

## SECTION D – REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND TASK GROUPS

1. Anti-Racism Team
  2. Candidacy Committee
  3. Director of Evangelical Missions (see vitality report)
  4. Forward Together in Faith
  5. Generosity Team
  6. Hunger Ministry Team
  7. Inclusive Communities Committee
  8. Interim Ministry
  9. Mobility, Director of
  10. Tanzania, North Eastern Diocese
  11. Urban Ministry Task Force
  12. Vitality Team
  13. Women of the ELCA
  14. Youth and Young Adult Discipleship
- 

### ANTI-RACISM TEAM

#### Synod Assembly Report 2022

*“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny, whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.”*

*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Letter from a Birmingham Jail)*

This has been a year of challenge, renewal, change, adaptation, and transformation for the Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Synod Anti-Racism Team (ART). Like others, ART was dealing with the continuing challenge of the ongoing global pandemic and its variants and their effect on community building and having in-person anti-racism educational experiences. Much time was spent this year trying to best answer the question, how we (ART) could effectively and efficiently help rostered leaders meet the now synodical requirement of anti-racism education every 2-3 years. COVID-19 almost sabotaged our beginning efforts, but we adapted. After extensive evaluation of our current approach, reflecting on its pros and cons, praying for insight, discussing possibilities, and taking into account our changed reality (“the new abnormal”), we discerned that a new format was needed. Still using the approach developed by Deacon Inez Torres-Davis, former Director of Justice for Women of the ELCA, as foundational to our anti-racism educational offerings, we developed a new format for “Having Helpful Conversations about Race in the Church”. The core curriculum of Context, Connections, and Conversations remains the same, however the CONTEXT arena (an overview of history) has been expanded to now include a 90 minute introductory online (Zoom) presentation; 9 video modules, to be

watched over at least a 9 week period by the participants at their own pace; with an in-person all day session following. Handouts, question follow-up, an opportunity for feedback, article and book recommendations; along with informational links to other resources are to be shared throughout the educational experience.

Countless hours of work, both individually and collaboratively, and collectively as a team, were given by ART members to research, develop, review, and produce the 9 new video modules. Currently, approximately 30 Rostered Leaders are enrolled in this new anti-racism educational experience, which began on Saturday, January 29, 2022. We hope to meet as a group in-person, for a daylong session, sometime after Easter 2022 (TBD).

Throughout the year members of ART have served as consultants to other ELCA Synods, Associations, and Committees. We also were invited to give a presentation to our own SEPA Synod Council, for a “Mission Moment” (April 8, 2021), to give an update on ART its mission and ministry. Over the past year we have met officially 7 times as a team, along with several small group development meetings. Periodically, we have also placed articles and reflections on the SEPA Synod website and ART’s Facebook page.

As members of ART (all volunteers) our commitment to what we still consider sacred work on behalf of God’s Kingdom, is emboldened by our individual efforts to expand our knowledge base; by keeping abreast of the new book offerings and movies in the area, watching video presentations, and attending local and online conferences, just to mention a few. If you have interest in joining us in this sacred work please contact us thru [antiracism@sepa.org](mailto:antiracism@sepa.org). We are thankful and appreciate the support of Bishop Patricia A. Davenport and other members of the SEPA staff in our efforts. We look forward to continued service and pray for the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,

The SEPA Synod Anti-Racism Team

The Rev. Dr. Susan Kay Folks (Co-chair)

The Rev. Gwendolyn S, King (Co-Chair)

Deacon Kathleen Afflerbach

Janet Bischoff

Charles (Chase) Ferguson

Fern Lee Hagedorn

The Rev. Kathleen Harkness

The Rev. Jane Marston

The Rev. Raymond Miller

The Rev. Jay Mitchell

Karen Paulus

The Rev. Serena Sellers

---

## CANDIDACY COMMITTEE

### Report to the 2023 SEPA Synod Assembly

*The gifts Lord gave were that some would be apostles some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith in the knowledge of the son of God. Ephesians 4:11–12.*

The ELCA candidacy process is designed to raise up leaders for our church who will proclaim the Good News. Our congregations, our synod, and the world crave leaders who are authentically and boldly witnessing to their faith in Jesus Christ and God’s power to change lives. The candidates who are discerning calls to public ministry are eager to continue finding new ways to be the Church even as our religious landscape changes.

In responding to the pandemic, the candidacy committee like many others pivoted to a digital platform. We are exploring ways to safely regather for learning events and discernment conversations. Decision interviews will remain digital until masks are no longer needed to protect those who are vulnerable in our communities.

Over 35 people are in contact with the Vocations and Leadership office about pursuing candidacy. They range from the beginnings of the Spirit’s whisperings about calling to waiting for their first calls. We are proud of our candidates who have been approved (the final step of our candidacy process) since the last assembly. Congratulations to Amy Smith and Thomas Natalini who are approved as candidates for Minister of Word and Sacrament!

We are privileged to work with a whole team of people in the communal work of discernment. We seek members of our committee to be diverse including, and not limited to, rostered ministers and lay people, age, gender, race, and sexuality.

- The following people currently serve on the SEPA Candidacy Committee: the Rev. Becky Resch (Churchwide Representative), the Rev. Dr. Charles Leonard (ULS Representative), Deacon Kathie Afflerbach, the Rev. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam, Jonathan Bagby, Sara Calderon, the Rev. Bill Coleman, Lucille Hall, the Rev. Noah Hepler, Bobbie Hoffman, Lisa Pressley, the Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath, the Rev. Carlton Rodgers, the Rev. Thomas Russert, and Deacon Allison Wilcox.
- Our initial interviews are conducted by the Rev. Lauren Bruno, the Rev. David Grainson, the Rev. Steve Keiser, the Rev. Tina Mackie, the Rev. Carlton Rodgers, and Deacon Allison Wilcox.
- A special thank you to Bishop Patricia Davenport for her support of our candidates, her prayer for the committee’s work, and her leadership with committee appointments.

The committee meets 5-6 times annually, including 1-2 gatherings spent in fellowship and formation. In between decision meetings, our committee members serve on relator teams, staying in regular communication with our candidates to provide support and guidance.

We are grateful to all for their dedication to our candidates and the Church. Please thank these leaders for the ministry and service they provide. They have given much of their time and commitment to the candidacy program here in our synod.

As always, we ask that our congregations, rostered ministers, and lay people continue to lift up future leaders within their communities and nurture their development as leaders of the church. Our world and the ELCA need strong, visionary leaders for the future who are not afraid to call on the name of Jesus, to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, and to be sent to form beloved community.

Thank you for partnering with us in this important ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Paul Neff  
Candidacy Committee Chair

and, The Rev. Karen Sease  
Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership / Mission Advancement

---

## FORWARD TOGETHER IN FAITH

### 2023 Synod Assembly Report

***Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:18-19***

The Forward Together in Faith vision is one of equipping leaders and congregation in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to be bold in the 21st century. To help network with other communities of faith and neighborhood to serve people in need. Help congregations think creatively about ministry as we support innovative new communities of faith. To develop better communications practices to engage social media, websites, video, and new channels that are just emerging. To equip leaders to empower healthy congregations by offering mission assessments, developing learning events, and more fully supporting our seminarians, who are tomorrow's leaders. Since 2018, the Forward Together in Faith grant team has distributed over \$ 190,000 to congregations, agencies and individuals who met the criteria of the campaigns vision. Prior to 2018 \$17,000 in awards and \$26,956 in fees for all the congregations who wanted a congregations' assessment during the offering period. In 2022, congregations were still dealing

with covid-19 and covid-19 protocols. Some of the grants last year were used to continue to help congregations with improving or expanding their presence using technology yet we started to see a slight shift to in-person ministries and equipping leaders and parishioners. This past year the FTiF team reviewed 13 grant applications requesting \$56,950 for the grant year 2022, with funds being distributed in January of 2023. There was 1 application which was denied due to eligibility. A total of 12 grants were awarded totaling \$24,958.

**Grants Awarded for 2022, (funds distributed in 2023) - \$24,958.08**

|            |            |               |            |
|------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| Networking | \$1,750.00 | Communicating | \$4,208.98 |
| Innovating | \$9,500.00 | Equipping     | \$9,500.00 |

| 2022-2023 | Awarded Grants–          |              |           |               |
|-----------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|
|           | Advent Harleysville      | Harleysville | \$1,000.0 | Communicating |
|           | Agustus, Trappe          | Trappe       | \$4,500.0 | Equipping     |
|           | Christ, Philadelphia     | Philadelphia | \$500.00  | Communicating |
|           | Grace, Broomall          | Broomall     | \$1,750.0 | Networking    |
|           | Grace, Philadelphia      | Philadelphia | \$1,000.0 | Communicating |
|           | Holy Trinity, Walingford | Walingford   | \$3,000.0 | Innovating    |
|           | Redemption               | Philadelphia | \$1,500.0 | Innovating    |
|           | St Luke Obelisk          | Obelisk      | \$4,000.0 | Innovating    |
|           | St. Matthews Chester     | Chester      | \$1,000.0 | Communicating |
|           | St. Michael's Unionville | Unionville   | \$5,000.0 | Equipping     |
|           | St. Peter's, North Wales | North Wales  | \$1,000.0 | Innovating    |
|           | St. Timothy, Fox Chase   | Fox Chase    | \$708.98  | Communicating |

Previous years grants attached.

*Respectfully submitted by Ellen Daneke, Forward Together In Faith, Chair*

**Previous Years Grants/Awards**

| 2021-2022 | Awarded Grants – \$87,004 |              |            |               |
|-----------|---------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
|           | Mediator                  | Philadelphia | \$2,500.00 | Communicating |
|           | St Peter's                | Philadelphia | \$2,500.00 | Communicating |
|           | St. Peter's               | Hilltown     | \$1,500.00 | Communicating |
|           | Calvary                   | West Chester | \$2,000.00 | Communicating |
|           | St Peter's                | Pottstown    | \$1,661.00 | Communicating |
|           | St. John's                | Ridge Valley | \$2,500.00 | Communicating |
|           | Spirit and Truth          | Yeadon       | \$2,500.00 | Communication |
|           | Ascension Washington      | Newtown      | \$5,900.00 | Equipping     |
|           | Holy Trinity              | Wallingford  | \$2,500.00 | Equipping     |
|           | St. John's                | Mayfair      | \$2,000.00 | Equipping     |

|                  |                                  |                |            |                             |
|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------------------|
|                  | Neuavo Creation,                 | Philadelphia   | \$5,023.00 | Equipping                   |
|                  | Grace                            | Broomall       | \$10,000.0 | Equipping                   |
|                  | St. Paul's                       | Olney          | \$10,000.0 | Equipping                   |
|                  | Grace                            | Broomall       | \$1,710.00 | Innovating                  |
|                  | St. Paul's                       | Olney          | \$1,710.00 | Innovating                  |
|                  | Augusta (Old Trappe)             | Trappe         | \$1,000.00 | Innovating                  |
|                  | Christ                           | Upper Darby    | \$2,000.00 | Innovating                  |
|                  | Immanuel                         | Norwood        | \$2,500.00 | Innovating                  |
|                  | Sanctuary Village                | Philadelphia   | \$20,000.0 | Innovating                  |
|                  | St. John's Spinnerstown          | Spinnertown    | \$1,000.00 | Innovating                  |
|                  | The Welcome Church               | Philadelphia   | \$1,500.00 | Innovating                  |
|                  | Grace                            | Hatfield       | \$5,000.00 | Networking                  |
| <b>2020-2021</b> | <b>Awarded Grants – \$28,774</b> |                |            |                             |
|                  | St John's                        | Phoenixville   | \$2,000    |                             |
|                  | Welcome Church                   | Philadelphia   | \$2,000    |                             |
|                  | Christ Upper Darby               | Darby          | \$2,000    |                             |
|                  | St Andrew Perkasio               | Perkasie       | \$1,750    |                             |
|                  | New Hanover                      | New Hanover    | \$2,500    |                             |
|                  | Faith Montgomeryville            | Montgomery     | \$1,000    |                             |
|                  | Holy Trinity                     | Philadelphia   | \$2,000    |                             |
|                  | St Matthews                      | Springfield    | \$2,000    |                             |
|                  | ULS                              | Philadelphia   | \$1,400    |                             |
|                  | Trinity Fairview                 | Fairview       | \$1,124    |                             |
|                  | Holy Communion                   | Philadelphia   | \$2,000    |                             |
|                  | St Peters Lafayette Hill         | Lafayette Hill | \$2,000    |                             |
|                  | Grace Temple                     | Havertown      | \$5,000    |                             |
|                  | Reformation Media                | Media          | \$2,000    |                             |
| <b>2019-2020</b> | <b>Awarded Grants – \$24,595</b> |                |            |                             |
|                  | Ascension                        | Newtown        | 2,105      | Communicating               |
|                  | Community of Love                | Oxford         | \$1,000    | Innovating                  |
|                  | Family of God                    | Buckingham     | \$500      | Networking                  |
|                  | Grace Lutheran Church            | Hatfield       | \$2,000    | Innovating                  |
|                  | Liberty Lutheran                 | Ambler         | \$1,650    | Equipping                   |
|                  | Lutheran Campus Ministry         | Philadelphia   | \$5,000    | Equipping                   |
|                  | New Hanover - Peer Support       | New Hanover    | \$2,515    | Innovating                  |
|                  | New Hanover - Incubator          | New Hanover    | \$1,000    | Innovating                  |
|                  | New Life Ministries              | Philadelphia   | \$500      | Equipping                   |
|                  | Redeemer                         | Jamison        | \$1,000    | Innovating                  |
|                  | St. David's                      | Philadelphia   | \$1,000    | Equipping and Communication |
|                  | St. John's                       | Blue Bell      | \$500      | Network                     |
|                  | St. John's                       | Sumneytown     | \$1,500    | Equipping                   |
|                  | St. Michael's                    | Philadelphia   | \$2,500    | Networking / Communication  |
|                  | Trinity                          | Fort           | \$1,825    | Innovating                  |

| <b>2018-2019</b> | <b>Awarded Grants - \$26,000</b> |              |         |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|---------|----------------------------|
|                  | Redemption                       | Philadelphia | \$2,500 | Communicating              |
|                  | The Welcome Church               | Philadelphia | \$3,000 | Equipping & Networking     |
|                  | Calvary and Advent               | West Chester | \$1,000 | Innovating                 |
|                  | St. Peter                        | Riegelsville | \$3,100 | Innovating & Communicating |
|                  | St. John                         | Blue Bell    | \$1,000 | Equipping                  |
|                  | St. Luke                         | Devon        | \$3,500 | Innovating                 |
|                  | Tabor                            | Philadelphia | \$2,000 | Innovating                 |
|                  | Trinity                          | Lansdale     | \$3,000 | Equipping                  |
|                  | Kairos                           | Quakertown   | \$1,900 | Innovating                 |
|                  | Atonement                        | Philadelphia | \$2,500 | Equipping                  |
|                  | Central Philadelphia Conference  | Philadelphia | \$2,500 | Equipping                  |

Grants from beginning of campaign, including raffles and support for CAT/MAP

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Congregation</b>     | <b>Location</b> | <b>Award</b> | <b>Pillar</b> |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| May 2015    | Christ the King Deaf    | West Chester    | \$1,000      | Innovating    |
| July 2016   | Living Gospel           | Philadelphia    | \$10,000     | Equipping     |
| Dec 2016    | St. Mark's Conshohocken | Conshohocken    | \$4,000      | Equipping     |
| Feb 2017    | Faith Philadelphia      | Philadelphia    | \$1,000      | Innovating    |
| Oct 2018    | Mediator                | Philadelphia    | \$1,000      | Networking    |
|             | CAT/MAP Congregations   | SEPA            | \$26,956     | Equipping     |

---

### **SYNOD GENEROSITY TEAM**

The synod Generosity Team would like to thank the congregations of our synod for their Mission Support that makes these ministries happen. Especially for those congregations that are modeling good stewardship to their members by giving at least 10% of their regular giving towards Mission Support and those achieving 6.2% or more of their regular giving, which is what we estimate the amount needed from each congregation to reach our synod budget.

This year was not a good year for the synod, and we hope it was better for our congregations. Mission Support decreased by \$70,791, a decrease of 4% from the 2021 actual Mission Support. The total amount in 2022 for Mission Support was \$1,591,698 compared to \$1,662,489 in 2021. More alarming, this has been the trend in our synod for over twenty years.

Despite that reality, the synod continues to use your gifts faithfully for the vital work of the church, including sharing half of its Mission Support with the ELCA. There is some good news. The All Saints Appeal received \$43,876 which is about \$12,000 higher than in 2021.

