

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD  
OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
*Transformed to Serve in a Where's the Faith World*  
May 5 & 6, 2023**

**FIRST SESSION – Friday afternoon, May 5<sup>th</sup>**

The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod began with worship. Deacon Kathie Afflerbach preached on the Gospel of Matthew the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter where Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am?”

A summary of her message:

This text is set in a context. Jesus is on his way through Casarea-Philppi, a region with many peoples of many cultures, who worship many different gods. In this context, Jesus asks his disciples who the people say *he* is, and how he might be seen in the plurality of all those objects of worship. When Peter says, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” Jesus rejoices that God has revealed to him the truth of who Jesus is.

It is into a pluralistic world that the disciples were being sent, and so when Jesus asks them who *they* say Jesus is, it is a key question to be asked. It was important for Jesus to know what his disciples would say about him. It was important that what they say conveys the truth of who Jesus is, and how what Jesus brings is different from the false hope conveyed by other objects of worship.

The question holds true for us today. Who do the people of our time say Jesus is? And who do we say Jesus is? In a “Where’s the Faith” world full of idols – money, power, white supremacy, technology – how do we go and proclaim the truth of Jesus, a truth the world desperately needs? We cannot bury our heads in the sand. We are called to confess the Christ who stands with the vulnerable, and who works for the well-being of all people.

To do this, we follow Paul’s encouragement that we “present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,” and that we “not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“Transformed to serve in a ‘Where’s the Faith’ World” is not just our Assembly theme: It is our challenge and our calling as disciples of Christ, the Son of the Living God.

**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 35<sup>th</sup> annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Bishop Davenport welcomed the voting members and visitors present at this Assembly, the first in-person Assembly since 2019, the year before the pandemic.

She acknowledged those for whom this is their first Assembly, and thanked them for their willingness to serve.

Bishop Davenport then expressed her thanks to the Assembly Worship Team: The Rev. Nancy Raabe, Chairperson and sacristan, and members of the Assembly Worship Team: The Rev. Bryan Penman, the Rev. Bruce Todd, Mr. Larry Baker, Ms. Christie Evans, Mr. Waverly Alston, Mr. Emmanuel Osadebay, Mr. Ed Bara, Ms. Rae Ann Anderson, Deacon Thomas Synder, Ms. Andrea Baxter, and Ms. Lina Baker.

Thank you to the musicians and vocalists who are serving in worship leadership this weekend: Deacon Tom Synder, Mr. Andrew Paulson, Mr. Azel Dixson, Rev. Robert Kilby, Mr. Waverly Alston, Vice President Tracey A. Beasley, Ms. Brigitte Wilson, Ms. Lina Baker, and Rev. Cornelius Eaddy.

Thank you to our prayer pause leaders: Ms. Emily Valentine and Ms. Kelsey Tomlinson.

Thank you for our Friday afternoon preacher: Deacon Kathleen Afflerbach, and our Saturday morning preacher: Minister Tiese Giles.

Thank you to our worship leaders, all who are serving as worship assistants at various times throughout the Assembly including: Communion assistants, ushers, readers, and pray-ers. Thank you to the congregations who provided materials, vessels, and equipment for our service. And many thanks to Franconia Mennonite Church for their friendship and support through the years.

Bishop expressed her appreciation for the presence of Mrs. Jill Beverlin, ELCA Program Manager- Coaching Ministries, and our Churchwide representative this year, and she also welcomed our new Regional Representative for Portico Benefits Service, the Rev. Tara Lynn.

Bishop Davenport acknowledged and thanked the Synod officers and the members of the Synod Council for their leadership and insight over the past 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. Richard Daniels | Christ's, Oreland                |
| + Mr. Albert Glenn    | St. John, Melrose Park           |
| + Ms. Pia Graham      | St. John, Ridge Valley           |
| + Ms. Doreen Kinzler  | St. John, Philadelphia (Mayfair) |
| + Ms. Abee Tabolo     | Faith-Immanuel (E. Lansdowne)    |
| + Mr. Roland Thompson | St. Peter's, West Oak Lane       |
| + Ms. Kendyll Ward    | Trinity, Havertown               |
| + Mr. J. Everett Wick | St. Andrew, Perkasio             |
| + Mr. Damar Wilson    | Reformation, Philadelphia        |
| + Ms. Dorothy Wilson  | Faith, Philadelphia              |

- + Ms. Sandra Zimmermann St. John, Phoenixville

Clergy Members:

- + Rev. Gary Costa Peace-Tohickon
- + Rev. Julie DeWerth Good Shepherd, King of Prussia
- + Rev. John Heidgerd Emmanuel, Souderton
- + Rev. Gwendolyn King Trinity, Havertown
- + Rev. Joseph Klinger Redemption, Philadelphia
- + Rev. Nathan Krause Redeemer, Jamison
- + Rev. Marie Sager St. Timothy, Aston
- + Rev. Serena Sellers Christ (Kulpsville) Harleysville

Thanks were expressed to those who serve on the Committee of Deans:

- + The Rev. Marcia Bell, Director of Mobility
- + The Rev. Sarah Aasheim, Dean of Lower Montgomery Conference
- + The Rev. Dr. Norbert Hahn, Dean of Lower Bucks Conference.
- + The Rev. Regina Goodrich, Dean of Central Philadelphia Conference
- + The Rev. Christopher Franz, Dean of Chester Conference
- + The Rev. Jenn Casey, Dean of Delaware Conference
- + The Rev. Joey Klinger, recently elected Dean of the Northeast/Northwest Philadelphia Conference, and Pastor Jane Marston who served two full terms.
- + The Rev. Erika Wesch, (recently elected to a second term) Dean of Upper Bucks Conference
- + The Rev. Christopher McKinstry, Dean of Upper Montgomery Conference
- + The Rev. Wayne Shelor, Director of Interim Ministry
- + The Rev. Janet Peterman, Chair of the Transitional Development Ministry Team.

In addition, Bishop expressed her thanks to all others who serve in leadership in our Synod and at this Assembly, including members the Rev. Paul Neff, chair of the Candidacy Committee, and all the members of that Committee, our Interim Pastors, Bridge Pastors, Synod Staff, Synod Assembly coordinator, the Communications Team, the Transitional Ministry Team, and the Vitality Team, to name some of the many people and teams.

**WELCOME TO NEW ROSTERED MINISTERS**

Bishop Davenport invited those Rostered Ministers who are new to Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod since last Assembly to come forward and state their name, and where they are serving.

These new ministers include:

- + Rev. Richard Bergen, Pastor, St. Luke, Ferndale
- + Rev. Laura Cain, Pastor, Grace Lutheran, Pottstown
- + Rev. Ethan Doan, Pastor, Faith, Montgomeryville
- + Deacon Jane Elliot, retired, Telford
- + Rev. Richard Elliot, retired, Telford
- + Rev. Meagan Esterby, Pastor, University Lutheran, Philadelphia
- + Rev. Diedre Florence-Johnson, Pastor, Grace, Philadelphia (Mantua)
- + Rev. David Grainson, Pastor, St. Michael, Unionville

- + Rev. Brandi J. Herbert, Associate Pastor, God’s Love, Newtown
- + Rev. Dr. Nelson Rivera, Associate Professor. Moravian Seminary
- + Rev. Eileen Ruppel-Doan, Pastor, Reformation, Media
- + Rev. Kayla Sadowy, Pastor, Grace, Broomall
- + Rev. Amy Smith, Pastor, St. Luke, Obelisk
- + Rev. Maeve Schurz, Pastor, St. Stephen, Feasterville
- + Rev. Kevin Tracey, Pastor, St. Mark, Clifton Heights

### **REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR**

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

Total number of Voting Members: 359

Total number of Voting Members registered: 303

Number of Voting Members needed for a quorum: 180

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

### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, noted that the proposed program for the Assembly had been posted on MinistryLink as a part of the *The Bulletin of Reports*. He presented the following changes to the proposed program:

On Saturday,

- Following the First Report on Elections, to add “Greetings from the Northeastern Diocese of Tanzania.”
- Following the break, to add “Churchwide Reports”
- To change the designation from “Reconciling in Christ Task Force” to “Inclusive Communities Committee” – the Task Force concluded its work last Assembly, one effect of which was to create the inclusive Communities Committee.
- Following the report by Dean Sebastian of United Lutheran Seminary to add “Creation Care Committee.”
- To move the Final Report on Reference and Counsel to after the Fourth Report on Elections and Balloting,
- And to add the installation of new Synod Council members following the Recognition of outgoing Synod Council members.

The Assembly adopted the program as amended.

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 themselves by their full name and congregation when addressing the Assembly 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 34<sup>th</sup> annual assembly on December 8, 2022. They are available in the Bulletin of Reports, pages SC 13 through SC 56.

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 ON THE CONSTITUTION**

Secretary Richard presented as information the required provisions of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America which were adopted by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. These provisions are included in the Bulletin of Reports, Report on the Constitution, Section 1 and Section 2.

He then presented for approval the following amendments to revise the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions, which were endorsed by the Synod Council.

From Section 3 of the Report on the Constitution:

**Section 3.** The 2022 Churchwide Assembly approved the redesignation of one provision from required to non-required. This provision is presented in Section 3. If a synod desires to eliminate this provision, there must be a majority vote by the synod assembly to amend the synod's constitution. Note also that there is a wording change that was approved by the assembly. If the synod maintains this provision, the wording change may be incorporated, and would require a **majority vote**. (reference †S18.12.) – *The proposal is to keep this provision with the updated wording.*

### **Section 3: Provision Reclassified from Required to Non-Required**

#### **Chapter 7: SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

*[Provision is no longer required]*

†S7.21.01. Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until **voting members are seated at the opening of** the next regular Synod Assembly.

Secretary Richard presented the following motion to the Assembly:

**SA.23.05.01. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod retains provision S7.21.01., incorporating the language adopted at the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.**

## The Assembly adopted the resolution without objection.

From Section 4 of the Report on the Constitution:

**Section 4.** Recommended amendments to the Constitution for Synods adopted by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. These amendments are in areas that are not required provisions, but are necessary to ensure our language is consistent within the document itself, and aligns with the Constitution Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These amendments may be adopted by a **majority vote** by the Synod Assembly. (reference †S18.12.)

Secretary Richard proposed that, unless there is objection, the following be considered *en bloc*. As there were no objections, they were presented as such for consideration.

### Section 4: Amendments to Recommended Provisions

#### Chapter 7: SYNOD ASSEMBLY

- S7.14. ~~One-half~~ One-third of the members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.
- S7.22. This synod may establish processes that permit retired rostered ministers, or those granted disability status, or on leave from call, on the roster of the synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, provided that such processes not result in fewer than 60% of the voting members of the Synod Assembly being laypersons in contravention of consistent with †S7.21.e. If the synod does not establish processes to permit the rostered ministers specified above to serve as voting members, they shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- S7.24. Ministers under call on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until the opening of the next regular synod assembly, or unless replaced by the election of new members for a special synod assembly, or until they have been disqualified by termination of congregation membership. Normally, congregations will hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit lay representatives of authorized worshipping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.
- S7.27. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister's service in a congregation of this church.

#### Chapter 8: OFFICERS

- S8.42. The treasurer shall provide and be accountable for:  
[...]

- c. Receipt and acknowledgment of offerings, contributions, and bequests made to this synod, collecting interest and income from its invested funds, and paying regular appropriations and orders on the several accounts as approved and directed by the Synod Council. The treasurer shall transmit each month to the treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the funds received by this synod for the general work of this church **as well as any funds to support restricted programs of this church.**

[...]

- ~~f. Obtaining a fidelity bond in the amount determined by the Synod Council for persons handling synod funds, which bond shall be in the custody of the secretary. The premium for the bond shall be paid by this synod. Fidelity coverage provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be deemed a fulfillment of this requirement.~~

## **Chapter 11: COMMITTEES (names of other organizational units)**

### **S11.10. General Provisions**

## **Chapter 14: ROSTERED MINISTERS**

- S14.13.** The pastor (a) shall keep accurate **parochial** records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, (b) shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to this synod, and (c) shall become a member of the congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.
- S14.15.** Each minister of Word and Sacrament on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of **his or her** ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- S14.34.** Each minister of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of **his or her** ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

Secretary Richard presented the following motion to the Assembly:

**SA.23.05.02. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod adopts the recommended amendments to the Constitution for Synods from Section 4 adopted by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.**

**The Assembly adopted the resolution without objection.**

## **Action to restore provision to the Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Mr. Brett Shaw, St. Paul's, Applebachsville, rose to address a concern in the revisions to Synod Constitution which were adopted by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. His concern is in sections S14.12. and S14.32., where the action of the Churchwide Assembly removed the words "proclaiming God's love for the world" as part of the call of a rostered minister, both of Word and sacrament and of Word and Service. Mr. Shaw expressed his belief that this is key to who we

are as a Church, and his desire that this be re-instated. He realizes that this has been adopted, and we do not have a choice in its inclusion at this time, but he asked the Synod Assembly to ask the Synod Council to do what is necessary to have this phrase reinstated to the Constitution for Synods.

The sections in question read as follows, from the changes enacted by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly:

†S14.12. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:

[...]

8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, ~~calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world~~ advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.

†S14.32. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:

[...]

c. Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, ~~calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world, witnessing to the realm of God in the community, the nation, and abroad~~ advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;

Mr. Shaw had approached Secretary Richard prior to the Synod Assembly as to the reason for the removal of this phrase. Secretary Richard was able to ask the Rev. Keith Fry, Executive for the Office of the Secretary, if there was a rationale for this action. Pr. Fry shared the following:

Looking back to the minutes of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly where those amendments were first approved, that particular set of amendments was offered from the floor of the assembly by a voting member. The change was not proposed by the Church Council. The discussion of the amendments from the floor was entirely focused on references to equality/equity and descriptions of the poor and oppressed, and it would appear that in that focus the assembly simply did not recognize that the language about the love of God had not been included in the revised version.

When those amendments were then ratified by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly they could not be further amended, by the rules of the assembly.

There does not seem to have been any intentional effort by the assembly to remove that wording. I suspect that the deletion was simply not noticed in the press of assembly business.



Rev. David Heckler from St. Paul's, Applebachsville, rose to speak in favor of this proposal by Mr. Shaw. He stated that "proclaiming God's love to the world is the essence of all we are called to do as the Church, the Body of Christ. While it may seem to be obvious, it still needs to be clear to all that this is the core of who we are, and what we are to do. And so Rev. Heckler strongly advocated that we direct the adoption of this motion.

Rev. Matt Staniz, St. Luke's, Devon, rose to ask for clarification of the motion before the house.

Secretary Richard read the motion:

**SA.22.05.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly directs the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to take the necessary steps to encourage the reinstatement of the words "proclaiming God's love to the world" to S14.12. and S14.32. of the Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.**

With no further discussion, the vote was called.

**The Assembly adopted the resolution without objection.**

#### **REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Bishop Davenport thanked the Rev. Joseph Klinger, who had served as Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, for his faithful work in this task. Rev. Klinger has been elected Dean of the Northeast/Northwest Conference, and thereby is no longer on Synod Council. Bishop Davenport called on Ms. Doreen Kinzler, member of the Synod Council and the Nominating Committee, to bring the report of the Committee before the Assembly.

Ms. Kinzler noted the following as she began making the report.

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 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 2. Deacons are no longer eligible for lay positions.
3. This year we continue 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 Youth 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 may be completed on-line and sent as an email attachment to the registrar, Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, at [coutterbridge@sepa.org](mailto:coutterbridge@sepa.org). The form can be found on the synod's website, [ministrylink.org](http://ministrylink.org).

**TICKET 1: SYNOD SECRETARY** (One person, lay or clergy, to be elected for a term ending 2027)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Rev. Karl M. Richard	St. Matthew, Springfield

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

As there were no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #1 closed, and further declared the **Rev. Karl M. Richard elected.**

**TICKET 2: SYNOD COUNCIL, CLERGY** (Two Rostered Ministers to be elected for terms ending 2026)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Rev. Heeralal Mukesh Cheedie	Redeemer, Penndel

Rev. David Lutcher	Advent, Harleysville
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Rev. Heidi Rodrick Schnaath	St. Luke, Devon
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*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

With no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #2 closed.

**TICKET 3: SYNOD COUNCIL, CHESTER CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY MAN** (One lay man to be elected for a term ending 2026)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
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Ms. Kinzler noted that there were no nominees from the Committee.

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

With no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #3 closed, and noted that as there are no nominees for this slate, it reverts to the Synod Council to find a person to fill this seat.

**TICKET 4: SYNOD COUNCIL, LOWER BUCKS CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY MAN** (One lay man to be elected for a term ending 2026)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
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Dr. John Connors	God's Love, Newtown
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*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

With no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #4 closed, and further declared **Dr. John Connors elected.**

**TICKET 5: SYNOD COUNCIL, LOWER MONTGOMERY CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE, LAY WOMAN** (One lay woman to be elected for a term ending 2026)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
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Dr. Marcia Boraas	St. John, Melrose Park
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*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

With no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #5 closed, and further declared **Dr. Marcia Boraas elected.**

**TICKET 6: SYNOD COUNCIL, LAY PERSON, YOUTH** (One to be elected for a term ending 2025). *The term "youth" means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election or appointment for service.*

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
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Mr. Tredon Stevenson	Mediator, Philadelphia
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*The Synod Assembly may make nominations from the floor.*

As there were no further nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #6 closed, and further declared **Mr. Tredon Stevenson elected.**

**TICKET 7: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, LAY WOMAN** (One lay woman to be elected for a term ending 2026)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Joan Nagel	Redemption, Philadelphia

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

With no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #7 closed, and further declared **Ms. Joan Nagel, elected.**

**TICKET 8: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, LAY MAN** (One lay man to be elected for a term ending 2028)

***Persons not elected on this ticket will move forward to Ticket 9.***

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Kinzler noted there were no nominations from the Committee.	

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

Deacon Kathie Afflerbach nominated  
Mr. Stephen Spry St. John, Spinnerstown

With no further nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #8 closed, and further declared **Mr. Stephen Spry elected.**

**TICKET 9: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, LAY MAN** (One lay man to be elected for a term ending 2026)

***Persons not elected on this ticket will move forward to Ticket 10.***

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Kinzler noted there were no nominations from the Committee.	

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

With no nominations from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #9 closed, and noted that as there are no nominees for this slate, it reverts to the Synod Council to find a person to fill this seat.

**TICKET 10: CONSULTATION COMMITTEE, LAY MAN** (One lay man to be elected for a term ending 2024)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONGREGATION</b>
Ms. Kinzler stated that no nominations came through the Committee	

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

With no nominees from the floor, Bishop Davenport declared Ticket #10 closed, and noted that as there are no nominees for this slate, it reverts to the Synod Council to find a person to fill this seat.

## **RECESS**

The Assembly stood in recess for 10 minutes .

## **INTRODUCTION OF CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY**

The Rev. Paul Neff, Chair of the Candidacy Committee, the Rev. Marcia Bell, director of Mobility, and the Rev. Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy, Mobility and Interim Ministry, and Mission Advancement, offered a video presentation introducing the candidates for ministry assigned to Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. There are four candidates assigned to this Southeastern Pennsylvania, two from this synod, and two from other synods.

#### SEPA Candidates Approved Since 2022 Assembly

- + The Rev. Amy Smith (sponsored by Trinity, Lansdale) – called to St. Luke, Obelisk/Zieglerville
- + Tom Natalini (sponsored by St. Andrew’s, Audubon) – awaiting call

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

- + Kayla Hopgood (from New Jersey Synod) – awaiting call
- + Roger Randolph (from Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod) – awaiting call

Bishop Davenport is grateful for the Candidacy Committee members, seminary faculty and staff, and congregations who accompanied them and served as discernment partners on this journey.

### **Recognition of Anniversaries of Rostered Ministers**

Those rostered ministers who are celebrating their 40<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> anniversaries were recognized. Those who were present at the Assembly were called forward for a photograph to mark this occasion.

#### **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrants**

The Rev. David Christensen  
Deacon Debra Detweiler  
The Rev. Stephen Godsall-Myers  
Deacon Barbara Hartenbauer  
The Rev. Susan Lang  
The Rev. Dolores Littleton  
Deacon F. Thomas Snyder III

#### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrants**

Deacon Jane M. Elliott  
The Rev. Gary E. Costa  
Deacon Carol N. Detweiler  
The Rev. David Grainson

### **Recognition of Congregational Anniversaries**

Congregations celebrating significant anniversaries were also recognized, with members of these congregations present invited forward to be recognized and have a photograph taken to mark this occasion.

**175 years**     Trinity, Fairview Village  
**125 years**     Tabor, Philadelphia

### **Recognitions of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination**

Our custom is to invite 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrants to bring greetings to the Assembly. We have three rostered ministers celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. **Pastor Ed Oswald** and **Pastor David Anderson** are not able to be with us today. A short biography of each was included in the Bulletin of Reports. We are grateful for their years of service to Jesus and the Church.

**Pastor Robert Holum** was present, and was given the opportunity to address the Assembly. His biography was also included in the Bulletin of Reports.

Pr. Holum expressed his pleasure at being back in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. He was ordained in the Delaware/Maryland Synod, but his ordination really “hit the road” at Grace, Philadelphia. He expressed his thanks to the people of Grace for teaching both what it is to be a pastor, and to know what grace truly is. He also expressed his gratitude for his wife, Binnie, who passed away a few years ago, but was a marvelous partner in ministry for the 43 years they were together. He thanked St. Peter’s for giving him a home as he has returned to Philadelphia. He thanked Bishop Davenport for being one of his mentors when he was serving in Center City Lutheran Parish, and noted how significant the urban ministry we have in this synod is for the life of the city, and the entire church. He is grateful to have been a part of it.

### **BISHOP PATRICIA A. DAVENPORT’S ADDRESS TO THE ASSEMBLY**

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley introduced Bishop Davenport to the Assembly prior to the Bishop’s address. Vice President Beasley highlighted with much joy and enthusiasm some of Bishop Davenport’s accomplishments in her service to Christ. Included in these are:

- + She is the first African American woman elected as a bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- + She currently serves as Vice-Chair of the Conference of Bishops of the ELCA
- + She is a former Director of Evangelical Mission for Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
- + She is a member, and the founding pastor, of Spirit and Truth in Yeadon
- + She is a life member of the African Descent Lutheran Association
- + She is a member of the Black Clergy of Philadelphia

With great pleasure Vice President Beasley presented Bishop Davenport to make her address to the Assembly.

Bishop Davenport expressed her thanks to Vice President Beasley, and to the Assembly, for the kind words and warm reception given to her.

Bishop Davenport is grateful, grateful to God for her ability to serve in this role. She noted that she, as a woman of color, was elected to be a bishop in a Church body that is 97% white, and she trusts that this is not because of the color of her skin, but the motivation of her heart.

She noted that it is so very good to be here, together, and in person, for the first time since since May of 2019. It has been four years! How are you?!? How is your spirit?!? Are you taking care of yourself?

Bishop shared the theme verse for this Assembly, Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

This verse leads Bishop to see how this may connect with her faith in daily life. She has determined to make Christian Spirituality a focus for this year. She is defining Christian Spirituality as loving God, loving self, and loving and serving others.

While others may feel she is giving them a passage to reflect on, primarily as a reminder to herself she has made this verse a signature line on her emails.

This transformation is needed. The Church is changing. And as followers of the Lord, we must adapt. In this time of change, we are reminded that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end. (Lamentations 3:22) While change is all around us, our constants are that we love God, love self, and love and serve our neighbors. Our theme, "transformed to serve in a 'where's the faith?' world," expresses that our faith changes the world, just as the love of Christ changes each of us.

We stand on faith as the world encourages us to become lax and lulled into complacency, being conformed to its standards, rather than being transformed by Christ. We are called to be different than the world. We are called to wait on the Lord, and be of good courage.

In the isolation of the pandemic we have learned we can adapt. We have worshipped online, we have worshipped in the parking lot, we have worshipped on the lawn, wherever we are, we worship. We have shown love for ourselves by wearing masks and getting vaccinated. As the world has become so racially and ethnically diverse, we have had to learn how to love a neighbor with whom we have had limited contact in our lives. We have seen how there are so many challenges facing people in this world – poverty, homelessness, mental illness, and other challenges. And we have seen that the world needs the Church to help meet these challenges and needs.

As we regather after four years, what can be said to speak a word of hope to this Assembly, and to this world?

- Covid was not a joke, and people are still dying of this virus.
- Climate change is no joke, and people are dying from climate related events.
- Gun violence and death from mass shootings are real, and killing people in our beloved America.
- Racism, sexism, ageism is real.
- We have inflation and higher interest rates widening the wealth gap.
- We have the wars in Ukraine and Sudan, and protests in France.

All this is happening while we are also dealing with the everyday pressures of life: raising children, caring for aging parents, fewer people in our pews, fewer volunteers, less money in the offering plates.

But we are people of faith and hope. We find God at work in the midst of it all, bringing peace, joy and healing. We are a NOW faith people. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

John F. Kennedy, in his inaugural address, needed to instill confidence at home, and respect abroad. He believed democracy only works when people contribute their talents to the common

good, and that leaders need to inspire people to acts of sacrifice. He inspired children and adults to see the need for civic action and public service. “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” challenged all citizens to work for the common good.

Ms. Amanda Gorman, who presented a poem at President Joe Biden’s inauguration, penned a poem after the mass shooting at the school in Uvalde, Texas, where 19 students and 2 teachers were killed. Grieving yet another mass shooting, she concludes this poem with these words:

*“Thus while hate cannot be terminated,  
it can be transformed into a love that lets us live.  
May we not just grieve, but give. May we not just ache, but act.  
May our signed right to bear arms never blind our sight from shared harm.  
May we choose our children over chaos. May another innocent never be lost.  
Maybe everything hurts, our hearts shadowed and strange.  
But only when everything hurts may everything change.”*

In the hurts of the world we are renewed in God’s word and transformed by God’s love to serve in faith. We need to be continually renewed in our minds, letting go of negative thoughts caused by world events. We should think of Amanda Gorman’s words: “But only when everything hurts may everything change.”

Bishop noted that we need to have the mind of Christ to deal with the concerns of this day. She listed them so that we do not lose track of them: voting rights, climate justice, health care, refugee justice, racial justice, human trafficking, income gaps, gun violence, hunger and food insecurity, equality for all. Without naming them, we won’t know how to address them.

Faith is not about what God can do for us, but what we can do with the strength God gives to us. We can live an abundant life, and invite others to live such a life, too.

Bishop expressed her gratitude for the members of this Synod, and the ways in which people are meeting the needs of their communities. She expressed her gratitude for the partnership we have with the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania, and the Southeast Michigan Synod of the ELCA. We are 70,000 strong in this Lutheran tribe in Southeastern Pennsylvania, and we are making a difference.

She then shared videos of the ways in which many of our congregations are transforming the world around them.

**Reformation, Media**, has developed a culture of generosity and stewardship. They give 10% of what they receive to the work of the Synod in partnership support. They have transformed their endowment from a vehicle to pay bills, to an instrument for funding additional ministries. Now 66% of its revenue is designated for outreach, 17% is designated for capital improvements, and 17% is designated for new ministry programs.

In 2022 Reformation gave \$217,000 to benevolent causes, including partnership support, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, the Well and the Welcome Church, and Bear Creek Camp. More than \$66,000 was given to Lutheran World Relief to assist Ukraine, which was matched in part by the ELCA, and matched

again in part through Lutheran World Relief, for a total impact of approximately \$120,000. They also take special offerings each month and on holidays to support local causes and ministries. \$32,000 flowed out of this to local needs.

Everything Reformation receives is tithed. Synod Partnership support is budgeted at 10% of all income they receive. A culture of generosity has grown to the point that people ask *what* are we supporting not *if* we are supporting.

Generosity is more than money. We share of time and talent, as well as treasure. In this time when so many children have fallen behind in their studies, **Trinity, Lansdale** has 9 volunteers who have given over 300 hours to help these children renew their minds.

**New Hanover Lutheran Church** has created a Garden of Hope to address food insecurity in their neighborhood. Beds are planted 3 times, a spring, a summer, and a fall planting, providing different vegetables at different times throughout the year for those who have need. It is an organic garden providing healthy options to people who do not have enough to eat. We have provided 160,000 meals since the beginning of the pandemic.

Along the fence of the garden, they provide sticks on which people can write prayer requests so the community, and the garden, are surrounded by prayer.

**Emmanuel, Souderton**, has taken an unused parsonage and transformed it into a place to care for people caught in human trafficking. They partnered with “Worthwhile Wear,” a non-profit agency assisting victims of human trafficking, and made the parsonage into a safe place for women to find shelter.

The house is leased for 30 years at \$1 per year to this ministry. Volunteers from around the country came to make the needed renovations, and were housed and fed by Souderton Mennonite Church. Pr. Heigerd noted that it is important to have the support of the local community, and they have that in Souderton. An attorney worked pro-bono to accomplish the mission, the Borough Beuracracy worked with the congregation and agency, and made all the necessary zoning changes.

The home is called Meleny’s House, named after the wife of a Emmanuel’s Pastor Emeritus, Richard Miller, who had lived in this house for many years, nearly 20 of those years as a quadripilegic. This home, in her name, is now a place for other women who are suffering different afflictions, but still finding a place of refuge, and a place where they can find worth.

Because of your generosity in establishing Forward Together in Faith, **Nueva Creacion** has been given a grant and is making a difference in the lives of people in the Tioga neighborhood of Philadelphia. “Spiritual Pharmacy” offers counseling services and assistance to those caught in addiction. We strengthen the faith of the people we are serving where they are. They have assisted people struggling with depression, They have cared for immigrants in the area, providing temporary shelter and referring them to another congregation that was more able to provide them with more permanent shelter. The response has been that people see God in what Neuava Creacion is doing through the efforts of this Spiritual Pharmacy.

Bishop Davenport concluded her report by reminding the Assembly that we are called to be transformed to go out to a “where’s the faith” world, not conformed to this world, but transormed



by the renewing of our minds. She offered the charge and blessing from the Book of Common Prayer:

Go out into the world in peace. Have courage.  
Hold onto what is good. Return no one evil for evil.  
Strengthen the fainthearted. Support the weak.  
Help the suffering. Honor all people.  
Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **RECESS**

Ms. Emily Valentine, Atonement, Philadelphia, offered a word of prayer, after which the Assembly stood in recess until Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m.

## **SECOND SESSION – Saturday morning, May 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Prayer, Praise, and Preaching** started the day for the Synod in Assembly.

Dr. Charles Leonard introduced Minister Tiese Giles from St. Mark's, Philadelphia. At St. Mark's they have lay people who preach, and these people are called "minister." Minister Tiese Giles is the youngest of them, just 12 years old, but he has been preaching at St. Mark since he was 5. He came to Dr. Leonard and said he wanted to preach the word. Dr. Leonard thought about this, and said yes. He sat with Tiese on small chairs in the middle of the sanctuary, but it was soon clear that Minister Tiese did not need any assistance. Dr. Leonard is pleased to present Minister Tiese Giles to bring the Word on this day.

Minister Tiese used Romans 12:1 & 2 as the basis for his message.

We need encouragement. Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us of this. It was written by Paul to the community in Rome, even though there were no problems. It was written as encouragement that they should keep on track. Even as we are guilty of sin, we are declared not guilty, and encouraged to live differently than the world.

How do we respond to the grace of God? How are we transformed?

Paul notes that what he asks us the people to do, they are able to do, because of the mercy of God. Because of what God gives us, we are asked to offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. Do not run away, but offer yourself in service to God.

"Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." We need to be changed, both inside and out. We need to be changed, not by the systems of this world, but rather we need to be led by God's will.

You cannot look good on the outside, and not be good on the inside. Our minds need to be changed. It cannot be about "me," but about God's will.

We need to be willing to go where God calls us, and not hold only to what we want to do. We need to allow ourselves to be changed into the image of God. A Christian cannot fully be called a Christian if they are not changed. We cannot go in to church, and then go out and treat people poorly. They will know us by our fruit. You should be able to have some fruit growing as God takes hold of you, in Jesus' name.

## **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

Bishop Davenport introduced Vice President Tracey A. Beasley before inviting her to make her report to the Assembly.

Bishop thanked the Vice President for the many ways she serves the Church, both in this Synod, and at the Churchwide level. Ms. Beasley has not only been the Vice President of the Synod, she also serves on the ELCA Church Council, and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Church Council. She is the treasurer of both the Philadelphia and National Chapters of the African Descent Lutheran Association. She serves as the chair of the ELCA Audit Committee, is a member of the Justice for Women Committee, chair of the Faith, Sexism, and Justice Ad Hoc Committee, is a board member for Thrivent Mid-Atlantic Regional, and recently elected as chair of the Thrivent Mid-Atlantic Regional.

Bishop Davenport takes this opportunity to share her appreciation and respect for Vice President Beasley. She is a valued ministry partner.

Vice President Beasley then began her report noting she asked God what she should share with the Synod in this time when we are moving past covid, and coming back together. The answer she heard was that it is about worship. It is about Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. It is not about your reports. It is about worship. It is about Jesus.

Vice President Beasley thanked those members of the Synod Council whose terms have concluded for their faithful service to Jesus. Some served for three years, and some for six years. To each, thank you, thank you, thank you.

The Vice President then wanted to thank “all those who make us look so good,” and invited the Synod Staff to come forward and be recognized.

As she did this, Bishop Davenport joined in, and invited the Deans, then the Synod Council, and finally the entire Assembly to come forward to be thanked and to have a picture taken to mark this occasion. Following the excitement of the photo event, Vice President Beasley continued.

It is my job to lift you up and be your biggest cheerleader in all you do in ministry. Ministry is rough, especially in these pandemic years. Look at your neighbor, and say, “You did it, you are still here. Good Job, you are still here!”

Keep sending videos in when you are asked so we can lift up your ministry. You are transforming your communities in such a way that God is saying, “Job well done. You are still here.”

Celebrate everything. If one member joins, if there is one baptism, celebrate it!

Yesterday in worship the choir sang, “God has Work for Us to Do.” This is true for you, my brothers and sisters, God has work for you to do. Keep on holding on to God’s hand as you move forward, relying on him as you do this work. Keep working the work God has for you to do, until the work is done.

Vice President Beasley ended her report by asking the Praise Team to lead the singing of “Goodness of God.”

## **RECOGNITION OF THE REV. DR. LARRY SMOOSE**

Bishop Davenport took a moment of personal privilege to thank Dr. Smoose for his many years of service to this Synod, and particularly for his service for many years as parliamentarian.

Pr. Smoose is a former Secretary of our synod, a former member of the ELCA Church Council, retired and continuing to serve our synod in various ways, as chair of our Generosity Team, and for the last many years he has been Parliamentarian for our Assembly. He concluded his service at last year's Synod Assembly. We are very grateful for his faithful service.

Bishop then presented Dr. Smoose with several gifts: a SEPA Synod golf shirt, a gift certificate to a 5-star steak house, and an order from Omaha Steak so he can grill for his family and friends.

## **PRACTICE VOTING**

The Rev. Bryan Penman, pastor of St. Mark's, Conshohocken, and co-Director of Evangelical Mission, described the electronic voting devices the Assembly will be using, and guided the voting members in several "test" votes.

## **FIRST REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REFERENCE AND COUNSEL**

The Rev. Jennifer Casey, pastor of Holy Trinity, Wallingford, Dean of Delaware Conference, and Chair of the Committee on Reference and Counsel, was invited to make her report.

Pr. Casey stated that there were no resolutions received by the Committee.

This concludes the report.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pastor Casey for her expeditious report.

## **REPORT OF THE URBAN MINISTRY TASK FORCE**

Bishop Davenport reminded the Assembly that the 2022 Synod Assembly had called for the creation of a Task Force to study issues related to the congregational ministries we have in Urban settings. This Task Force was established by action of the Synod Council, and has begun its work. She called forward the Rev. Derrick Jackson, New Life Ministries and Mr. Clifton Hayes, Trinity Germantown, co-chairs of the Task Force, and Ms. Maureen Tang, St. Peter's, North Wales, secretary of the Task Force, to present a summary of what they have accomplished to date.

