

MINUTES
of the 176th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
March 30, 2023
6:00 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:01 p.m. and invited the Rev. Dr. Moses Suah Dennis, co-Director for Evangelical Mission, to lead the Council in devotions. His focus was on Paul's letter to the Philippians 1:2-6 – Joyful Prayer, Gospel Driven Mission, and a Confident Future.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 176th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:15 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 174th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (January 26, 2023) were approved as presented.

The Minutes of the 175th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (February 17, 2023) were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

The agenda for the 176th meeting of the Synod Council was approved with the addition of Pr. Kim L. Lengert, esq., our Synod Attorney, to bring an update on the Synod Administration of Trinity, South Philadelphia.

UPDATE ON TRINITY, SOUTH PHILADELPHIA

Vice President Beasley welcomed Pr. Lengert to present on the situation at Trinity, South Philadelphia. Prior to Pr. Lengert's presentation, Vice President Beasley noted, on behalf of the Synodically appointed Trustees, that the congregation has voted to enter Holy Closure.

Pr. Lengert conveyed that a key issue facing Trinity has been misappropriation of funds from the Cemetery account. Over the past several years a significant amount of money had been taken from the Cemetery fund, which was then used for purposes not designated for the cemetery. This constitutes a massive theft. The issue was pursued by the office of the Attorney General. The case went all the way up the chain, but ultimately the Supervisor of this Division said they would not pursue the case. This was not due to lack of evidence, but due to a lack of staff at the office of the Attorney General, making it impractical for the office of the Attorney General to prosecute the case. We could pursue this issue in civil court, but the costs of the case would likely exceed what we would receive back, even though we would likely be awarded our court costs on top of the amount taken. This is because the misappropriated money has been spent,

and the parties involved would not be able to raise the amount originally misused, let alone the additional costs of our legal fees.

Mr. Bert Glenn inquired as to the amount of the loss we are discussing.

V.P. Beasley: \$700 – 800 thousand dollars.

Glenn: Is there evidence that there are specific people who were responsible?

Pr. Lengert: It is pretty clear where the money went.

Mr. Glenn: Was the D.A. pursuing a criminal or civil case?

Pr. Lenget: Criminal.

Treasurer Janet Neff: So, we will not get what we spent back?

Pr. Lengert: We can prove where the money went; we cannot guarantee its return.

Ms. Neff: Since we are not pursuing this, is this the reason for moving to “holy closure?”

V.P. Beasley: The reasons for closing are a significantly diminished membership, the lack of commitment by those members who remain to any effort at revitalization, the reputation of the congregation in the community, and the lack of mission developers available to try to start something new at this site.

Pr. John Heidgerd: Will selling the property cover the losses?

V.P. Beasley: Yes, it should be enough to cover the loss, and the money can then be returned to the cemetery fund for the legally mandated purpose of perpetual care.

Pr. Serena Sellers: Will the entire amount embezzled be returned to the cemetery fund, or just the amount that was taken from perpetual care? The two may be different numbers.

Ms. Neff: What will happen to the organization that is renting part of the property? Will they be hurt by our selling the property?

V.P. Beasley: Bethesda Project, which rents a house owned by the congregation, is considering purchasing the property they use.

Pr. Sellers: It is important to know the amount due to the perpetual care fund. The amount that is required for perpetual care may not be as much as the amount that was stolen. Are we sure we need to return all that we make on the sale to the perpetual care fund?

V.P. Beasley: That is where the money came from, so it seems as though that is where it needs to be returned.

Bp. Davenport: Pr. Sellers, we are investigating this. You are correct that we may not need to put the full amount in the perpetual care fund.

Mr. Richard Daniels: Is there anything we can do to prevent these people doing this again to another congregation.

Bp. Davenport: We have no recourse. There were three people involved. Two are not rostered ministers. One of them is a Philadelphia police officer. The one who was a rostered minister is now retired, and as such is no longer on the active roster. This person will not be able to serve under call to another congregation.