Within the synod your Mission Support dollars fund:

- The **Candidacy Committee** as it gathers to support people who are wondering if God is calling them to be a pastor or a deacon in the ELCA. They receive guidance and support from our synod staff person, The Rev. Karen Sease, and her capable team of hard-working volunteers.
- The **Committee of Deans** gathers monthly to work through congregational leadership transitions and the other needs of our 143 congregations.
- Our **Vitality Team** has lifted new possibilities for ministry together. We have supported congregations being renewed through the anchor church model. We have helped other congregations explore collaborative ministries.
- “Ministry in the New Abnormal” as clergy and lay congregation leaders connect over Zoom, our **Communications Team** troubleshoots technology, assesses the limitations of building electronic systems, reimagine liturgy for digital spaces, and keep updated on the latest pandemic health guidelines. Sometimes we bring in experts. Other times we learn from the hard-earned wisdom of those in the room. But we remain connected in prayer and support for each other. Led by The Rev. Bob Fisher they manage our Synod’s website, email newsletter, videos, and media relations, assist congregations with crisis communications and equipping congregations to improve their communications.

All of this and much more is made possible by your generosity.

During the past year the Generosity Team decided to take advantage of an ELCA-sponsored program called **Building a Culture of Generosity**. Fifteen congregations accepted the invitations which was open to all congregations of the synod. Mike Ward, who wrote a book about the topic was the facilitator for our congregations and the responses from those who followed the program were very positive. It centered around developing a congregational annual response. The cost was \$450/congregation with the possibility of having a Thrivent Action Team request a grant for \$250. The synod also provided scholarships for congregations that requested them. Team members from each congregation would meet (virtually) with Mike once a month, with reading assignments and activities planned prior to each session. While the program was well-received, it was definitely geared to suburban congregations, leading the Generosity Team to recommend that Mike Ward work on an approach for urban ministries and for various cultures that have different backgrounds and attitudes about money and generosity.

In August we had a **workshop on *Saying Thanks*** led by team member Carl Reitz at Redeemer Church, Jamison. There were eight attendees, six virtually and two in-person for the 90-minute workshop. The breakout sessions were well-received as an opportunity to exchange ideas and share insights on the various ways to thank congregational members for their generous gifts of money, time and abilities.

Wanting to model best practices, the members of our team sent **hand-written thank you notes** to every congregation in the synod, either to the pastor or, in congregations in transition, to the



council president. These notes were to thank them for their Mission Support and their ministry in their community.

Most of our time was spent planning the **2022 Extravaganza**, which we had originally planned for January. However in the NOW normal of new COVID strains, we had to postpone it to June 18 and then **re-scheduled a second time to January 21, 2023**. We had a wonderful contingent of nationally acclaimed speakers, including:

- the Rev. Louise Johnson, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop/Executive for Administration of the ELCA, "**Leadership in the NOW Normal**"
- The Rev. Ryan Burge, assistant professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University – "**The Nones: From The Overlooked Category to Impossible to Miss in Less Than Fifty Years**"
- The Rev. Dr. Doug Powe, Jr., the Director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership and the James C. Logan Professor of Evangelism at Wesley Theological Seminary – "**Re-vitalizing Urban and other Struggling Congregations**"
- The Rev. Dr. Dave Daubert is a second career pastor (previously an engineer) who has served in congregational, synodical and churchwide ministry positions, "**Generosity and Vitality in the New Normal.**"
- The Rev. Miguel Gomez-Acosta became the Senior Pastor of First Evangelical in 2013. In 2016 he was called to be the Director for Evangelical Mission for the Grand Canyon Synod. – "**Cultivating Generosity and Vitality through Storytelling**"
- The Rev. Rob Blezard has worked as web editor for the Stewardship of Life Institute since 2003. He serves as pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, MD. – "**Giving: The Key to Vitality and Transformation.**"
- Charlotte Gross has been involved with Mission Interpreter ministry for several years, and now enjoys coordinating this ministry jointly with Georgia Suranofsky for NE PA Synod. – "**God's Work: Sharing the Stories of Generosity.**"
- Mary Wolfe serves at Pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in Reading and Mission Developer of Hope's Table, an outreach ministry to the unhoused and working poor. She is also the founder of Café Esperanza. The Rev. Michael Bennethum serves as Director for Evangelical Mission in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. – "**Building Community in the Now Normal - a Pay-What-You-Can Café**"
- Carolyn Wilt is an Engagement Leader with Thrivent, covering the Greater Philadelphia Market. She provided a brief lead-in with some background on Thrivent's generosity findings from marketing research, and then the workshop was presented by Amanda Schulenberg, Financial Associate, in the Thrivent Lansdale office. – "**Growing Giving in Your Congregation**"

We were blessed to receive a SOLI (Stewardship of Life Institute) grant for \$12,000, United Lutheran Seminary's "Larry House Fund" a \$1000 grant, Thrivent Financial a \$1,000 grant and seven congregations from SEPA synod provide \$1,000 sponsorships to help keep the cost affordable so that congregations can have teams of people attend this outstanding training event. 38 congregations from SEPA synod at 21 congregations from NEPA synod attended the event, with most having teams of 2-3 people and some with as many as 6-7 members attending. The

Mission Team leader for the Southeast Conference of the UCC church was present and expressed a desire to be involved in our next Extravaganza.

Members of the Synod Stewardship Team are Pr. Larry Smoose, chair, Carl Reitz, Pr. Mark Singh-Heuter, Doreen Kinsler, Pr. Tim Ness, Pr. Julie Bergdahl, Yvonne Lembo, and Pr. Phil Krey. We also want to thank our entire Synod staff, and especially Bishop Patricia Davenport, Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Pr. Bryan Penman, Pr. Karen Sease, Pr. Moses Suah-Dennis along with Mr. Martin Schwab, Pr. Bob Fisher, and Ms. Cynta Outterbridge who do so much to support congregational stewardship ministry.

Larry V. Smoose, Chairperson

---

### **THE SYNOD HUNGER MINISTRY TEAM**

Last year Pastor Sandra Brown stepped aside as Chair of the Synod Hunger Ministry Team after serving in that role for several years. She has been a strong voice and a willing worker encouraging Lutherans in this synod to respond faithfully to local and global hunger. Her leadership was especially significant when congregations looked for ways to respond to issues of food insecurity that worsened during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Following the last Synod Assembly I began serving as chair of the Hunger Team. I have been working on learning more about the needs of people who are food insecure here in Southeastern Pennsylvania. I have been impressed by the commitment and creativity of individuals and congregations who have invested time, money and resources in ministries that are helping to meet needs. Congregations are indeed doing amazing things! Food collections, pantries, community suppers, neighborhood gardens, nutritional and health ministries have sprung up and grown despite the challenges of the last few years.

Giving to the World Hunger Appeal of the ELCA remains strong in Southeastern Pennsylvania: A reminder that we continue to recognize that global hunger remains a serious crisis beyond the more obvious needs we see locally.

Ten percent of money collected by the ELCA Hunger Appeal is designated to address local needs. Synod hunger teams are asked to meet and build relationships with those seeking this funding. With the help of Pastor Kathleen Kerin and Mr. Ralph Wellington, we were able to visit five such local ministries. It was awe-inspiring to learn about the kinds of things that are being done in response to the stated needs of those being served. Deeply rooted in their neighborhoods, these hunger ministries have enhanced the witness and reputations of congregations and agencies of this church. Feast of Justice, located in St. John's Lutheran Church in Mayfair, and The Wellness Center at Grace Lutheran Church in Broomall received ELCA grants to support their hunger ministries.

In addition, Welcome Church in Philadelphia was one of 11 hunger-related ministries in the ELCA to receive a “Big Dream” Grant: A more financially significant one-time investment from ELCA World Hunger meant to help move creative dreams of transformation in the direction of becoming realities.

In addition to ELCA grants, small grants from designated synod funds were provided to eight congregations that qualified for assistance.

I am working to recruit and rebuild the synod’s Hunger Ministry Team. If you have a passion for addressing issues of hunger and food insecurity and would like to serve on this team please be in touch with me: [brucehdavidson@yahoo.com](mailto:brucehdavidson@yahoo.com).

Submitted by Pastor Bruce Davidson

---

## **INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

The Inclusive Communities Committee (ICC) is celebrating its first official year since being made a synod committee during the last Synod Assembly. The ICC’s mission is to create events, training, workshops, fellowship, and connections around issues of LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity in the congregations, communities, organizations, committees, and rosters of the SEPA Synod. This committee brings together many areas of work already in place through the synod and creates a central space to continue expanding and strengthening the work of inclusivity throughout SEPA.

In 2022 the ICC hosted the 4th annual In God’s Image event at St. Luke, Devon. This daylong resourcing event is designed to provide resources for rostered leaders and congregations to provide welcoming and inclusive ministry for LGBTQIA+ folk. In 2022 we were pleased to welcome Jamie Brueshoff as our keynote speaker. Please save the date and plan to join us for the 5th annual event at Upper Dublin Lutheran Church on Saturday, October 7.

On June 1, the SEPA Pride event will be hosted at Grace Lutheran, Broomall. The event will include educational workshops and a celebratory worship service.

We give thanks to Pastor Jay Mitchell, co-founder and co-chair of the ICC for his five years of work on this team. Pastor Mitchell has accepted a new call in the Northwest Pennsylvania Synod. We wish him all of God’s blessings in this next chapter of his ministry! Pastor Alina Gayeuski is also completing her term as co-chair at the end of 2023.

We are excited to announce that Pastor Daniel Eisenberg and Pastor Kevin Tracey will be coming into the co-chair roles.

In Christ,

The Inclusive Communities Committee

Pastor Jay Mitchell (outgoing co-chair)  
Pastor Alina Gayeuskki (outgoing co-chair)  
Pastor Daniel Eisenberg (incoming co-chair)  
Pastor Kevin Tracey (incoming co-chair)  
Pastor Skyle Rea (Bishop's representative)  
Pastor Kayla Sadowy  
Pastor Marie Sager  
Pastor Joey Klinger  
Pastor Bradley Gow  
Em Fowler Johnston  
Carrie Johnston

---

## **INTERIM MINISTRY**

### REPORT FOR 2023 SEPA ASSEMBLY

Rev. Wayne R. Shelor  
SEPA Director of Interims

Interims and Interim Consultants assist congregations helping them make a healthy transition following the departure of a pastor to the identification and arrival of the next pastor. This is a process of intermediate pastoral care and directed congregational reflection to help the congregation be well prepared for the arrival of a new pastor.

My goal as the Director is to have an Interim or Interim Consultant identified, confirmed by the congregation, and ready to begin work the day after the pastor officially completes their service. We have made advances in this approach as we continue to grow into it.

The landscape in which our congregations exist is shifting. We are seeing an increased number of pastoral vacancies, fewer available pastoral candidates, increased costs associated with having a pastor, decreased giving (income) in congregations, cultural hostility toward religion in general and to the persons serving in the Office of Pastor in particular. This is clearly a challenging set of conditions in which to do ministry and to facilitate healthy pastoral transitions.

We are seeing some congregations take as much as three years to identify and call the next pastor. During that time, we endeavor to arrange coverage of basic pastoral services (worship leadership, sacraments, and visitation), while we simultaneously have fewer clergy willing to serve as a Bridge Pastor (primary worship leadership, emergency visitation, support for

congregation lay leadership) or as a Supply Pastor (worship leadership). These conditions are pressing us to consider arrangements which are new in our synod (multiple congregations sharing a pastor, a parish with multiple sites, part-time pastorates, union churches, trained lay leaders, etc.) all the while serving our neighborhoods and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

There is much to do, obstacles like we have never experienced, and a growing fatigue with the effort, but in all that let us continue to proclaim the truth we know – God is with us, God is at work in all the places in which we serve, and God knows what comes next. With patience and hope let us continue to wait on the Lord.

---

## **DIRECTOR OF MOBILITY**

One of the major responsibilities of the Director of Mobility is oversight of the Committee of Deans. Deans are generally elected by the conference (on occasion appointed by the Bishop) and serve three-year terms. As a committee, deans meet monthly along with Bishop Davenport and her executive staff. It was good to resume in-person meetings this past year.

The deans work diligently to support the needs of the pastors and congregations in their conferences. Much of their work involves the transition process, but deans also support congregations through other challenges. This support includes conducting exit interviews when a pastor retires or takes another call, explaining the basics of the transition time, interviewing candidates interested in serving in SEPA Synod, reviewing Ministry Site Profiles, and making recommendations of possible candidates for call processes. In addition, deans conduct and assist with installations, work with congregations in times of conflict, and walk with congregations through the steps of closing after they have voted to end their ministry.

In addition to these functions, deans are asked to welcome new rostered leaders to their conferences, to encourage all their colleagues in their ministries, to represent the Office of the Bishop at various functions, to share information about synodical programs, and to inform the Office of the Bishop of rostered leaders who are seriously ill or congregations that are struggling.

The following pastors are now serving on the Committee of Deans: Regina Goodrich, Central Philadelphia Conference; Christopher Franz, Chester Conference; Jennifer Casey, Delaware Conference; Norbert Hahn, Lower Bucks Conference; Sarah Aasheim, Lower Montgomery Conference; Erika Wesch, Upper Bucks Conference; and Christopher McKinstry, Upper Montgomery Conference. I am grateful to Pastor Jane Marston who served as Dean of NE/NW Philadelphia Conference and has recently completed her second term. We are anticipating that a new dean will soon be elected for that conference. The Committee of Deans is privileged to work closely with Pastor Wayne Shelor who currently serves as the Director of Interim Ministry.

As Director of Mobility, I also review Rostered Ministers' Profiles from across the ELCA and review Ministry Site Profiles for congregations in our synod who are seeking to call rostered leaders. I make recommendations to the Deans of candidates to interview and review the summaries of those interviews. Together we work to find the most suitable candidates to recommend to congregational call committees.

It is a privilege to work with congregations, pastors and deacons, and our synod staff in the important work of mobility. I am grateful for this opportunity to serve God and to further the mission of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Marcia G. Bell

---

## **TANZANIA, NORTH EASTERN DIOCESE**

**See Section D, Addendum 1**

---

## **URBAN MINISTRY TASK FORCE**

### **2023 Synod Assembly Report**

#### **Executive summary**

The Urban Ministry Task Force has been charged with developing a coherent strategy for supporting urban congregations in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA. This report summarizes the Task Force's work from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023. In this time, the task force surveyed urban congregations on general church finances and pastor compensation. The survey confirmed that there are significant racial discrepancies in pastor compensation, even within the City of Philadelphia. Providing healthcare and retirement benefits for pastors who do not already receive them would require approximately \$150,000 per year beyond current congregational budgets. Compensating all urban pastors at synod guidelines and current or full-time calls would require approximately \$450,000 or \$920,000 per year, respectively.

#### **1. Mission, scope, and preliminary approach**

At the 2022 SEPA Synod Assembly, the synod approved Resolution "Fortifying Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas – A Resolution to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod". A similar memorial was also sent to the 2022 ELCA churchwide assembly and approved there. The full

text of the resolutions can be found at <https://ministrylink.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/3-resolution.pdf>

Briefly, the resolution points out that many of SEPA's urban churches are in dire straits, forced to decide between supporting ministers and repairing crumbling buildings. Urban churches are singled out because of their history serving the most ethnically, racially, and economically diverse populations. The ELCA has approved social statements on equity, diversity, and inclusivity, including *Freed In Christ: Race Ethnicity and Culture* and *How Authentic and Strategic Is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection, and Healing Action*. The recent events in the Sierra Pacific Synod also called attention to ongoing racism within the ELCA and the need for active strategies to address its harm.

The resolution was approved in May 2022, and work began to form a task force at the next meeting of Synod Council in September 2022. The task force was appointed in October and in November 2022 began to meet. Members include:

- Rev. Derric Jackson (New Life Ministries), *co-chair*
- Mr. Clifton Hayman (Trinity Germantown), *co-chair*
- Ms. Maureen Tang (St. Peter's North Wales) *secretary*
- Rev. Gwendolyn Johnson-Bond (St. Peter's Philadelphia)
- Rev. Stephen Keiser (retired, Christ Upper Darby/ University Lutheran)
- Ms. Karen Paulus (St. Timothy's Fox Chase)
- Ms. Cynthia London (St. Mark's Philadelphia)
- Rev. Lyzette Rios (New Creation/ Nueva Creación)

Rev. Regina Goodrich, Dean of Central Conference and Rev. Bryan Penman, Director of Evangelical Mission serve on the committee *ex-officio*, meaning that they provide guidance but do not make decisions.