Ms. Tang shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the efforts of the Task Force over the past 9 months. She noted that the resolution that was adopted last year focused on Urban ministry because there is a real need for ministry in our cities, where there is a great deal of material poverty, and also a lot of spiritual poverty. The ELCA has also made some very public statements about diversity and to Lutherans of African descent, and we want to uphold that commitment.

In the resolution that was passed there are three items to be addressed: pastoral compensation, buildings, and professional development, such as internships. We determined we need to know 1. how much these things would cost if we were to fund them all adequately, and 2. how we would support that cost. So far, we have addressed one of these six issues, that is, what is the cost to offer appropriate pastoral compensation to those serving in urban communities. How did the Task Force determine this cost?

A survey was sent to all the city churches, asking how long has your minister been serving, how many hours per week are they contracted to work, and do you have a parsonage for the minister. We took that, and the housing cost for the neighborhood based on the zip code, plugged this into the Synod guideline calculator, and determined the cost of the salary and benefits either at the current call, or at a full-time call. They then compared that to what the ministers are actually making. The survey also asked if there was health care and retirement, as well as some other details.

This allows us to look at the difference between what ministers should, and actually do, receive. We are also able to determine from this a level of racial inequality within the city. This allows us to see how much we would need to provide the appropriate level of salary and benefits.

Results from the survey:

### **What kind of pastor do you have?**

When determined by all congregations, approximately half have a full-time called pastor. If we break that into the congregations that are predominantly white and the congregations that are predominantly people of color, we find a large difference. Approximately two-thirds of predominantly white congregations have a full-time called pastor, while one-third of congregations predominantly made up of people of color have a full-time called pastor.

### **Estimated Salary and Housing as % of Synod Guidelines**

City-wide about one-third of congregations are at or near synod guidelines, but again, a large division is seen when considering the racial make-up of the congregations.

About one-half of predominantly white congregations are at or near guidelines.

About one-sixth of congregations predominantly made up of people of color are at or near guidelines.

### **Pastoral Benefits**

City-wide, a little less than half of all congregations offer both pension and healthcare.

Nearly three-quarters of White congregations offer both pension and healthcare.

Less than one-quarter of congregations of color offer both pension and healthcare.

In summation,

1. many urban congregations are struggling financially, and yet there are stark disparities by race in calls, salary, and benefits. This is not a surprise, but we now have data to verify this.
2. These congregations hold a lot of potential for their communities.
  - Trinity, Germantown, has maintained a ministry without a pastor for 12 years
  - New Creation host a Spiritual Pharmacy to fight neighborhood addiction
  - St. Mark's has a part-time pastor, but leads Stephen's Ministry, nursing home, homeless, collections for natural disasters

What might these congregations do if they had a full-time pastor, with the ability to stay for an extended period of time?

**How much would it cost** to increase all city pastors to the 2019 guidelines (the most recent guidelines available at the time of this survey)?

At current call levels, the cost for salaries would be \$450,000 per year, and for benefits another \$150,000 per year, for a total of \$600,000 per year.

If we were to make them full-time calls, the cost would be \$950,000 per year for salaries, and another \$250,000 per year for benefits, for a total of \$1,200,000 per year.

This is not a small number, but at least we know what it is.

**Next steps:**

1. Determine feasibility of supporting pastors with existing SEPA resources of external funds: is it better to partially support many pastors, or fully support strategic congregations?
2. Conduct property audits to determine the scope of deferred maintenance.
3. Investigate internships and professional development opportunities

Bishop Davenport thanked the task force for their good work so far. She also made two observations: 1. These are the 2019 guidelines, which have been updated, so this number will go up, and 2. The ELCA is looking to us for this information, because our resolution also went to Churchwide.

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS**

The Rev. Rebecca Schanely, pastor of St. John’s Sumneytown and Chair of the Committee on Elections, led the Assembly in the election of Synod Council members.

Because of the way in which the nominations played out, there is only one seat that needs to be determined: Ticket 2, Synod Council, Clergy.

There are three names in nomination:

1. Rev. David Lutcher
2. Rev. Muksh Cheedie
3. Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath

Pr. Schanely noted that the voting members are selecting two people on this ballot. They may vote for two of the three, or if they prefer, they may vote for only one of the three.

The vote was opened.

288 votes were cast

145 were needed for election

Rev. David Lutcher	144
Rev. Mukesh Cheedie	204
Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath	191

Bishop Davenport declared **Rev. Mukesh Cheedie and Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath elected.**

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

**Greetings from our Global Companion Synod, the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania**

Dr. Msafiri Mbilu, Bishop of the ELCT, addressed the Synod Assembly by video presentation.

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is a great joy to bring you greetings from your Christian friends of the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania.

We are blessed to have the opportunity to serve our almighty God together as brothers and sisters, coming together in prayer, coming together in solidarity as we continue serving our lord. We wish you God's blessings as you continue discussing and deliberating the aspects of the Church.

We are working to overcome the struggles we have met over the past several years.

Our University had been closed because of various reasons, including major debts with the banks, but the government has recently allowed us to reopen the school. We have not re-opened as a University, but as a college, now called Koloa Technical Training Institute. We are pleased to be able to use the buildings of SeKoMu with this college. We have reopened with a few students, but have hope that in time the University will grow.

We continue with our mission work, sending out evangelists and pastors. We are supporting various institutions, such as a home for children who are homeless, the Rainbow school where we help children with problems, and a hospital to assist people with mental illnesses.

Please continue to pray for us. We continue praying for you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bishop Davenport noted how blessed we are that so many of our congregations have a connection with the North East Diocese. We are grateful for our generosity to them as a whole. She asked each congregation that has a partnership with the Diocese to stand and be recognized.

## **RECESS**

The Assembly stood in recess for 20 minutes

## **CHURCHWIDE REPORT**

Bishop Davenport invited Mrs. Jill Beverlyn, the ELCA Representative to our Assembly, to present a video segment on the ministry we share between this Synod and the ELCA. Mrs. Beverlyn is Program Manager for the Coaching Ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Mrs. Beverlyn began by bringing greetings from Bishop Eaton and the ELCA staff. She shared that she is here because Mary Streufert, who was scheduled to be our ELCA Representative, was, at the last minute, unable to come. So at 4:30 one week ago, she was asked if she could, in one week, go to Philadelphia. She said, SEPA? That's Bishop Pat! I am absolutely going to Philadelphia! She took the week to do a deep dive into the ministry we are doing and learning more about how God is moving through this Synod, loving and healing the world.

When you watch this video, understand that this is about lifting up the three expressions of the Church, and how God is working in us, as individuals, as congregations, as Synods, and all supported by a national framework. An expanded version of this video will be available on the Synod' website for future viewing and use.

Her task is to share news from the Churchwide office, and provide a snapshot of our collaborative work together in 2022.

She shared Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 as a framework for her presentation:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, of two lie down together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

She has served in each of the three expressions of the Church, and has found it true that we need each other.

How have we worked together?

### **Mission Support**

In 2022, \$38.7 million was shared from congregations to synods to support the Churchwide Organization. Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod shared \$792,195 with the ELCA.

### **How is this money used?**

**New Start Ministries and Explorations.** 33 such mission starts were approved in 2022: 18 new starts, and 15 explorations. Three Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities exist in this synod: Kairos Community in Quakertown, The Welcome Church in Philadelphia, and the Well, also in Philadelphia.

The Well, a shelter for women, is learning how consistent, positive community helps individuals take responsibility for securing housing and healthy independence. The Well is an offshoot of the Welcome Church, and it is supported by the Kairos Community. Note the three strands that support each other.

### **Strategic Ministry Grants**

These grants focus on churches in ethnic and historically marginalized communities. Two such grants helped congregations in Philadelphia: St. Michael's and Atonement. These two congregations are only a half mile apart, and they are now meeting together to determine how they can more effectively minister to the people in their neighborhoods. They are working on how they can reach out to the community, rather than wait for the community to come in to their space.

Grace, Broomall, and Mediator, Philadelphia, have also received grants.

Grace is creating a wellness center to bring a fuller sense of healing and wholeness to the people of this community.

### **Fortifying Urban Ministries Update**

This is an initiative brought from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. Concerns of adequate funding of ministers and church building decay is a national problem that should not be ignored. The Church Council gave this memorial to the Christian Community Committee and Leadership Team at the Churchwide office, and invited Senior Advisor for new ministry development, Pastor Ruben Duran, to write a response to the memorial. The commitment from their team is two-fold:

1. A churchwide team called Fortifying Urban Ministries has been named, and
2. This team is committed to seeking representation that reflects the breadth of geography and the diversity of the ELCA.

SEPA will be looked at as a field for learning and testing in the coming years.

### **Lutheran Disaster Response**

Across the Church gifts of \$23,349,632 were received. Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod contributed \$311,060 of this amount.

### **ELCA World Hunger**

Total gifts in 2022 were \$19,194,022. This synod contributed \$222,280 of this amount.

Some of this money is used for Hunger Grants, which help local ministries in feeding the people of their communities. Four Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod congregations received Hunger Grants:

- + Christ the King Deaf Church, West Chester
- + Feast of Justice, Philadelphia
- + Grace, Broomall
- + New Hanover, Gilbertsville
- + The Welcome Church, Philadelphia

### **Fund for Leaders**

This fund supports over 375 students with \$3,062,418. This is the highest number of students, and the greatest amount of support, provided by this fund in its 25 years. This includes Ian Clements from Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion, who is attending United Lutheran Seminary.

### **Service and Justice – Global Engagement**

Missionaries - \$1,861,762 to support 131 missionaries in 54 countries around the world. SEPA Synod supports three of these people: Linda Jacobson, Brian Palmer, and Stephen Deal. Stephen Deal is the Regional Representative for AMMPARO in the Americas. AMMPARO stands for Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Resources, and Opportunities. This work is critical in these days, particularly as immigration is such a hot topic nationally, and policies are set to change soon which may encourage many more people to try to come to the United States.

Amparo is a Spanish word that means “refuge,” and that is what this ministry seeks to provide migrating people across the Americas.

### **Rostered Ministers Gathering and ELCA Youth Gathering**

Both of these events are important learning and service opportunities in our Church. We grow as we learn, and learn as we serve.

### **Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church**

After being in existence for 35 years, the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly determined that it is time to reconsider the language of the 1980s and look at the principles of its organizational structure, being particularly attentive to our shared commitment to dismantle racism. This Commission will work for two years, with the goal of presenting its report to the Church Council in April, 2025. The Church Council will then forward recommendations to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.



Hundreds of nominations were made for this Commission. Ms. Thelma Pruitt Jacks of St. Luke, Devon, has been selected to be on this Commission.

**Federal Chaplains**

More than 160 Federal Chaplains serve in the military and in VA hospitals under ELCA Church Council calls, and more than 450 chaplains serve in healthcare systems, nursing homes, retirement villages social service agencies, public prisons, police and fire departments under Synod Council calls.

Newly approved for ordination, Chaplain Roger Randolph, III will be ordained in SEPA Synod, and will deploy next year to Djibouti in Africa.

Mrs. Beverlin concluded by thanking the Synod Staff and Synod Assembly Planning Team for their support in this process. In particular, she thanked Bishop Davenport, Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, Pr. Robert Fisher, and Ms. Carrie Schwab. Finally, she thanked all who have been apart of this Assembly. We need each other. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Thank you, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, for all you do to share from your abundance to support the wider Church, and to love and heal the world.

Bishop Davenport thanked Mrs. Beverlin for this report.

**AUDIT REPORT**

Ms. Janet Huber Neff of St. Luke’s, Devon, and Treasurer of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod presented the Audit Report for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2023.

Prior to her presentation of the Audit, Treasurer Neff reminded the Assembly of the upcoming “Lutheran Night at the Phillies” event. This annual event is a great way to come together as Lutherans for fellowship and a game, but is also a fundraiser for our Synod’s youth ministry programs. This year Lutheran Night at the Phillies will be on May 20<sup>th</sup>, the 4:05 p.m. game. The section in Citizen’s Bank Park is B1-20.

Treasurer Neff noted that a session had been offered prior to the Synod Assembly, during which questions regarding the Audit were addressed. This session had been recorded and posted as part of the pre-Assembly materials. She hopes that many were able to view this, and that it was helpful. In this session she went into more detail than she can do in this presentation.

Ms. Neff thanked all the members of the Assembly and their congregations for their support. We are in this work together as we share God’s love in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Treasurer Neff thanked Mr. Martin Schwab for his faithful work as the Synod’s Senior Accountant, Mr. Bert Glenn for his time as Chair of the Finance Committee, and Pr. John Heidgerd for his work as Chair of the Investment Committee.

Treasurer Neff then used a PowerPoint presentation to provide a summary of the Audit Report.

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

	2023	2022
Total Cash and Investments	\$ 9,979,761	\$11,021,881

Total Assets	\$13,622,258	\$15,027,767
Total Liabilities	\$ 142,031	\$ 154,580
Total Net Assets	\$13,480,227	\$14,873,187
Unrestricted	\$ 9,443,415	\$10,349,338
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 796,322	\$ 872,809
Permanently Restricted	\$ 3,240,490	\$ 3,651,040

The Synod’s revenues are down from last year. This is due to the decrease in the market over that time.

Our liabilities are a very small part of our financial position. This is our accounts payable from one month to the next.

Our net assets have a portion of funds that are Temporarily Restricted. These are funds that have been given for a particular purpose, and are thereby donor restricted.

We also have some Permanently Restricted Funds, from which we receive income. These are long term trusts we have.

When comparing our total assets compared to our total liabilities, the Synod is in a very good financial position.

**Audit Report Details  
Statement of Activities**

	<b>Revenue</b>	
	02/01/22 – 01/31/23	02/01/21 – 01/31/22
Mission Support	\$1,591,698	\$1,662,489
Other Contributions	\$1,034,173	\$ 511,474
Registration Fees	\$ 27,991	\$ 41,324
Investment Income	(\$1,015,313)	\$1,009,379
Beneficial Interest in Trust	(\$ 417,959)	\$ 304,688
Proceeds from Property Sale	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>\$ 530,169</u>
Total Revenue	\$1,220,590	\$4,059,523

Mission Support from congregations is down by \$70,000 from last year. Yet we have also received some unrestricted bequests, the All Saints Appeal, and the Blessed to Be a Blessing Fund, all of which have been a part of how we have kept doing the work of the Church in Southeastern Pennsylvania. These are some of what makes up “other contributions.”

Registration fees are down as we have not had as many in person events. This will be changing as we move forward.

This chart also shows the significant decrease in our investments. We trust the markets will rebound over time.

We also had no property sales this past year. In the coming year we anticipate the sale of the property formerly used by a congregation that underwent holy closure in 2022.

**Audit Report Details  
Statement of Activities**

	<b>Expenses</b>	
	02/01/22 – 01/31/23	02/01/21 – 01/31/22
Operating Expenses	\$1,446,013	\$1,278,981
ELCA Proportionate Share (50%)	\$ 795,849	\$ 831,244
Property Management	\$ 44,812	\$ 128,614
Distributions to other Agencies	\$ 92,227	\$ 91,700
Remit to Designated Agency	\$ 21,270	\$ 25,976
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 213,379</u>	<u>\$ 202,834</u>
Total Expenses	\$2,613,550	\$2,559,349

Operating expenses are up by \$167,000 because we now have full staffing for the Synod. We also have increased the salaries and benefits of the staff. And we have some other costs now that we are coming out of the pandemic. One such expense is our rent to the Seminary. During the pandemic, when we were not using the space, we did not pay rent. Now that we have returned to the space, we have resumed paying rent.

Property management includes responsibility for perpetual care of cemeteries of former congregations. St. James, Chalfont, St. John’s, Quakertown, and St. Michael, Germantown all had cemeteries affiliated with their ministries. Upon the ending of their ministries, the Synod was given responsibility for the care of these cemeteries. Property management also includes the expenses of the facilities of former congregations until such time as the property can be re-purposed or sold. This past year this had included expenses for the former Bethany, Roxborough.

Distributions to other agencies includes our support of Muhlenberg College, United Lutheran Seminary, Campus Ministry, Bear Creek Camp, Lutheran Advocacy, and Lutheran Congregational Services.

Remit to designated agency are monies given by congregations through the Synod for designated purposes. This included gifts to Christ the King Deaf Church in West Chester, and to Hunger Ministries.

Grants to organizations includes grants for student loan debt of our rostered ministers, Forward Together in Faith grants, ELCA grants to congregations.

Our proportionate share to the ELCA is 50% of all the Mission Support we receive from congregations.

In addition to what is in the chart above, Treasurer Neff described another aspect of our financial picture, namely what we do with properties of congregations that have undergone holy closure.

When this happens, the Synod does an assessment of the property. The Synod, as noted, has responsibility for the expenses of that property until it is sold. When it is sold, 15% of the sale goes into the Synod budget. After reimbursing the costs of the management of the properties, the remainder of the sale goes into the Fund for Mission.

Expenses have recently increased from the Mission portion of our budget because we have two co-Directors of Evangelical Mission. These pastors are shared staff with the ELCA. Compensation comes to us from the ELCA, is passed through the Mission segment of our budget, and is given to the congregations our DEMs serve to be given to them as compensation.

The Mission portion of our budget also includes support of such ministries as the Welcome Church, the Well, Kairos Community, Grace Broomall, New Creation, Atonement, St. Michael's Philadelphia and Mediator.

In all this we are sharing. Members are sharing resources with their congregations. Congregations are sharing their resources with the Synod. The Synod is sharing with congregations within the Synod, and with the ELCA. We are all in partnership with one another. We are blessed to have Rev. Bryan Penman and Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis as our Directors for Evangelical Mission, helping us to discover how we can more fully partner with each other for the sake of the gospel.

Ms. Neff asked for questions from the floor. She then read the audit opinion from Tait, Weller, and Baker:

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the "Synod") which comprise the statement of financial position as of January 31, 2023, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Synod as of January 31 2023, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

She then put the following resolution before the Assembly:

**SA.22.05.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly accepts the Audit reports for the Fiscal Year January 31, 2023.**

The Assembly voted using the electronic devices.

**The Assembly adopted the resolution.**      Yes – 99.25%                  No – .75%

## **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND PRESENTATION OF THE BUDGET**

Mr. Albert "Bert" Glenn of St. John's, Melrose Park, and Chair of the Finance Committee, made the report of the Committee, and presented the budget for Fiscal Year 2/1/2024 to 1/31/ 2025.

Mr. Glenn thanked the members of the Finance Committee, Mr. Everett Wick, Ms. Pia Graham, and Ms. Sandra Zimmerman, for their devotion and service to the Synod. He thanked Treasurer

Neff for explaining what the numbers mean, and Mr. Schwab for keeping track of all the accounts and his patience with the numerous questions that the Committee sends his way. Mr. Glenn also thanked Bishop Davenport for her support of the Committee’s work. She has not missed a meeting, and it is appreciated.

Mr. Glenn noted that the Budget is in the Bulletin of Reports, pages B21 to B23. The budget is in two parts, as are our financial statements, income and expenses. The income for 2023 is summarized on this chart:

	<b>2024 Budget Income</b>	
	2022 Audit	2024 Budget
Mission Support	\$1,591,698	\$1,600,000
Other Contributions	\$1,034,173	\$ 440,800
Registration Fees	\$ 27,991	\$ 57,100
Investment Income	(\$1,015,313)	\$ 721,962
Beneficial Interest in Trusts	(\$ 417,959)	\$ 60,000
Proceeds from Property Sale	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
Total Revenues	\$1,220,590	\$3,879,862

The budget is for a long time off, beginning 1/31/2024, but while it is some time in the future, we do have a track record of our operations, both income and expenses, over many years that help us be confident in our presentation.

Based on our current receipts, we are not increasing our projected Mission Support from congregations, but keeping at the level we have received this year.

We had unusually strong receipts in other income. We have determined we should budget a more typical amount for the coming year.

We see in the audit how the investments were down in this past year, but we are projecting a more normal return for the next fiscal year.

While we did not have any properties sell in this past year, we are anticipating two to be sold which will help the coming year’s budget.

	<b>2024 Budget Expenses</b>	
	2022 Audit	2024 Budget
Operating Expenses	\$1,226,403	\$1,335,176
ELCA Proportionate Share (50%)	\$ 795,849	\$ 800,000
Property Management	\$ 44,812	\$ 102,500
Distributions to other Agencies	\$ 92,227	\$ 93,000
Remit to Designated Agency	\$ 21,270	\$ 17,500
Mission Expense	\$ 219,610	\$ 232,593
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 213,379</u>	<u>\$ 182,300</u>
Total Expenses	\$2,613,550	\$2,763,069

There is nothing unusual or remarkable in the proposed budget. It includes a slight increase in operating expenses for inflation. Proportionate share is still at 50% of the Mission Support we receive. The number is slightly lower than last budget because of the receipts we received. We are not saying you should reduce your Mission Support. We would be happy to see an increase in this line, but we are basing this number on our past response.

Mr. Glenn asked if there were any questions on the proposed budget.

Rev. Bruce Davidson, Christ Ascension, Philadelphia inquired about the cut in support for designated agencies. What agencies have been cut, and what was the rationale?

Mr. Glenn noted that the line for support to designated agencies is the “pass through” portion of the budget. When congregations send support to specific ministries or agencies through the Synod, we send on what they send to the Synod.

Mr. Zenas Savage, Emmanuel Pottstown, asked what rate of inflation was used by the Synod Finance Committee, and would you recommend that congregations use the same rate?

Mr. Glenn stated that the Committee did not use a mathematical calculation. He noted that an indicator of inflation could be seen in the rate of increase of Social Security and those who have a federal pension received an 8.7% increase in their payments. One of the lines in the expanded budget figures is a sum we had set aside for increases to Synod Staff salaries. That amount was 25,000, and we increased that to \$35,000 because of that significant rate of inflation. We did not multiply by 8.7%, but we did want to provide some additional funds for this item. In terms of congregational work, there are guidelines for pastoral compensation which include salary, which can be obtained through the Deans or the Synod office. Those do increase as well. Each congregation needs to take into consideration its own unique circumstances, while remaining aware that inflation is inflation.

With no further questions, Mr Glenn put the following resolution before the Assembly:

**SA.22.05.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly adopts the budget for the coming year, Fiscal Year ending January 31, 2025.**

The Assembly voted using the electronic devices.

**The Assembly adopted the resolution.**      Yes – 99.26%                  No – .74%

## **RECESS**

Following a prayer by Ms. Kelsey Tomlinson, Grace, Royersford, the Assembly stood in recess for lunch.

## **THIRD SESSION – Saturday afternoon, May 6<sup>th</sup>**

### **INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

The Rev. Alina Gayeuski, pastor of Reformation, Media, and Chair of the Inclusive Communities Committee, came to give a report on this recently formed Committee.

Pr. Gayeuski, (*she/her/hers*) noted that this is the first year of this committee, which was created by action of this Synod in Assembly last year as part of a resolution renewing our commitment to

be a Reconciling in Christ Synod. The ICC's mission is to create events, trainings, workshops, fellowship, and connections around issues of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in the congregations, communities, organizations, committees and rosters of the SEPA Synod. This committee is comprised of people of the LGBTQIA+ community, and allies who are committed to sharing in this work. This committee brings together many areas of work that have already been in place throughout the Synod, and creates a central space to continue expanding and strengthening the work of inclusivity throughout SEPA.

One example of work that is already in place is our annual Pride Event. Pastor Marie Sager and Pastor Kayla Sadowy are coordinating this event on Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, at Grace, Broomall. The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a presentation by Pastor Carla Christopher Wilson, followed by worship at 7:30 p.m. with Pastor/Dean/Parliamentarian Joey Klinger preaching.

Another example is our "In God's Image" event, a day-long resourcing event for congregations. This year the event will be held on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, at Upper Dublin Lutheran Church, one of our newest Reconciling in Christ congregations in SEPA Synod. Workshops will include sessions on how to become an RIC congregation; how to engage in advocacy, particularly around issues of transgender individuals; mental health; how to organize congregational groups for families, and other topics. Pastor Noah Hepler from Atonement will be our Keynote Speaker this year.

We warmly welcome you to join us in this work.

We thank our Bishop for being such a strong advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community. We thank Pastor Skylie Rea for being the Bishop's representative on this Committee. Thank you to Pastor Jay Mitchell who was co-founder and co-chair of this ministry. He has recently accepted a call to serve in another synod, but we are blessed by his work among us. Finally, we thank our incoming co-chairs, Pastor Kevin Tracey and Pastor Daniel Eisenberg.

### **ELCA CHURCHWIDE REPRESENTATIVE**

Mrs. Jill Beverlyn returned to address the Assembly, sharing about her work as the Program Manager for Coaching Ministries.

Prior to her sharing about coaching, Mrs. Beverlyn shared a video of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, who brings greetings and encouragement to the people of this Assembly and this Synod. Bishop Eaton reminded us that we are connected with each other by our Baptism into Christ. She highlighted our call to serve all people, to reach out in diverse communities, to serve through efforts of agencies like ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response. We connect our faith in daily life through ELCA Advocacy, standing for policies that reduce poverty, promote dignity, and defend God's creation. The Body of Christ is open for everyone, and we invite others into the mission we share. We give ourselves in service to others, and receive comfort and care from a loving community in times of need. The Gospel changes lives, and together we go out to share the love of God in Jesus. Together, we are called.

Some background on Mrs. Beverlyn. She has been a church professional for 28 years and has served at every expression of church. She is a Professional Certified Coach with the International Coaching Federation (PCC-ICF). She has Coaching Specialties in grief & loss, stewardship, spiritual disciplines, and mission development and congregational vitality. Her technical and managerial experience includes team/group facilitation, visitation ministry, Bible study, generosity projects, faith formation, and community engagement.

She loves her job as a coach. She encourages people to explore more about coaching by visiting [elcacoaching.org](http://elcacoaching.org). Note that this is not an ELCA site; it is its own entity. ELCA Coaching Ministry has five components: Center on Jesus, Create Community, Education, Engagement, and Collaborate with Synods and Congregations.

The theology of ELCA Coaching Ministry is based on Luke chapter 24, the story of the Road to Emmaus.

On that day of resurrection two were returning to Emmaus. While they were talking on their way, Jesus appeared among them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing them. They were discussing the events that had happened, and Jesus asked “What events?” They spoke of the crucifixion, and their hope that Jesus might have been the one to redeem Israel. Jesus then interpreted the scripture to them showing how these events were the fulfillment of all that was prophesied. Finally, in the breaking of the bread, their eyes were opened, they saw Jesus, and he vanished from their sight. In their joy they returned to Jerusalem and declared how Jesus had been revealed to them.

In this story we see some basic principles of coaching.

First, Jesus journeys along with the disciples, meeting them where they are, physically and philosophically.

Second, Jesus uses good questions to help them name where they are, and what they know to be true.

Third, their encounter with Jesus expands their understanding, and spurs them to action.

In each coaching situation there are usually three involved. The person receiving the coaching, the coach, and Jesus. Our coaches follow the model Jesus lays out. We help people name where they are in the world; where they hope to be, and where God might be asking them to be; and then what needs to happen to help them get there.

