

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
34th ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
April 30, 2022
On-line Assembly during Covid-19 Pandemic
Serving and Unchanging God in Changing Times

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Resolution from the Committee on Reference and Counsel

SA.22.04.01. A Resolution for Justice for the Rev. Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez

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 recommends that the ELCA presiding bishop and the Church Council reform the process used when a rostered minister is under investigation so that it allows the rostered minister opportunity for response, investigation, transparency, and appeal.

Submitted to the Office of the Secretary of the ELCA

Resolution from the Synod Council

SA.22.04.02. A Resolution on Welcome and Inclusion

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;

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.

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

Forwarded to the Synod Council for implementation

Resolutions from the Treasurer and the Finance Committee

SA.22.04.03. Therefore, be it resolved that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly accepts the Audit reports for the Fiscal Year January 31, 2022.

No further action needed

SA.22.04.04. Therefore, be it resolved that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly adopts the budget for the coming year, Fiscal Year ending January 31, 2024.

No further action needed

Further Resolutions from the Committee on Reference and Counsel

SA.22.04.05. Fortifying Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas – A Resolution to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council

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.

Forwarded to the Synod Council for implementation

SA.22.04.06. Fortifying Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas – A Memorial to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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 TEEM¹ 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.”²

¹ Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) is a leadership formation process in the ELCA designed for those who meet established criteria. The TEEM process responds to ministry needs of the ELCA. <https://www.lstc.edu/academics/degrees/teem>

² Recommendation #11 of the recommendations for Theological Education and Leadership found within “How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity; A Call for Confession, Reflection and Healing Action,” 10.

Submitted to the Office of the Secretary of the ELCA

SA.22.04.07 Resolution on Paid Leave for Rostered Ministers: Guidelines for Parental and Family Leave and Care of Family Due to Illness

THEREFORE 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 any time a child is added to a household of a pastor, congregations provide at least 12 paid weeks of child-bearing leave for the birthing caregiver and at least 8 paid weeks of childcare leave for the non-birthing caregiver. This allows time to recover from the physical demands of childbirth, as well as for parents to spend time bonding with the child. Congregations are also encouraged to consider the provisions of the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which allow for up to 12 weeks leave (which can be a combination of paid and unpaid leave). FMLA leave can be used for personal or family member care situations.” A minimum of 6 weeks leave with full compensation is recommended.

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 any time a child is added to a household of a rostered deacon, congregations provide at least 12 paid weeks of child-bearing leave for the birthing caregiver and at least 8 paid 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 6 weeks leave with full compensation is recommended.

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 childcare leave coverage for congregations in which a child is added to the rostered minister’s household.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod set up a fund to assist part-time call and struggling congregations with the increased cost.

Forwarded to the Synod Council for implementation

Election of Synod Council Members

The Synod Assembly elected the following persons to serve on Synod Council, terms ending 2025:

Clergy members:

Rev. Gwendolyn King – second term

Rev. Marie Sager – first term

Lay members:

Ms. Abee Tabolo Weiah – Delaware Conference Representative

Ms. Dorothy Wilson – Northeast/ Northwest (NEW) Conference Representative

Referred to Synod Council – Lay Person – Young Adult

Referred to Synod Council – Lay Man – Upper Montgomery Conference Representative

Election of members to Committee on Discipline

The Synod Assembly elected the following persons to serve on the Committee on Discipline, terms ending 2028:

Clergy members:

Rev. Mukesh Cheedie

Rev. Leslie Richard

Lay members:

Ms. Heather Dean

Mr. Ralph Wellington

Election of members to Consultation Committee

The Synod Assembly elected the following persons to serve on the Committee on Discipline:

Terms ending 2028:

Clergy members:

Rev. Daniel Smith

Rev. Joseph Varsanyi

Lay members:

Dr. Jill Schott

Referred to Synod Council - Lay Man

Terms ending 2026:

Clergy members:

Rev. Daniel Eisenberg

Rev. Rachel Scheibel

Lay members:

Referred to Synod Council - Lay Woman

Referred to Synod Council - Lay Man

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA