and pledged our support as allies as we strive for a more inclusive and equitable use of the land for all.

The Assembly was then led in worship, beginning with the Thanksgiving for Baptism during which were recognized the waters of the territory on which the Synod ministers. Songs sung to set the stage for our worship of Jesus included “Great is Their Faithfulness,” and “Christ, Our Peace.”

The text for the day was Romans 15:1-7. Bishop Davenport preached the Word, focusing on verse 4 of the text, “For whatever was written in former days *was written for our instruction*, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.”

A summary of her message:

Our theme is Strength for Today and Hope for Tomorrow through Community in Christ. This passage from the end of Paul’s longest letter reminds us of the conflicts between law and grace, Jew and Gentile, sin and righteousness, and yet declares the death and resurrection of Jesus brings good news to all people. St. Paul instructs us in how to live as followers of Jesus: Outdo one another in showing honor... do not be haughty... do not repay evil for evil... as far as is possible... live peaceably with all. Paul encourages those who are strong in faith to be patient with those who are new in the faith, and to help them as they grow.

The Ten Commandments were written to give us insight on how to live together as the community of faith. We worship God, and God alone. We remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. We honor our parents. We do not harm others by killing, cheating, stealing, or bearing false witness. We live for each other.

Jesus affirmed these Commandments as a grounding for our faith, and for living in community. He lived a life of service based on these commandments. “It is written that the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” It is significant that it is written, because Jesus did the opposite of what we as sinful human beings so often do. Jesus was about reconciliation, not division; loving neighbor, not hating them; forgiving those who harm us, not holding a grudge. While we are caught in our sinfulness, Jesus offers forgiveness so we can live differently. We as the community of Jesus are to be different from the world. We are to be like Jesus.

What is written gives us strength for today and hope for tomorrow, in community. We should study the Word, and then strive to live out what has been written. As we strive, the strength of God is with us. God will see us through any challenges we face.

We have sung together “Great is Thy Faithfulness!” The third verse of this hymn has particular meaning for us as a Synod in this day.

*Pardon for sin, and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide!  
Strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside!*

God is not going to give up on us, and we should not give up on God. We go forward in faith, trusting in God’s faithfulness, love, and care.

As part of the opening worship, the Reverend Stacey-Kyle Rea was installed as Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship, and the installation of the Reverend Bryan Penman and the Reverend Moses Suah-Dennis as co-Directors of Evangelical Mission for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Assembly offering is dedicated for Lutheran World Federation’s support of Ukrainian children.

### **Order for the Opening of the Assembly**

At 9:45 a.m. Bishop Patricia A. Davenport and Vice President Tracey A. Beasley led the Order for the Opening of the 34<sup>th</sup> annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Bishop Davenport invited Pr. Bryan Penman, pastor of St. Mark, Conshohocken, and co-Director of Evangelical Mission, to explain the procedures for speaking and voting in this online Assembly. Pr. Penman described the process, using the various features in the Zoom platform, so that voting members could most fully participate in the meeting.

As part of this process, voting members were asked to use the feature to acknowledge their presence in the meeting, and thereby help to establish a quorum is present. Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, registrar, will certify a quorum before we begin the deliberations of the meeting.

Bishop Davenport then formally welcomed all those attending the Assembly, both voting members and visitors viewing online.

The bishop expressed her thanks to the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps, Chairperson, the Rev. Bryan Penman, and the Rev. Nancy Raabe of the Assembly Worship Team, and all who participated in leading us in worship.

Bishop Davenport conveyed a word of welcome and appreciation to, the Rev. Nicolette Peñaranda, Program Director for African Descent Ministries, ELCA, and our Churchwide representative this year.

She also expressed her gratitude for the work of our parliamentarian, the Rev. Dr. Larry Smoose, who also chairs the Synod's Generosity Team. Pr. Smoose celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination this year.

Bishop thanked many of our ministry partners, such as Portico Benefits Services and the United Lutheran Seminary, who have provided video presentations of their work which will be aired at various times throughout this day. Please take the opportunity to view these, and many other video presentations, in the Virtual Mission Center to gain an appreciation of the vast number and variety of ministries that take place within our Synod.

The newest members of our Synod Staff were also acknowledged. The Rev. Stacey-Kyle Rea is the new Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship. The Rev. Bryan Penman of St. Mark, Conshohocken, and the Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis of Faith-Immanuel, East Lansdowne, are co-Directors of Evangelical Mission.

Bishop thanked the Conference Deans for the many hours they spend as liaisons between the Office of the Bishop and the congregations of their Conferences. Those who served on the Committee of Deans since our last Assembly include:

The Rev. Marcia Bell, Director of Mobility

The Rev. Sarah Aasheim, Lower Montgomery Conference (recently elected as the Rev. Penman began his responsibilities at CO-DEM.)

The Rev. Norbert Hahn, Lower Bucks Conference

The Rev. Regina Goodrich, Central Philadelphia Conference

The Rev. Christopher Franz, Chester Conference (we said goodbye to the Rev. Ron Wesemann who retired from active ministry December 2021)

The Rev. Jenn Casey, Delaware Conference

The Rev. Jane Marston, Northeast/Northwest Philadelphia Conference

The Rev. Erika Wesch, Upper Bucks Conference

The Rev. Christopher McKinstry, Upper Montgomery Conference

The Rev. Wayne Shelor, Director of Interim Ministry (we said goodbye to the Rev. Dr. Christian McMullan who concluded his service.)

In addition to the Committee of Deans, there are many other Committees and Teams of the Synod, many of which she did not have the time to thank by name, but which include the Candidacy Committee, the Interim Ministers and Consultants, Bridge Pastors, Supply Pastors, the Communications Team, the Transitional Development Ministry Team, the Vitality Team, and of course, the Synod Staff, just to name a few.

Bishop Davenport thanked the officers of the Synod, and the Synod Council, which she notes is a working council, for their leadership and advice over the year. Those serving in these positions include:

Synod Officers

- + Ms. Tracey A. Beasley, Vice-President, Reformation, Philadelphia
- + The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, St. Matthew, Springfield
- + Ms. Janet Huber Neff, Treasurer, St. Luke, Devon

Members of Synod Council

Lay Members:

- + Mr. Graeme E. Brown, Christ, Ascension
- + Mr. Adam Clark, Zion, Olney
- + Mr. Richard Daniels, Christ's, Oreland
- + Ms. Cheryl Detweiler, Grace, Pottstown
- + Mr. David Ehret, Grace, Broomall
- + Ms. Emily Fowler, St. Luke, Devon
- + Mr. Albert Glenn, St. John, Melrose Park
- + Ms. Pia Graham, St. John, Ridge Valley
- + Mr. William Graham, Prince of Peace, Philadelphia
- + Ms. Doreen Kinzler, St. John, Philadelphia (Mayfair)
- + Ms. Cynthia Moultrie, Christ, Upper Darby
- + Ms. Gail M. Penman, St. Mark's, Conshohocken
- + Mr. Roland M. Thompson, St. Peter's, West Oak Lane
- + Ms. Kendyll C. Ward, Trinity Havertown
- + Mr. J. Everett Wick, St. Andrew, Perkasio
- + Mr. Damar Wilson, Reformation, Philadelphia
- + Ms. Sandra Zimmermann, St. John, Phoenixville

Clergy Members:

- + Rev. Gary Costa, Peace-Tohickon
- + Rev. Julie DeWerth, Good Shepherd, King of Prussia
- + Rev. John T. Heidgerd, Emmanuel, Souderton
- + Rev. Gwendolyn King, Trinity, Havertown
- + Rev. Joseph F. Klinger, Redemption, Philadelphia
- + Rev. Nathan Krause, Redeemer, Jamison
- + Rev. Dwight Mason, Spirit and Truth, Yeadon
- + Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps, Trinity, Perkasio
- + Rev. Serena Sellers, Christ, (Kulpsville) Harleysville

**Report of the Registrar:**

Ms. Cynta Outterbridge was brought forward to bring the Report of the Registrar, and certify a quorum.

Total number of Voting Members: 319

Total number of Voting Members registered: 220

Number of Voting Members needed for a quorum: 160

Bishop Davenport thanked Ms. Outterbridge, and declared a quorum is present.

### **Report of the Secretary**

The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, presented, and the Assembly adopted, the proposed program as printed in *The Bulletin of Reports*. He then presented as information the Rules of Procedure as printed in *The Bulletin of Reports*. Secretary Richard highlighted the limitations on submissions to Reference and Counsel, and the process for nominating persons from the floor to the various tickets before the Assembly.

The Assembly approved the following rule: "The Synod Assembly shall limit each speaker from the floor to two minutes, alternating *for* and *against* whenever possible, and allowing someone who has not spoken on a particular issue from the floor to speak before someone speaks a second or additional time."

The secretary encouraged the voting members to clearly identify yourself by your full name and your congregation when addressing the Assembly. Also, if possible, please set your name in Zoom to state your full name and congregation so that we can correctly record who is making an address or offering amendments or motions.

Secretary Richard reported that the Synod Council approved the minutes of the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual assembly on September 23, 2021. They are available in the Bulletin of Reports, SC 11 through SC 55. It has been brought to the attention of the secretary that the name of Mr. Paul Keener, who was elected to the Committee of Discipline, was misspelled "Kenner." This will be corrected in the archived record. It has been further brought to his attention that the Rev. Janet Peterman, who was granted "On Leave from Call" status by the Synod Council at its June 2021 meeting, is not recorded in the Secretary's Report. This will also be corrected in the archived record.

Secretary Richard reminded the Assembly that all times are approximate, as things sometimes move more, or less swiftly than the time originally allotted, and that it is the responsibility of each voting member to be present for each part of the Assembly so they can vote, act, or contribute as necessary or appropriate.

He presented as information the reports of the various committees, task forces, organizations, and institutions of the Synod.

### **Report of the Nominating Committee**

The Rev. Joseph Klinger, Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, made the report. He brought four reminders to the Assembly as it comes to the process of nominating people to serve.

1. Nominations from the floor shall be made at the time of the first report of the Nominating Committee during the first business session of the Synod Assembly for all positions to be elected at this assembly.
2. The 2019 Churchwide Assembly has changed the definition of "Clergy" to include both Ministers of Word and Sacrament (pastors) and Ministers of Word and Service (deacons). Since this Synod has adopted this change to the bylaws of the Southeastern Pennsylvania

Synod constitution, Ministers of Word and Service (deacons) are now eligible to be nominated for Ticket 1. Deacons are no longer eligible for lay positions. However, until action is taken by the Churchwide Assembly in 2022, Tickets 6, 9, and 12 remain limited to Ministers of Word and Sacrament (pastors).

3. This year we begin the restructuring of the Synod Council adopted by the 2021 Synod Assembly. As a result, there are fewer seats open, including two rather than three Clergy seats, one rather than two Young Adult seats, and this year there are no At-Large seats open.
4. A reminder that a person making a nomination from the floor must immediately present to the Assembly office a copy of the nominee's biographical information, and a picture of the nominee. This nomination form should be completed on-line and sent as an email attachment to the registrar, Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, at [couterbridge@sepa.org](mailto:couterbridge@sepa.org). The form can be found on the synod's website, [ministrylink.org](http://ministrylink.org).

Pr. Klinger then presented the tickets as they currently stand.

### **Synod Council**

**TICKET 1: SYNOD COUNCIL, CLERGY** (Two Rostered Ministers to be elected for terms ending 2025)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Rev. Marie Sager	St. Timothy, Aston
Rev. Kathleen Harkness	Trinity, Pleasant Valley ( <i>call begins May 1, 2022</i> )
Rev. Gwendolyn King	Trinity, Havertown

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

Nominated from the floor:

It was noted that the Rev. Heidi Roderick-Schnaath, Christ, Oreland, had submitted her paperwork, and is not listed on the Ticket.

Bishop Davenport stated we will add her name to the Ticket.

With no other nominees from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 1 closed.

**TICKET 2: SYNOD COUNCIL, LAY PERSON, YOUNG ADULT** (One to be elected for a term ending 2025) "Young Adult" is a person between the ages of 18 and 30 at time of election or appointment.

Pr. Klinger noted that no nominees came through the Committee.

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 2 closed.

She further noted that responsibility for filling this seat will revert to the Synod Council.

**TICKET 3: SYNOD COUNCIL, DELAWARE CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY WOMAN** (One lay woman to be elected for a term ending 2025)

Pr. Klinger: No nominees came through the Committee.

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

Nominated from the floor:

Ms. Abbe Tabolo Weiah,	Faith-Immanuel, East Lansdowne
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With no further nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 3 closed, and declared **Ms. Abbe Tabolo Weiah ELECTED**

**TICKET 4: SYNOD COUNCIL, NORTHEAST/NORHWEST CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY WOMAN** (One lay woman to be elected for a term ending 2025)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Dorothy Wilson	Faith, Philadelphia

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 4 closed, and declared **Ms. Dorothy Wilson ELECTED**

**TICKET 5: SYNOD COUNCIL, UPPER MONTGOMERY CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY MAN** (One lay man to be elected for a term ending 2025)

Pr. Klinger stated that no nominees came through the Committee.

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 5 closed. She further noted that responsibility for filling this seat will revert to the Synod Council.

**TICKET 6: COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINE, CLERGY** (Two Ministers of Word and Sacrament to be elected for terms ending 2028)

As a reminder, until action is taken by the Churchwide Assembly, this ticket is still specifically for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, that is, pastors.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Rev. Mukesh Cheedie	Redeemer, Penndel
Rev. Leslie Richard	St. Matthew, Springfield

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 6 closed. She further declared **the Rev. Mukesh Cheedie and the Rev. Leslie Richard ELECTED**

**TICKET 7: COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINE, LAY MAN** (One lay man to be elected for a term ending 2028)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Mr. Ralph Wellington	Christ Ascension, Philadelphia

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 7 closed, and declared **Mr. Ralph Wellington ELECTED**

**TICKET 8: COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINE, LAY WOMAN** (One lay woman to be elected for a term ending 2028)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Heather Dean	Reformation, Philadelphia

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 8 closed, and declared **Ms. Heather Dean ELECTED**

**TICKET 9: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, CLERGY** (Two Ministers of Word and Sacrament to be elected for terms ending 2028)

As a reminder, until action is taken by the Churchwide Assembly, this ticket is still specifically for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, that is, pastors.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Rev. Daniel Smith	Holy Trinity, Narberth
Rev. Joseph Varsanyi	University Lutheran, Philadelphia

Pr. Klinger noted that persons not elected on this ticket will move forward to Ticket 12.

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 9 closed. She further declared **the Rev. Daniel Smith and the Rev. Joseph Varsanyi ELECTED**

**TICKET 10: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, LAY WOMAN** (One lay woman to be elected for a term ending 2028)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Dr. Jill Schott	St. Matthew, Woodlyn

Pr. Klinger noted persons not elected on this ticket will move forward to Ticket 13.

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 10 closed, and declared **Dr. Jill Schott ELECTED**

**TICKET 11: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, LAY MAN** (One lay woman to be elected for a term ending 2028)

Pr. Klinger stated that no nominees came through the Committee. Persons not elected on this ticket will move forward to Ticket 14.

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 11 closed. She further noted that responsibility for filling this seat will revert to the Synod Council.

**TICKET 12: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, CLERGY** (Two Ministers of Word and Sacrament to be elected for terms ending 2026)

As a reminder, until action is taken by the Churchwide Assembly, this ticket is still specifically for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, that is, pastors.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Rev. Daniel Eisenberg	St. John, Mayfair, Philadelphia
Rev. Rachel Scheibel	Holy Spirit, Secane

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 12 closed. She further declared **the Rev. Daniel Eisenberg and the Rev. Rachel Scheibel ELECTED**

**TICKET 13: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, LAY WOMAN** (One lay woman to be elected for a term ending 2026)

Pr. Klinger stated that no nominees came through the Committee.

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 13 closed. She further noted that responsibility for filling this seat will revert to the Synod Council.

**TICKET 14: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, LAY MAN** (One lay man to be elected for a term ending 2026)

Pr. Klinger stated that no nominees came through the Committee.

*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 14 closed. She further noted that responsibility for filling this seat will revert to the Synod Council.

Pr. Klinger stated that this concludes his report. He took a moment to thank the members of the Nominating Committee for their efforts, and expressed his gratitude for all who were willing to allow their names to be submitted for consideration.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pr. Klinger for this report. She also thanked the Committee for its efforts, and particularly Pr. Klinger for his work as chairperson.

### **Introduction of Candidates for Ministry**

Three candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament have been approved by the Candidacy Committee. All three have been assigned to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to receive their first call. In addition, four other candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament have been raised up by the Candidacy Committee of other synods, and have been assigned to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to receive their first call. We are grateful for the work of the Candidacy Committee, its chair, the Rev. Paul Neff, our Director of Mobility, the Rev. Marcia Bell, and the Rev. Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations. These new candidates for ministry were introduced to the Synod by video presentation.

#### SEPA Candidates Approved Since 2021 Assembly

- + **The Rev. Bo Bannister** (sponsored by Trinity, Perkasio; from the Evangelical Covenant Church) – called by the synod council to St. John’s, Hatboro
- + **Kayla Sadowy** (sponsored by Holy Communion, Philadelphia) – called to Grace, Broomall
- + **Maeve Schurz** (sponsored by Trinity, Lansdale) – awaiting call

#### Candidates from Other Synods Assigned to SEPA for First Call

- + **Ethan Doan** (from Northern Illinois Synod) – awaiting call
- + **Meagan Esterby** (from Northeastern Minnesota Synod) – called to University, Philadelphia
- + **Brandi Hebert** (from New Jersey Synod) – called to God’s Love, Newtown
- + **Eileen Ruppel-Doan** (from Metro Chicago Synod) – awaiting call

Bishop Davenport expressed her pleasure that these candidates have been assigned to our Synod, and her appreciation for the faculty and staff of the seminaries of the ELCA. Please pray for these candidates as they await calls. The Church continues to need leaders. If anyone has a sense that God might be calling them to service in the Church, please contact Pr. Karen Sease to begin the discernment process.

### **Point of Clarification**

Mr. Thomas Salber, Prince of Peace, Philadelphia, noted that nominees from Ticket 9 could move forward to Ticket 12, yet Bishop Davenport declared Ticket 12 “closed.”

Bishop Davenport: Ticket 9 is open for 2 positions. Since there were only two persons were nominated, they were both declared elected, and therefore neither will move forward to Ticket 12. Hence the declaration of Ticket 12 as “closed.” Since there were two nominees for 2 positions on Ticket 12, they were also declared elected.

### **Recess**

Bishop Davenport declared the Assembly to be in recess for 10 minutes. During this break, videos of ministries across our Synod were shared online for members to view as they desired.

### **Morning Session, Part 2**

The Assembly was called back to order at 11:00 a.m.

### **First Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel**

Prior to welcoming the Reverend Jennifer Casey, Chairperson of the Committee on Reference and Counsel to make the report, Bishop Davenport took a few moments to thank Dr. Addie Butler, who chaired this committee for many years. Last year Dr. Butler decided to step aside from this work. We thanked her in a private way, but now in front of this Assembly I offer my gratitude for the faithful leadership she has provided the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. If we were in-person I would ask Dr. Butler to come forward and received the gratitude of the assembly. But in this virtual space, we offer our sincere appreciation to you, Dr. Addie Butler.

Bishop then called on Pr. Casey to make the First Report of Reference and Counsel. She also asked the voting members to be sure to have their online Vpoll open, as we will be taking actions during this report.

Pr. Casey reported that four resolutions and one memorial were received by the Committee by the March 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. No late submissions were offered, and so there is no need to request the Assembly for permission to entertain additional resolutions. We will be working through the submissions in order of receipt.

### **Resolution #1 “A Resolution for Justice for the Reverend Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez”**

Original resolution was submitted by the Reverend Frank Sayford.

The Committee on reference and Counsel is bringing before the Assembly a substitute motion for consideration. The text will be on the screens.

### **A Resolution for Justice for The Rev. Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez**

**(1 - substitute)**

**WHEREAS**, the Sierra Pacific Synod Council voted to vacate the call of Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez to pastor the mission development of Misión Latina Luterana,<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, the [Asociación de Ministerios Latinos de la ELCA](#)<sup>2</sup> and the African Descent Lutheran Association<sup>3</sup> declared systemic racism played a part in ending the call of Pastor Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez,

**WHEREAS**, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has acknowledged the community's pain caused by the process of terminating the call of Pastor Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez in December 2021<sup>4</sup> and established a Listening Panel to review the interactions between Bishop Megan Rohrer and the community of Misión Latina Luterana,<sup>5</sup>

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod commends the ELCA Presiding Bishop on her establishment of a Listening Panel in Sierra Pacific Synod, and prays for a healthy and just resolution for all.