Jesus listens first. Rather than jumping to the conclusion, he helps them speak their truth, and come to see where God is in the middle of their own encounters.

Jesus didn’t just skip to the end. He held space. He let them speak their sorrow: “but we had hoped...”

Do we not feel the same? We had hoped. We had hoped all would be fed. We had hoped we would be welcomed to the table. We had hoped hate would not cause a child to be shot for chasing a ball into a driveway, or wearing a hoodie, or knocking on the wrong door.



In their tale, Jesus listens, and then turns the conversation to show how their story is intersected with God's story. Jesus understands the importance of accompaniment, and the ability for listening and thoughtful questioning to reveal God's presence and direction. And then to have that encounter empower people to act in the enterprise of God.

We are still celebrating Easter. The image of Jesus stepping out of the tomb, leaving the grave clothes of death and decay behind, and bringing with him the beginning of the new creation is powerful. And then he goes and reminds his friends of his truth, and their mission. And in so doing, he begins the Beloved Community here on earth.

Sometimes we forget that we are in a liminal time of already begun, but not yet completed. But scripture reminds us that the work we do for justice is building the kingdom. When we do something, anything, for the glory of God, it helps to bring about another step toward the world God intends.

Your work is not in vain. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15 Paul writes "Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." Because we know that our work is not in vain, we know that what we do today will echo into eternity.

Coaching enables people to see that they are Beloved of God, that they are Gifted by God, and that they are Invited by God into God's work of loving and healing the world.

You are beloved of God. You are called and invited into the work of God, where Jesus walks alongside you. And this work is not in vain.

### **PORTICO BENEFITS SERVICES**

Bishop Davenport introduced the Rev. Tara Lynn. Ms. Barabara Debski has retired from her work with Portico, and we are blessed to have Pastor Lynn as our newly assigned representative.

Pr. Lynn gave thanks for the example of Ms. Debski. She expressed her thanks to be present here. It is a gift to be able to walk along with congregations and rostered leaders in their ministry. While we provide pension and insurance and financial services. But as a non-profit ministry, we provide holistic well-being for our plan members. We have socks with a "wholeness wheel" on them. This wheel reminds us that there are all different aspects to our whole person well-being. This is what we encourage, with Jesus Christ at the center of that well-being.

### **UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY**

The Rev. Dr. J. Jayakiran Sebastian, Dean and H. George Anderson Professor of Mission and Cultures, United Lutheran Seminary was welcomed to give an update from the Seminary.

Dr. Sebastian brought greetings for Dr. Guy Erwin, President of the United Lutheran Seminary, and the whole seminary community. He expressed his gratitude for the partnership we share between the Seminary and the Synod.

As a special note, Dean Sebastian announced that at this year's commencement, distinguished alumna Bishop Davenport will be receiving an honorary doctorate from the United Lutheran Seminary!

A second announcement is that Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero, the Steck-Miller Assistant Professor of Worship and Liturgy and Co-Director of Worship Life at United Lutheran Seminary, has been appointed the Grace Professor of Leadership at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Saskatoon, starting July 1. We wish him Godspeed, even as we will miss his presence here.

In my report to the Board of Directors, I have called this a year of gratitude for stability. Over the past several years there have been periods of tension within our seminaries, but this has indeed been a year of stability among our faculty, our staff, and particularly with our students. It has been a year of consolidation, bringing together all the threads of our mission, to be responsive in training leaders who are receptive to what is going on in the future of the Church, not least after what the pandemic has wrought.

This year we will be graduating two PhD students, one from the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, and one from the Myanmar Baptist Church. We will also have one STM, ten D.Min, twenty-three MDiv, six MA, and one MAPL graduates.

Among all these graduates we have a variety of people, from Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic backgrounds. One of our challenges at the Seminary is to increase enrollment from among our Hispanic community, our Asian American community, and from our Native American community. We want to increase the pool from which our students come, and we are in a unique position as a Seminary to offer these communities a robust theological education.

Thank you for allowing me to be here. I wish you the best from your Seminary. Please visit us, you are always welcome.

### **CREATION CARE COMMITTEE**

Ms. Joy Baxter, St. Paul's Ardmore, and Dr. John Connors, Lutheran Church of God's Love, Newtown, were introduced as the Co-Chairs of this newly constituted team. Bishop Davenport invited them to share some information about this new ministry.

Dr. Connors and Ms. Baxter told the Assembly that they have been given an assignment: form a Care for Creation Team, sometimes called a "Green Team."

We have not always been the best stewards of the earth. The ELCA has a social statement about our care for creation, and the climate crisis, which we have had for more than 20 years. At the end of the last Churchwide Assembly, the Church reaffirmed its commitment to reduce our carbon impact and reach 0 emission status by 2035.

How do congregations care for creation? How do we work for carbon reduction? Like in the movie "Field of Dreams," it has been said, "If you build it they will come." We are concerned that if WE build it you may not come. So we are asking to build a small steering committee, so

that together we may inspire you to come. We are looking for those who may be willing to serve on this steering committee, making proposed initiatives, and working on ways to roll out these initiatives.

We have congregations in many settings – urban, suburban, and rural. Some have people, some have wealth. One size will not fit all. We need to come up with initiatives that will meet congregations where they are.

We do not envision participation on the steering committee to be a heavy lift. We will share that load. On our table in the mission fair we have various items that may help your congregation take steps to save energy and protect the environment.

We look for you to join us as we work to care for the creation God has entrusted to us.

### **FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REFERENCE AND COUNSEL**

The Rev. Jennifer Casey was invited forward to make the final report of the Committee, the Resolution of Thanks.

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-fifth meeting of the Assembly, we offer our appreciation and thankful applause;

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

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

To our ELCA representative, Ms. Jill Beverlin, ELCA Program Manager for Coaching Ministries;

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

To Reverend Nancy Raabe and the members of SEPA's Worship Committee for the prayers, praise and preaching;

To Deacon Tom Snyder and the assembly choir for leading us in song;

To Reverend Joseph Klinger and members of the Nominating Committee, and Reverend Rebecca Schaney 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 2023 Assembly a success;

To Reverend Bob Fisher and the tech team;

To the people of Franconia Mennonite Church for their unfailing hospitality, especially Gerry Derstine, Monique Kratz, and Rich Landis;

To Mr. Scott Casey from Vistacom 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.

**The Assembly adopted this resolution with applause.**

### **Stewardship Extravaganza**

The Rev. Dr. Larry Smoose was recognized for a moment of personal privilege, during which he announced the coming of the next Stewardship Extravaganza, January 20, 2024. The theme of the event is “Practical Gifts, Tools for Today.” It will be hosted by Trinity, Lansdale.

### **FINAL REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR**

Ms. Cynta Outterbridge was called forward to give the final report on registration.

Total number of ministers of word and sacrament under call	127
Total number of retired ministers of word and sacrament voting	30
Total number of ministers of word and service under call	6
Total number of retired ministers of word and service voting	3
Total number of lay voting members certified*	
including Council members and Youth/Young Adult	212
<b>TOTAL VOTING MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>378</b>

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

Total number of persons of color or primary language other than English in the previous total	44
Percentage this is of the total voting membership	11.6%
Number of women lay voting members	108
Number of men lay voting members	83
Number of lay Synod Council members	10
Number of Youth/Young Adult	11

### **ACTUALLY IN ATTENDANCE**

Total number of ministers of word and sacrament under call registered*	108
Total number of retired ministers of word and sacrament registered*	26

Total number of ministers of word and service under call registered*	3
Total number of retired ministers of word and service registered*	4
Total number of lay voting members registered*	
including Council members and Youth/Young Adult	194
<b>TOTAL REGISTERED VOTING MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>335</b>
*registered = Any voting member present and accounted for by the Assembly Registrar as being in actual attendance at the Assembly at the time this report is compiled.	

Total number of persons of color or primary language other than English in the previous total	44
Percentage this is of the total voting membership	13%
Total number of visitors and guests registered	58

### **RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING SYNOD COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Bishop asked the members of the Synod Council whose terms have concluded to come forward and be blessed. These included:

- + Mr. Richard Daniels
- + The Rev. Julie DeWerth
- + Mr. Bert Glenn
- + Ms. Doreen Kinzler
- + Rev. Joseph Klinger - elected Dean of NE/NW Conference March 28, 2023
- + Rev. Serena Sellers
- + Ms. Kendyll Ward
- + Mr. Damar Wilson
- + Ms. Sandra Zimmermann

### **INSTALLATION OF NEWLY ELECTED SYNOD COUNCIL MEMBERS**

She then invited the newly elected members of the Synod Council to come forward to be installed, and asked those members who continue to serve to come forward with them. Those newly elected include:

- + Rev. Heeralal Mukesh Cheedie
- + Rev. Heidi Rodrick Schnaath
- + Dr. Marcia Boraas
- + Dr. John Connors
- + Mr. Tredon Stevenson

### **ORDER FOR THE CLOSING OF THE ASSEMBLY**

Bishop Davenport then led the Assembly in the Order for the Closing of the Assembly. The thirty-fifth annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

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

*Approved by Synod Council, June 29, 2023*