The resolution advances three topics of study:

1. Pastor compensation and benefits
2. Buildings and facilities
3. Professional development and internships for future leaders

For each topic, the task force's mission is first fact-finding to define the financial scope of the problem, then to develop strategies using existing synod resources, appealing to churchwide ELCA resources, or external fundraising.

From Fall 2022 - Spring 2023, the Task Force chose to first focus on pastor compensation. We asked,

1. What is the shortfall between current funding and that required to compensate all city pastors at synod guidelines?
2. What is the scope of financial inequality within our own synod, particularly between predominantly White congregations and congregations of color?

A survey was developed and sent to all churches within Philadelphia County limits as well as three congregations in Delaware County: Spirit and Truth, Christ Lutheran (Upper Darby), and Faith Immanuel. These congregations are located just outside city limits and are subject to the same problem of urban poverty and disinvestment. They are also included among the list of congregations who have predominantly baptized members of color or non-native English speakers, as described in the Lay Voting Member Allocation, available at

<https://ministrylink.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-Lay-Allocation.pdf>

## **2. Survey questions and response rate**

The survey questions are included as Appendix A. It can be accessed at

<https://forms.gle/KdcaT3XeaonNPWYjQ8>

Questions asked about the general health of the church (days/week open; paid staff) and the compensation for the pastor. To preserve privacy, we offered congregations to select from a range of salaries and housing allowances. We also asked about benefits such as pension and health care. Congregations were invited to share detailed budgets with the task force only if they felt comfortable doing so. Buildings were not specifically addressed, although some respondents used the opportunity to describe the challenges of building maintenance.

74% of congregations (23/31) have responded to the survey as of March 2023.

## **3. Preliminary findings**

### **A. Full-time vs part-time pastors and callings**

Figure 1 shows that about half of the churches who responded support a full-time pastor. Many have called a part-time pastor and other have a bivocational non-stipendiary or contract pastor. Comparing the predominantly White congregations with the congregations of color shows that congregations of color are less likely to support a called pastor, either full-time or part-time.



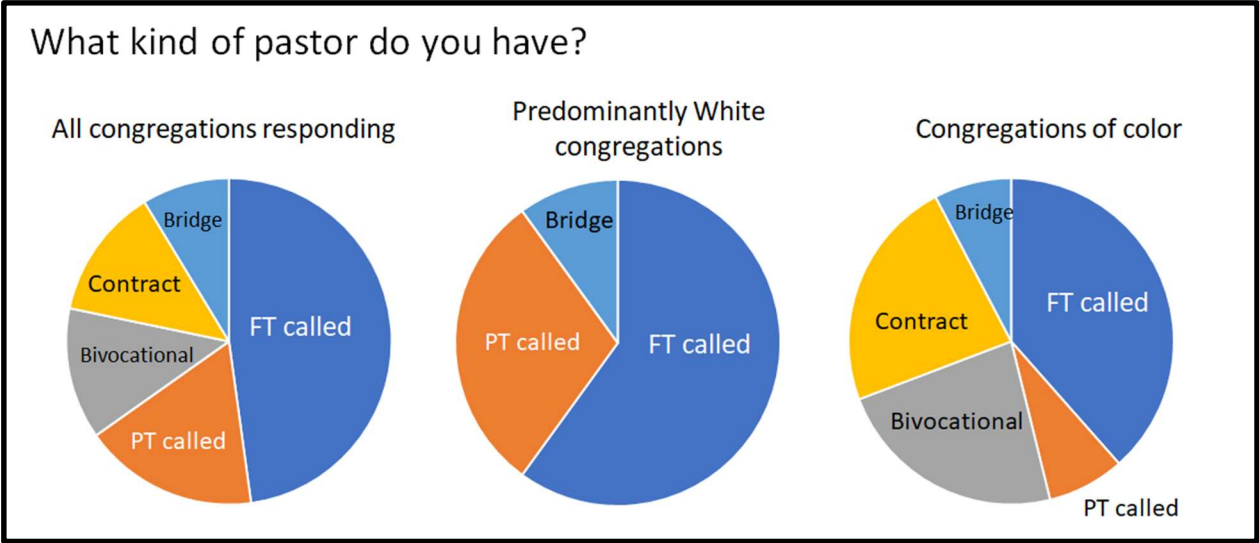


Figure 1: Survey responses to type of pastor serving the congregation.

B. Weekly church activities

Figure 2 shows that more than half of city churches who responded are open for activities six or seven days each week. Comparing the predominantly White congregations with the congregations of color shows that congregations of color are open less frequently, possibly because part-time, bivocational, and/or contract pastors are less able to support additional activities beyond Sunday worship.

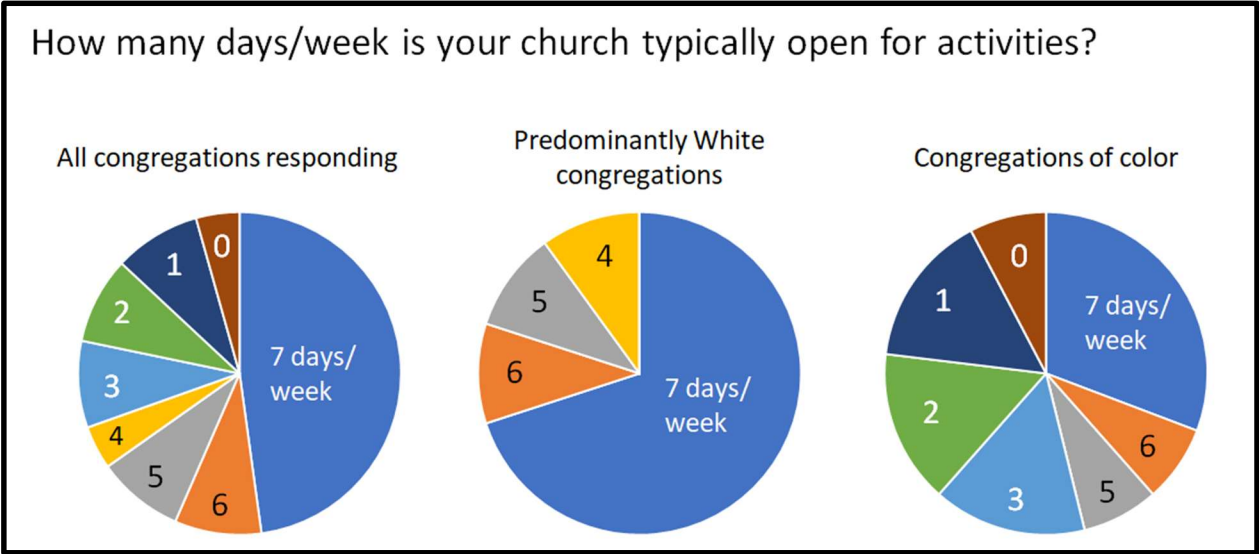


Figure 2: Survey responses to congregation weekly activity level

### C. Pastoral compensation and synod guidelines

Figure 3 shows rough estimates of pastoral compensation considering salary and housing. The 2019 Synod Guidelines were used to calculate an ideal median salary considering housing cost by zip code, years of experience, and hours/week of call. If congregations provided exact compensation, this number was used to calculate the actual/ideal fraction. If congregations provided only a range, the middle value of the range was used to calculate the fraction. Even with this uncertainty, the data shows that only a third of urban pastors are compensated at or near synod guidelines, and that again there are disparities by race. The 2019 guidelines, as used in this calculation, have not been updated for inflation.