Mr. Glenn: Because the DA chose not to pursue this case because of staffing, it seems as though it is not for lack of evidence. There is a 20-year window for us to pursue recourse. I realize we

are not being asked to vote on this, as the decision has already been made. I just express my disappointment that we are not considering pursuing action to hold these people accountable and to at least try to recoup some of our losses.

Pr. Lengert: We have discussed the value of pursuing this case with other lawyers in this field. The consensus is that to do so, the expenses would be great, and the possibility of return is small, especially since the money is gone. Consequently, it would not result in a recouping of our losses. The effort and expense is greater than the benefit of moving forward with this case.

Pr. Sellers: I am concerned that a public safety officer was involved, and not held accountable.

Pr. Lengert: If we take action against a police officer and a rostered minister, is it worth the press we would attract from suing these persons?

Mr. Everett Wick: For me, it is about the principle, and whether we should allow people to get away with this, especially in the church. It is not so much about getting the money back: it is about accountability.

Mr. Roland Thompson: Is the officer still working? He should be fired and lose his pension.

Pr. Lengert: We do not know, but as far as I am aware he is still working.

Pr. Heidgerd: I understand our outrage, but sometimes we as the Synod Council need to focus more on the mission than retribution and revenge.

Pr. Sellers: For me it is not about revenge, it is about accountability, so that these people are not put in a place of responsibility in another setting, both for the setting's sake and for their own.

Ms. Neff: Perhaps we should have another session for the congregations of our Synod on the need for separation of duties and proper processes for accountability to help stave off this type of issue in the future.

Bp. Davenport: We can put some of these workshops in place, and Pr. Lengert is willing to assist with this project.

Pr. Lengert: This happened in great part because no one in the congregation wanted to be involved, and so there was no one watching. I would encourage you to encourage congregations to have an annual audit so that issues like this can be caught earlier.

Mr. Glenn: I still think we should give due consideration to pursuing this case. If it were only \$50K, perhaps not. At \$700K, I am surprised that the District Attorney was not interested in pursuing this.

Pr. Lengert: Pursuit of this is complicated by the way in which the money was used. Some was used for operations, some was used for repairs to the facility, some was used for increases in salaries. It was authorized by an "unlawful" council, but since it was, on the surface, used for the congregation, it is harder to make clear to a jury that it was inappropriately used for the benefit of these three individuals.

Mr. Glenn: If this was used for the congregation, even if not properly designated, then it is different. I had the sense that the people were taking it.

Pr. Lengert: They were. It was funneled from the cemetery to the employees, using council action as the method by which to cover the move of the money to them in a way that looked to the outside as permissible.

Mr. Wick: This goes against my grain to allow these people to walk away, because we are in the right, and they are in the wrong.

V.P. Beasley: The trustees are not comfortable with this either, but because of some other issues Bishop has raised, we are standing on God's righteousness, and trusting that they will be held accountable in other ways. It feels like they are getting away with it, but I trust that they are not. Mr. Wick: We do need to practice forgiveness. But I am also reminded that theft is the greatest problem in congregations.

Bp. Davenport: What we need to consider before we pursue this case, with the world and the Church in the state they are, is "At what cost?" The offenders are not going to be able to pay the money back. Two are unemployed. The officer may also be unemployed if he is no longer on the force.

V.P. Beasley: As Brother Bert noted, we are not asking Synod Council for a vote. The Synodical Administration Council voted, and we are informing you of the situation and the reason for the decision.

MISSION MOMENT

Ms. Carrie Schwab, Assembly coordinator, was invited to give the latest information on the preparations for the upcoming Synod Assembly.

Ms. Schwab noted that this is the week when all registrations and reports are due.

- To this point we have had no resolutions or memorials come through the Committee on Reference and Counsel. The preliminary deadline for submission is April 5, with the final date for such actions to come before the Assembly April 27.
- There had been an appeal for congregations with means to contribute to a scholarship account for the sake of our less affluent congregations, but so far there have not been any responses to this appeal.
- We have granted scholarship assistance for 17 individuals to attend the Assembly.
- Our budget is not where we hoped it would be, but we are not significantly over.
- There are fifty-six (56) congregations that have no lay voting members registered. Twenty (20) of them do have a Rostered Minister registered, but no lay members. Twelve (12) of these congregations do not have a settled pastor, and some do not have a bridge or interim either.
- The Deans have been asked to check on these congregations. It is important to have members from each ministry site to be part of the Assembly.
- There is also the reality that many people register late, and with tomorrow (March 31) being the last day to register, we anticipate several people to get in "under the wire."
- The low registration numbers do make us feel better about the decision not to use Valley Forge this year, as lower registration means lower revenues, which would have made our budget quite stretched.
- There are only nine (9) youth/young adult people registered from our congregations, even though every congregation is entitled to send an extra youth or young adult.
- We have a new worship committee planning our worship experiences this year. Many thanks to Pr. Bryan Penman, who used to be on this team, for his tremendous help with the new committee!
- It has been determined that the offering will go to support the Urban Task Force in its work.

- We can use volunteers to help with an Assembly choir. Please let people know of this opportunity.
- Speaking of volunteers, Synod Council members have generally been asked to volunteer to help on site. Help is needed, in particular, with registration. Please email Ms. Schwab if you are willing to assist with whatever is needed.
- If Synod Council members have not registered for the Assembly, please do so. You will get a reminder from Ms. Schwab this evening.
- The Agenda has not changed significantly from the last meeting. Worship has expanded slightly on Friday evening. The United Lutheran Seminary presentation has been moved to Saturday, per their request. Vice President Beasley has been given the space that she has requested.

Ms. Schwab asked if there were any questions. With none raised, Vice President Beasley thanked Ms. Schwab for all her hard work on the Assembly.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Davenport referred the Council to her written report and noted several increases in the numbers she had originally provided.

Celebrations in person were 2 instead of 1 and included the celebration of Deacon Allison Wilcox's 10-year anniversary with the congregation. A wonderful presentation of Jesus Christ Superstar was a part of the event, and it was very impressive.

Individual meetings with staff should be 10 rather than 6.

Meetings with Rostered Ministers should be 3 Zoom meetings rather than 2, and 18 telephone meetings rather than 14.

Lay leader meetings, in person were 8, not 6.

Staff telephone meetings numbered 22, not 14.

Confidential meetings included 1 Zoom 3 phone calls, rather than only 2 phone calls.

Hospital contacts were 10, up from 8.

Funerals were 4, not 3.

With the Conference of Bishops, add 2 informal meetings, and the Conference of Bishops Executive Committee should reflect 2 meetings, not 1.

Under Ecumenical and Interfaith contacts, this should show 2 phone calls, and 2 in-person meetings.

Grateful!

In all of this, Bishop has a grateful heart. She is thankful for the partnership we share in the Gospel, and she is moved by the work we are able to do together in Jesus' name.

As an example of her spirit of gratitude, Bishop noted a visit she had with Pastor Harvey Davis, retired pastor, and member of Holy Trinity, Narberth. Pr. Davis is 96 years old, and has entered hospice. In this visit Bishop received a Ministry Moment, one of those times when the visitor is given a gift from the visited. Pr. Davis has had a very difficult year. Last year his wife died. Six months later, his oldest son died. And then, six months after that, his daughter also went to the Lord. Now, as he is on hospice care, Bishop visits him. She greets him as customary for her, saying she is grateful. He responds that he is better than he deserves. The power of the Holy Spirit in that room, and the witness and faith of this servant of Jesus, was overwhelming. Is that not true for all of us? Because of Jesus, we are better than we deserve.

She was able to attend the services for Pr. Carlton Rodgers' mother, who died recently. Pr. Rodgers did a fantastic job, both with the preaching at the service, and with the internment. We stand together on Jesus.

A bishop from another Synod was on our territory to officiate at an ordination. There is an understanding at the Conference of Bishops that when a bishop ventures onto the territory of a colleague bishop, you let the local bishop know you are coming, and for what purpose. The two bishops were able to share in a meal together, and to offer support to each other in their ministries.

Two other bishops were present on the seminary campus for a visit. Bishop Davenport was able to share a meal with them, as well. These visits are necessary as leaders of the Church are able to share joys and concerns, and offer support to each other.

We as the Church are standing together, building relationships, standing against gun violence, witnessing to the love of Jesus in this world. This is what we are doing.

Bishop is grateful for the partnership of the Synod Council. In her dealings with other bishops across the ELCA she is regularly reminded of the blessing we have in this Council. This Council does not "rubber stamp" things. We are faithful to our calling to leadership. We ask hard questions. We manage the issues that come before us. We show up! Without such faithful partnership in the Gospel, we would not be as strong a Synod as we are.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley thanked the members of the Synod Council whose terms are coming to an end, a total of nine people! These include Pr. Joey Klinger, who was just elected Dean of the Northeast/Northwest Conference, Pr. Julie DeWerth, Pr. Serena Sellers, Mr. Richard Daniels, Mr. Bert Glenn, Ms. Doreen Kinzler, Mr. Damar Wilson, Ms. Kendyll Ward, and Ms. Sandra Zimmerman. Most of these persons are not eligible to serve another term on Synod Council at this time, but for those who are, Vice President Beasley encouraged them to consider putting their name in nomination for another term. For those who are not eligible, please help us recruit quality leaders to serve in your stead. To all of you, thank you for your faithful service!

Vice President Beasley then called on Mr. Bert Glenn, chair of the Finance Committee and member of the Executive Committee, to present a proposal for the use of the money of the Grace Trust.

Mr. Glenn presented the following information.

Delegation of Authority for Distribution of Income from Grace Endowment

Background of Grace Endowment

This document delegates authority for determining the appropriate spending of the annual income from the former Grace Norristown Endowment, and the distribution of those funds, to the deans of the Upper and Lower Montgomery Conferences and of the Upper Bucks and Delaware Conferences. The Upper Bucks and Delaware Conferences are included because some of their congregations are in Montgomery County.

The funds were originally in an endowment (trust) for the congregation at Grace Norristown. After that congregation closed, the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas issued a decree on February 22, 2021, ordering that the trust be transferred to the SEPA Synod "and for the

income therefrom to be used . . . at least annually to support [the synod's] benevolent activities in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania" (No. 2021-X0313).

In order to efficiently and appropriately distribute this trust income to congregations in Montgomery County, the Synod Council determines that it is appropriate to delegate the authority to evaluate benevolence projects and to award these funds to the deans of the Upper Montgomery and Lower Montgomery conferences and of the Upper Bucks and Delaware Conferences.

Process for Distribution of Income from Grace Endowment

The Synod will annually make available the income from the Grace Endowment to the Upper and Lower Montgomery and the Upper Bucks and Delaware Conferences. The deans of those conferences, working with the congregations in Montgomery County, will approve appropriate uses for these funds and disperse the funds. The funds must be used for the Synod's "benevolent activities in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania." Note that the recipient churches must use the funds to further benevolent activities in Montgomery County. This income from the Grace Endowment will be assessed at the end of each calendar year and communicated to the deans by January 31. This will be the amount available for the following fiscal year (February 1 to January 31).

Not later than January 31 of each year, the deans of the Upper and Lower Montgomery and the Upper Bucks and Delaware conferences shall each (or jointly) submit a report to the Synod Treasurer providing details of how the Grace Endowment income was distributed the previous year. At a minimum, each report shall include the following:

1. Amount of trust income received by the conference from the synod and date(s) received;
2. Each distribution of funds, the amount disbursed, the congregation to whom it was given, and the date disbursed;
3. A brief description of the benevolent activity furthered by the funds disbursed for each award;
4. Amount of any undisbursed funds remaining with the conference as of December 31.

Each annual report will be signed by the dean of the conference.

Mr. Glen moved the adoption of this process.

S.C.23.03.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the process for the distribution of income from the Grace Endowment.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Compensation Guidelines

Vice President Beasley noted that the Executive Committee has approved an updated version of the Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers. The Synod Council is encouraged to link on the Synod website MministryLink.org for a copy of the guidelines, and the Council is encouraged to share where these guidelines are with congregations in their Conferences.

Treasurer Neff asked if the guidelines apply for those settings with a parsonage. Vice President Beasley stated that this is a part of the guidelines.

Pr. Marie Sager asked if the guidelines are for full-time calls. Ms. Beasley stated yes, they are for full-time calls, and that within the guidelines are steps on how to consider what portion of "full-time" a smaller congregation might be able to afford.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Actions on the Roster

Secretary Richard brought forward the following actions on the roster:

Call to Interim Ministry

S.C.23.03.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Wayne R. Shelor** to interim ministry at Grace Lutheran Church (Royersford) beginning May 1, 2023 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Shelor resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Move from Active Roster to Disability Roster

S.C.23.03.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend disability status to the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps effective March 13, 2023.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Information not requiring action

Resigned from Roster:

The Rev. Daniel Phelps, effective March 16, 2023

Temporary Synodical Administration for St. Peter, Pottstown

Pr. Elaine Quincy is serving as Interim Pastor at St. Peter, Pottstown. She reached out regarding a concern about their current quorum needed to do business. The constitution for St. Peter's has a firm number of 40 for a quorum. For several years they have not had that many voting members at their meetings.

Changing the quorum provision in the constitution is needed, however, to amend the quorum, one needs a quorum.

After consultation with the Office of the Secretary of the ELCA, it was determined the best way to address this issue is for St. Peter to request temporary Synod Administration, during which the Synod Council can take action to amend their congregation constitution to a more feasible quorum.

From our Synod Constitution:

S13.25. This synod may temporarily assume administration of a congregation upon its request or with its concurrence. Such synod administration shall continue only so long as necessary to complete the purposes for which it was requested by the congregation or until the congregation withdraws consent to continued administration.

At a meeting of St. Peter's Executive Committee on February 6, 2023:

The Executive Committee of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 564 Glasgow St, Pottstown, PA unanimously requests the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to take temporary administration of the congregation for the purpose of updating our quorum from "40" to "10 per cent of active membership."

There are two resolutions before the Synod Council:

S.C.23.03.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council assumes administration of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Pottstown, in accordance

with S13.24. of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, effective as of the date of the passage of this resolution.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.03.10. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the change in the provision of a quorum in the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of St. Peter from “40” to “10 % of active membership.”

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

With the completion of the task for which the Synod Council assumed administration of St. Peter, Pottstown, the temporary administration comes to an end, and responsibility for continuing their work and ministry returns to St. Peter.

Sabbatical for Bishop Davenport

Secretary Richard noted that Bishop Davenport has requested a sabbatical for the renewing of her spiritual, physical, and mental strength as she enters the last year of this term as Bishop. The dates of this sabbatical are the months of July and August 2023, and January 2024. On her behalf, he put the following resolution before the Synod Council.

S.C.23.03.11. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the Sabbatical time for Bishop Patricia A. Davenport, to extend July 1 – August 31, 2023, and January 1 – 31, 2024; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the appointment of the Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary of the Synod, as Acting Bishop during Bishop Davenport’s Sabbatical.

Bishop Davenport spoke briefly to the issue, sharing that she has a desire to end her current term as bishop well, and feels this time of sabbatical will help her do so. She noted that her initial plan was to take three months in a row, June, July, and August, but her schedule in June would not permit this. Hence the split of July/August, and then January.

Pr. Gwendolyn King acknowledged how hard the bishop works and affirms her desire for a sabbatical. She did ask if it was permissible for the secretary to take the role of acting bishop. Bishop Davenport stated that she conferred with Bishop Tracy Bartholomew, who serves as chair of the Conference of Bishops about this, and Bishop Bartholomew indicated that it is acceptable.

With no other concerns raised, the vote was taken,

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Members of the Council expressed their best wishes to the Bishop, as well as their hopes that this is indeed a time of renewal for her.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Ms. Janet Neff, treasurer, noted that revenues are down. We are currently \$58,300 behind in anticipated partnership support from congregations. Investment income remains below

projections. We are lowering our projection for Partnership Support for the year to \$1.6MM to more closely match the reality we are seeing.

We have benefited from lower expenses over the past several years, as travel and other in-person costs have decreased during the pandemic. We are not anticipating this level of savings as we continue through this fiscal year, as we are resuming more in-person gatherings and meetings.

