

**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 34th 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 50th 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/West 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, Orelan
- + Ms. Cheryl Detweiler, Grace, Pottstown
- + Mr. David Ehret, Grace, Broomall
- + Ms. Emily Fowler, St. Luke, Devon
- + Mr. Albert Glenn, St. John, Melrose
- + 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, (Kulpville) 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 33rd 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 coutterbridge@sepa.org. The form can be found on the synod’s website, 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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
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

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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
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.

NAME	CONGREGATION
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Rev. Mukesh Cheedie	Redeemer, Penndel
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Rev. Leslie Richard	St. Matthew, Springfield
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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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
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Mr. Ralph Wellington	Christ Ascension, Philadelphia
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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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
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Ms. Heather Dean	Reformation, Philadelphia
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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.

NAME	CONGREGATION
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Rev. Daniel Smith
Rev. Joseph Varsanyi

Holy Trinity, Narberth
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)

NAME

CONGREGATION

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.

NAME

CONGREGATION

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, Perkasie; 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 30th 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,¹

WHEREAS, the [Asociación de Ministerios Latinos de la ELCA](#)² and the African Descent Lutheran Association³ declared systemic racism played a part in ending the call of Pastor Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez,

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

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 2021⁴ and established a Listening Panel to review the interactions between Bishop Megan Rohrer and the community of Misión Latina Luterana,⁵

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 11th, 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 12th, 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 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.

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

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

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

⁵ https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Statement_Panel_ENGLISH.pdf

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 prays 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 dose 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 “wobble 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, Kulpville 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 on offer 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 Neal 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 21st at Advent Lutheran Church in West Chester. If you didn’t get to participate on the 23rd 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 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. 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**

	Revenue	
	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	\$ 202,834	\$ 163,525
Total Expenses	\$2,559,349	\$2,528,434

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 31st, 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:

	2023 Budget Income	
	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.

	2023 Budget Expenses	
	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, Kulpville, 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's 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, Kulpville, 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 Msseemmaa.

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

We recognize those congregations celebrating significant anniversaries, including:

- 150th St. John, Phoenixville
- 100th 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 50th 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 caregiver.

Pr. Kaegler: Then we should change the language of the proposal from Reference 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 unpaid 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 Geysler, 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. Wendie 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. Blean'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 Counsel 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 Oreland 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
TOTAL VOTING MEMBERSHIP	341

*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
TOTAL REGISTERED* VOTING MEMBERSHIP	245

*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