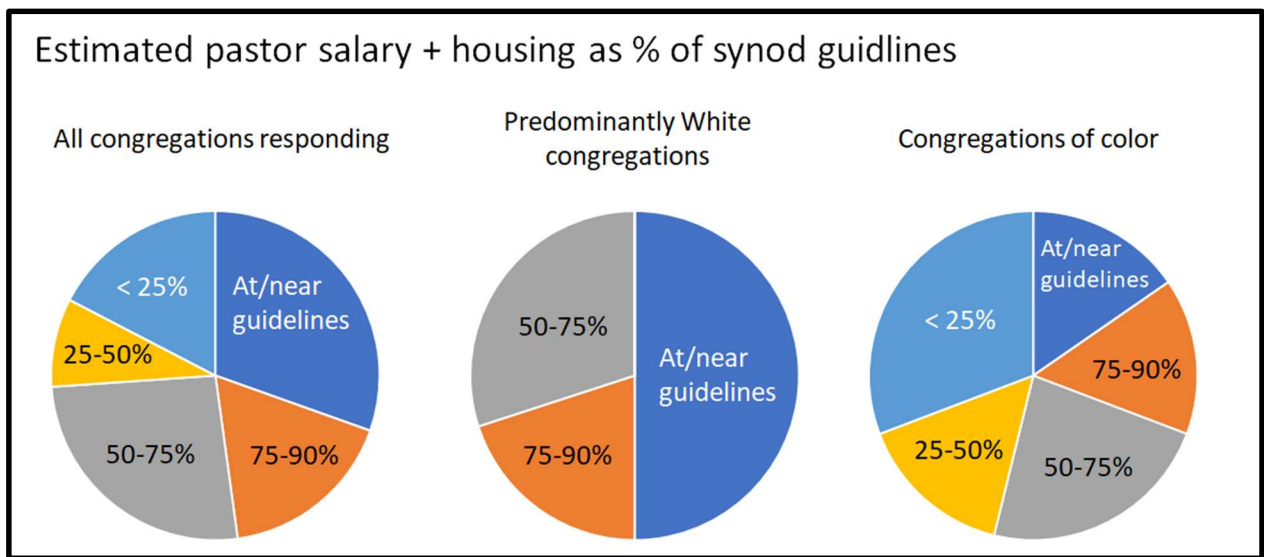


Figure 3: Survey responses to pastor compensation (salary+housing). Numbers are estimates based on ranges from the surveys. Guidelines vary by years of experience and hours/week.

Figure 4 shows pastor benefits. About a third of urban pastors receive neither pension contributions nor healthcare from their call, with disproportionate representation from the congregations of color.

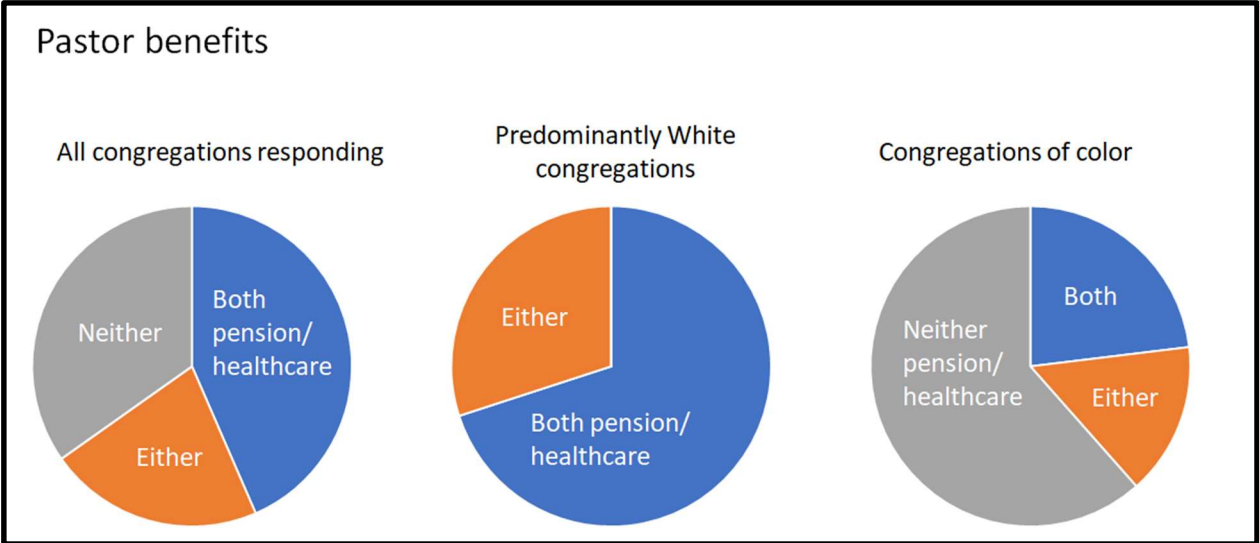


Figure 4: Survey responses to pastor pension/healthcare contributions. Other benefits such as paid leave, continuing education, etc. are not shown.

D. Funds required to compensate pastors

We calculated the ideal compensation for all pastors at both current calls and FT calls based on experience, housing prices by zip code, and hours/week. We then took the difference between (estimated) actual and ideal to find the total amount that would be needed to pay all pastors at either current-call or FT call guidelines. We calculated retirement and healthcare benefits at 12% and 15%, respectively, only if they were not already provided by the congregation. These resulted in the numbers in Table 1. Please note that this amount includes only congregations who responded to the survey.

Table 1: Money required to pay all urban pastors at synod guidelines

|               | Salary/housing | Benefits  | Total       |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Current calls | \$448,377      | \$143,551 | \$591,928   |
| All FT calls  | \$919,148      | \$235,927 | \$1,155,075 |

3. Preliminary conclusions and next steps

Our survey shows clearly that many congregations throughout the city struggle to support a full-time pastor while maintaining aging buildings. At the same time, even within the City of Philadelphia, there are clear discrepancies between the financial health of predominantly White congregations and congregations of color. These conclusions are not surprising, but they are now supported by data.

Roughly \$600K/year would be required to bring all city pastors to synod guidelines with full benefits at current calls, while \$1.2 million/year would be required to bring all city pastors to full-time calls with benefits.

Our next steps are the following:

- A. Determine the feasibility of supporting ministers using existing SEPA resources or external funds from the ELCA or other sources. If existing resources cannot support all pastors, is it better to partially support many pastors or to designate strategic congregations for full support?
- B. Conduct property audits to determine the scope of deferred maintenance in congregational buildings.
- C. Generate ideas for internships and professional development opportunities within urban ministry.

Attached: Survey Questions (See Section D, Addendum 2)

---

## VITALITY TEAM

# 2022 Vitality Team Report

for the 35th Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

## Purpose

---

The Vitality team seeks to help our synod foster communities of Jesus that nurture life changing relationships with God, each other and their community. Working with established and emerging ministries, we seek foster the key marks of vitality while helping congregations deepen their walk of discipleship.

## Directors of Evangelical Mission

---

In partnership with the churchwide organization, our synod is supported by the work of two Directors of Evangelical Mission. Typically, this is a single deployed churchwide staff person, but in our synod that role is shared by two part-time Directors of Evangelical Mission. The Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis and The Rev. Bryan Penman. Within this role, each has their own particular areas of focus. Dr. Suah-Dennis is working with our New Start and Emerging ministries while Pastor Penman focus work with vitality among established congregations. In addition to their work with the Vitality Team, our Directors of Evangelical Mission work as a key connection between our Synod and the churchwide organization helping to connect churchwide resources within the Christian Care and Leadership (CCL) team as well as resources from the Service and Justice areas. They also serve as the connection to a variety of churchwide resources for stewardship / generosity, mission interpretation, and coaching. Here in our synod they also serve as a resource for congregations to assist with vitality consults and mission planners. Additionally, they serve as a resource for our Conference of Deans as well as our Synod Council.

## New Ministry Starts & Emerging Ministries

---

*New Ministry starts are communities that are new worshipping communities. The ELCA has a process to develop new congregations from ideas to worshipping communities. Congregations under emerging ministries are those that need partnership support in order to exist because they don't fit into a historic pattern of mission development and serve diverse populations.*

### *The Welcome Church*

*The Welcome Church is a ministry supported by our Synod Fund for Mission. A community of Jesus serving those on the streets of Philadelphia, it gathers a beautiful community of believers who gather on the Parkway for worship and fellowship. Over this past year they have fostered several creative ministry efforts – a book (TITLE) that destigmatizes homelessness in our city as well as a forthcoming book that Pastor Little and The Rev. Dr. Ruban Duran are working on called “Voice from the Margins.” Pastor Violet was also recognized this year by the Pennsylvania Housing Alliance by receiving the prestigious Front Line Leaders award.*

***Mission Developers: The Rev. Violet Little & The Rev. Schaunel Steinnagel***

*ELCA Supported Funds: \$ 20,000*

*SEPA Synod Funds: \$ 44,000*

### *The Well*

*The Well is a special sheltering program born out of the Welcome Church. The Well is an ecumenical partnership between the Presbytery of Philadelphia and our Synod. The Well serves as a women's shelter and works to help their members find and secure long term housing. They also work closely with the Bethesda Project who is also renting a parsonage at one of our churches provide transitional housing.*