Bishop Davenport asked if there was a second for the substitute motion. A second was offered. Bishop then asked Pr. Casey to provide the Committee of Reference and Counsels rationale for this substitute resolution.

Pr. Casey: The Committee on Reference and Counsel believes voting members in our Synod need more information about what happened in the case of Pr. Rabell-Gonzalez to be equipped to vote on this resolution. Some pieces of this narrative have been published widely on the internet, but other aspects remain confidential. The basic facts are Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez was called by the Synod Council of the Sierra Pacific Synod to serve as pastor of Misión Latina Luterana in Stockton, California. After issuing this call, the Sierra Pacific Synod Council received formal allegations regarding Pr. Rabell-Gonzalez. At the December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting of the Sierra Pacific Synod Council, the Synod Council voted to remove Pr. Rabell-Gonzalez from that call. The congregation was informed of this action on December 12<sup>th</sup>, the Feast Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a feast day held sacred and beloved by the Latine community and this congregation. The action to remove him from the call, and the timing of the notification, hurt and angered many in the congregation, as well as many friends and colleagues of Rabell-Gonzalez. Some feel that Rabell-Gonzalez was treated unfairly, and hold Bishop Megan Rohrer of the Sierra Pacific Synod accountable, and are asking for Bishop Rohrer to be removed. To ascertain the fact of this situation, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has established a Listening Panel to gather information from all angles of this story. She intends to use the results of this process to inform her recommendations as to what may, or may not, be appropriate actions in response to this situation. Because we do not have all the facts, much less the details gathered from the Listening Panel, and because it is premature to make recommendations about potential charges without full knowledge of what happened, we believe it is not appropriate at this time for

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.spselca.net/post/synod-council-statement-regarding-misi%C3%B3n-latina-luterana>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/AMLELCA/posts/641555600622762>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ADLAELCA/posts/4575109515938631>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ELCABishopEaton/posts/5246754978750385>

<sup>5</sup> [https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Statement\\_Panel\\_ENGLISH.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Statement_Panel_ENGLISH.pdf)

members of one synod in assembly to call for the Presiding Bishop to begin a process to remove a person called to serve as bishop in another synod. Reference and Counsel puts forward this substitute resolution in which we agree with Pastor Sayford in commending our Presiding Bishop for establishing the Listening Panel, and committing to pray for a healthy and just resolution for all. We cannot speak to a particular direction for the Presiding Bishop to take at this time.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pr. Casey for the rationale of the Committee. She then asked for questions or discussion.

Mr. Jason Tashka, St. Paul's, Olney was recognized for a question.

He wondered if we know what the allegations against the pastor were.

Bishop Davenport: No, we do not, and it is my understanding that this is why this substitute resolution is being offered.

Pr. Serena Sellers, Christ, Kulpsville was recognized.

Pastor Sellers asked if it would be possible to see the resolution, as it is not visible to the people online.

Pr. Casey asked for the resolution on the floor to be screen-shared in Zoom.

Pr. Sellers: Is there just the one resolution? It went by rather quickly.

Pr. Casey: Yes, there is just one resolution.

Mr. Thomas Salber Prince of Peace, Philadelphia was recognized.

Mr. Salber: I would like to add that we suggest that the Committee on Consultation of the ELCA be involved as well.

Pr. Casey: We need specific wording to entertain amendments.

Bp. Davenport asked Mr. Salber if he had language he would like propose.

Mr. Salber: I would make the amendment that we add "To suggest the Committee on Consultation be involved in this situation."

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod commends the ELCA Presiding Bishop on her establishment of a Listening Panel in Sierra Pacific Synod, and prays for a healthy and just resolution for all. To suggest the Committee on Consultation of the ELCA be involved in this situation.

Bp. Davenport: We would need more clarity than "be involved in this situation."

Pr. Casey: "To be involved in the situation" leaves me wondering in what situation are we requesting the involvement of the Committee on Consultation.

Mr. Salber: There seems to be a conflict between bishop and pastor, and that is why I am suggesting the Consultation Committee.

Bp. Davenport: My understanding is that the Listening Panel will be the ones to make that determination and recommendation.

Pr. Casey: This is why our resolution is commending the Presiding Bishop for establishing this Panel, and we would then trust that the Listening Panel, in its work, would make this suggestion if it seems appropriate.

Pr. Casey asked if there is a second for the amendment.

Bp. Davenport: I do not see a second at this time. Bishop then offered clarification on the resolution: in this resolution we are commending the establishment of the Listening Panel, and then we would trust that the Panel would make recommendations, one of which may be to call on the Committee on Consultation.

Mr. Salber: I am concerned that if the Presiding Bishop calls her own Listening Panel it may remain one sided, and I think we need to be more open. Having served on the ELCA Consultation Committee, I strongly recommend the involvement of this Committee.

Bp. Davenport: are you aware that part of why the Listening Panel has been convened is to make recommendations to the Consultation Committee? There is no way to jump over a process and hand something to the Consultation Committee. It has to come from somewhere. It would be the Listening Panel that would make that referral.

Mr. Salber: OK

Bp. Davenport: **There is not a second**, and so the amendment does not come before the Assembly.

Are there other questions?

Pr. Frank Sayford, Family of God, Buckingham, was recognized.

Pr. Sayford thanked the bishop for recognizing him. He noted that he is passionate about this issue, and that is why he is the author of the original resolution. The original resolution calls for the Presiding Bishop to follow the Constitution of the ELCA, it was not to bring charges. It is not an expression of guilt of the bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod. But it is an expression that a disciplinary committee should determine what the outcome of all this should be. Two minutes is not nearly enough time to go into all the details of what has been occurring. The Presiding Bishop's initial response was that she had no responsibility in the actions of Synodical Bishops. The ELCA and the Synod Constitutions give her both the authority and the responsibility to address this, and he would respectfully request that this alternate be rejected, and that the original be approved. This is not to say that the Synodical Bishop is guilty, but if only 10% of the charges are true, something needs to be done. So far, the handling of this is to sweep it under the carpet and ignore it.

Bishop Davenport: Pastor Sayford speaks against the resolution on the floor.

Bishop Davenport then recognized Pastor Lyzette Rios-Sanchez, Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creacion, Philadelphia.

Pr. Rios-Sanchez spoke against the resolution. Since we do not know the facts clearly, we should not speak to this. It is bigger than what we know. In this Listening Panel, Pr. Rabell-Gonzalez's issue would not be addressed. The Panel is focused on the actions of Bishop Rohrer. There are more facts that are needed. Pastor Rabell-Gonzalez has asked his synod to investigate the alleged charges, and they have not done so. The situation escalated to removing him from the roster. I do not believe this resolution is helping anyone. It does not help Pastor Nelson. The Listening Panel is already set up, and it is not established to look into the issue with Pastor Rabell-Gonzalez, but rather the bishop's action. So I am against this resolution, as it is not relevant to Pr. Rabell-Gonzalez's situation.

Pr. Susan Lynch, Good Shepherd, Coatesville, was recognized.

Pr. Lynch expressed her frustration that the substitute does not address some of the issues raised in the original resolution. She proposed the following amendment:

“Be it further resolved that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod recommend that the ELCA Presiding Bishop and Churchwide Council seek to reform the process used when a pastor is under investigation so that it allows the pastor opportunity for response, investigation, transparency, and appeal.”

As I have read about this issue over the past month, I have heard two primary concerns. One is regarding the actions of the synodical bishop, and the other is the need for the pastor involved to have more information and the ability to appeal. While this situation deals with a particular pastor, there are other pastors under investigation for various issues. Our current process does not allow for these avenues for such pastors to be informed, to allow for investigation, or to appeal decisions made.

Bishop Davenport asked if there was a second. A second was offered. The amendment was placed before the Assembly. Pr. Casey read the proposed amendment.

Be it further resolved that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod recommend that the ELCA Presiding Bishop and Churchwide Council seek to reform the process used when a pastor is under investigation so that it allows the pastor opportunity for response, investigation, transparency, and appeal.

Bishop Davenport asked for discussion on the amendment.

Pr. Sellers was recognized for a point of order.

Pr. Sellers stated that we cannot consider a second amendment until the first amendment is considered.

Bp. Davenport: This amendment is what is on the floor at this time. The whole will be considered after we discuss and act on this amendment. Mr. Salber’s amendment is not on the floor, as it did not receive a second. Pr. Lynch’s proposed amendment is what we are considering at this time.

Rev. Dr. Noah Hepler, Atonement, Philadelphia, was recognized to speak to the amendment.

Dr. Hepler proposed we change the word “pastor” to “rostered minister.”

Pr. Lynch received this as a friendly amendment.

Pr. Gwendolyn King, Trinity, Havertown was recognized.

Pr. King raised a question of clarification. Is this amendment from Pr. Lynch in addition to the resolution put forward by the Committee on Reference and Counsel?

Bp. Davenport: that is correct.

Pr. Sayford was recognized.

Pr. Sayford stated that while he still prefers his original resolution, he is in favor of this amendment, as it adds an important piece, as a concern for Pr. Rabell-Gonzalez was not given any provision for response.

Bp. Davenport: Are we ready to vote on the amendment?  
Please prepare to vote. Vote yes to adopt, no to reject. Vote now.  
**The Assembly adopted the amendment** 209 yes, 17 no.

The Assembly then considered the Substitute Resolution as amended.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod commends the ELCA Presiding Bishop on her establishment of a Listening Panel in Sierra Pacific Synod, and prays for a healthy and just resolution for all, and

Be it further resolved that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod recommend that the ELCA Presiding Bishop and Churchwide Council seek to reform the process used when a pastor is under investigation so that it allows the pastor opportunity for response, investigation, transparency, and appeal.

Pr. Sellers was recognized.

Pr. Sellers proposed an amendment to the first resolved, so that it would read:

**“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod commends the ELCA Presiding Bishop on her establishment of a Listening Panel in Sierra Pacific Synod. Based on the outcome of the Listening Panel we request that appropriate actions be recommended and implemented to ensure a just resolution, and we pray for a healthy and just resolution for all.”

Bishop Davenport asked for a second. Upon receiving a second, Pr. Sellers was recognized to speak to her proposed amendment.

Pr. Sellers stated that while the “further resolved” addresses the systemic issue, the first resolved does not say we are looking for an additional action beyond the listening panel, and I know that was a concern of those who put forth the original resolution. While we trust the process, this gives us a chance to state what we hope the process will bring forth, which is a just resolution.

Bp. Davenport: We now have this amendment before the Assembly for discussion.

As no one made request to speak to this amendment, Bishop Davenport asked the Assembly to prepare to vote. Vote yes to adopt, vote no to reject the amendment. Vote now.

**The Assembly adopted the amendment** 191 yes, 22 no.

The entire resolution was then placed before the house as amended:

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod commends the ELCA Presiding Bishop on her establishment of a Listening Panel in Sierra Pacific Synod. Based on the outcome of the Listening Panel we request that appropriate actions be recommended and implemented to ensure a just resolution, and we pray for a healthy and just resolution for all, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod recommend that the ELCA Presiding Bishop and Churchwide Council seek to reform the process used when a pastor is under investigation so that it allows the pastor opportunity for response, investigation, transparency, and appeal.

With no further discussion, Bishop asked the Assembly to vote on the Substitute Resolution as amended. Vote yes to adopt, vote no to reject.

**The Assembly adopted the Resolution** 221 yes, 14 no.

**Point of Order**

Pr. Rachel Manke, St. John, Bluebell was recognized.

Pr. Manke noted that the system for voting resets itself, and so it would be helpful to give a little more time for people to be able to enter the Vpoll app prior to closing votes.

Pr. Casey stated that this ends the First Report of Reference and Counsel.

**Moment of Personal Privilege**

Pr. Sayford was recognized for a moment of person privilege.

Pr. Sayford: Bishop, you know how passionate I am about this issue, and I want to thank Reference and Counsel and everyone who has responded on this. I am not a resolution person, and I appreciate all the work Pr. Casey and Paul Kelly and the Committee have put into this.

**Consideration of the Resolution on Welcome and Inclusion**

Bishop Davenport welcomed Pastor Alina Gayeuski and Pastor Jay Mitchell to present on the Resolution on Welcome and Inclusion.

This Resolution comes to you as a recommendation from the Synod Council. It was generated by a task force formed to review and consider issues regarding our status as a Reconciling in Christ Synod. We have been RIC since 1995, but the expectations of organizations so designated have changed over time, and to ensure we are where we want and need to be as a Synod, we formed the Reconciling in Christ Task Force to review current expectations, and to make suitable proposals for the Synod to enact.

Rev. Alina Gayeuski, Pastor at Reformation Media and Rev. Jay Mitchell, Pastor at Christ Ascension are the co-chairs of the task force. Their team devoted many hours to this proposal, and I call upon them to present this resolution on behalf of the Synod Council.

Pastors Gayeuski and Mitchell made a pre-Assembly presentation which was recorded and made available for voting members to view, but I ask them to answer questions the Assembly may have.

Pastors Mitchell and Gayeuski:

In 1995, 27 years ago, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly adopted three welcoming statements. By this action the Synod was recognized, and earned designation as Reconciling in Christ (RiC) through ReconcilingWorks. ReconcilingWorks supports the welcoming ministry of LGBTQIA+ persons and celebrates the diversity of God's people.

Since that time, ReconcilingWorks has requested updates to the commitments and actions of all RIC partners to maintain this designation. These updates include the commitment to racial justice and financial support of ReconcilingWorks in addition to a Welcome Statement. The Welcome Statement was not part of the initial requirements to become Reconciling in Christ, and SEPA did not have one.

Upon the request of Bishop Davenport, in the summer of 2021, a task force was created to accomplish this work and create a resolution to be presented to Synod Council and adoption at Synod Assembly.

The task force had eleven members from across SEPA representing the full diversity of our synod. We would like to thank those members for their work: Pastor Daniel Eisenberg; President R. Guy Erwin; Pastor Bradley Gow; Deacon Allison Wilcox; Seminarian Christian Hick; Ms. Sofie Daniszewski; Mr. John Darden; Ms. Hannah Knauss; Ms. Gail Penman

These folks have met several times since September 2021 to create the welcome statement and additional supporting resolutions.

This was passed on to the Synod Council for feedback and eventually action. Synod Council passed this resolution at their February meeting to send to Assembly for action.

The important things to remember as we enter any discussion of this “Resolution on Welcome and Inclusion”:

- The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod is already a Reconciling in Christ synod through the action of Assembly in 1995. This resolution affirms that status by aligning our commitment with current ReconcilingWorks requirements. That status is not in question with this resolution.
- Even with such a broad name and “Welcome and Inclusion” it is important to note this resolution does not supplant or supersede the important work of the Anti-Racism Team and is meant to broaden the Synod’s explicit welcome and inclusion at the synodical level. This resolution is specific to our Reconciling in Christ commitments.
- This resolution comes from Synod Council to Assembly having already been approved by Synod Council. We are but the mere stewards of this resolution by invitation of Bishop Davenport.

We are grateful to Bishop Davenport, Synod Council, and you Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod for the opportunity to lead this important work of Welcome and Inclusion—specifically to our LGBTQIA+ siblings—in our Synod.

### **Resolution on Welcome and Inclusion**

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;

**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.

The Bishop thanked Pastors Mitchell and Gayeuski for their presentation. She then said that we would consider this resolution seriatim, considering each resolved clause individually to give due consideration for adoption or amendment. Bishop asked that the first "Resolved" clause to be placed on the screen for the Assembly to see.

We are considering only the first resolved clause - are there any questions or amendments to this portion of the resolution?

With no discussion, Bishop Davenport called for the vote. Vote yes to adopt the clause, vote no to reject.

**The Assembly adopted the clause** 211 yes, 2 no.

Bishop Davenport then asked for the second "Resolved" clause to be placed on the screen, and asked for any comments or questions.

With no discussion, she called for the vote. Again, the Assembly was asked to vote yes to adopt the clause, no to reject.

**The Assembly adopted the clause 201 yes, 8 no.**

The third “Resolved” clause was then placed before the house.

With no questions or amendments, Bishop Davenport called for the vote, yes to adopt, no to reject.

**The Assembly adopted the clause 213 yes, 6 no.**

Bishop Davenport then requested the fourth and final “Resolved” clause to be placed before the Assembly.

With no discussion, Bishop called for the vote on the fourth resolved clause.

**The Assembly adopted the clause 207 yes, 9 no.**

Bishop Davenport then placed the entire Resolution on Welcome and Inclusion before the Assembly for final consideration.

Dr. Noah Hepler, Atonement, Philadelphia, was recognized.

Dr. Hepler made an amendment to add a fifth resolved clause that the Synod be resolved to add “gender non-binary” to our options for candidates who are seeking elected positions in our Synod. This would have the affect of broadening the language beyond male and female.

And be it further RESOLVED, that we add non-gender specific options for candidates for elected positions within the synod.

Bishop Davenport asked if there was a second. After a second was offered, she invited Dr. Hepler to speak to his proposed amendment.

Dr. Hepler shared that if we are talking about creating a welcoming space, this is an issue with which Atonement has wrestled, because we have members who have not identified as male or female, yet to vote here in this space there is a requirement that we send male and female candidates. This is also true for any elected position. This is an opportunity for us to move forward into what the RIC status calls us to.

Bishop Davenport asked for any discussion.

Secretary Karl Richard, St. Matthew, Springfield, was recognized.

Secretary Richard offered several points of clarification.

First, the language in the Constitutions of the Church and the Synod, and the Model Constitution for Congregations, no longer uses “male” and “female.” Rather, the language has been changed to lay “man” and lay “woman,” and it has also been changed to say the representation should be 45% lay man, and 45% lay woman, leaving 10% open for either, or any identification. The way we have been approaching this in our Synod has been that using “gender” language rather than “sexuality” language allows those who identify as women, or those who identify as men, may apply for the position that matches the gender with which they identify. It also allows some “wiggle room” for those who don’t identify in any way to still have their names come forward. We strove to put this into the language of the nominations letter, allowing people to identify as “man,” “woman,” or “non-binary/non-conforming.”

Further, there are proposals coming to the Churchwide Assembly in August to try to address this issue more clearly. As the Secretary of the Synod, I have been hesitant to get too far ahead of the legal language that comes from the ELCA because of the inter-dependent nature of our

relationship. As a Synod, we are an independent body, and other Synods have tried to address this. I have used the interpretation that the ELCA is taking steps, however imperfect so far, to try to address this concern. As one step, we need to grow in our understanding that we are no longer using voting “male” and voting “female;” we are using “man” and “woman,” and this is how we have been approaching this in our Synod.

Ms. Emily Fowler, St. Luke, Devon was recognized.

Ms. Fowler proposed an amendment to Dr. Hepler’s amendment.

She proposed to change the language to read “that we include all spectrums of gender identity for candidates in elected positions within the synod.”

And be it further RESOLVED, that we ~~add non-gender specific options~~ include all spectrums of gender identity for candidates for ~~in~~ elected positions within the synod.

Dr. Hepler received this language as a friendly amendment.

Now before the house is the following amendment:

And be it further RESOLVED, that we include all spectrums of gender identity for candidates in elected positions within the synod.

A question was raised regarding the word “we.” Dr. Hepler revised “we” to read “the synod.”

With no further discussion, Bishop Davenport called for the vote. Vote yes to adopt this as a fifth “Resolved” clause, vote no to reject.

**The Assembly adopted the clause** 172 yes, 46 no.

Bishop brought the entire Resolution on Welcome and Inclusion, as amended, for a vote.

**The Assembly adopted the Resolution** 209 yes, 15 no.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pr. Gayeuski, Pr. Mitchell, and the entire Task Force for their faithful work.

### **Bishop Patricia A. Davenport’s Address to the Assembly**

Greetings Beloved,

Dear Synod!

I greet you with deep gratitude for your faithfulness and profound partnership as we have endured together the joys and challenges of this pandemic. We have experienced a year filled with anxiety, pain, change, challenges, and death. And yet, there have also been times of opportunity, hope, healing, and joy. Yes, these are my exact words from 2021. I am going to take this into high definition, a higher level of explanation, to bring more clarity. When working with anti-racism, we were grateful to have people stand as allies, what does it mean to be an ally? Those who are allies are not only helpers, but also have a common interest with those they desire to help. In an alliance, both parties stand to benefit from the bond or connection they share. It was stated that allies are great and highly valuable; however, we need some accomplices. What makes someone an accomplice?