Our proportionate share we send to the Churchwide Organization is down by \$29,000, as we send 50% of what we receive in partnership support. As we received \$58,000 less than we anticipated, we sent less on to the ELCA.

There is a surplus in the Restricted Funds, as we received an estate gift of \$375,891 for “God’s Work.” This gift has offset much of the investment losses of the year. While we have held this money in our Restricted Fund, as it had a particular purpose attached to it, at the direction of our auditors, we are moving this money to “Unrestricted Income.”

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr. Bert Glenn, chair, made the report, highlighting two areas in particular: seminary debt relief, and the budget for the next fiscal year.

Seminary Debt Relief

The Committee received nine (9) applications for relief. Each request was considered valid and appropriate under the guidelines for relief. There is \$25,000 available for this purpose, and suggestions as to how much each applicant might receive was given to the Bishop for consideration and potential disbursement. The proposed awards are made in proportion to the need of each applicant. Presuming the Bishop concurs, and each applicant completes the final stage of the process, the money will be paid to the applicant’s lender.

Budget for Fiscal Year ending January 31, 2025

Mr. Glenn noted that the budget for the next fiscal year is included in the January 31, 2023, Financial Statement, in the column to the far right.

The changes are not significantly different from the budget we have had this year.

- Income from Partnership Support from congregations is kept at the current projection of \$1.6MM
- There is a planned transfer from the Fund for Mission to assist with the Mission portion of the budget.
- Most spending lines stay close to current levels.
- There is a provision for an increase in compensation for the staff.

As there were no questions or comments, the following resolution was placed before the Synod Council:

S.C.23.03.12. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the proposed budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2025, for presentation to the Synod Assembly for adoption.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit Committee

Ms. Cynthia Moultrie had been the chair of the Audit Committee, but needed to step aside from the Synod Council due to personal concerns. Vice President Beasley assumed the role of chair for the purposes of reviewing the audit of the fiscal year ending January 31, 2023.

The Draft Report of the Auditors was included in the packet of materials for this meeting. Vice President Beasley noted that this was a smooth process, and very few concerns were raised by our auditing firm. She asked if there were any questions from the Synod Council. As there were none, the following resolution was considered:

S.C.23.03.13. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the presentation of the Audit Report to the Synod Assembly for acceptance.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Investment Committee

Pr. John Heidgerd, chair, stated that a revised draft of an Investment Strategy for the portfolio of the Synod will go to the Executive Committee at its May meeting. If approved by the Executive Committee, it will come to the Synod Council for consideration.

Investments are beginning to grow, albeit at a slow pace of approximately 1%. The Investment Committee anticipates modest gains going forward.

Nominating Committee

Pr. Klinger, chair, updated the Synod Council on the status of nominations for open seats that will come before the Synod Assembly.

Most slots have at least one nominee.

There are still 3 tickets without nominees: Chester Conference Representative, Lay Man; and two (2) seats for Lay Man, Consultation Committee.

Bishop Davenport noted that there may be some questions she holds about one nominee on the slate where she has information that may impact this individual's ability to serve. She will discuss this concern privately with Pr. Klinger after this meeting.

Vice President Beasley encouraged members of the Synod Council to actively seek out people to serve. Please consider, in particular, people with experience in financial and constitutional matters, and be mindful of our commitment to diversity in our Synod Council, Committees, and Boards.

Constitution Committee

Pr. Marie Sager, chair, noted that there are now eight (8) congregations in the process of updating their constitutions. This is an additional three from the last meeting. They are in different stages of the process, and at this point, none are yet ready to come before the Synod Council for ratification.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None, but Bishop Davenport took a moment of personal privilege to thank the Synod Council again for being present, faithful, and active. It is because of the questions raised and engagement with the issues before us that our Synod is as healthy as it is. She noted that this is not the case in all synods of the church, and she is grateful for the way the Council takes the work of the Church seriously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m. with prayer by Pr. John Heidgerd.

The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be June 29, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

Approved by Synod Council, June 29, 2023