**Mission Developers: Pastor Schaunel Steinnagel**

*Funds Received from churchwide in 2022: \$12,000*

*Kairos Communities*

*Kairos Communities is an experiential faith community that seeks to model gathering as the early Christians did in small group communities. Often called a “house church” model of ministry, these small groups form relationships that help people nurture their spiritual lives, honor their doubts and questions, and engage in actively making a difference in the world through acts of service.*

**Mission Developer: Pastor Bob Fisher**

*Funds Received in 2022 from churchwide: \$8,000*

*Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creación*

*Inglesia Luterana Nueva Creacion is a Latine community in North Philadelphia. Serving their community, they offer ministry to their surrounding communities with the support of many partner congregations and organizations. This summer they had a large cinderblock wall in their parking lot fall and L&I required that it be adjusted. The insurance company denied the claim and so the synod granted funds to be distributed to help get the demolition completed so that we did not incur excess fines from L&I. Over this year they continue to work to develop leaders and grow their “Spiritual Pharmacy” to help those in the community struggling with addiction. Pastor Lyzette is also serving this year on the Synod’s Urban Ministry Task Force.*

**Mission Developer: The Rev. Lyzette Rios – Sanchez**

*ELCA Supported Funds: \$18,000*

*SEPA Synod Funds: \$10,176*

## *Strategic Ministries*

---

*Strategic ministries are those communities of faith who serve ethnic minorities, in diverse socioeconomic neighborhoods, serve ministries among those at risk or whose worship language is other than English.*

### [Atonement Lutheran, Philadelphia](#)

Atonement is a congregation serving in the Fishtown neighborhood of Philadelphia. They continue to work to recover after a series of building issues – a broken boiler and an electrical fire. They regularly see visitors and are working to cultivate relationships with community partners.

**Mission Developer: The Rev. Dr. Noah Hepler**

*ELCA Supported Funds: \$8,000*

## Grace, Broomall

Grace transitioned from Anchor Church and into Strategic Ministries this year as we continue to support their development of the Wellness Center – serving those who lack access to affordable wellness services. This year they were awarded an ELCA Domestic Hunger grant and Forward Together in Faith grant to support the work with one of their Wellness Center Partners – Chef Dad’s Table, to complete a program called Menus with Meaning which is an interfaith exploration of the foods of scripture. Besides capital improvement projects funded by grants and partner congregations, the Wellness Center has expanded its mental health offerings through scholarships for individual therapy and grant subsidized support groups.

### ***Mission Developer: The Rev. Kayla Sadowy***

ELCA Supported Funds: \$25,000

SEPA Synod Funds: \$ 20,000

## St. Michael’s, Philadelphia

St. Michael’s is a strategic ministry serving vital feeding and supporting ministries in the Kennsington neighborhood of Philadelphia. Their feeding ministry serves hundreds of families a week and is growing. They are working this year to establish new community partners and serve as a resource hub for the wider community. Within their building, they feature daily AA meetings, a youth after school program, a food pantry, and studio space for various local musicians. In partnership with these musicians, they are exploring the possibility of concert space as well as offering music therapy to neighbors in need.

### ***Mission Developer: The Rev. Danny Phelps***

ELCA Supported Funds: \$16,000

SEPA Synod Funds: \$6,000

## Mediator, Philadelphia

The vitality team has been having conversations with Pastor Regina Goodrich about ways they can continue to develop and support the vital work Mediator is doing in their neighborhood and in the world to cultivate relationships that develop deep and passionate faith. Over the coming year we have a plan to help them expand their ministries through a series of street revivals. We will also partner with them to help develop culturally appropriate stewardship resources as we help them grow their spirit of generosity. They will also be exploring partnership possibilities with shared leadership that may lead to developing new urban ministry pastors with other congregations.

### ***Mission Developer: The Rev. Regina Goodrich***

ELCA Supported Funds: \$15,000

SEPA Synod Funds: Not yet approved for publishing

## Anchor Church Ministries

---

*Anchor Church is a model of congregational development where one congregation actively works to develop a second congregation. Sharing resources of time, talent and treasures, they work to create a collaborative environment of mutual support. This past year our one anchor church partnership dissolved between Temple, Havertown and Grace, Broomall.*

## Vitality Consults

---

Throughout the year the Vitality Team is asked to come and speak with congregations to help them focus on forming new relationships in their community. Many of the congregations that call feel stuck and the Vitality Team can help them get unstuck and focus on what really matters to help form new relationships to foster a deeper sense of vitality. The Vitality Team can help you focus on your purpose and discover how your congregation can be a unique piece of your community.

- *Community of Love, Oxford*
- *Zion, Philadelphia*
- *Trinity, South Philadelphia*
- *Trinity, Germantown*
- *Mediator, Philadelphia*
- *St. Peter's, Pottstown*
- *St. John's, Folcroft*
- *Prince of Peace, Philadelphia*

## Holy Closure

---

2022 saw our first Holy Closure since before the Pandemic. Pastor Paul Jann continues to walk with congregations through the process of bringing a ministry to a graceful close. Assisted by Sr. Accountant Martin Schwab, we are looking to expand the work of this team as we anticipate that this ministry has the potential to be quite active this coming year. In addition to conversations within our own synod, we are also in conversations with other Bishops and synods who are developing resources for this ministry to facilitate congregations making a faithful decision to live in resurrection hope as they plan their legacy.

- Bethany, Roxborough

## Life of Faith – ELCA Holy Innovation Grant

---

Our Life of Faith congregations continue to work at developing the Life of Faith in their congregations for year two. Life of Faith seeks to help congregation members discover their ministry in daily life by affirming the work and vocation of all the baptized. Church becomes less



a thing that we do as we discover church is the people we are. Helping people live out their faith in the three spheres of influence (home, work, and community) participants discover that they have been gifted by the spirit with unique gifts to serve. If the Life of Faith process sounds like something that your congregation would be interested in starting – contact one of our Directors of Evangelical Mission.

## *Synod Vitality Strategy*

---

Over the last year the team has been working to develop a synod wide vitality strategy. In partnership with churchwide our DEM's have been meeting with other DEM colleagues working to develop a process to network congregations in our synod together to work on deepening their connections to God, each other and community. Over the coming year you will be hearing more about this strategy and hope that you will consider participating with us as we help congregations emerge from the pandemic and fall back in love with ministry in their contexts! We also have the opportunity to submit our Vitality Strategy with the Lilly Endowment Fund as part of their Vibrant Congregations Initiative. If selected this could mean over \$1 million dollars to support this work in our synod.

## *ELCA Coaching*

---

Our synod is blessed to have several ELCA trained coaches to help walk alongside congregations and leaders as they seek to develop their ministries. Coaching is a relational alliance that leverages the art of deep listening, powerful questions and intentional exploration to produce awareness, change, and transformation for the client. In coaching, the client has agency, is the one naming the goals, designs action plans to meet those goals, and does 80% of the talking. Faith-based coaching (from a Christian lens) looks at each individual as beloved of God, believes that person has been specifically gifted by God, and helps the person discover how they are being invited by God to use these gifts in God's work of loving and healing the world. We are working to develop a more robust network of coaching in our synod. If you think you could benefit from the work of coach be in contact with one of our Directors of Evangelical Mission.

## *Congregational Vitality Survey*

---

A new resource is available for use in our synod – the Congregational Vitality Survey. An online (and paper) survey to congregation members helps take a snapshot of your congregation's vitality. As an assessment tool, it can be used as part of a larger process of missional planning or beginning the conversation of where to start to build more effective and vital ministries. The survey is free to use and easy to set up, if you would like to use it in your congregation, speak with one of our DEM's or a member of the vitality team.

## Presentations, Conference & Trainings

---

### ELCA Vitality Trainings

Given the blessings of technology, this fall we were able to offer Congregational Vitality Training for congregations in a series of sessions hosted on Zoom with congregations from across the country. Participant congregations learned about the foundations of Congregational Vitality and put those principals to work with hands on learning and planning in small group settings. We hope this will be an annual offering in the fall and spring – so if you would like to participate in the next Vitality Training – speak with one of our DEM's or a member of the Vitality Team.