A person who knowingly, voluntarily, or intentionally gives assistance to another in (or in some cases fails to prevent another from) the commission of a crime. An accomplice is criminally liable to the same extent as the principal. An accomplice, unlike an accessory, is

typically present when the crime is committed. My mind goes to Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, bottom line, an accomplice is willing to go to jail with you and the ally bails you out. We learn as we go, when we know better, we do better.

I spent far too many years not trusting God with my life. Early in my life I thought I needed to be in control. I was afraid I didn't have the gifts to go where God was directing my life, so I did not want to go. I had allies and even a few accomplices on my journey, who saw my gifts and encouraged me, but I did not sense that I had the calling on my life that others saw in me. After lots of reflection and prayer, what I finally came to realize was that I was afraid to fully trust God! As I have come to this position, I have acquired a mindset to "Trust in the Lord with all my heart, And lean not on my own understanding; but, in all my ways acknowledge God, And God shall direct my paths." God has truly directed my path. When elected, I stated, by the work of the Holy Spirit, I will show up and I will serve. I am blessed to be a servant leader, working to build up the kingdom of God that we might experience and reflect the beloved community that Jesus taught and prayed for here on earth as it will be in heaven. Together, 70,000 Lutheran conspire to make a difference in this five-county area. Some of you are looking perplexed, so let me make it plain.

Conspire: con, meaning with, and spire, meaning to breathe; therefore, conspiracy is to breathe together. Breath meets us in the book of Genesis, when "the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

God breathes into us, and we give life giving breath to one another. Think about, when a woman gives birth, mothers are encouraged to breathe together with a partner as a midwife guides them in the proper way to achieve a pattern of breathing that lessens the pain. In contrast, when we die, we take a final breath and then our breathing stops. Sometimes we need resuscitation, and sometimes we are the ones doing the CPR to get breathing active again.

As advocates for antiracism ministry, we are in a conspiracy to give life to developing strategies that will end racism, in contrast to George Floyd's painful cry as he was being held down on the ground. We all remember what he said don't we? It is etched in our minds forever. He said, "I can't breathe." We as people of God understand that if all of humanity is not treated with dignity and respect, then there will continue to be cries of "I can't breathe" by those who are being killed because of the color of their skin. In this COVID pandemic we have learned how people have come to value the importance of breath and breathing as the virus attacks the lungs and creates a severe health challenge where many are placed on respirators in order to breathe.

All of this to say, over these past few years, I have watched us move from the pews and park benches, to become, allies, accomplices and now co-conspirators for Jesus. We conspired together to do this awesome ministry of building the Kingdom of God in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to be the beloved community in the name of Jesus!

We are in a conspiracy against, the thief, who comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy. Together, we conspire, that all people may have life, and have it abundantly in Christ. We take a stand against those who would corrupt our morals, values, and core principles. In this world of want-to-bees, we honor the ten commandments, so others learn to not lie, steal, cheat, or hate, but to love as God loves us. We teach against violence, so people will come to value life as a precious gift from God. We strive to show to our neighbor that they are made in the image of God. In this ongoing pandemic, we encourage our vulnerable populations to be vaccinated, because people of color are still dying at a higher rate. We dismantle systemic racism, gender

bias, homophobia, transphobia, and cultural insensitivity because, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of us are one in Christ Jesus.” We work to remove the disparity between the haves and the have nots, throughout the world. We are very mindful that the socioeconomic challenges such as poverty, homelessness, food scarcity are not only prevalent in our synod, but the entire world. We conspire! We sing this song, “Breathe on me, breath of God, Love and life that makes me free, Breathe on me, breath of God, Fan the flame within me, Teach my heart, heal my soul, Speak the mind that in Christ we know.

You, valued members of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod allow the breath of God, the Holy Spirit to lead you to serve others. You have been consistently providing service in and out of your congregations, despite all of the anxiety and fear that is prevalent in our world because of the pandemic, showing clearly what it means to be a dedicated disciple of Christ. That song continues, “Breathe on me, Speak to me, voice of God, Soft and still, inside my heart, Speak to me, word of God, Comfort, heal, restore with light, teach my heart, and heal my soul, Speak the mind that in Christ we know.

The Synod Council and I want to express our thanks to God and to you for the tremendous work that was done last Saturday for our Synod Day of Service. This one day is reflective of the hundreds of days and thousands of hours that you conspire with Christ in your community to serve. I know that Vice-President Beasley was making blankets to warm the bodies and hearts of those in need. Pr. Julie DeWerth was her accomplice, I saw her in a picture with scissors. Ms. Julia Menzo from Lutheran Disaster Response and Ms. Tracey DePasquale from our LAMPa (Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA) whose office is in Harrisburg, was with volunteers in Eastwick, rebuilding from Tropical Storm Isaias, which devastated the area in August 2020. Ms. Schwab, our assembly coordinator was able to spend time at the Upper Bucks Conference project at Emmanuel Lutheran in Souderton; Lower Montgomery project at Christ Evangelical Lutheran, Kulpsville in Harleysville, and the Upper Montgomery project at New Hanover Lutheran in Gilbertsville.

I had the privilege to conspire with Pr. John Heidgerd and the volunteers at Emmanuel. Their efforts resulted in a distribution of 2,000 meals last Saturday alone - and they plan to offer more meals in upcoming weeks.

You sorted and stored over 3 TONS of food delivered in those 150 boxes from Blessings of Hope.

You packaged 500 snack bags which will be delivered to people experiencing homelessness through Bread Drop ministries. Brother Lou Farrell conspired to deliver, thank you.

We shared several boxes of bananas, oranges, and rice cakes with our sister ministry FEAST of JUSTICE, now in two locations in Northeast Philadelphia. Special thanks to Pr. Tricia Neale and staff

You, faithful members of the SEPA Synod packaged 100 bags of non-food, personal care items which support families in need with items they cannot buy with SNAP benefits.

You, amazing servants of the beloved community, known as the SEPA Synod prepared 200 welcome kits for people that come to Emmanuel providing them information about the E-Meal Ministry, Meleny’s House, and other community ministries at Emmanuel. These ministries are a small sampling of our 143 ministries making a difference in times like these. Beloved Synod, we have been forced to do things differently and we have had to re-consider some of our priorities in this moment as we strive to move from a mindset of negativity and apathy to a focus on how to strengthen our relationship with Christ and with each other. We are the Church, and the

pandemic has taught us that the church is much more than the building and we need to continue to develop innovative strategies to proclaim the gospel to those who may not prefer to come into our buildings, but still want to have a relationship with Christ and a relationship with believers who share their love of Christ with the world.

We had nine locations as you see with various projects, and have a tenth scheduled for May 21<sup>st</sup> at Advent Lutheran Church in West Chester. If you didn't get to participate on the 23<sup>rd</sup> or just had such a wonderful time and want to do more, you can register to pack meals for Rise Against Hunger at Advent by visiting our website, [ministrylink.org](http://ministrylink.org) Day of Service. At that page you can also donate to help cover the cost of project supplies.

This is a great witness of service, and I sense that God is calling us higher, things are constantly changing, we have learned to be allies, accomplices, and co-conspirators for and in Christ. We are learning how to do ministry in new ways, knowing that the love of Christ is always present with us.

I pause for a point of personal privilege to offer a debt of gratitude to those who conspire with us in the Office of the Bishop, our Staff team! I applaud them for their agility and diligence in working remotely, and a hybrid as CDC (Centers for Disease Control) permits. Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operation, who keeps me on my toes and on task with our churchwide matters, in addition to coordinating congregational meetings with council presidents, which has led to 15 call votes since our last assembly. Mr. Martin Schwab our senior accountant who works with our treasurer, Ms. Janet Neff to assure all our financial responsibilities are met. Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, database manager, communications assistant, and synod registrar. Pr. Bob Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation and Director of Communications who meets weekly with our congregational communicators sharing tech tips to improve our on-line experiences, as well as ensuring our mission is clearly communicated, and critical information updated on our many digital platforms in these fast-paced times, especially, [ministrylink.org](http://ministrylink.org). Pr. Stacey-Kyle Rea, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship teaching and learning how to conspire innovatively. Our new, Co-Directors for Evangelical Pr. Bryan Penman, St. Mark's, Conshohocken and Dr. Moses Suah Dennis, Faith Immanuel, East Lansdowne, conspiring with their congregations and our ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) Churchwide office, we were able to purchase their time to serve synodically. This innovative Kingdom building idea allows us to be the change, we hope to see where the ministry focus emphasizes teams and collaborations. Pr. Marcia Bell, Director of Mobility; Our new Director of Interim Ministry, Pr. Wayne Shelor; Pr. Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership, and our Committee of Deans have innovatively provided leadership for and with congregations in transition to assure pastoral coverage. Pr. Paul Neff, our Candidacy Chair, Pr. Sease and our Candidacy Team accompany candidates in our candidacy process, and offer guidance and support as needed. Pr. Paul Jann, Bishop Deputy for Holy Closure, walking with those discerning God's will for their legacy. Rev. Dr. Dolores Littleton, Advisor for Fitness for Ministry, who gives guidance as we walk with our Rostered Ministers. I am thankful for all who have kept the synod mindful of our siblings suffering in the Ukraine and also grateful for Our Hunger Ministry, led by Pr. Davidson, who is passionate about accompanying those who are food insecure. We will continue to be mindful of the disparity in the salaries of our Black and Brown rostered ministers, of the challenges of our LGBTQIA siblings, of caring for creation, of Bishop Mbulu and our companion synod, and we are thankful Pr. Butiku for your ministry.

A big shout out to each of you, our co-conspirators in Christ, you have shown-up behind the scenes in ways great and small. Your generosity of spirit has not gone unnoticed. Every kind word of support and encouragement to our synod staff via social media, snail mail or email, is greatly appreciated. Your financial contributions in partnership support has blessed us to continue all the work above, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Almost three years later, beloved, we are one day closer to the other side of these pandemics, and we do not want to hear about the rise of variants. We are still one day closer to our new abnormal, praise God! We will hold to God's unchanging hand to gain strength and with that renewed strength, we will continue to show up to serve our neighbor. And thanks to your efforts, God's love is seen and felt in the Lutheran tribes of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties, causing a ripple effect that will transform lives around the corner and around the globe. Hallelujah! Let me echo my words again from last year, "Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6. Like Martin Luther when he was confronted with things that challenged his faith, we too can proclaim, "Here we stand; we can do no other. God help us." God give us strength for today and hope for tomorrow through community in Christ. Give us the skills, resources, and desire to help our neighbor.

Loving God, we are thankful for all you have done to help us through these ongoing pandemics, war in our streets and war in Ukraine, not only helping us as individuals, but blessing our synod with 70,000 dedicated servant leaders who are committed to serving their neighbor, no matter the difficulties in their lives. Let us allies, accomplices, and co-conspirators continue to strategize on how to make the beloved community a global reality. For these blessings and all the blessings, you bestow on us each day, we say thank you and amen!

Bishop Davenport invited Pr. Heidi Roderick-Schnaath of Christ, Oreland, to pray for the Assembly as we recess for lunch.

**Afternoon Session**

The Reverend Dr. Moses Suah-Denis offered prayer to lead the Assembly back into session.

**Report of the Treasurer**

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, was called forward to present the Audit report for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2022.

Ms. Neff commented on how well the Assembly is going so far, and she thanked the bishop and the new staff for their sharing. She also took a moment to encourage participation in Lutheran Night at the Phillies, which supports Synod Youth ministries. She then went into the Audit report. Ms. Neff referenced where to find the Audit Report in the Bulletin of Reports, but at this point she will share a summary of this lengthy report in a PowerPoint presentation.

**Statement of Financial Position  
Highlights as of 01/31/2022 and 01/31/2021**

	2022	2021
Total Cash and Investments	\$11,021,881	\$ 9,816,378
Total Assets	\$15,027,767	\$13,515,235
Total Liabilities	\$ 154,580	\$ 142,222

Total Net Assets	\$15,027,767	\$13,373,013
Unrestricted	\$10,503,918	\$ 9,259,379
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 872,809	\$ 778,242
Permanently Restricted	\$ 3,651,040	\$ 3,335,392

Ms. Neff noted the increase in Total Assets from last year, and shared that this increase is due to real estate we have, and beneficial interest in trusts, which we now need to show on our balance sheet.

Our liabilities are minor. They reflect payables that we have for the following month.

The next line, our net assets, reflect several categories of funds. Unrestricted assets are those we receive for the day-to-day operations of the Synod. Temporarily restricted funds are monies we receive which are for a purpose and are held until that purpose has occurred. For instance, monies we received for this Assembly are Temporarily Restricted Funds. The registrations were temporarily restricted, and then used for the presenting of this Assembly. Finally, we have some assets that have been given for a particular reason, and which will last for a long time. These are the Permanently Restricted funds.

**Audit Report Details  
Statement of Activities**

	<b>Revenue</b>	
	02/01/21 – 01/31/22	02/01/20 – 01/31/21
Mission Support	\$1,662,489	\$1,655,732
Other Contributions	\$ 511,474	\$ 428,764
Registration Fees	\$ 41,324	\$ 2,868
Investment Income	\$1,009,379	\$1,368,481
Beneficial Interest in Trust	\$ 304,688	\$ 156,087
PPP SBA Grant	\$ 0	\$ 168,073
Proceeds from Property Sale	<u>\$ 530,169</u>	<u>\$ 516,340</u>
Total Revenue	\$4,059,523	\$4,296,345

Thank you to all of you and your congregations for your support. It is wonderful to see that our Mission Support from congregations is up from last year. Other contributions include receipts from sources such as grants, the All Saints Appeal, during Covid we had the Blessed to be a Blessing Fund to which people gave extra gifts to support the work we do as a Synod. We also have an endowment from Grace, Norristown. As you see at the bottom of this chart, we have proceeds from property sales. In the Spring of last year the building of the former Grace, Norristown was sold. That amount was \$530,000. In addition, Grace has an endowment of \$163,000, and the income from that endowment is to be used to assist Montgomery County congregations. We will set a procedure for Montgomery County congregations to apply for these funds. Investment Income was a large source for us, as the markets performed quite well. Below that line is the beneficial interest in trust, which we now need to report. The \$304,000 is the change in the value of our trusts from one year to the next.

**Audit Report Details**

## Statement of Activities

	Revenue	
	02/01/21 – 01/31/22	02/01/20 – 01/31/21
Operating Expenses	\$1,149,124	\$1,141,137
ELCA Proportionate Share (50%)	\$ 831,244	\$ 827,866
Property Management	\$ 128,614	\$ 129,286
Distributions to other Agencies	\$ 91,700	\$ 91,000
Remit to Designated Agency	\$ 25,976	\$ 24,932
Mission Expense	\$ 129,857	\$ 150,688
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 202,834</u>	<u>\$ 163,525</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$2,559,349</u>	<u>\$2,528,434</u>

Operating expenses only increased by \$8,000. This was in part due to staff increases for our staff, who work tremendously hard. We also had some areas of decrease. Due to Covid, many activities did not take place, we did not have the same level of travel expenses, we had a decrease in rent, as we were not present for much of the year. Our proportional share to the ELCA went up slightly, as we received more from congregations. We send 50% of whatever we receive to the Churchwide organization. Property Management of \$128,000 will remain fairly consistent, as we have responsibility for perpetual care of several cemeteries from congregations that have closed. When a congregation closes, if they have a cemetery, we receive that as well, along with the need to provide for its perpetual care. We have the cemeteries of St. James, Chalfont, St. John's, Quakertown, and St. Michael's, Germantown. These make the basis of our property management expenses. Distributions to other Agencies include Muhlenberg College, the United Lutheran Seminary, Campus Ministry, Bear Creek Camp, Lutheran Advocacy, and Lutheran Congregational Services. Mission Expenses were lower this year, as we did not do all of the programs we traditionally do, again due to the pandemic. For instance, we did not have an Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult ministry for most of the year. Some of our Mission expenses also represent support of our congregations and programs that need extra help, and often cannot be fully self-sustaining. These include programs like the Well, the Welcome Church, Kairos Community, and Grace, Broomall. We support these "mission congregations." We also now have the Vitality Team, and we give money to congregations through this team to congregations to support their ministry ventures. We also have grants to organizations. This is things like grants for student loan debt for clergy who need help paying off their Seminary loans. There are also grants given like those from our Forward Together in Faith fund.

We have a clean audit. From Tate, Weller, and Baker, I have the following statement: In our opinion the financial statements referred to above present fairly in all material respects the financial position of Synod as of January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, and the changes in its net assets and cash flows in the year then ended, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America." On behalf of the Synod Council, I put the following resolution before the Assembly:

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly accepts the Audit reports for the Fiscal Year January 31, 2022.

Bishop Davenport asked if there were any questions for the Treasurer concerning the Audit Report.

Mr. Jason Tapscott, St. Paul's, Olney, asked about the net assets. It looks as though they did not compute properly in your report. The number for the net assets was the same number as the total assets.

Ms. Neff: You are correct. It should be \$1,487,187 for net assets. Thank you for catching this.

As there were no more questions, Bishop Davenport called for the vote.

**The Assembly adopted the resolution** 197 yes, 2 no.

Mr. Bert Glenn, St. John, Melrose Park, and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented the budget for the coming year, fiscal year ending January 31, 2024.

Mr. Glenn noted that the theme for this Assembly is "Hope for Today, Strength for Tomorrow." What we also need for tomorrow is a budget. The budget he presented is for the year beginning February 1, 2023, and ending January 31, 2024.

The budget is in two parts, as are our financial statements, income and expenses. The income for 2023 is summarized on this chart:

	<b>2023 Budget Income</b>	
	2021 Audit	2023 Budget
Mission Support	\$1,662,489	\$1,700,000
Other Contributions	\$ 511,474	\$ 297,000
Registration Fees	\$ 41,324	\$ 111,740
Investment Income	\$1,009,379	\$ 785,571
Beneficial Interest in Trusts	\$ 304,688	\$ 60,000
Proceeds from Property Sale	<u>\$ 530,169</u>	<u>\$ 0</u>
Total Revenues	\$4,059,523	\$2,954,311

These numbers follow the figures we have in our financial statements. The Synod Council has approved this to be brought before the Assembly. This is a summary of the budget. There are more details in the Bulletin of Reports, beginning on page B-25.

We are hoping we will have a slight increase in Mission Support. Registration Fees are listed higher, as we anticipate more in person events, and thereby more registrations. We have lowered the investment income projections as we cannot presume we will continue in such a strong market indefinitely. In addition, we are not anticipating any congregations closing, and so we do not anticipate needing to sell any properties.

The expenses are in the next chart.

	<b>2023 Budget Expenses</b>	
	2021 Audit	2023 Budget
Operating Expenses	\$1,149,124	\$1,317,143
ELCA Proportionate Share (50%)	\$ 831,244	\$ 850,000
Property Management	\$ 128,614	\$ 30,500
Distributions to other Agencies	\$ 91,700	\$ 95,000
Remit to Designated Agency	\$ 25,976	\$ 15,045
Mission Expense	\$ 129,857	\$ 288,160
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 202,834</u>	<u>\$ 92,000</u>
Total Expenses	\$2,559,349	\$2,687,848

Operating expenses will be higher than this past year, as we are now fully staffed at the Synod office. We anticipate our proportional share will be higher, as we send 50% of what we receive to the ELCA, and we anticipate higher partnership support from congregations. Janet described the other items in her report as to where these other monies are sent. Again, more detail is available in the Bulletin of Reports.

Bishop, on behalf of the Synod Council, I put the following resolution before the Assembly: **Therefore, be it resolved that** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly adopts the budget for the coming year, Fiscal Year ending January 31, 2024.

Bishop Davenport thanked Mr. Glenn, and asked if there were any questions on the budget. Hearing none, she asked the Assembly to vote.

**The Assembly adopted the resolution** 199 yes, 0 no.  
Both the Audit and the budget have passed.

Bishop thanked Treasurer Neff, Mr. Glenn (chair), Senior Accountant Mr. Martin Schwab, and the Finance Committee for their many hours and faithful oversight of our financial resources.

### **Report of the Vice President**

Bishop Davenport introduced Vice President Tracey A. Beasley, thanking her for the many ways in which she serves the Synod and the Church, serving, among other ways, as the Treasurer of both the Philadelphia and the national chapters of the African Descent Lutheran Association, as the Chair of the ELCA Audit Committee, Chair of the Faith, Sexism, and Justice ad hoc committee, and as a member of the ELCA Church Council.

At this year's Churchwide Assembly we will vote for the next Vice President of the ELCA. I'm pleased to share our own Vice President Beasley has been nominated for this position, and will stand for election.

I want to take this opportunity to share my appreciation and respect for Vice President Beasley. She is a valued ministry partner.

Vice President Beasley began her address by singing "Bless the Lord, O My Soul, and all that is within me bless his Holy name."

Vice President Beasley welcomed those who are voting members of the Assembly for the first time, and thanked those who have been voting members at previous Assemblies for their dedication.

Ms. Beasley expressed her gratitude to Bishop Davenport, the other officers of the Synod, the Executive Committee, and the Synod Council.

Many thanks to the Synod Staff and their faithful work and tireless service.

Vice President Beasley is also grateful for the work of our congregational councils, and their efforts during the pandemic. She has been pleased to meet with many of these leaders, both in events, and at their congregations. The next gathering she will have with congregational leaders will be in June. A date will be announced soon. A special thanks to Pr. Bob Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communications, for all the work he puts in to make those Zoom events work so smoothly.

Our Deans put in significant levels of work in our Synod. Working with congregations in transition during the pandemic has been a challenge, and they have stepped up to the task.

VP Beasley was considering the theme for this Assembly, and struggled to determine what she might say to this body. “Hope for Today, Strength for Tomorrow, through Community in Christ.” What could she say?

As she continued to repeat the theme out loud, her brain kept inverting the words: “Strength for Today, and Hope for Tomorrow, through Community in Christ.” This version was working for her.

As she considered this report she thought about the Day of Service. Ms. Beasley had attended the activities at Christ, Kulpsville, where Pr. Serena Sellers serves. This Conference, Lower Montgomery, was sorting, clearing and shelving for The Shepherd’s Shelf, and emergency food cupboard, they packed Welcome Kits for residents of Sanctuary Village, made wreaths for the doors of Sanctuary Village, prepped the Food Pantry Garden for its Spring planting, refurbished a community walking path, and made blankets for Sanctuary Village residents. In addition to the efforts of Lower Montgomery Conference,

- + Upper Bucks Conference’s Day of Service was at Emmanuel in Souderton, supporting the E-Meal program.
- + Upper Montgomery Conference met at New Hanover church in Gilbertsville, and helped with a food garden and cleaned up a cemetery.
- + Two of our Social Ministry organizations also participated in the Day of Service. Lutheran Disaster Response helped the Eastwick neighborhood of Philadelphia to clean up 45 homes damaged by a tropical storm in 2020, and Lutheran Settlement House had volunteers setting up donation rooms for their Domestic Violence Program.

This is what we do as SEPA Synod. We engage in service for others. This fits her understanding of how we work in Strength for Today and bring Hope for Tomorrow.

What we do for the community beyond our church walls is important, and it is marvelous in God’ eyes.

Yet Vice President hears daily about war and violence, and this happens here, in our own neighborhoods. There were two incidents in the current week of children being shot at our softball fields. These unnecessary killings, and all the evil in the world, put her in a frame of mind where she did not feel like writing a report for this day.

But as she began to write, God turned things around for her. Even though we are still in this pandemic, even as we are surrounded by violence and struggles, Ms. Beasley was heartened by the mantra of our Bishop, “Do no harm to others.” We all are caring for each other, wearing masks unless we are speaking, and taking other steps to live out our love in Christ for others. Some of you always have Hope for Today, and Strength for Tomorrow. As she was considering this report, God was reminding her of the work she shared in at Christ, Kulpsville, and it was as though the Holy Ghost reminded her that, even when things don’t look good, when things don’t feel good, God is in charge.

The One we call the Bright and Morning Star, The Alpha and the Omega, Emmanuel, Lord Of Lords, the Messiah, The Savior, The Holy One, the Love of Life, The Bread of Life, the King of Kings, The Good Shepard, “Gives US HOPE for Today, STRENGTH for Tomorrow Through Community in Christ.” SEPA, keep up the great work you are doing.

We all get weary, we all get tired of what is happening in the world, we are still in this pandemic, but God got us All! And God got everything that is surrounding us! God bless you, and keep up the good work!

Vice President Beasley ended her address as she began, singing, “Bless the Lord, O My Soul, and All that is within me, Bless His Holy Name!”

### **Report of the Committee on Elections**

Bishop Davenport welcomed Pr. Rebecca Schanely of St. John, Sumneytown, Chair of the Committee on Elections, to lead the Assembly through our balloting process.

Pr. Schanely noted there will be only one ticket to consider today, that of rostered minister for Synod Council. We will be voting for two people. There are three names on the ballot. The name of Pr. Heidi Roderick-Schnaath came from the floor earlier today, but as there is someone from the congregation she serves already on Synod Council, she is not eligible at this time. The ballot will be placed on Vpoll. You may vote for up to two people. Please be sure to hit “submit” when you are finished so your vote will be counted.

The results were as follows:

204 votes were cast, 103 were needed for election.

Rev. Kathleen Harkness, Trinity Pleasant Valley	- 106
Rev. Marie Sager, St. Timothy, Aston	- 118
Rev. Gwendolyn King, Trinity Havertown	- 156

Bishop Davenport declared **Rev. Gwendolyn King and Rev. Marie Sager elected.**

Pr. Schanely stated that this concludes the report of the Committee on Elections.

### **Report of the ELCA Churchwide Representative**

Bishop Davenport introduced the Rev. Nicolette Peñaranda, our Churchwide representative this year. Rev. Nicolette Peñaranda is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serving as the Program Director for African Descent Ministries. She graduated from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 2017 with a concentration in Black Church Studies. She also attended Wagner College for her BA in History and Sociology and her MBA in business Management. Nic is the creator of MONadvocacy, a racial justice resource grounded in play. She is passionate about queer Black liberation, cultivating diverse leadership in faith spaces, and the art of creation. She resides in the Chicagoland area with her spouse, daughter, and two cats: Penne Pablo and Rigatoni Braxton. We are grateful to have her with us today.

Pr. Peñaranda thanked Bishop for her introduction, and the Assembly for the opportunity to be with us in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. She shared a few things about herself. She is a graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, she served as a student at St. Mark in the West Oak Lane area of the City, which holds a special place for her, and she has a wonderful daughter.

In particular, Pr. Peñaranda wanted to give an update on the work she does with the African Descent Ministries of the ELCA. She came to this role in October, 2021. This February we held a “**Talks at the Desk**” series, a two-part series one aspect of which was a day-to-day conversation that happened where we talked with about 24 people of our community. There were 9 lay leaders, 11 rostered leaders, deacons, seminarians, a large collection of Afro-Latino, a

few African nationals, and some Afro-Americans. We had 10 or 11 people under the age of 35, and 2 under that age of 21. This was important because we want to concentrate on our focus to be newer, younger, and more diverse. We are pleased that we were able to be in Philadelphia with the Rev. Dr. Charles Leonard, and Tyus Giles, associate junior minister at St. Mark, and we were also able to speak with Bishop Davenport. Take aways from these conversations: we heard wonderful stories of the work at SEPA Synod. You are a teaching synod; not just because of the Seminary on your territory, but also in your work with youth and young adults.

We also started a **Sankofa Wellness Cohort**, where rostered ministers can come together every other month for a program led by a licensed therapist to deal with some of the heaviness and stress they carry.

We have begun an **African Descent Stewardship Project**, retooling some of our resources to ensure we are up to date and inclusive. We want to make sure that the diversity within our community is reflected in our efforts and work. We want to make **Deeper Investments** in new mission starts in areas with persons of African Descent.

**RECLAIM Gathering** – this will be the first event in a long time, gathering members of the African descent community. We will be in person. We will be discussing how to equip ourselves and organize. More information will be coming out at the end of May

Finally, we are working on creating **Prayer Breakfasts around the Now is the Time Study**. This study was created in response to the Apology to People of African Descent: where it came from, why it was made, and what comes next for leaders of this community. What does this mean for our Church? Where is the action?

On behalf of the Churchwide Organization, Pr. Peñaranda thanked Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod for its generous support of our common ministry. The Synod provided \$831,296 dollars to the Churchwide Organization last year.

Churchwide commends Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod on its recent new mission starts, Kairos Community, The Welcome Church, and the Well, There has also been strategic ministry planned at Atonement in Philadelphia, and we are aware of congregations participating in the Anchor Church Model: Grace, Broomall and Temple, Havertown.

We celebrate recipients of the Fund for Leaders Scholarship from SEPA Synod, including Maeve Schurz, Ian Clements, and Christian Hicks.

SEPA Synod support of Global Missionaries includes support for Dr. Stephen and Jodi Swanson, Dr. Steven and Bethany Friberg, Ms. Linda Jacobsen, as well as Regional Representatives David (Daudi) and Kellen Mseemmaa.

Support of ELCA World Hunger allowed this arm of our Church to expand its efforts by \$2 million, reaching more than 21 countries around the world, in addition to the United States. The Global Farm Challenge is an effort to maximize our offerings and our impact from ELCA Youth.

SEPA. Grants have been available for the different ethnic associations of the Church. This includes the African Descent Lutheran Association, the Association for Latino Ministers, the Arab and Middle Eastern Association Network, the American Indian and Native Alaskan Association, the Asian Pacific Islander Association, as well as at large grants for the European Lutheran Association for Racial Justice.

In 2021, Lutheran Disaster Response responded to crises in 47 countries and 17 states and territories, thanks to offerings of \$14.9 million from ELCA members and congregations. Eastern European Response to assist the victims of the war in Ukraine has received more than \$2 million so far.

Pr. Peñaranda also thanked the members of our Synod who serve at the churchwide level. These include:

- + Ms. Tracey A. Beasley, Church Council and 2022 Churchwide Assembly Reference and Counsel Co-chair
- + Mr. Emmanuel Alves, Committee of Appeals
- + Pr. Fitz Fowler, Committee of Appeals
- + Mr. Thomas Salber, Committee on Discipline
- + Pr. Ray Miller, Committee of Hearing Officers
- + Pr. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam, Nominating Committee
- + Mr. Frank Roth, Portico Service Board of Pensions

We are also grateful for our separately incorporated ministries that help us with the work of the Church. 1517 Media, the ELCA Foundation, served in this area by Ms. Yvonne Lembo, for the Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services, and Women of the ELCA, served by Ms. Linda Buskofsky.

And a special thank you to co-Directors of Evangelical Mission, Pr. Bryan Penman and Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis, and especially thanks to Bishop Patricia Davenport.

The theme for the Churchwide Assembly is Embody the World, and will be held August 8 – 12 in Columbus Ohio.

The ELCA Rostered Ministers gathering will be held in July of 2023 in Phoenix, Arizona.

The ELCA Youth Gathering will be held in July of 2024 in New Orleans.

Thank you for having me, and thank you for the way you steward your resources to do Kingdom work in this area.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pr. Peñaranda for her presentation.

### **Celebration of Anniversaries**

Those rostered ministers celebrating their 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup>, or 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries will receive their certificates sent in the mail. We would, if in person, bring forward those celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but this is not possible this year.

We recognize those congregations celebrating significant anniversaries, including:

150<sup>th</sup> St. John, Phoenixville  
100<sup>th</sup> Holy Trinity, Narberth  
St. Luke, Gilbertsville

A video presentation of the ministry of Holy Trinity, Narberth was presented to the Assembly.

We have four rostered ministers celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their ordination or consecration, the Reverend Dean Bickel, the Reverend Paul J. Jann, Sister Sally Kerr, and the Reverend Dr. Larry V. Smoose. For their ministry we are grateful. A video address from Pr. Smoose was shared with the Assembly. In this video, Pr. Smoose noted how each celebrant was asked to submit a one-page, single sided paper to summarize their 50 years in ministry! He feels he can do it in one word. Blessed.

He was blessed by faithful parents who raised him in the Church, blessed by a dual internship with two congregations, St. John, Summit NJ, and Trinity, Akron OH, blessed by 3 congregations, Holy Trinity, Abington, Gods Love, Newtown, and Reformation, Media. Blessed by faithful coworkers and lay leaders that did the work of the Church. He was blessed by interns he mentored who went on to serve the larger Church. Blessed to serve on Synod Council, and as Synod Secretary, as well as many other leadership roles. Blessed to serve on the Church Council, and blessed to be part of a delegation on an ecumenical journey to visit patriarchs and popes and heads of the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran World Federation, and the World Council of Churches. But mostly he is blessed by his family. God has blessed him on this journey, and his heart is filled with gratitude at the blessing of God.

As Dr. Smoose was present, Bishop Davenport presented him with his framed certificate.

Bishop then called a recess for 10 minutes to give voting members a chance to reset for the remainder of the Assembly.

### **Afternoon session, Part 2**

#### **Second Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel**

Bishop Davenport called on Pr. Jennifer Casey to continue the work of this Committee.

Pr. Casey brought to the Assembly the remaining resolutions. She noted she will be sharing only the resolutions, as the “whereas” clauses are in the Bulletin of Reports, and are for background, not action, by the Assembly.

#### **Resolution #2 A Resolution for Fair Employment Separation**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod direct the Synod Council to petition the ELCA Church Council, to request by the end of calendar year 2022, elimination of separation agreements that include non-disclosure language and a prohibition of disparaging remarks as an employment or settlement practice.

Pr. Casey: After reviewing Resolution 2 with ELCA General Counsel Mr. Thomas Cunniff, the Committee on Reference and Counsel learned that the ELCA Churchwide Organization has

already moved away from non-disclosure agreements for rostered ministers employed by the Churchwide Organization. Therefore, no action is needed by the Assembly.

Resolution 3 is divided into two parts. 3A is a resolution to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, and 3B is a memorial to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**Resolution #3A Fortifying Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas  
A Resolution to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

This resolution is authored by the Reverend Carlton Rodgers and the Reverend Paul Hagedorn

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly direct the synod council to immediately create an "Urban Ministry Task Force" to study and develop a strategy to address the inequalities experienced by our urban congregations. And be it further

**RESOLVED** that such a task force shall consider as part of its strategy (1) evaluating adequate compensation and benefits for urban rostered ministers, (2) examining the condition of urban church facilities, and (3) training future leaders for success in urban ministry contexts by reviving urban internships. The task force may consider additional topics as revealed during their study phase. And be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the task force be empowered to make proposal requests to the Fund for Mission for the implementation of their strategy, while seeking additional grant funding wherever possible. And be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the task force may request funding from the ELCA Church Council through the SEPA Synod Council as provided for by "How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection and Healing Action" adopted at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. And be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the SEPA Directors for Evangelical Mission submit an application to designate urban congregations in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as strategic ministries within the ELCA and oversee the grant funding associated with that program. And be it further

**RESOLVED**, that an initial report of the Urban Ministry Task Force be included in the Bulletin of Reports for Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's 2023 assembly.

***The Committee on Reference and Counsel Recommends adoption.***

Pr. Casey expounded on the Committee's recommendation.

Urban ministry is an important part of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. The challenges faced by urban congregations should be addressed and resources found to strengthen that segment of the Body of Christ.

Bishop Davenport opened the floor for discussion of Resolution 3A.

Pr. Paul Hagedorn, Tabernacle, Philadelphia spoke to his resolution. I have been involved in Urban Ministry for 56 years. Bishop made a reference to George Floyd, and to "conspiracy," "breathing together." We need to breathe together, including those underserved communities and congregations within our city and surrounding areas. I have been studying the Gospel lesson about the denying disciple Peter, and his conversation with our Lord. He denied the Lord several times, and then Jesus took him aside, and asked him, "Do you love me? Then feed my sheep.

Tend my lambs. Feed my sheep.” We need to tend these sheep, both congregations and leaders. We need more conspirators breathing together, we need to bring hope for today, and strength for tomorrow.

Mr. Richard Martz, Grace, Pottstown: It may be petty, but define “urban.”

Bishop Davenport – I believe we are talking about the city congregations, particularly inner city.

Pr. Hagedorn – I agree.

Mr. Martz – so would Norristown be “out?”

No, Norristown would be considered a city.

Pr. Sellers: the popular definition of a “city” is 1,000 people per square mile.

Bp. Davenport: Thank you.

The Bishop then called for the vote.

**The Assembly adopted the Resolution** 196 – yes, 7 – no

Pr. Casey then brought Resolution 3B to the floor.

**Fortifying Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas  
A Memorial to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (3B)**

This resolution is authored by the Reverend Carlton Rodgers and the Reverend Paul Hagedorn

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod** in assembly memorialize the ELCA to create an "Urban Ministry Task Force" to study the inequalities experienced by urban congregations, build a strategy to address those inequalities, and report on its work to be presented at the next Churchwide Assembly (2025). And be it further **RESOLVED** that such a task force shall consider as part of its strategy (1) evaluating whether urban rostered ministers are adequately compensated, (2) examining the condition of urban church facilities, and (3) training future leaders for success in urban ministry contexts by reviving urban internships. The task force may consider additional topics as revealed during their study phase. And be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize "the churchwide organization [to] strategically disburse Fund for Leaders scholarships to enhance the capacity of people of color who are TEEM candidates, non-English speakers, part-time students, or seminary students. [And] provide communities of color with opportunities for student leadership and reinstate the Horizon Internship Program. So that students of color can train in their own communities."

***The Committee on Reference and Counsel Recommends adoption.***

Pr. Casey spoke to the recommendation of the Committee.

Urban ministry is an important part of the ELCA’s witness. The challenges faced by urban congregations should be addressed and resources found to strengthen that segment of the Body of Christ.

Bishop opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Thomas Salber, Prince of Peace, Philadelphia, raised concern about the timeline for reporting back. The nature of the ELCA is that it takes time to make things happen, and he would like to extend the time of reporting out three years to ensure that some progress is able to be made.

Pr. Casey: this is not suggesting that the process is complete, it is asking for a report of the work be presented to the next Churchwide Assembly.

Mr. Salber: But you are also asking for the formation of a committee, and that takes time.

Pr. Casey: I believe there will be enough time to form a committee, and get an interim report.

Pr. Hagedorn: I believe we have to get started now.

The Bishop called for the vote.

**The Assembly adopted the Resolution 199 – yes, 3 – no**

Pr. Casey then brought the fourth and final resolution to the floor.

**Resolution #4 Resolution on Paid Leave for Rostered Ministers:**

**Guidelines for Parental and Family Leave and Care of Family Due to Illness**

This resolution is authored by The Rev. Timothy Ness, The Rev. Axel Kaegler, The Rev. Dr. Phil Krey, and The Rev. Raymond Miller

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the section of the compensation guidelines of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod for pastors, titled "Parental/Family Leave", be amended by substitution as follows: "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 congregations provide paid childbearing leave of at least six weeks for all pastors, regardless of gender.~~ **It is recommended that any time a child is added to a household of a pastor, congregations provide at least 12 weeks of child-bearing leave for the birthing caregiver and at least 8 weeks of child care 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. 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."

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the section of the compensation guidelines of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod for rostered deacons, titled "Parental/Family Leave" be amended by substitution to read as follows: "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 congregations provide childbearing leave of at least six weeks for all pastors, regardless of gender.~~ **It is recommended that any time a child is added to a household of a rostered deacon, congregations provide at least 12 weeks of child-bearing leave for the birthing caregiver and at least 8 weeks of child care 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. 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."

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly direct the Synod Council to petition the ELCA Church Council to request that Portico explore providing child-bearing leave and child care leave coverage for congregations in which a child is added to the rostered minister's household.

*The Committee on Reference and Counsel Recommends adoption.*

Pr. Casey: It is increasingly recognized in the secular world that childcare level is important both for children and parents. Currently, the parental leave guidelines of Southeastern Pennsylvania are lower than the guidelines of our surrounding synods.

Parental Leave in Surrounding Synods:

- **Del/MD Synod** – “paid childbearing leave of at least 8 weeks” plus “paid childcare (for mother or father) leave of at least 4 to 6 weeks”
- **LSS Synod** - parental leave plan “should include eight weeks of parental leave with full salary, housing, and benefits, but not less than six weeks”
- **NEPA Synod** – “6-12 weeks of parental leave depending on the needs of the parent and family with full pay and benefits”
- **NJ Synod** – paid leave “up to 12 weeks is recommended for the rostered minister following the addition of a child to their family through birth and adoption”

Bishop opened the floor for discussion.

Pr. Sarah Aasheim, Grace, Wyndmoor spoke in favor of the resolution. After the birth of her son, she received six weeks of leave. This was not enough time for her to recover from the birth, or to bond with her son. This negatively impacted her relationship both with her son, and her first call congregation. If she had received more time to heal and to bond, she believes she would have stayed longer in that congregation.

Mr. Wayne Gerlach, Good Shepherd, Feasterville, stated that having worked for the Federal Government, he knows that the Federal Leave Act handles part-time employment differently under the constraints that are proposed here. How will this be applied to smaller congregations that have shared pastors or part-time calls to protect their financial situation with the increased cost of this proposal?

Pr. Serena Sellers, Christ Kulpsville, offered an amendment.

Amend to include in each of the first two “resolved” clauses “a minimum of six weeks of leave with full compensation is recommended.” Please add it at the end of each resolved clause.

Having received a second, Bishop Davenport asked Pr. Sellers to speak to her proposed amendment.

Pr. Sellers – The original text of the guidelines had six weeks leave included in it. The proposed resolution removes it. I believe that congregations, when they read the section regarding the FMLA, will feel it is adequate to offer unpaid leave. In my own experience of giving birth to two daughter, two years apart, in a small congregation, I know that compensation was an issue, and it was a challenge for the congregation, but if I were to fall ill, the congregation would have to provide six weeks of full compensation before Portico would be able to offer disability care. So I believe that congregations need to be prepared for this level of care for their rostered leaders, just as any employer has to be prepared to deal with the costs of having someone serve for the good of their organization.

Pr. Axel Kaegler – as one of the original movers of the resolution, I do not concur with the amendment. With six weeks leave already being the guideline, and us asking for at least eight weeks, I do not believe this amendment helps the resolution.

Pr. Sellers – What is taken out of the original is any period of time that is paid childcare leave. What replaces it is that there be a program of leave, and then a reference to FMLA, and after that reference, and indication that it can be a combination of paid and unpaid leave, without any minimum of how much is paid. I am trying to ensure that at least six weeks is covered. The way it is proposed, a congregation can say we will give two weeks of paid leave, and you can have ten weeks of unpaid leave, and we will give eight weeks of unpaid leave to the non-birthing care-giver.

Pr. Kaegler: Then we should change the language of the proposal from Refence and Counsel to at least eight weeks of paid childcare leave. As Pr. Aasheim stated earlier, six weeks was not enough for her, and it is likely not enough for others. To say 12 paid weeks and 8 paid weeks fits more with the spirit and intention of the resolution.

Bishop Davenport are you proposing another amendment?

Pr. Sellers: do we need to deal with the amendment on the floor before we bring another amendment?

Bishop: Yes, we are considering Pr. Sellers amendment at this time, that six weeks paid leave be the minimum.

Pr. Manke raised a point of order. Was this raised as a friendly amendment, and thereby not needing a vote?

Bishop Davenport: it was not received as a friendly amendment.

Bishop opened the vote.

**The Assembly adopted the amendment 124 yes, 89 no**

Bp. Davenport: We now have the amended resolution before the house:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the section of the compensation guidelines of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod for pastors, titled "Parental/Family Leave", be amended by substitution as follows: "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 congregations provide paid childbearing leave of at least six weeks for all pastors, regardless of gender.~~ **It is recommended that any time a child is added to a household of a pastor, congregations provide at least 12 weeks of child-bearing leave for the birthing caregiver and at least 8 weeks of child care 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. 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 six weeks of leave with full compensation is recommended.

Pr. Ray Miller, St. Peter, Hilltown, spoke to the concern of the cost for smaller congregations, noting that it is the intention of the third resolved to petition Portico Benefits to provide such assistance.

Mr. Scott Geyser, New Hanover, Gilbertsville, asked to clarify if in the case of adoption is the pastor considered to be a non-birthing caregiver?

Pr. Casey: The pastor would be considered "non-birthing."

Pr. Sue Lang: We are focusing a lot on childbirth, but there is also the provision that will allow up to twelve weeks which can be used for personal care or for care of a family member. We just went through a situation where we had to care for my daughter. Would this cover that situation?

Pr. Casey: The portion referencing the Family Medical Leave Act is not the guideline amendment. There is no change to that language from the original guidelines.

Pr. Wende Bleam, St. John, Folcroft, spoke in favor of the resolution, but she expressed concern for small congregations that are struggling financially. So I would like to propose an amendment that Synod be asked to assist small congregations financially when this type of need arises.

Pr. Casey: Is this an amendment?

Pr. Bleam: I would like to because of the cost to smaller congregations.

Pr. Casey: The "Be it further resolved" referenced by Pr. Miller is addressing this by asking the Synod to request the Church Council to request Portico to provide such assistance with childcare and childbearing leave, which would then address the financial burden. It is also important to remember that these are guidelines, and not requirements. Each congregation needs to address the guidelines as they feel they are able.

Pr. Kaegler moved to amend by adding "paid" to both 8 and 12 weeks, in both resolved clauses. Bishop asked for a second. When one was offered, she asked Pr. Kaegler to speak to his amendment.

Pr. Kaegler said this was to add clarity to the original intent of the resolution.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the section of the compensation guidelines of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod for pastors, titled "Parental/Family Leave", be amended by substitution as follows: "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 congregations provide paid childbearing leave of at least six weeks for all pastors, regardless of gender.~~ **It is recommended that any time a child is added to a household of a pastor, congregations provide at least 12 weeks of PAID child-bearing leave for the birthing caregiver and at least 8 weeks of PAID child care 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. 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 six weeks of leave with full compensation is recommended.

Is there discussion on the amendment?

Bishop called for the vote on the amendment to add "paid."

**The Assembly adopted the amendment** 171 yes, 43 no

Mr. Wayne Gerlach, Good Shepherd, Feasterville, proposed an amendment to the final "resolved" clause, regarding Pr. Blear's concerns about the expense for smaller congregations, those with part-time staff, or with struggling finances. I move that we continue the last sentence to include "with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod setting up a fund to assist part-time and struggling congregations with the increased cost."

Bishop asked if there was a second. A second was offered.

Mr. Gerlach noted that every congregation that pays for a pastor also pays into Portico, and if we put this on top of the costs of Portico, it could be too great for the smaller congregations to bear.

Bp. Davenport: Is there discussion on this amendment?

Pr. Casey: Who is setting up this fund?

Mr. Gerlach: Our Synod.

Bp Davenport: Would you welcome this as an additional resolved?

Mr. Gerlach: Yes.

And be it further RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod set up a fund to assist part-time and struggling congregations with the increased cost

Pr. Casey: We then need to ask where the money comes to for this fund? Are you asking for another budget line within the Synod Budget?

Mr Gerlach: Yes, I am.

Pr. Steven Godsall-Meyer: What is a part-time congregation?

Mr. Gerlach: It should read part-time "call."

The Bishop called for the vote on the amendment.

**The Assembly adopted the amendment**

Pr. John Heidgerd, Emmanuel, Souderton, called the previous question.

Bishop Davenport described that to call the question is to end debate, and bring the resolution for a final vote.

All in favor of closing debate, vote yes, those opposed, vote no. A two-thirds vote is required to end debate.

**The Assembly voted to call the question** 194 yes, 12 no

The Assembly then voted on Resolution 4 as amended.

**The Assembly adopted the Resolution** 182 yes, 27 no

Pr. Casey then offered a final resolution, the Resolution of Thanks.

**SEPA Synod Assembly Resolution of Thanks**

**April 30, 2022**

**WHEREAS** it is right at all times and in all places to give thanks for God’s grace and mercy, and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit that bless the people of God to do God’s work with our hands;

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** at the end of this thirty-fourth meeting of the Assembly, we offer our appreciation and thankful applause;

To our own Bishop Patricia Ann Davenport for her years of service and dedication to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the people of God in this “beloved community” who are members of, and affiliated with, this church;

To Vice President Beasley and our Synod Council for their leadership and guidance;

To our ELCA representative, Reverend Nicolette Pernaranda, Program Director for African Descent Ministries who will be joining us on May 11;

To the representatives of all organizations and agencies of the Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Synod present here at this Assembly;

To Reverend Dr. Jennifer Phelps and the members of SEPA’s Worship Committee for the prayers, praise and preaching;

To Reverend Joseph Klinger and members of the Nominating Committee, and Reverend Rebecca Schanely and members of the Elections Committee, for their tremendous work;

To the officers, staff, and volunteers of the SEPA Synod, including Ms. Yvonne Curtis and Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, who worked tirelessly to make this 2022 Assembly a success.

To Reverend Bob Fisher and the tech team for their work to make our digital assembly possible;

To Christ Lutheran Church in Orelan for their unfailing hospitality;

To Mr. Scott Casey from Vpoll which was used throughout this Assembly;

To Ms. Carrie Schwab, Assembly Coordinator, and her exceptional work aligning all of the details of this Assembly;

To all participants from the SEPA Synod who offered their energy, skills and time to prepare for, plan, arrange and participate in this Assembly.

And permit me to extend a personal thank you to the Reference and Counsel Team members and our consultants:

Reference and Counsel Team Members

Rev. Lauren Bruno

Mr. Paul Keener

Rev. Marie Sager

Rev. Karen Sease

And our consultants:

Rev. Karl Richard, Secretary of the SEPA Synod

Rev. Larry Smoose, Assembly Parliamentarian

Bishop Davenport encouraged the voting members to affirm this resolution by acclamation with the raised hand emoji in the Zoom feature.

Bishop: The motion carries. Please accept the thanks of a grateful synod.

Thank you, Committee for your work and Pastor Casey for your leadership this year, and for stepping up and stepping in.

### **Report of the Registrar**

Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, Registrar, was recognized to make the final report of the Registrar.

Total number of ministers of word and sacrament under call	123
Total number of retired ministers of word and sacrament voting	24
Total number of ministers of word and service under call	6
Total number of retired ministers of word and service voting	4
Total number of lay voting members certified*, including Council members and Youth/Young Adult	184
<b>TOTAL VOTING MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>341</b>

\*Certified = Any voting member for whom a signed and duly recorded registration form has been received by the Assembly Registrar by the time this report is compiled.

Total number of persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English in the previous total	58
Percent this total is of total voting membership	17.2%
Number of women lay voting members	97
Number of men lay voting members	64
Number of lay Synod Council Members	15
Number of Youth/Young Adult	8

#### **ACTUALLY IN ATTENDANCE**

Number of ministers of word and sacrament under call registered*	85
Number of retired ministers of word and sacrament registered*	13
Number of ministers of word and service under call registered*	4
Number of retired ministers of word and service registered	0
Number of lay voting members registered*, including Lay Council members and Youth/Young Adult	143
<b>TOTAL REGISTERED* VOTING MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>245</b>

\*Registered = Any voting member present and accounted for by the Assembly Registrar as being in actual attendance at the Assembly at the time of this report.

Total number of persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English in previous total	25
Percent this total is of total registered voting membership	10.2
Total number of visitors and guests registered	17

Bishop Davenport took a moment of personal privilege to recognize Mr. Ken Salazar. Mr. Salazar has been a blessing to this Synod in so many ways. Mr. Salazar has been helping to run the technological aspects of our Synod Assemblies since the days we met in Cherry Hill, NJ! Saying thank you is one thing, but putting action to it is even more important. Bishop presented Mr. Salazar with a plaque of appreciation, and informed him that he will also receive a gift of “a liquid variety” from the private selections of Dr. Larry Smoose.

Bishop additionally called Ms. Carrie Schwab forward to recognize her for her tremendous efforts coordinating this online assembly. Yesterday was Ms. Schwab’s birthday, and she spent the entire day, and into the night, right here ironing out details so this meeting could run smoothly. I cannot describe how grateful I am for you, and the Synod is blessed by you. You deserve this gift after dealing with us!

**Recognition of outgoing Synod Council members**

Bishop prayed with thanksgiving for those members who are ending their terms on Synod Council:

- Mr. Graeme Brown
- Mr. Adam Clark
- Ms. Cheryl Detweiler
- Mr. David Ehret
- Ms. Emily Fowler
- Mr. William Graham
- Ms. Gail Penman
- The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps
- The Rev. Dwight Mason

**Recognition of newly elected Synod Council members**

She then prayed for and installed the newly elected members of the Synod Council:

- Rev. Marie Sager
- Ms. Abbe Tabolo Weiah
- Ms. Dorothy Wilson

**Installation of Voting Members to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly**

The Bishop prayed for, and commissioned, the following persons who have been elected as Voting Members from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly in Columbus, OH:

- The Rev. Patricia Davenport, Bishop
- Ms. Tracey Beasley, Vice President
- Ms. Veronica Britto
- The Rev. Mukesh Cheedie
- Mr. Thomas Conroy

The Rev. Julie DeWerth  
Mr. Albert Glenn  
The Rev. Regina Goodrich  
Ms. Doreen Kinzler  
The Rev. Joseph Klinger  
Mr. Ernest Knowlden  
The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps  
Mr. Candido Silva, Jr.  
Ms. Elizabeth Stewart  
Mr. Damar Wilson  
Ms. Sandra Zimmermann

**Order for the closing of the Assembly**

Bishop Davenport then led the Assembly in the Order for the Closing of the Assembly. The thirty-fourth annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

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

*Approved by the Synod Council, December 8, 2022*

**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 theVillage, 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 theVillage, the parallelism is striking.

theVillage 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. theVillage 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 theVillage? 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 theVillage 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 theVillage, 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*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 172<sup>nd</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Zoom Meeting**  
**September 22, 2022**  
**6:00 p.m.**

### **DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:04 p.m. and invited Mr. Bert Glenn to lead the Council in devotions.

Mr. Glenn began by sharing that a button was given to him at the Churchwide Assembly this past August. On this button was the number 328. He asked if anyone knew what this meant. He shared that it is the number of times the word “justice” appears in the Bible.

For Mr. Glenn, justice is our calling as people of Jesus. We are called to treat each other fairly and kindly. A mandate to do justice calls us to know the needs of the poor, and to meet them. How do we do this? We focus on what is in front of us. Global concerns are important,

and we need to advocate for them, but if we are called to justice, we need to do so first with those in our presence.

Mr. Glenn is recently retired from the Department of Justice, where he was a federal prosecutor. Justice is a key part of his life and livelihood. He worked for justice in his work, but sometimes not in the way people expect. Sometimes the most just thing to do is to charge a person and hold them accountable. But sometimes, there are other issues involved in a case, where the most just action is to let the charges drop away.

He saw justice displayed at the Churchwide Assembly, in the apology to the congregation of Iglesia Luterana Santa María, in the Apology to Indigenous Peoples, and in the Church's commitment to stand against racism.

There is another button he has found helpful. It says, "Justice not Revenge." Justice is what we as people of faith are to be about. Mr. Glenn concluded his remarks with Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require of you? To seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 172<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:18 p.m. The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the 171<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

The Minutes of the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod were included in the packet of materials. As there was not significant time to review them, approval of these Minutes is deferred until the December meeting of the Synod Council.

### **SETTING THE AGENDA**

The agenda for the 172<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Synod Council was approved as presented.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

The Mission Moment for this meeting was the sharing of reflections on the August 2022 Churchwide Assembly in Columbus, Ohio. Several members of the Synod Council had attended, some as voting members, one as a visitor. It seemed good to Vice President Beasley that the remainder of the Synod Council hear the insights of the Assembly from their colleagues.

**Mr. Glenn** – was very pleased with the Assembly. There were four things that stood out for him:

1. The worship services were well done and elaborate. They were held in a huge hall, with many musicians, many pastors, and much technology. They were very impressive and moving.
2. The Apology to the congregation of Iglesia Luterana Santa María. Bishop Eaton's words were powerful, and the reception of her words by the congregation was gracious.
3. It was wonderful to spend time with, and get to know better, the other members of our Synod's "delegation."
4. Perhaps one of the best lines spoken at the Assembly was by our new Vice President, Imran Siddiqui. He originally came from a Muslim background, and in trying to describe

his family's Muslim connection, he described them as "Christmas and Easter" Muslims. That seemed like a good way to make the comparison.

**Pastor Julie DeWerth** – The worship was extraordinary. The opportunity to build relationships, both with members of our Synod, but also with others from across the Church, was significant. The chance to see people she had not seen for a long time was wonderful and life-giving. The consideration of our own Vice President, Tracey A. Beasley, for the position of Vice President of the ELCA, was powerful. Tracey made us so proud!

**Pastor Joey Klinger** – was very glad to go, as he had never attended a Churchwide Assembly before. In looking at the advance paperwork it did not seem as though there would be much of interest to this Assembly; nothing seemed particularly important or unusual. But then he arrived, and he was amazed at how much was discussed, and even more so, how much was put into action. It will be interesting to see how much is implemented in the next three years. There are issues of a possible new constitution, concerns of pay equity, and provisions for "bound conscience" with regard to LGBTQIA+ persons, as well as many other issues, that were discussed and charged for action.

**Ms. Sandra Zimmerman** – could not be at this meeting, but submitted the following reflection via email:

Thinking back on my experience I have found many things to be thankful for:

First, being chosen to attend.

Second, I appreciated being able to drive rather than fly since we are still in a global pandemic.

Third, getting to know some of the other delegates from our synod and breaking bread with them at lunch every day.

Fourth, having access to a motorized scooter helped with my mobility. I also learned that the scooter can be similar to being in a wheelchair – because you are not in people's normal line of vision, you cease to exist. This helped me to become more aware of others with disabilities and to be considerate of them on my journey through life.

Fifth, getting stuck in the elevator at the Hilton for over an hour and learning how kind the staff can be. While I waited, they offered to bring me water, lunch and checked continuously to make sure I was okay.

Sixth, I enjoyed attending the various worship services, each with their own unique styles of preaching and music. I was struck by how many practices and languages from other cultures were included. I was especially delighted to hear the drums from the American Indian and Alaskan Native People.

Seventh, I'm thankful for the declarations to the American Indian and Alaskan Native People, Jewish Community, and Muslim Community.

Eighth, I am grateful that the memorials on diversity and the LGBTQIA communities were included, and that we are moving forward to being a better and more inclusive church.

Ninth, regarding the various issues and conversations surrounding the removal of Pastor Rabell-Gonzalez: I am hopeful that with the apology given to the congregants of Misión Latina Luterana at Churchwide, they can now begin the healing process denied to them previously and that moving forward we can be more open, honest, and accountable in our conversations within our church (the ELCA).

While I have many things to be thankful for from my time at Churchwide, I know that our work is never finished. If we are all created in God's image, how can we not love our brothers and sisters as ourselves? Even as we strive to be better sisters and brothers in Christ, we still do not always live by a Theology of the Cross in our actions. Martin Luther taught us to "call a thing what it is", and in doing so, we must continue to call out racism, discrimination, and intolerance.

During Bishop Davenport's sermon, she gave us a call to action, reminding us that words are not enough. We must be the ones to help bring about the changes we want to see for the future of the ELCA. I am grateful for her leadership, and have faith that with her leading us, we will continue to work to see real and meaningful changes in the future of the church.

**Pastor Serena Sellers** –went as a visitor with her husband, Pastor Ray Miller. She noted that, as a visitor, she did not have to attend anything, but wanted to attend everything. She is proud to be from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, proud of our Vice President, and proud of our Bishop.

**Vice President Tracey A. Beasley** – is so excited about what we have in SEPA Synod. We are family. Not every Synod has this feeling. Some Synods have Vice Presidents and Bishops that do not get along. People comment on our closeness. They see the love we have for each other as a Synod. The most powerful thing about the Assembly for her was the laying on of hands during the process for the election of the Vice President of the Church. She is still in the trenches, and she is not going anywhere.

## **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Davenport reflected on Vice President Beasley's remarks on the Assembly, sharing that she hopes people saw us as ones who live out our baptismal covenant.

Bishop noted that her report was before the Synod Council. She took some time to share some of the items that are on her heart and mind in these days. In particular, she noted the need for prayer in these days. She noted the multiple pandemics we face: covid, monkey pox, violence, hatred, racism, war in Ukraine and in Sudan, each of which is pandemic in its scope and impact.

Bishop asked for prayer for the Executive Committee, noting that we do not do this work alone. We need to support and encourage each other in dealing with "what is."

She asks for prayer for the Staff, and in particular, with thanksgiving for Pr. Bob Fisher, returning from sabbatical, for Pr. Karen Sease, going on maternity leave, and for Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, as her child is ill at this time.

Bishop Davenport noted that October is pastor appreciation month. She will be sending out a letter to our congregations encouraging them to do something special for their ministers – a card, an extra Sunday off, or any expression of support. As they try to lead during the multiple pandemics we face, a word of encouragement can be powerful. Depression is real, the sense of trauma is real, and anything we can do to support our rostered ministers is helpful.

## **Muhlenberg Board**

Bishop serves on this board, and is on the Committee on Student Life. This team is working on issues of diversity, equity, and belonging. She noted a difference between "inclusion" and "belonging." "Inclusion" is inviting people other than you to the dance. "Belonging" is asking them to dance.

### **Religious Leaders Council**

All our interfaith partners are experiencing a decline in members returning to the buildings. Deep discussion on how we lower pastoral expectations on members returning and how to work on increasing the number of volunteers to handle the basics of moving ministry forward.

### **Bishop's Activities**

Bishop Davenport was excited to share that there have been five ordinations since our last meeting. In the midst of the struggles the church is facing, it is good to see new leadership being called forth and sent out to serve.

In addition to the many pastoral contacts reflected in her report, Bishop wanted the Synod Council to know that a Council member, Ms. Cynthia Moultrie, had a fire in her condo. She is fine, and all steps are being taken for the restoration of her home at this time, but please keep her in your prayers at this time.

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

Vice President Beasley noted that the Council has the minutes from the meeting of the Executive Committee.

### **Synod Council Committees**

The Vice President brought before the Council the proposed assignments for the various Synod Council Committees. The process we follow has the Bishop and the Vice President make the proposed assignments, and the Synod Council affirm the committees as configured. The chairperson of each committee is a member of the Council. Membership on several of the committees may include people not on Synod Council. Ms. Beasley thanked those who have served as chairs, and those who have been tapped as new chairpersons of the various committees. After the Council had reviewed the proposed assignments, the following resolution was presented by Secretary Richard:

**S.C.22.09.27. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the Committee assignments as proposed by the Bishop and Vice President.**

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

### **Urban Ministry Task Force**

Vice President Beasley noted that the pandemic has been difficult for the Church. This has made constructing the Urban Ministry team challenging. Many people are overwhelmed, and do not want to take on one more responsibility. We are still looking for one more member, a man 40 years or younger, to serve. Yet, we are grateful to have the following persons who have agreed to be a part of this team.

#### **Ex- officio members:**

Rev. Regina Goodrich, Dean

Rev. Bryan Penman, Co-Director for Evangelical Mission

#### **Lay Leadership:**

Karen Paulus

Cynthia London  
Maureen Tang  
Cliff Hayman

**Rostered Leadership:**

Rev. Derrick Jackson  
Rev. Gwen Johnson Bond  
Rev. Lyzette Rios  
Rev. Steve Keiser (Retired)

**Resource People:**

Rev. Paul Hagedorn  
Rev. Carlton Rogers  
Rev. Sandra Brown  
Rev. Jesse Brown  
Rev. Cornelius Eaddy  
Gunter Wesch (financial person subcommittee if needed)  
Rev. Kari Hart

Vice President Beasley gave a brief description of each of the proposed members, and why they were approached to be a part of this team. As the formation of this task force was a charge to the Synod Council from the Synod Assembly, the following resolution was put before the Council:  
**S.C.22.09.28. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council appoints these persons as members of the Urban Ministry Task Force. The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

**Churchwide Assembly**

Ms. Beasley noted that in the Synod Council materials is a summary of the highlights from the Churchwide Assembly. Please be sure to share these highlights with your congregations.

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

**Actions on the Roster**

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

**S.C.22.09.29. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve moving Pastor Arlene Greenwald to the retired roster effective April 21, 2021.

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

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

**S.C.22.09.30. 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, 2022 until September 30, 2023.

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

***Renewal - Call to Specialized Ministry:***

**S.C.22.09.31. 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, 2022 to July 31, 2023.

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

*Call to Interim Ministry:*

**S.C.22.09.32. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Heidi M. Rodrick-Schnaath** to interim ministry at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (Coatesville) beginning August 1, 2022 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Rodrick-Schnaath resigns this call, whichever comes first.

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

## **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, began by expressing her thanks to Bishop Davenport for all the support given to the Neff family in this time when they have experienced the death of several family members, and during Ms. Neff's own health struggles. She then shared the following regarding the finances of the Synod.

- The global economy is taking its toll on the markets, and our investments have also been hit hard by this current trend. While we are experiencing challenges with inflation, the Synod is no worse off than any other organization.
- Mission Support is down, but this is common during the summer months.
- We are now in our offices, and so our rent to the Seminary has resumed. We have also settled all past accounts owed between the Synod and the Seminary from our previous rental arrangement.

In response to queries she has received regarding the budgeting for the Director of Evangelical Mission positions, which are shared staffing with the ELCA, Ms. Neff pointed out that the ELCA is giving the pay for the positions to the congregations of our Directors for Evangelical Mission, which are then paying it to the DEMs.

Overall, our balance sheet is still strong, and we are in a good financial position at this time.

Mr. Roland Thompson raised a question about on-line giving, and whether or not it is suppressing giving to the Synod. Often on these giving links there are fewer options for where to designate your gift, and this may be part of why we are receiving fewer offerings.

Pr. Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Advancement, noted that we have congregations that fund Mission Support in numerous ways. Some do this on-line, some do this by check. Some give a firm number of support, and others give a "guesstimate" of what they will give. Over the summer she checked on congregations that are \$3,000 behind in their stated support to the Synod. Some of them were not sure where to send their support, some were just behind, and some were having financial struggles. The good news is that none of these congregations are behind because they are discontented with the Synod.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pr. Sease for these contacts. In these calls we discovered that with respect to a congregation that had not given anything for 5 years, there had been a change in

financial leadership, and the new person did not know that the money designated for Partnership Support was supposed to come to the Synod.

Picking up on Mr. Thompson's comment regarding on-line giving, Pr. Julie DeWerth noted that what they miss most in her congregation from on-line platforms are the "extra" envelopes, and the offerings received through them. While each offering may be small, for Christmas, Lent, Food Bank, or whatever, each of them is an addition to people's regular giving, and that adds up.

Pr. Serena Sellers shared her experience that most online sites will allow you to set up a few extra funds, but not as many as we have in our boxes. Maybe the platforms that provide for on-line giving could be made aware of the need for more options.

Mr. Everett Wick noted that in his congregation the move has been to include most of these smaller "pockets" into a consolidated budget. Each of these items are important to fund, so the congregation has taken the position to fund them all from the regular budget, decreasing the need for special offerings and appeals.

## **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Glenn noted that the Committee reviewed the most recent statements available, and found no issues with the reports.

### **Special Funds**

With regard to the various pockets of money the Synod has, the Finance Committee feels it is important to be clear who has the authority to disburse these monies, and by what process. Among the funds we have are the Fund for Mission, the St. Petri-Hope Fund, the Fisher Trust, and the relatively newly received trust from the former Grace, Norristown. Some of these Funds have clearer parameters than others. The money of the Grace, Norristown Trust is the one in greatest need of clarification.

### **Seminary Debt Relief**

The Finance Committee is adjusting the timing of the relief process. Requests will be received in January, with recommendations for awards made prior to the Synod Assembly in early May.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Nominating Committee**

Pr. Joey Klinger shared there is no formal report at this time, but the process of identifying needs, and drafting a letter to the Synod regarding such openings, has begun.

There were no other committee reports at this time.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

Meeting closed with prayer by Pr. Marie Sager at 7:57 p.m.

The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be December 8, 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, December 8, 2022*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 173<sup>rd</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Zoom Meeting**  
**December 8, 2022**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:05 p.m. and invited Pr. John Heidgerd to lead the Council in devotions.

Pr. Heidgerd spoke on the theme of longing, a key part of our worship in Advent. In this time, we look at short days and dry trees and we long for life to return. We sing songs of longing, like “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” We hear words like those from Isaiah 35 about life springing forth in the desert, and we are filled with longing. In Isaiah we also have the image of a stump. A dead stump is not generally seen as a sign of hope; it is rather seen as a sign of death and the grave. But in Isaiah, life comes from this dead stump; the Messiah, the descendant of Jesse, will come forth and bring life where it seems there is no life. New life emerges like new shoots from deep roots. When it begins it may be ungainly, and not lovely, but it is new life.

In this age we are afraid of what is dying all around us. Our congregations are smaller, and finances are difficult. As we look around, we long for new life. But we are reminded that new life is coming, even as what we see looks like a dead stump. We have the Messiah. We have Emmanuel. God is with us.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 173<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:14 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

The agenda for the 173<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Synod Council was approved as presented.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

Ms. Ellen Daneke, chair of the Forward Together in Faith Team, presented the current round of grants provided from this ministry endowment.

Ms. Daneke noted that the fund had \$25,000 to distribute this year. This number is lower than last year, but that is due to the drop in the stock market.

The Team received thirteen applications. Of those thirteen, one was rejected, as it did not meet the parameters of the grant guidelines. The remaining 12 applicants will receive at least partial grants for their projects, if not the full amount they requested.

When asked into which of the four areas of emphasis (Networking, Innovating, Communicating, and Equipping) the grants fell, she said they were predominantly in the area of Communicating. Congregations are still quite focused on making improvements in technology to assist with their on-line presence and ability to reach out to a broader audience.

### **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Davenport commented that we do this work of the Church in teams; we do not do it alone. It is the OFFICE of the Bishop, not just the person who is the Bishop, that accomplishes much of what is contained in her report. Members of the Synod Council should feel free to ask the staff questions regarding the items before the Synod as well as asking the Bishop herself.

Pr. Gwendolyn King raised a question for co-Director for Evangelical Mission, Pr. Bryan Penman. She thought she had heard a survey was coming out regarding congregational vitality. Is there an update on this?

Pr. Penman said that we have been working with the Rev. Dr. Dave Daubert, who has reworked our congregational assessment tool. It is now much simpler to use, and it is web-based, making it more immediate in providing “results.” When a congregation fills out the form, the program produces a report with PowerPoint and other helps nearly instantly. And above all this, it is FREE.

Mr. Bert Glenn asked if, in addition to providing such a tool for congregations, we monitor congregations to see if they are approaching a “danger zone,” where they may be in risk of closing, so that, perhaps, we can offer assistance earlier and possibly stave off an end to their ministry.

Bishop Davenport said we are working with the Deans to identify such congregations, and are building a database from that information.

Bishop Davenport then shared several pieces from her written report with the Council.

#### **Rostered Ministers Equipping Event**

After three years we were finally able to come together again for this event. It was offered both in person, and online for those who felt uncomfortable gathering face to face. We were able to offer this event free of charge to our rostered ministers. The event was not free, but it was important to find a way to offer it free of charge as an investment in our leaders. With the level of burnout among rostered ministers, we wanted to be sure to provide this opportunity to allow our pastors and deacons to experience rejuvenation and renewal.

### **African Descent Lutheran Association**

ADLA held an event at Christ, Upper Darby, to honor the Rev. Jehu Jones, the first African American Lutheran pastor, who was ordained in 1832. Jones established the first African American Lutheran Congregation, St. Paul, in 1834 here in Center City Philadelphia. This celebration was somewhat bittersweet, as the Rev. Dr. Richard Stewart, who had unearthed this history which has allowed us to have a street marker erected at the historic site, died just before this celebration.

When we celebrated the life and ministry of Dr. Stewart the next day, also at Christ, Upper Darby, it was good to have the black theologians present, reminding us of the diversity we have in the Body of Christ.

### **Sparking the Movement**

The ELCA is striving to recognize this diversity, even as it struggles to find helpful ways to do so. The “Sparking the Movement Gathering” raised three challenging questions for the Church to consider: over the next ten years, what does the ELCA need to give up? What do we need to hold on to? What do we need to be? While these are good steps, a sign of our struggle for change is seen in the makeup of the team. It is nearly entirely prominent, well-educated, white people. Bishop Davenport was the only woman of color present. Bishop pointed out another missed opportunity to spark change and diversity. While the Sparking the Movement group was meeting, there were other groups searching for more inclusion and diversity, including a gathering of womanist theologians, present at the Church Offices at the same time, and yet there was no cross conversation. There was not even a plan for these different teams to share lunch together, which could have been a simple way to begin building bridges and connections moving forward.

### **Conference of Bishops**

The Conference had many important conversations, including a discussion with the Rev. Jeff Thiemann of PORTICO Benefits regarding disability benefits, and discussions about the recent events in the United Methodist Church, the actions of which are resulting in many people coming to the ELCA.

### **Zone of Peace**

We, with our ecumenical partners, have been in discussion about the “57 Blocks” program. This is a program to address issues in the 57 blocks in Philadelphia where the greatest amount of gun violence occurs. How can we take steps to increase opportunity, and mitigate situations that increase the chance of violence, in these specific areas? The number “57” has now been expanded to 72, but even with the greater number, it is a relatively small percentage of the total number of blocks in Philadelphia where such violence is experienced. The Black Clergy of Philadelphia also have representation in this discussion. The violence in the city is becoming so great that the Jewish Federation now has a security office.

Mr. Glenn asked Bishop Davenport what the issues are with the United Methodist Church that are causing such division.

Bishop Davenport shared the United Methodists are debating the same issues of sexuality as the ELCA did in 2009: same sex marriage, ordination of LGBTQ ministers, and transgender issues. This is causing a major divide in the denomination.

Pr. King recognized how much Bishop Davenport has on her plate, and asked how she might be taking care of herself in these difficult times.

Bishop noted that her relationships with friends and colleagues are important. She will be going, with a few other people, to visit Bishop Burkat in California, where she is serving as interim Bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod, for some time of mutual support.

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

Vice President Beasley noted that the Council has the minutes from the meeting of the Executive Committee.

Ms. Beasley shared that, as part of her role as Vice President, she attended the Holy Closure of Bethany, Roxborough. She encouraged the members of the Synod Council to be aware of such Synod events, and take the time to show up to them, showing our support by our presence.

Vice President Beasley then invited Ms. Carrie Schwab, coordinator of our Synod Assembly, to present on where we are to date with this upcoming meeting.

Ms. Schwab shared that we will be back in person for the Assembly this year. After several years of being distant, we are working on making our return to an in-person Assembly a cause for celebration. We sent a survey asking what people had as their hopes for this year's Assembly, and we gathered a many different opinions. There was a fairly even split between having a one-day on-line event, a one-day in-person event, and a two-day in-person event. While the divisions were fairly even across the three categories, two-thirds of the responses did ask for an in-person Assembly.

We are also working on a program that would span a day and a half, starting in the afternoon on Friday, and then concluding on Saturday. This is an attempt to balance the desire to have the opportunity to gather, but recognizing that two full days, especially a full day on a Friday, is difficult for lay people who cannot get the day off work for the Assembly.

We have been in conversation with Franconia Mennonite Church, and they are holding the date for us. Before we commit to going back to our former site, we are also investigating the Valley Forge Resort Center. This is because another major component of the survey showed that people wanted to have the chance to fellowship and network with each other, and a Resort Center may be more able to provide such opportunities than the Mennonite church can. Valley Forge will be more expensive as a site, but we will also save on the expenses of the tent for the meals. Valley Forge has offered us a price that is significantly lower than their usual fee, but the cost of food would be more expensive than the caterers we used at Franconia. All of these varying costs will be part of the determination as to whether we move to a new site, or return to Franconia.

We will keep some form of electronic voting. We need to address concerns about how we do this. At the church there may not be strong enough WiFi to have this work properly. At the Resort Center there is likely enough bandwidth, but we need to investigate the if there is an increase in expense that goes with this greater capacity. Pr. Bob Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communication and Mission Interpretation, is also exploring other systems by which we might be able to conduct electronic voting.

Pr. Marie Sager asked where Franconia is, as she is relatively new to the Synod and has not been there before.

Pr. Penman said it is in Montgomery County, near Souderton, north of Lansdale.

A question was raised about V-poll, which was used last year, and whether voting members will need to bring a laptop.

Ms. Schwab said a smartphone should work for V-poll, if this is the system we determine to use.

Ms. Schwab then asked Bishop Davenport to share the tentative theme for the Assembly.

Bishop shared the current idea: “Called by God to Serve in an OMG World.” The idea is to have something provocative that will encourage people to attend, and to have a hook by which we and address many of the concerns that people are dealing with. Bishop asked for reactions. Would this inspire you to come?

Pr. Nathan Krause: When I hear this, I hear that we are going to be equipped for serving the people of this day, in the language of this day.

Bishop Davenport: I read this is Bishop Almquist’s newsletter, and it grabbed me. I want language that will grab attention.

Pr. Stacey-Kyle Rea, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship: for some, “omg” is like “like, ya know,” where for other generations it might be offensive.

Ms. Schwab: When I saw it, I heard it as flippant, and that people were not taking the Name seriously. But how do we approach people where they are, in a secular, not religious world?

Bishop Davenport: To me, what is it to serve when everywhere we turn it is “Oh my goodness!” There is the war in Ukraine, there is gun violence, there is more racial tension. But we cannot give up.

Mr. Roland Thompson: It is like the end of home improvement shows, where they are surprised at the finished project: “OMG! I cannot believe it can look so good!”

Ms. Schwab asked the Council if they are good with the overall format of a day and a half. The consensus was affirmative.

Pr. Krause said that he is very much looking forward to returning to being in-person and having this time together.

## **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

### **Actions on the Roster**

Secretary Richard brought forward the following actions on the Roster:

#### ***Renewal of Call to Specialized Ministry***

**S.C.22.12.33. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year, renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the **Rev. Margaret**

**J. Ainslie** as Director of Pastoral Care at Doylestown Hospital beginning February 27, 2023 to February 26, 2024.

**The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution**

***Request to Move from On Leave (Disability) to Retired Roster***

**S.C.22.12.34. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve moving the Rev. Susan K. Ericsson to the retired roster effective January 1, 2023.

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

***Request to Move from On Leave to Retired Roster***

**S.C.22.12.35. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve moving the Rev. Tina Mackey to the retired roster effective February 1, 2023.

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

**Information Only; No Action Required**

***Transfers***

The Rev. Dr. Richard Mathisen **to** Northeastern PA Synod effective 02/08/2022

The Rev. Nelson Rivera **from** Northeastern PA Synod effective 09/19/2022

The Rev. Rick Elliott **from** Northeastern PA Synod to retired roster effective 10/31/2022

Deacon Jane Elliott **from** Northeastern PA Synod to retired roster effective 10/31/2022

The Rev. Dr. Richard Stewart **from** Upstate New York to retired roster effective 11/01/2022

***Deaths***

Mrs. Martha Reumann (*honorable mention; will not be included in official Report of the Secretary for Bulletin of Reports*) death occurred November 13, 2022.

The Rev. Dr. Richard Stewart death occurred November 13, 2022.

The Rev. Kenneth Smith death occurred November 27, 2022.

The Rev. John Stevens Kerr death occurred November 30, 2022.

**Reception of the property of the former Bethany, Roxborough**

Secretary Richard then brought forward a resolution to receive the property of the former Bethany, Roxborough:

**S.C.22.12.36. THEREFORE, RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council** acknowledges with sadness the action of Bethany Lutheran Church, 401 Martin Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19128 to close, effective November 20, 2022, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of Bethany, Roxborough, in accordance with the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, specifically 9.71.b., +S13.23., and \*C7.01.; and, on this date, December 8, 2022, authorizes the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, or the Bishop's representative(s), to sell the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Secretary Richard described that this is a formal action we take in order to authorize the Office of the Bishop to dispose of the property if it seems the best course of action to take. In some

cases it may make sense to keep the property and try to repurpose it, but we learned from past experience that it is important to make the resolution so that there is clear action acknowledging that we as the Synod have received the property, and have given authorization to sell it if we need to.

Secretary Richard noted that we, as the Synod, do not close congregations, nor do we desire congregations to close. We do not gain anything from this, as there is more opportunity to share the Gospel if we have more sites from which to do ministry. Congregations that believe that we as the Synod close congregations, or that we are trying to do so, do not understand the role we play.

Congregations close when the people in the congregation feel they can no longer afford to do the ministry, either from a lack of finances, or from a lack of people. But as the ELCA is an interdependent organization, with Churchwide, Synod, and Congregation each playing a role in the work of the Church, when a congregation chooses to close, the Synod becomes, in a sense, the “executor of the estate.” As in our families, when a member of the family dies, someone in the family receives the estate, and deals with its disbursement after the fact. So it is with the property of former congregations. The Synod receives the assets, and by the way, the liabilities, of the now closed congregation. The congregation no longer exists, but someone has to deal with the affects.

Pr. John Heidgerd asked if there is an assessment of the liabilities that come from closed congregations, and whether we should know that balance sheet prior to acting to receive the property.

There is not such an assessment, and even if there were, the Synod is the body that constitutionally is responsible for the property regardless of net asset or net liability.

Pr. Penman shared that congregations do not close because they could still be viable. They usually wait until they cannot pay for the deferred maintenance that has caught up with them. In Bethany’s case, some of the reasons they voted to close were an outdated and costly heating system, a lack of parking, and roof repairs that will cost more than \$250,000. The idea that we are going to receive congregations with valuable assets is not true, and gives a misleading sense of what we are doing in this action.

Secretary Richard asked if the Council was ready to vote.

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

### **Appointment of a Synod Attorney**

Secretary Richard noted that our previous Synod Attorney, Mr. John Gordon, has retired. We need to appoint a new attorney to do the work of the Synod. Upon Mr. Gordon’s recommendation, and with the agreement of Bishop Davenport, the Executive Committee recommend the Rev. Kim L. Lengert, Esquire, be appointed to serve as Synod Attorney for Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA. She has been working for us in several matters over the past months, but according to the Synod Constitution, her appointment as our Synod Attorney needs confirmation by the Synod Council:

†S8.13. **The synod bishop may appoint an attorney, admitted to the bar within the territory of the synod or the state where the synod is located, to be Synod Attorney. The appointment must be approved by the Synod Council and reported to the**

**Synod Assembly and to the secretary of this church. The appointment continues until resignation or until a successor is appointed. The Synod Attorney provides legal advice and counsel to the synod officers and the Synod Council. The Synod Attorney is expected to be familiar with the governing documents and policies of the synod and, as necessary, to attend meetings of the Synod Council. The Synod Attorney serves without salary but may be retained and compensated for specific legal services requested by the synod.**

To this end, the following resolution was placed before the Council:

**S.C.22.12.37. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the appoint of the Reverend Kim L. Lengert, Esquire, to serve as Synod Attorney for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA.

Mr. Glenn inquired as to the type of work the Synod Attorney does.

Bishop Davenport replied that it covers many types of issues; concerns regarding property, issues with the Boy Scouts, concerns such as those of Trinity, South Philadelphia and Synodical Administration.

Mr. Glenn: I note that the candidate does not have a significant amount of time in service as a lawyer. While she has been an attorney for 15 years, she is also a pastor, and she has spent many of these years in that role. Are you comfortable with the level of experience she brings?

Bishop Davenport said she is very comfortable with her experience.

Vice President Beasley also said that she is comfortable with Attorney Lengert, having worked with her often in the situation at Trinity.

Mr. Glenn also asked if it bothered anyone that our Synod Attorney lives in Maine.

Vice President Beasley said that this is not important, as Lengert has passed the bar in Pennsylvania, and she has been here in Philadelphia several times to handle business for us.

Vice President Beasley noted that Attorney Lengert has many contacts in the area that have proven to be helpful to us.

The vote was called.

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

### **2023 Housing Allowances for Rostered Ministers on Synod Staff**

Finally, Secretary Richard brought to the Council a resolution setting Housing Allowances for the staff.

**WHEREAS**, Internal Revenue Code Section 107, as well as the associated Regulations and Revenue Rulings, provide that a portion of a minister's remuneration, designated as rental/housing allowance by the employing church or other qualifying organization, is excludable from the minister's gross income under Section 107 of the code; and

**WHEREAS**, The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a qualifying organization, and

**WHEREAS**, of the compensation paid by SEPA Synod to ministers listed below in the calendar year 2022 the amount stated in each instance is designated as a rental/housing allowance in accordance with the provisions of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

**S.C.22.12.38. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2023 housing allowance for Bishop Patricia Davenport, Pastor Robert Fisher, Pastor Violet Little, Pastor Stacey-Kyle Rea, and Pastor Karen Sease, and **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the recipients be reminded that the amounts so designated as rental/housing allowance are excludable from the gross income of the respective recipients only to the extent that said amounts are used to rent or provide a home. Further the amount eligible for the Section 107 exclusion may not exceed the fair rental value of the minister's home (including furnishings and appurtenances) plus the cost of utilities. To the extent a greater amount is designated as rental/housing allowance, the designation will be ineffectual with respect to such amount.

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

### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, shared details from her written report. The financial reports are from October. The numbers from November show that Partnership Support has grown slightly.

The Generosity Team sends quarterly reports to congregations to keep them apprised of where they stand with regard to their giving to the Synod.

Treasurer Neff encouraged members to check their own congregation's numbers, and see how they are keeping up with their support.

Much of the loss we have continues to be due to the depressed market, and the subsequent decrease in our investment portfolio. These losses are still "unrealized" losses. The hope is that the market will rebound, and these losses will be regained in the coming year.

The losses in the investment funds show as loss across the four areas of our budget; Unrestricted, Temporarily Restricted, Mission, and Permanently Restricted.

Expenses continue to be lower than they were pre-pandemic, which has helped our overall bottom line.

Treasurer Neff expressed her thanks to Mr. Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee, Pr. Heidgerd, chair of the Investment Committee, and Mr. Martin Schwab, the Synod's Senior Accountant, for their ongoing help and support.

### **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Glenn noted that the Committee reviewed the most recent statements available and found no issues with the reports.

#### **Grace Trust**

The Committee looked at the status of this Trust, which has been received by the Synod to assist congregations in Montgomery County. A proposal for how this money may be accessed is being developed with the Deans of the four Conferences with congregations in Montgomery County.

At this time there is no income for disbursement. The Finance Committee recommends that the

Investment Committee consider if there may be a better investment vehicle for this Trust that may generate more income.

### **Fund for Mission**

While the Fund for Mission is not directly under this Committee's purview, the Finance Committee does keep an eye on this Fund as it is such a significant pocket of money. It does also help with the Mission portion of the budget, and is also used for projects recommended by the co-Directors for Evangelical Mission, and approved by the Fund for Mission Trustees. The next meeting of the FFM Trustees will be in January 2023.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Investment Committee**

Pr. John Heidgerd, chair of the Investment Committee, shared that the Committee is taking the Grace Trust into consideration as they review the entire portfolio. The Committee hopes to have a proposal for the Synod Council at its January meeting.

### **Nominating Committee**

As Pr. Klinger the chair of the committee, was unable to attend this meeting, Ms. Doreen Kinzler shared the following report on their progress.

The letter asking for nominations has been sent to the congregations and rostered ministers of the Synod. We have added to the letter a description of the tasks and preferred backgrounds that would be helpful for the various positions. We are looking for two clergy and several lay persons from particular conferences. If you are from one of those conferences, please help us find quality people to serve.

### **Constitution Committee**

Pr. Marie Sager, chair, said the Committee has received word of one congregation that is starting the process of revising their constitution.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Vice President Beasley shared a "praise report" with the Synod Council. While she was not elected Vice President of the ELCA, she is still in the room. She has been chosen to serve on the ELCA Executive Committee. She feels that this is an affirmation from the Holy Spirit. God wants her at the table, but has spared her the added pressure that goes with the title "Vice President."

Bishop Davenport noted that the All Saints Appeal continues. She encourages all members of the Synod Council to make a contribution, large or small. It is good to be able to say we have support of 100% of the Synod Council.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Gary Costa.

The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be January 26, 2023, 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, January 26, 2023*

**MINUTES**  
**of the 174<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**Zoom Meeting**  
**January 26, 2023**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**DEVOTIONS**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:04 p.m. and invited Ms. Dorothy Wilson to lead the Council in devotions.

Ms. Wilson noted that she and her family have been members of Faith Lutheran in Northeast Philadelphia since its inception. She enjoys being a Lutheran. And she enjoys being at Faith. She noted surprise at where inspiration comes. She has many magazine subscriptions which she seldom reads, but during the pandemic, she picked up 6 months of magazines and started going through them, saving recipes, and reading articles. Among these articles was one in “Women’s Day” from Candace Cameron Bure. She plays Aurora Teagarden in the Hallmark series of the same name, and in the ‘80s she played DJ Tanner on the television show “Full House.” This article was “Love: it’s more than a feeling; it’s an attitude.”

In the article Bure noted that it is important to get ready for each day, and to do so on the inside as well as out. Ms. Wilson read the article, which included the words of scripture, “Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, you beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another, and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other, just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which finds everything together in perfect harmony.”

We are reminded that love is an attitude, an attitude that chooses to be patient, even when it is hard, to celebrate what is good, to help others, and not keep a record of wrongs.

Ms. Wilson concluded her devotion with prayer for the work we are called to do as the Synod Council, that it might be done in love.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 174<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:14 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

### **SETTING THE AGENDA**

The agenda for the 174<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Synod Council was approved with the addition of a discussion of a proposal regarding the property of University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, to be led by Pr. Kim L. Lengert, esq., our Synod Attorney.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

Pr. Violet Little and Pr. Schaunel Steinnegal were invited to share about the ministry of The Welcome Church, and particularly of The Well.

Pr. Little began with some of the history of The Well. This ministry began in the winter of 2015-2016. The reason for its development was the lack of any safe place where women without housing could go to spend the night. There are many shelters, but they are not secure. Men may be present, causing women who have suffered abuse to be on guard. In the shelters, they cannot leave their possessions unattended, and often sit up all night to ensure they are not robbed or assaulted. The name “The Well” comes from the story in John’s Gospel of the Woman at the Well, where Jesus met her where she was. It is also a play on the word “Welcome,” as this is an outgrowth of the ministry of The Welcome Church.

As with issues of concern in the Welcome Church, this decision was not entered into without input from the community. The women of the Welcome Church were gathered to share ideas and provide input. Some of the key issues discussed were the need for safety, continuity, and security. The women wanted to ensure that there would not be men present, that they would have a place to which they could return each evening, and a space where they could secure their possessions during the day when they are out.

The Well began at the historic Church of the Crucifixion. They began with some cots and a way to cook some meals. A primary goal was to create a sense of community among the women, which has become the main success of the program. Horizon House was a key ally in the determination of who would be invited to this program. Women who were labelled “shelter resistant” were the first to be brought into this housing ministry, and before long, many of them were finding permanent housing.

The Well’s model became so successful that the City of Philadelphia offered to pay the staff so the program might be available year-round. This sounds great on the surface, but it would necessitate changes in the way in which The Well could operate. This would impact the ability of the women to set the rules for themselves. An alternative plan was devised, and a new partnership developed, where the City gives money to Bethesda Project, and Bethesda pays the staff. This allows The Well to continue as it was configured, allowing the members a say in how the program operates.

As the Church of the Crucifixion has closed, the ministry has now moved to a Presbyterian Church in the City. Money was raised to make showers available at this site. This is a tremendous blessing to the women. The women continue to form community, and to work as

community. They have worked to set ground rules for life together, dealing with such issues as what happens if someone does not show up for 3 days in a row? Do we hold the bed? How do we set standards of life together?

This sense of community and self-determination has led to other opportunities. For instance, the Deaconess Community has worked with The Well, and together they have been involved in The Poor Peoples' Campaign. Through this partnership alumna of The Well went to the Women's March on Washington.

There are approximately 150 women who have been assisted by this ministry, about 25 each year.

Pastors Little and Steinnegal opened the floor for comments and questions.

Pr. Gwendolyn King: I am a super fan of the Well and the Welcome church, and I have known many of the women who have gone through the programs. They have brought me more hope and inspiration than words can ever say. You go, girls!

Mr. Bert Glenn: The Well ministers to women. Is the Welcome Church for women also?

Pr. Little: no, the Welcome Church is a congregation, like any other. The Welcome Church is about 75% men, which reflects the community of the unhoused. The Well was set up specifically for women because of the lack of safe places for them to go.

The latest project of the Welcome Church is for couples on the street. They do not want to be separated, but their children are usually placed in foster care. We are looking at how we can support them in the journey they are on.

The Welcome Church is very organic. Our focus is, "How can we share the love of a gracious God with all in need?"

Pr. Sellers: With the Well, were there zoning issues with housing people in churches?

Pr. Little: Not in Philadelphia. In Philly you can house people in churches. This is not so in every city, though you can work around this by claiming your congregation to be a 24-hour worship space. Our churches are as blessed by the women as the women are blessed by the congregations. It is a true partnership we have with our congregations.

Pr. Moses Suah-Dennis thanked Pr. Little and Pr. Steinnegal, and stated they are a true blessing to the Church.

## **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Davenport referred the Council to her written report, and stated she would not be reading from what they already have received. She shared that lately she has been intentionally leaving the office, and she feels a tremendous sense of accomplishment and reconnection with people and ministry.

A particular issue she raised regarded the original theme of the Synod Assembly. Bishop Davenport noted that we set a controversial theme: "Transformed to Serve in a WTF\* (where's the faith) World." To evoke a response, we used "WTF." While the definition was included immediately as "where's the faith," the provocative wording was offensive to several people.

Bishop took responsibility for the choice of theme. She shared that to offend one is to offend all. We have since revised the theme and the messaging, removing the initials. The theme is now “Transformed to Serve in a where’s the faith World.”

Bishop then asked if there were questions from the Council on her written report.

Pr. Serena Sellers noted that her report included some days off for illness. Pr. Sellers wanted the Bishop to know that we are here to support her in whatever issues she may be facing.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pr. Sellers for her concern. Bishop is indeed well. The days off were just days off, not for medical reasons.

Pr. Sellers expressed her pleasure to know all is well.

Bishop Davenport then turned the remainder of her time to Ms. Carrie Schwab, Synod Assembly Coordinator, to bring and update on the 2023 Synod Assembly.

### **Assembly Updates**

Ms. Schwab shared that the Synod Assembly planning team has received and reviewed the responses to the survey, and has been working to implement some new aspects to the Assembly based on what we have heard. Among those responses were a desire to meet again in person, to have the opportunity for fellowship, to try something new, to have an extended period of time for conversation and deliberation, and yet, to make it possible for employed lay members to attend without losing a full day of work.

We had been very excited about the possibility of going to a new site, the Valley Forge Resort Center. This would be a new venue, with a new feel, and a greater set of options for food and fellowship (one thing we heard was using the tent at Franconia for meals was not comfortable or desirable). The cost for the technology piece made it prohibitive this year, particularly since we do not know how many people will choose to attend an in-person Assembly. One-third of the respondents to the survey had requested a remote assembly, and we cannot know if they will come since it is in-person. If that many people choose not to attend, it affects the overall amount of funds we will have to cover the costs. We are still considering using Valley Forge next year, depending on how attendance and finances may pan out. Next year is the election of a Bishop, and that usually brings additional participants to the Assembly. And we will be one more year past the pandemic, which may ease some peoples’ concerns.

For this year, we have decided to return to Franconia Mennonite Center. The surveys did not indicate any problem with Franconia. The consideration of Valley Forge was to meet other desires raised in the survey for fellowship and something new. We have made some changes to try to address these items:

We will begin Friday afternoon at 2:00, rather than Friday morning, in response to those concerned with losing a full day of work.

We are ending at dinner time to make it a shorter day.

Dinner on Friday will be on one’s own, allowing people the option to go to various local eateries for fellowship and conversation. This will also save on the cost of providing a meal that many people “skipped out” on when we ended the day with worship following dinner.

We will be sharing information about local places where people might gather.

Lunch on Saturday will be inside the building, where we used to have the Mission Center, rather than in the tent. This will mean having two seatings for lunch, but we will not be subject to the weather. This is not significantly different in timing. When we used the tent we did not all eat at one time. While people are not at lunch, they can take advantage of the Mission Displays. We will keep electronic voting. We will use a different system that will not be dependent on Wi-Fi, so voting members will not be pushed off for lack of bandwidth.

Ms. Schwab entertained comments and questions.

Pr. Serena Sellers: If the lunch will be in the space for the Mission Center, will there still be a Mission Center?

Ms. Schwab: Yes. It will either be downstairs in the Sunday School space, or we may make use of the large hallways to have the mission displays arranged in them. But we are definitely planning for agencies and ministries to have display booths.

Treasurer Janet Neff: Will there be a pre-session on finance so we can share the details of the report and the budget there? This seemed to help streamline the process at the Assembly.

Ms. Schwab: Yes, we plan to do this again.

Pr. Gwendolyn King: How will the meal work? If there are two seatings, how will they be determined.

Ms. Schwab: We will assign a time, early or late, to people as part of the registration. We will keep congregations together.

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

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley noted the Synod Council had received the Executive Committee report in their packet of materials. She asked if there were any questions or comments before we go into particulars of one part of it. With no questions raised, the Vice President introduced Pr. Kim Lengert, our Synod Attorney, to bring information about a proposal concerning the University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation (UniLu).

### **University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation**

Pr. Lengert thanked the Synod Council for allowing her to serve as our attorney. It has been an exciting time already. By means of introduction, she shared that she has recently celebrated the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of her ordination. Approximately 15 years ago she took a sabbatical and went to law school. She has transformed her brick-and-mortar law practice to be entirely virtual. She is still licensed in Pennsylvania, and still practices in Pennsylvania, but she lives on an island in Maine.

Regarding the issue before the Synod Council, she has been working on this proposal from The Mark, LLC. The conversations have included the developer, the ELCA, National Lutheran Campus Ministry, and University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation (UniLu). Information has been shared with the Synod Council, but as further information, concerns regarding possible damage to the structure have been addressed. A title search has been done on the property so issues of any easements that may have existed can be addressed. We are now at the point of memorializing the agreement so that construction can start, and the work be completed.

Vice President Beasley asked if Pr. Lengert could give an overview of what it is that is being proposed to the property of UniLu.

A brief summary: The Mark has purchased the property next to University Lutheran. Because of the height of the building they are constructing, they want to add two anchors under the church building and use them as tie-ins for the construction to make the new building more secure. These anchors will give more support and safety to the new structure. The anchors will take some time to put in and will be completed in stages. The process will take several weeks to complete. During this process, monitors will be added at the UniLu property so that the contractor can be aware of any changes in the structure prior to any damage occurring. The reports of this monitoring will be shared with all parties during the construction, so all are aware if concerns arise. They have offered \$75,000 as compensation for the inconvenience of this work.

Mr. Bert Glenn: Is this anchor system for construction, or is it a permanent structure?

Pr. Lengert: The anchors are permanent; they will not be removed at the end of the construction.

Mr. Glenn: Will UniLu get an annual rent for this?

Pr. Lengert: This is a one-time payment.

Mr. Glenn: is this the \$75,000 that is noted in the documents?

Pr. Lengert: Yes, and this is stated as being for any access to the property of UniLu, and any inconvenience caused to the congregation during construction.

Mr. Glenn: Is there a reason we are not asking instead for an annual rent?

Pr. Lengert: the congregation has not brought a request for annual rent. The thought is that this sum is more significant than an annual rent would be.

Pr. John Heidgerd asked how the amount of \$75,000 was achieved.

Pr. Lengert: This number, and the one-time payment, is what has been offered by the developer.

Pr. Heidgerd: Was any kind of benchmark analysis done to determine an appropriate value?

Pr. Lengert: Those discussions have been between the congregation and the construction company. The congregation is represented by a civil attorney, and I trust they have done this assessment well. This attorney is a person whom the Synod uses in representing congregations, and he also happens to be a member of University Lutheran.

Mr. Richard Daniels: What are the names of the two engineering firms involved?

Pr. Lengert: One is SPAK, and they are working with the congregation. I can find the name of the other for you later.

Pr. King: For clarification, which property “next to” UniLu has been purchased? Is it the property that used to be the International House?

Pr. Bryan Penman brought up a Google Map view of the property to help gain some perspective.

Pr. King: What I am concerned with is the ashes that are buried along the fence. Has this been taken into consideration?

Pr. Lengert: I was not aware that there was a crematorium there. Is this on the UniLu side of the fence?

Pr. King: Yes

Pr. Lengert: Then this arrangement should not interfere with these ashes.

Mr. Richard Daniels: What concerns of trespass will there be? Will all the construction to be done on the developer's property?

Pr. Lengert: The only need to go onto the property of UniLu will be for monitoring, not for construction. These anchors will be going in at a "pitch," and the intent is to do so from the developer's property while going under the property where UniLu is.

Mr. Glenn: If the congregation is doing the negotiating, why are we as the Synod Council involved in this consideration?

Pr. Lengert: The Synod has a 73.4% interest in the property. The ELCA Lutheran Campus Ministry has a 26.6% interest in the property. University Lutheran has no equity in the physical site.

Treasurer Janet Neff indicated that this is listed on our balance sheet as "Equity and Chapel and Student Center."

Pr. Lengert: As a result of this equity stake the Synod Council will need to sign off on this proposal. We do not need to do so tonight, but soon.

In searching the paperwork before her, the engineering firm for the developer is listed as "engineer of record." She will need to get back to the Council with which firm this is if this is a concern.

Mr. Daniels: I was just curious, as I am a civil structural engineer. I didn't know if perhaps I knew the firms.

Pr. Heidgerd: I am glad we are not acting on this tonight, as I would still like a further understanding of the process used for the valuation of \$75,000. I would like to know the valuation of whatever rights UniLu may be giving up.

Pr. Lengert: The underground rights are not part of the deal. The use of the anchors does not compromise these rights.

Pr. Heidgerd: I just want to ensure that UniLu is being fairly compensated for whatever they might be giving up. And since the Synod is a 75% holder in the property, it seems as though the Synod ought to know how this value was determined.

Mr. Glenn: If these are concrete anchors, and are permanent structures, is there need for an easement for this structure? How is this happening.

Pr. Lengert: There is not a need for an easement. The easement is actually with the electric company, and the electric company has signed off on this.

Mr. Glenn: Doesn't UniLu have property rights since it is underneath their building? Do they not have the right to exclude?

Pr. Lengert: The Synod and Lutheran Campus Ministry technically have the property rights, UniLu does not.

Mr. Glenn: So, is the \$75,000 then coming to the Synod? Or at least 75% of that?

Secretary Richard: This is one of my questions, also. As this is the Synod's property, it seems as though the Synod has an interest in knowing how the number has been determined. It also seems to me that since the property is owned by the Synod and the ELCA, the process would be that the money comes to the Synod, and then the Synod should determine what goes to UniLu.

Vice President Beasley: Who pays the insurance and everything that is related to the new construction in case something goes wrong? We are not paying for that, are we?

Ms. Neff: That should be on the developer. She added, I don't want to speak for everybody, but I personally am confused. Could we have a diagram or something to show us more of a description that may not be a legal document, but which can show us what is happening and to who, and what the repercussions are? There are a lot of good questions here about the 75,000 and who gets it, how it is calculated, and what the implications for the congregation are.

Mr. Daniels: The developer is going to put a structure on our property. The structure is going to be there forever. I don't know if we ever will have a desire to redevelop the property and maybe put up our own 34 story building. But the developer is going to be "first in" with a permanent structure, which means we'll never be able to put some structure in that place. I don't know if we're concerned about that or not. But before they start work is the time to hash that out.

I would like to see a copy of the foundation drawings.

Pr. Lengert: The full plans should be drawn up and ready by the end of the week. It is also important to realize that the purpose of this building is for student housing, and so there will be 34 floors worth of students next door to University Lutheran, regularly going past the church.

Pr. Heidgerd: As we are thinking about the \$75,000, I had a similar experience at the seminary when I was the CFO regarding selling the air rights on top of one of our buildings to a cell phone company. We were getting over \$20,000 per year, and were able to translate that into a sell-off of future cash-flow of about \$800,000. This is why I am concerned about how we determine the value of a one-time payment of \$75,000.

Mr. Glenn: It seems as though this project cannot go forward without our approval, and that is why there is a monetary transaction as part of this. Also, as Richard has pointed out, not only are we allowing them to use our property for their purposes, but we also may be limiting our future potential to do something with this property should we want to.

Pr. Lengert: To clarify, the original plans for construction of the building have been approved whether these anchors are approved or not. These tie-ins are being proposed as an added safety feature.

Pr. Heidgerd: So, in what way are we helping them more than they are helping us? Are we getting fairly compensated for giving up our property so they could do this construction in a way that would satisfy the codes of the of the city building people?

Pr. Nathan Krause: I note we show \$100,000 on our balance sheet as University Lutheran air rights. I do not know how this may play into this conversation.

Ms. Neff: Several years ago, we sold those air rights. The interest we earn each year on that money we give to UniLu.

VP Beasley: At this point, and for the sake of time, I think we will have another meeting. It probably would need to be a special meeting. I will also say that the lawyer for UniLu needs to be in this meeting also. He will have answers to some of these questions. Are there any other concerns to raise before the meeting we will call for this issue?

Mr. Everett Wick: How soon do we need to make this decision? I have a son who has a development consulting business that deals with high-rises, and I would like him to look at this contract before we sign. I would like him, with permission, to look at this proposal and offer his opinion.

Vice President Beasley: We also have Brother Richard Daniels who is in this field if I am correct.

Mr. Daniels had lost connection for a brief time, so Mr. Wick repeated that his son has a consulting business that handles high-rise construction, and he would like his son to take a look at this proposal and offer any thoughts.

Mr. Daniels: I think this is a great idea. I would be glad to be a part of this.

Mr. Wick: My son is in Minneapolis.

Mr. Daniels: With Zoom, anything can work.

VP Beasley thanked Pr. Lengert was thanked for her time and her explanations. Pr. Lengert will follow up on the questions raised at this meeting. A decision will be made at a future meeting for just this issue.

### **Appointment of a Treasurer**

Vice President Beasley asked for Treasurer Janet Neff to be placed in the “waiting room” while the Council considers the appointment of a treasurer.

After Ms. Neff was out of the meeting it was noted that the treasurer serves for a term of four years. Ms. Neff was appointed to this position in February of 2019, and thereby her term is coming to an end. According to the bylaws of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, the Synod Council appoints the treasurer.

The Executive Committee made the following motion:

**S.C.23.01.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council appoints Ms. Janet Neff to the office of Treasurer of the SEPA Synod for a 4-year term, expiring 2027.**

Mr. Glenn spoke in favor of this resolution, stating that he finds Ms. Neff to be very good to work with, and he is glad she is willing to serve again.

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

Ms. Neff was readmitted to the meeting and was congratulated on her re-appointment.

### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

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

Secretary Richard brought forward the following actions on the roster:

***Request to Move from the Active Roster to the Retired Roster***

**S.C.23.01.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve moving the Rev. Janelle Kraus to the retired roster effective May 1, 2023. **The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.**

**Information not requiring action**

***Death***

Mrs. Elizabeth Tiemeyer, (honorable mention, not to be included in the official Report of the Secretary in the Bulletin of Reports), death occurred January 1, 2023.

**Amendment to Continuing Resolution**

At the request of the Committee on Reference and Counsel, and with the concurrence of the Vice President, Secretary Richard proposed an amendment of the continuing resolution regarding timing of submissions to the Committee on Reference and Counsel to make the practice consistent regardless of type of Assembly, and to provide adequate time for the Committee to do its due diligence in making recommendations regarding proposed action to the Assembly.

**S.C.23.01.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council** approves amending continuing resolution **S7.32.A01.** by deletion:  
**S7.32.A01.**

*2. Rule Regarding Resolutions Not Meeting the Deadline for Reference and Counsel: The assembly, by a two-thirds vote, may grant permission for consideration of a resolution that a voting member wishes to bring to the floor, but which has not met the imposed deadline of the Reference and Counsel Committee. ~~If the assembly is one day, whether in person or virtual, a~~ Any resolution not meeting the original deadline **MUST** be submitted one week prior to the assembly **AND** be granted permission for consideration by the two-thirds vote as indicated above. **NO RESOLUTION WILL BE CONSIDERED PAST THIS DEADLINE.***

Pr. Sellers raised the concern that there be a process by which an emergent issue might be raised at the Assembly. It is possible that some issue may arise that is not known before the week's deadline, and there should be some way to address the issue. Perhaps if we worded this such that an item beyond the deadline would need to be emergent, and would require a 90% vote of the Assembly for consideration.

Secretary Richard questioned how we might define "emergent," and how we then determine what would qualify for a 90% threshold. If there is an issue that is significant enough to require special attention, we do have the ability to call a special Assembly for that issue.

Pr. Sellers: Yes, but that has a significant financial cost.

Pr. Joseph Klinger, our new parliamentarian, noted that there is a provision by which the Assembly can suspend the rules of procedure, and bring anything it wants to the floor.

Pr. Sellers concurred and withdrew her concern.

Pr. King asked if that is possible if this is a constitutional provision. We can overrule the rules of procedure; can we overrule the Constitution?

Pr. Sellers: Since this is a continuing resolution, the Assembly can change it at will if it desires to do so.

Secretary Richard: As it is a continuing resolution, this is so. If it were a bylaw, that would require different action.

Pr. Klinger concurred.

With no further discussion the vote was called.

**The Synod Council adopted the resolution.**

### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Ms. Neff summarized many of the items in her report. She noted that investment losses are still impacting the overall balance sheet, but our overall financial position is good.

The Synod has received an estate gift of just over \$375,000, designated “for God’s Work.” This has been placed in the Restricted Fund.

Bishop Davenport also noted that we received generous gifts from two of our congregations.

The Welcome Church made a gift of \$3,000, and Good Shepherd, King of Prussia, tithed a gift made to them, making an extra gift above their stated intent. We are grateful for such acts of generosity and are blessed by them.

### **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Bert Glenn, chair, made the report.

The Finance Committee has not met since the last Synod Council meeting. There is a process begun to consider how we might allocate mission dollars from the Grace Trust. Letters to rostered ministers advising them of the process and opportunity to apply for Seminary debt relief are being sent.

### **REPORT OF THE FUND FOR MISSION**

Mr. Glenn also gave the report on the Fund for Mission.

He noted that there are two uses for the money from the Fund for Mission. One is to supplement the Mission portion of the Synod’s budget. The second is to make funds available for projects recommended by our Directors for Evangelical Mission. Each year 5% of the Fund is available for use. Following the allocation of the amount for the Mission portion of the budget, the remainder is available for projects from the Directors of Evangelical Mission. If we do not use the full 5%, the remainder is kept in reserve for future projects that may require significant additional funding, e.g., a new mission start. We “take out” the 5% each year, even if we do not use it all in that particular year.

The Fund for Mission Trustees approved the following:

1. to use funds from the FFM to pay for the projected deficit in the Synod’s proposed Mission Budget for the fiscal year February 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025. This amount is projected by the budget to be \$176,443.
2. to provide \$20,000 for the ministry of St. Michael, Kensington; \$13,000 for 2023, and \$7,000 for 2022.
3. To provide \$4,000 for the ministry of Atonement, Fishtown.

Other projects are being formulated, and requests for funding will be proposed at the next meeting of the Trustees.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Investment Committee**

Pr. John Heidgerd, chair, stated that in the interest of time, he commends his written report to the Council for their review and consideration.

### **Forward Together in Faith**

Ms. Ellen Daneke shared a document with the final disbursements that were made for 2023. Twelve congregations received grants totaling \$24,958. The areas of focus included: Networking – \$1,750; Communicating – \$4,208; Innovating – \$9,500; Equipping – \$9,500.

### **Nominations Committee**

Pr. Joseph Klinger, chair, noted that nominations are coming in, but we still have a way to go. We still need nominees for some of the conference restricted seats. We are still looking for at least one more rostered minister. We are also in need of names for the Consultation Committee.

### **Constitution Committee**

Pr. Marie Sager, chair, noted that there are five congregations in the process of updating their constitutions. They are in different stages. When they are complete, their revised documents will be brought to the Synod Council for ratification.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Bryan Penman.

The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be March 30, 2023, 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, March 30, 2023*

**MINUTES  
of the 175<sup>th</sup> MEETING  
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL  
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
Zoom Meeting  
February 17, 2023  
6:00 p.m.**

This meeting of the Synod Council was called expressly for the purpose of dealing with the proposal from The Mark L.L.C. regarding the property of University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 175<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:05 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present. Bishop Davenport began the meeting with prayer.

Discussion of the following resolutions were the agenda for the meeting:

1. Regarding the Agreement with The Mark:

***THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED*** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves, in principle, the Agreement with *THE MARK AT PHILADELPHIA, LLC*, and desires to enter into this Agreement upon the completion of final details, and ***BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED*** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council entrusts the completion of such details to the Synod's Attorney, the Rev. Kim L. Lengert, Esquire, and that after such details are completed to her satisfaction the Agreement may be executed.

2. Regarding the disbursement of the money from the Agreement:

***THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED*** that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the recommendation of Bishop Davenport, that the money received from this Agreement be conferred to University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation to assist its mission and ministry.

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed our Synod Attorney, the Rev. Kim L. Lengert, Esq., Mr. Bruce McCullough, Attorney for University Lutheran (UniLu), and the Rev. Meagan Esterby, pastor of UniLu, to the meeting. She then turned the meeting over to our Synod Attorney to give an update on actions in this matter since the January 26, 2023, meeting of the Synod Council.

Prior to Pr. Lengert's sharing, Mr. Richard Daniels showed an architectural rendering of the new building, and described where the building will be constructed.

Pr. Lengert: There was a concern raised last meeting as to whether the anchors, as permanent structures, would interfere with any future construction on the site of University Lutheran. This will not be the case. The anchors are used for added support during the construction phase, and are not needed permanently to support the building when completed. As a result, this will not affect the possibility of future development. The developer can remove them now, but it would be an additional cost, which would reduce the compensation offered for this project.

Mr. Richard Daniels: I saw that in the drawings and agree that they are temporary supports that will be abandoned in place. This is not a concern for future development or sale.

Mr. Everett Wick: Yes, I agree. They will rust away over about ten or fifteen years, but they can be removed as part of excavation by a future owner.

Pr. Lengert continued with other items of concern:

We have added to the agreement that access to the congregation should not be impeded by the construction, including access for worship services and other activities of ministry.

Additionally, with regard to insurance, if there is any damage to the structure it will be the responsibility of the developer, not the congregation or the Synod.

There will be fencing placed during the construction, which will benefit both the developer and the congregation, as it will discourage people accessing the property to do illicit activities.

Regarding the offer that has been made, it has been increased to \$100,000, and that is the highest the developer is willing to go.

A survey will be done prior to construction so any damage that may occur can be noted and assessed to the developer.

Any damage is the responsibility of the developer to fix.

Mr. Daniels: I believe the Synod should have an engineer, in addition to the developers, at the point of this survey to document and photograph the area, and to assess the progress of the development.

Pr. Lengert: We have amended the proposal so that we can have a mutually agreed upon engineer, at the expense of the developer. We can also have our own engineer, separate from the developer's. The congregation has an engineer. It may make sense for the Synod to use the same firm as UniLu. A copy of the survey will be made available to both the congregation and Pr. Lengert on behalf of the Synod.

As for the umbrella coverage, after further conversations with various people, this should be raised from \$10MM to \$30MM.

Mr. Daniels: With regard to the easement, is that a legal issue, or a technical issue?

Pr. Lengert: It is considered a legal issue, as it deals with access and ownership.

Mr. Daniels: So, we can remove the anchors if we choose.

Pr. Lengert: An easement does not give a right of ownership, just a right of access.

Mr. Daniels: As a legal issue, even though the anchors are not needed after construction, but since they are still there, it makes sense to have the easement.

Pr. Lengert: Yes, it covers all parties more completely.

Pr. Lengert: There were also questions regarding the parties, and who is a signatory on the documents. In the documents the Synod is listed as "adjacent owner," and UniLu is listed as "adjacent congregation." In each previous memorialization of the agreement with Lutheran Campus Ministry and the Synod, University Lutheran has also been included as a signatory on those agreements. For consistency, we need to follow suit, and cannot just drop one of the signers from subsequent agreements. In addition, with this agreement it is UniLU that is most directly affected by the development, and it makes sense to have the most affected party as a signatory on the documents.

This is also a reason for considering University Lutheran as the beneficiary of the financial agreement, as they are the party experiencing the costs, as well as the benefits, of the construction. The benefits will come when there are the students next to the congregation; the costs come with the noise, traffic, dirt, and debris of the construction process. Generally speaking, the party most affected is the party that is compensated for the inconvenience.

Pr. Lengert asked if there were any other questions.

Mr. Bert Glenn: I see that there are about 30 tie-ins that are being placed. I note that they are underground. How deep are they, and do they connect at all to the building of UniLu?

Pr. Lengert: From my understanding, they are not connected.

Mr. Glenn: Will they go through the foundation?

Pr. Lengert: They will not go through the foundation.

Mr. Daniels: According to the plans it says that they will not interfere with the foundation of University Lutheran.

Mr. Glenn: As opposed to what I heard at the last meeting, am I hearing correctly that these tie-ins are simply for construction, they are not necessary for the ongoing structural integrity of the building, and they will degrade away over time, or can be removed at a future date?

Pr. Lengert: That is correct.

Pr. Heidgerd: Does the agreement provide for any damage that may come from potential settlement during the construction?

Pr. Lengert: Yes, and that is why there will be electronic monitoring throughout the construction process, in addition to physical inspections. There will be a post-construction survey as well.

Mr. Daniels: In item 3, it says, "If the project is abandoned, the agreement is automatically terminated." I believe we should add that "if it is abandoned, we need to confirm that the developer will restore permanent equivalent, subject to approval by the Synods' engineer, support to the church's property." If the project is abandoned, we do not want a huge hole for 30 years.

Pr. Lengert: My understanding is that "abandonment" would happen if they cannot get all the proper permits and documents to begin the project.

Mr. Wick: There may also be delays in financing which could cause the project to be abandoned, and in such a case, there should be provision that our property should be made whole.

Pr. Lengert: There is a provision in the post-construction survey that if there is any concern, a written request can be made and prompt an inspection and address of the issues.

Mr. Wick: In section 2b, it states that if they submit a change of work order, we have only 5 business days to respond. This is not a great deal of time.

Pr. Lengert: I have submitted a request to change that to 15 days.

Mr. Daniels: Under the section for insurance indemnification, it states the developer will continue the coverage for a period of 3 years. My concern is, if there is a defect that shows up beyond the 3-year window, it could adversely affect the congregation. I would like to see us have coverage for 12 years to match the statute for an owners' recourse against a builder.

Pr. Lengert: I can check on that. If there is a defect that no one can find, we can likely bring suit regardless, but I will check on this.

Pr. Heidgerd: Will the \$100,000 come to UniLu before a shovel hits dirt?

Pr. Lengert: According to the contract, it comes when the developer has secured the parcel and the rights to proceed with the building.

Mr. Wick: Is there a need for a firewall between our property and theirs? What set-back for fire protection is needed? Do we have assurance that they are not using our easement to avoid this set-back.

Pr. Lengert: I do not believe the City of Philadelphia will allow this. The building codes are the building codes.

Mr. Daniels: I suggest we run this past the engineer we retain, and that our engineer can be aware if code violations come.

Vice President Beasley asked if Mr. McCullough or Pr. Esterby had anything they would like to say.

Mr. McCullough: Since they have no right to enter our property, I do not believe they will be able to build on our side. In Philadelphia, many buildings are built next to each other.

We have been aware for some time that there was interest in the property next door. We knew something was going to be built. We were not sure if there would be pressure to purchase the property of University Lutheran, and if we would be negotiating for a "St. Peter's Citicorp" type of situation. That company did not get the property. This company, which is building this thin 34 story tower, did. As there are no variances required, we had limited options for negotiation. But the developer has been generally cooperative with us in the process, even as it will cause disruption. And we are hopeful for the mission opportunity presented by having this many students inches away from the church.

Mr. Daniels: We should be aware that they will be swinging a crane over our property.

Pr. Lengert: We have included that when the crane does swing over our property, it will not have load, and it is also the reason for the higher liability insurance.

Mr. Daniels: Paragraph 7 – designated on-site representative: will this person be on-site daily, and will he or she be able to reach our Synod offices?

Pr. Lengert: Since Pr. Esterby is there each day, I recommend that she be the on-site person for both the adjacent owner and the adjacent congregation.

Mr. Daniels: In the section about correspondence, how would that be handled?

Pr. Lengert: All papers are to be copied to me, in case there is a legal issue included.

Mr. Daniels: "Each party shall look to the assets of the other party for satisfaction." Are there limits to how far they can reach into the Synod's assets? Can we limit this to the Chestnut Street property?

Pr. Lemgert: The congregation, the Synod, and Lutheran Campus Ministry are all indemnified against any suit by the developer.

With no further questions, Vice President Beasley called on Secretary Richard to bring the resolutions before the Synod Council.

1. Regarding the Agreement with The Mark:

**S.C.23.02.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council** approves, in principle, the Agreement with THE MARK AT PHILADELPHIA, LLC, and desires to enter into this Agreement upon the completion of final details, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council** entrusts the completion of such details to the Synod's Attorney, the Rev. Kim L. Lengert, Esquire, and that after such details are completed to her satisfaction the Agreement may be executed.

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

2. Regarding the disbursement of the money from the Agreement:

**S.C.23.02.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the **Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council** approves the recommendation of Bishop Davenport, that the money received from this Agreement be conferred to University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation to assist its mission and ministry.

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

Mr. Daniels: before we close, I was checking the tax records for the City of Philadelphia and was surprised to see we have taxable property on this site. Why do we have taxable property?

Mr. McCullough: We rent out the parking lot.

The meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Joseph Klinger.

The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be March 30, 2023, 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, March 30, 2023*