### Diversity, Equity and Belonging

Our DEM's are working with their fellow Region 7 DEM's to develop Diversity, Equity and Belonging training resources for transition teams and call committees. Helping congregations understand the role of bias in the call process will help us work towards our goal of becoming a more diverse synod and denomination

### GSB – Generations of Generosity

This fall over 18 of our congregations participated in training sponsored by the ELCA and GSB Consulting. Cultivating Generations of Generosity was a training led by consultant Mike Ward to help congregations develop and strengthen a year round pledge and appeal process. Full of practical and hands on tools for immediate use, the goal of this program is to help congregations tap into the spiritual dimensions of living as generous disciples. This program we hope will run again in the fall – if you would like to participate, please contact our DEM's.

### Fundraising for Missional Leaders

Training open to pastors and lay leaders who want to take a look at the ways in which congregations fund and handle money in a congregational setting. It's perfect for those who say they "aren't numbers people" to help gain a basic working knowledge of church finances and how they connect to the mission of the congregation. Co-hort groups are forming this Spring and Summer and if you would like to participate in them, please speak with one of our DEM's.

### Mission Developers Training

Our synod sent mission developers to Chicago for mission developers training this spring as we are working to develop some new mission start communities, ministry explorations, and emerging ministry possibilities.

### Stewardship Extravaganza

In partnership with our Synod's Generosity Team our synod hosted "Generosity and Vitality in the NOW Normal" to help leaders explore deepening a sense of vitality and generosity in their congregations.

## DEM Gatherings

We had the chance to network with other DEM's several times last year – In Chicago for our annual meeting, in the spring at ULS with our Region 7 & 8 partners and with our Mission Developers in Region 7.

## Vitality Team Members

---

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| The Rev. Kayla Sadowy  | Grace, Broomall                                   |
| The Rev. Sandra Brown  | Good Shepherd, Southampton                        |
| Mr. Don Stevenson      | Mediator, Philadelphia                            |
| Mr. Tom Salber         | Prince of Peace, Philadelphia                     |
| Mr. Wayne Goerlich     | Good Shepherd, Southampton                        |
| The Rev. John Heidgerd | Immanuel, Souderton                               |
| The Rev. Brita Carlson | St. Martin and the Field Episcopal, Philadelphia, |
| The Rev. Nathan Krause | Redeemer, Jamison                                 |

### ***Mission Developers***

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| The Rev. Violet Little        | The Welcome Church, Philadelphia              |
| The Rev. Schaunel Steinnagel  | The Well, Philadelphia                        |
| The Rev. Bob Fisher           | Karios Communities                            |
| The Rev. Dr. Noah Hepler      | Atonement, Philadelphia                       |
| The Rev. Lyzette Rios Sanchez | Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creación, Philadelphia |
| The Rev. Danny Phelps         | St. Michael's, Philadelphia                   |
| The Rev. Bo Banister          | St. John's, Hatboro                           |

## Conclusion

---

We are excited for the work ahead of us in 2023! As we help congregations emerge from the pandemic we are ready to help you fall back in love with Jesus and ministry in your contexts. If you want to be part of our vital work – we are always looking for ways we can expand our work

and our team. Is God calling you to be part of helping congregations write their next chapter of ministry? To find out more about our work, speak with our Directors of Evangelical Mission – The Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis ([mdennis@sepa.org](mailto:mdennis@sepa.org)) or The Rev. Bryan Penman ([bpenman@sepa.org](mailto:bpenman@sepa.org)).

---

## WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Report to Southeastern PA Synod Assembly

2022 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synodical Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA

We continue to 'come back' to meeting in person. Most of our in-person meetings are in individual congregational units.

We were able to celebrate June 2022 during our 2022 convention of the Southeastern PA Synodical Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA on June 4, 2022, at St Matthew Lutheran Church Springfield, PA. We did something new, we met both in person and via Zoom. Voting members were also able to attend and vote via Zoom. There were 12 voting members, 10 in person and 2 via Zoom. We had 42 participants in total. Seven conferences and 11 congregational units were represented.

Bishop Patricia Davenport was our keynote speaker. She spoke on our theme Reconnecting with Hope for the Future. She urged us to wait on the Lord, to listen to what he is telling us, and then act. She used Phyllis Boyer, our former president, who is deceased, as an example of someone who worked for the Lord. She urged us take action and described how one woman started WELCA's involvement of installing solar panels to provide continuous electricity for a hospital in Liberia as an example.

Pastor Violet Little described how she became aware of homeless women (from SEPTA restrooms) and how she began reaching out to them. The ministry grew from there. Pastor Schaunel Steinnegal shared how they are giving homeless women a chance to do crafts, and to journal. The men and women of The Welcome Church are also developing a fund so that they can assist others. The city of Philadelphia has given them land and money to construct some small homes for the homeless. They hope to begin building in 2023.

Our offering of \$641.10 was split between Churchwide and The Welcome Church. Our In-kind offering to The Welcome Church was over 400 snack bags, 20 journals, and pens, and 11 - \$5.00 'Wawa' gift cards.

During every meeting we acknowledge that we are meeting on the ancestral homelands of the Lenni-Lenape people.

We also had a virtual meeting in November 2022 to vote for voting members for the Twelfth Triennial Convention currently scheduled for September 19-21, 2023, Phoenix, Ariz.

We support the 'Katie's Fund 2122' a \$1 million campaign for Katie's Fund that is designed to support the organization into the next 100 years of mission and ministry.

Our main plans for 2023 are to continue to improve communication; a Gathering of Celebration of the Southeastern PA SWO women on June 3, 2023; a Women's retreat in October; attend the Twelfth Triennial convention and gathering; and support our congregational units and local ministries.

Respectfully submitted by,

Linda Garcia

President of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synodical Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA

---

## **YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT DISCIPLESHIP**

SEPA Youth is growing back from the pandemic. In the fall, SEPA Youth held a backpack blessing by Bishop Davenport to welcome students back to school. As the fall progressed, we needed to pivot with the current trend: families with children and youth were slowly returning to worship and church activities. Pastor Rea and SEPA Youth joined with the Box City planning team, holding a spring conference youth event. It was a Spirit-led event, helping to raise money for the Beacon of Hope warming shelter in Pottstown, PA. Special thanks to Janet Hilsmier and the people of St. James, Limerick for hosting. Another great planning team came together to create the Tuscarora Retreat. It was a joy to see young people together in worship and small groups on this weekend retreat. Many thanks to Kelsey Tomlinson and the rest of the planning team.

We are planning more conference youth events to help churches gather in a larger group together. A great example of what can happen when you work together is the West Chester Youth Collab. Several churches in West Chester gather their youth together once a month, alternating meeting places. Many thanks to Pastor Chris Franz and Interim Youth Director Jeff Kely for your leadership. Look for SEPA Youth conference events in your area. We appreciate our youth leaders in SEPA Synod!

We are grateful for 11 SEPA Youth leaders who participated in this year's ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza. We encourage all youth leaders to participate in the 2024 ELCA Youth

Ministry Extravaganza, January 18-21, 2024 in New Orleans. It's a great way to gather with colleagues, share ideas and check out the city for the ELCA Youth Gathering in July.

You can help SEPA Youth in many ways.

1. May 20 at 4pm – organize a trip to Lutheran Night at the Phillies. We would love to see record numbers of Lutherans in the stands after our COVID hiatus.
2. Call a young person you haven't seen in a while. Write them a note. Invite them to join a team, help in worship, be part of an event. One on one conversations are really important right now.
3. Donate to our Youth Scholarship Fund, to help youth experience Jesus

We have great opportunities for youth and young adults coming up in 2023/24

1. This summer, SEPA Youth will be sending 2 teams of youth/young adults, along with adult leaders to experience the Appalachia Service Project from July 1-8. Other churches in the area are sending teams on different weeks. Contact Pastor Rea if you are interested in finding a team.
2. We would like to start an ELCA Gather community in Philadelphia. Gather is a community of young adults created by young adults. Pastor Meagan Esterby from University Lutheran, Pastor Skylie Rea and Pastor Bryan Penman from synod staff would love to hear from young adults who would like to discern what this community could look like.
3. ELCA Youth Gathering AND ELCA Young Adult Gathering 2024 in New Orleans, LA – please let young adults (18-35yo) know that this is the first young adult gathering, and it will coincide with the ELCA Youth Gathering. Our Gathering Synod Champion is Kelsey Tomlinson. [sepagsc@gmail.com](mailto:sepagsc@gmail.com)

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Stacey-Kyle S. Rea

Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship