**2024 Bishop’s Synod Assembly Report**

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”*

1 Peter 2:9

***Chosen, Called and Sent to do more in 2024 +***

***(****Drawing Others into a deeper relationship with Jesus through acts of love.****)***

I am grateful for you all! In the words of St. Paul, *“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”  Philippians 1:3-6.* Beloved members of our Lutheran Tribe, I am excited with and for us, looking forward to the bright future that God has in store for our awesome Synod.  In the midst of wars, contentious presidential election, upswing in anti-Semitism, ongoing systemic racism, food insecurity, gun violence and drug usage openly on our streets we have consistently showed up.  We have accomplished so much missional ministry over this last year with our Synod Council leading the way, boldly guiding us in handling our fiduciary responsibilities.  This is due in large part to the leadership of Vice President Tracey A. Beasley and our Synod Council executive committee: Mrs. Janet H. Neff, treasurer; Rev. Karl M. Richard, secretary; Ms. Pia Graham, Dr. John Connors, and Rev. Gwendolyn King. Of course, our dedicated Office of the Bishop staff towed the line in accomplishing the many tasks set before us.  Yes, your office staff along with our committee of Deans and synodical committees have diligently worked to fulfill the obligations handed down to us by our Synod Council by way of you, our Synod Assembly voting members.

Beloved, leaning into 1 Peter 2:9 and our theme as people of the Lutheran Tribe, “Chosen, Called and Sent to do more in 2024” we have wholeheartedly embraced, drawing others into a deeper relationship with Jesus through acts of love.  Across the 5-county area we have been showing up in ways great and small, we know that no act of kindness no matter how small is wasted, we make a difference!  You will see, hear, and note our acts of love throughout the following reports.

**Synod Staff Reports**

**Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership / Mission Advancement** – Pastor Karen Sease continues to support the discernment of those who are exploring a possible call to rostered ministry in the ELCA with 12 inquiry conversations and assisting the Candidacy Committee with 4 entrance decision interviews, 1 endorsement interview, and 2 approval interviews. Her work with the administrative functions of mobility assists the Committee of Deans with the call process. Pastor Sease has coordinated with other stakeholders to establish a SEPA process for Synod Authorized Ministry that would allow vetted and trained lay people to serve as a temporary pastoral presence in congregations that do not have settled leadership from the Word and Sacrament roster. She continues raising funds to support the SEPA mission through the annual All Saints campaign and other appeals while also supporting the synod Generosity Team’s ministry. In 2024, Pastor Sease looks forward to the launch of the Love Revolution, a $1 million dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment which she helped write and now serves on the launch team. It has been an honor for Pastor Sease to serve on the synod staff under the leadership of Bishop Patricia Davenport and she joins the rest of the synod in prayer for whomever God is calling to be our next bishop.

**Directors for Evangelical Mission**

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

**Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship -** Rev. Stacey-Kyle Rea

**Young Adult** –

* We are excited to announce that last year’s dream is now a reality! Gather Philly+ is a new ministry of SEPA Synod, a ministry for young adults planned by young adults. We have a great planning team and held our first event at Board and Brew in University City

**Youth -**

* Our first Synod Youth ASP (Appalachia Service Project) trip was July 1-8. We had 16 participants from 6 different congregations. We served in Kentucky for this week of accompanying a family who needed repairs to their home. Thanks to Ray Hopkins for leading us
* Bridge Builders – This program for campers who have completed 9th-12th grades intends to help campers "grow as a leader, develop peer ministry skills, and join the fight against racism as an expression of your faith & our call to love our neighbors!" 13 multicultural youth from SEPA attended, along with Rev. Regina Goodrich and me, who led the group. Thanks, Pastor Gee
* ELCA Youth Gathering – We have at least 125 people attending the Gathering, with 42 Youth attending MYLE (multicultural youth leadership event). We held a Mardi Gras Gathering kickoff to have fun and answer questions. Thanks to our Gathering Synod Champion, Kelsey Tomlinson
* Our past and present Youth Synod Council members, Damar Wilson and Tredon Stevenson, along with Robin Alderfer and me attended the ELCA Youth Leadership Summit in Chicago
* We doubled our number of leaders attending the ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza. 23 leaders from SEPA participated
* We are beginning Conference Youth Helping Hands events. Our first was hosted by Chester Conference. Dean Franz hosted the event at Advent, West Chester. 90 participants of all ages helped pack meals for Rise Against Hunger, then enjoyed an ice-skating party
* Our Montgomery Conferences Youth Helping Hands event is Box City, April 6-7 at Advent, Harleysville

**Advocacy**

I serve as Synod Staff liaison for the Inclusive Communities Team, SEPA Hunger Team and our new Creation Care Ministry. Many thanks to Rev. Alina Gayeuski, Rev. Daniel Eisenberg, Rev. Kevin Tracey, Rev. Bruce Davidson, Joy Baxter and Dr. John Collins for your leadership on these teams. We are always looking for new members! Some highlights:

* Deacon Ross Murray came for a book signing event for his latest book, “The Everyday Advocate; Living Out Your Calling to Social Justice
* ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering was attended by Rev. Tricia Neale, Luvenia Johnson, Damar Wilson and me
* Our In God’s Image event was a great success. Thank you to Upper Dublin LC for hosting
* We celebrated PRIDE and God’s love for all on June 1 at Grace, Broomall.
* MLK Day of Service was a joint service day between United Lutheran Seminary, Lutheran Congregational Services and SEPA Synod, benefitting Lutheran Disaster Response

I continue to represent the Office of the Bishop on the Bear Creek Camp Board and ELCA Synod Youth Ministry Band of Leaders (SYMBOL).

**Business Office**

Martin Schwab is responsible for recording all deposits, processing accounts payable checks, reconciling bank and investment accounts, preparing monthly financial reports and processing payroll. He also oversees properties of closed congregations and cemeteries. In January he sends out W2s, 1099s and year end donor statements. Every March he works with an audit firm to complete the annual audited financial statements. He worked with staff and completed the 2024 forecast and 2025 budget for the Treasurer and Finance Committee to approve. He also manages properties and cemeteries of closed congregations. He works closely with the Director of Operations, Treasurer of the Synod and chairs of the Finance Committee, Investment Committee and Audit Committee. Martin would like to thank everyone for their Mission Support contributions.

**Office Administration**

In this position Ms. Curtis manages daily office operations and serves as our office human resource administrator with grace. She is your link to the Bishop, Synod Council, and the Executive Committee of Synod Council. If you have ever been part of a call process - either as a congregation or rostered leader - Ms. Curtis has been an invaluable member of your team.

Ms. Curtis reports: "I am honored to be called to this ministry of administration. I have the responsibility for constitutional administrative requirements in the Office of the Bishop. Working with congregations and rostered leaders include helping congregations schedule congregational meetings to call rostered ministers led by synodical deputies, coordinate with other synods throughout the ELCA transferring rostered leaders to and from SEPA Synod to reflect call changes. When a rostered minister is planning retirement, I process retirement paperwork with Portico. Working closely with the Vice President and Secretary of SEPA Synod, Committee of Deans, and the Bishop's Advisor for Fitness for Ministry is a rewarding experience, along with collaborating with the ELCA Office of the Secretary, to process roster actions for the Report of the Secretary to SEPA Synod Assembly."

Since last Synod Assembly Ms. Curtis was elected, by the ELCA Church Council Executive Committee, to serve on the ELCA Task Force On Leave From Call and Specialized Ministry. This Task Force was called for by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to review the Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**Communications Office**

With an impressive tenure of 25 years in the Synod Office, Mrs. Cynta Outterbridge has become a familiar and respected presence in the SEPA Synod community, excelling in her dual roles as Database Manager and Communications Assistant. Her expertise in data collection and records management is highly regarded, especially in her meticulous tracking of the participation of our Rostered Ministers in Healthy Boundaries Training and other significant events. In her capacity as Database Manager, Ms. Outterbridge oversees the maintenance of the synod's database, ensuring its alignment with the ELCA Churchwide system and collaborating closely with the ELCA Office of the Secretary. Additionally, she plays a crucial role in roster management alongside the Director of Operations, diligently monitoring anniversaries and maintaining up-to-date contact information for congregation council officers. Furthermore, Ms. Outterbridge extends her capabilities to event planning and organization, supporting the Synod’s Hospitality Committee, and serves as the in-house Blackbaud System Consultant, overseeing essential software functions for tracking synodical information and financial matters. Collaborating with the Senior Accountant, she provides valuable support with financial reporting tasks. Beyond her Database Manager role, Ms. Outterbridge is an essential aid to the Assistant to the Bishop for Communications – Mission Interpretation, maintaining the Synod Website, compiling the bi-weekly SEPANews email, and crafting engaging content for social media platforms. Her multifaceted contributions reflect her unwavering dedication to the synod's efficient functioning and fostering effective communication within the community.

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

**Bishop’s Report**

**Virtual Synod Council Meeting June 29, 2023**

*“Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?”* *1 Kings 3:9*

***Newly elected to Synod Council***

Join me in welcoming those newly elected to Synod Council: Pastor Heeralal Mukesh Cheedie, Redeemer – Penndel; Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath, Good Shepherd – Coatesville; Dr. Marcia C. Boraas, St. John – Melrose Park; Dr. John Connors, God’s Love – Newtown; and Mr. Tredon J. Stevenson, Mediator - Philadelphia. We are blessed to have them join in this Kingdom building work of being the Beloved Community of God. On June 6th, Vice-President Beasley graciously gathered us on a Synod Council Orientation Zoom call to introduce all to the intricate work of our Synod Council. Vice President noted the Synod Council is the synod’s board of directors, functioning as the interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. We set goals and budgets for the synod to present at the assembly, carrying out the resolutions of the assembly, and she informed new members all will be asked to serve on a committee of council. Praise God, all remained committed to our joint task of serving the people of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

***SEPA Synod Assembly***

Join me in appreciating Mrs. Carrie Schwab, Synod Assembly Coordinator, for her leadership and coordination of our Synod Assembly.  Under Ms. Schwab’s direction our Synod staff, Synod Council and volunteers facilitated a great Synod Assembly.  I admit I am very biased, but the assembly evaluations support my statement, thank you all.  We also, applaud the welcome, support and services provided by Franconia Mennonite Church staff, our partnership continues strong. <https://ministrylink.org/2023-synod-assembly/>

***Chrism Worship Service***

A hybrid Chrism Service was held at the Schaeffer-Ashmead Memorial Chapel on the United Lutheran Seminary campus.  The Rev. Dr. Guy Erwin, ULS President blessed us with a powerful sermon.  Moving through the trauma of this lingering pandemic fog has been a slow process, we were able to invite Rostered Ministers (pastors, deacons, and deaconesses) to gather in person while others joined us in sacred cyberspace.  Those attending nearly filled the chapel. Great to have our staff participate in worship sharing the gifts of music, assisting with the readings, technology, and logistics. We understand from the feedback that this was a very meaningful gathering for many on the journey through Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday, praise God!

***Annual SEPA Interim Ministers Meeting with the Bishop***

I was invited to a dialogue with our Interim Ministers to respond to the following questions.  I share below the questions as some of these questions are in the hearts and minds of Rostered Ministers, Deans, and lay leaders.  I did my best to answer the questions, as well as to ascertain what they saw on the horizon for us as a Synod.

a. What is your VISION for SEPA? How has it shifted since you began as Bishop?

b. It seems we are experiencing a shift to part-time pastorates.

i. How do you envision consistent sacramental ministry being achieved in SEPA with this shift?

ii. How might we expand our interim training to help us facilitate this shift?

iii. What increased support / training might we provide for lay leaders as they undertake greater congregational responsibilities (preaching, teaching, eucharistic ministers, etc.)?

iv. What are some of the polity requirements that may weigh on this shift?

c. New Ways

i. Share with us some places in our synod where new collaborations have emerged, so we may see some new ways of doing things.

ii. Our new landscape is so vast and affects so much how might we encourage one another to sit in the discomfort of it and listen for God’s guidance?

iii. What other hybrid forms (circuit rider, technology best practices / hacks, multiple congregation parishes, etc.) do you see emerging here?

d. How might we facilitate greater forthrightness from the Deans and Office of the Bishop in conversation with congregations with honest and realistic sharing that this may be “difficult to match,” or “may take a long time.” Interims will often express this and remain unheard.

e. Long pastorates lead to some very complex issues in their eventual transition. How might we assist long-term pastors to exit / retire in ways that are healthy for both pastor, congregation, mission and ministry?

f. Seems fewer pastoral candidates are interested in coming to SEPA. What is different now than it was in our not-too-distant past?

**ELCA**

*“Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.”* *Titus 3:1-2*

***Conference of Bishops (COB)***

Bi-weekly meetings continue to be offered with different topics and leaders guiding conversations.  May was the launching of Synod Assembly season so participation was lower due to bishops turning their attention to assembly preparations.

***Region 7 Bishops*** continue weekly meetings of support, information, and encouragement.  It was through these conversations that the invitation to preach at the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly was extended by my colleague, Bishop Chris deForest.  While at the NEPA Assembly, I learned that my Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome can be triggered by things great and small, such as an older white woman invading my personal space, physically assaulting me by putting her hands in my hair.  I had in my power to respond in many ways, I chose forgiveness and resilience, at a cost.  I think it was a price that I can no longer pay at the hands of people who do not see my humanity, but only my Black skin which they believe they have the power and privilege to do as they please. In these times of embolden, however subtle white supremist acts, I solicit your prayers in this ongoing process of healing for me and growth for our white siblings.

***African National Ministries, ELCA 2nd International African Lutheran Conference*** **(IALC)**

The African National Ministries steering committee elected Ms. Madea Reeve-Karpeh from People's Community Lutheran Church of Delaware Maryland Synod to chair the conference. The theme of the conference is Preach, Teach, and Heal, that is, it must address and enhance ministry, health/healing, and education, sustaining and explaining the mission of the church. The Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL)provides a unique experience of missional leadership, indigenous identity, and self-sustainability. The Lutheran Church in Liberia has a mission to reach all people through word and sacrament in a threefold ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing. Through its congregations, it preaches and teaches the word of God (the Bible). Through its health care institution, it heals God's people and through its parochial institutions, it teaches God's people and maintain its theological and biblical heritage for the last 163 years. As we continue to wrestle with the challenges of missional engagement, we pray that this will be a time to celebrate, connect and dialogue on the ways to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our intent continues to be to learn from the rich context, practice, and vision of the church in Africa. We hope to strengthen the relationships between African National Ministries of the ELCA and African Lutheran churches based on partnership, and interdependence and mutual support.  The librarian conference is a follow-up to the 2018 conference in Moshi, Tanzania and this conference will facilitate networking around best practices and benefit from evangelical work, justice, peace, and reconciliation. The IALC2023 focused on building bridges, sharing, and learning through the global experience of the diaspora of Christ’s witness in the world. It also provided the opportunity to think about our work, leave our mission and cross the bridge into the future as a church. The participants also connected their experiences with the ELCA future church, imagined new ways to collaborate in the future as they preach, heal, and teach their neighbors, locally and globally. In addition, participants immersed themselves in pulpit exchange and experiences of Christian worship, dance, and prayers in a unique West African context.

African churches are witnessing rapid social and ecclesiastical change about membership, ethnicity, gender, and culture. We are happy to report that we have been encouraged by this major accomplishment in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. African churches boast of having some of the largest church attendants in Africa. Because of this success in Africa, African Nationals in the diaspora feel a passion to reconnect with our brothers and sisters and inspire the ELCA to continue to be a center that nurtures and preserves culture, as well as develop the leadership among its members. Many African National leaders in the ELCA are recent immigrants with strong ties to their homelands; their congregations face some of the same challenges faced by Lutheran congregations in Africa, but they have been quite successful in meeting the needs of their members here. African pastors and theologians in the United States and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) also have long felt the need to engage in theological reflection relevant to their cultural backgrounds. We want to do a better job of evangelism and mission outreach. We want to establish a network that will enable us to accomplish the goal of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. The ELCA recognizes the need to appreciate the challenge of pluralism; to dialogue from and beyond local culture and to interconnect within a world church not dominated solely by a northern paradigm.

The Lutheran Church in Liberia was established by missionaries of the Lutheran Church in America in 1860 and has a deep history and ministry connection with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Lutheran churches in Europe. Most West Africans see the LCL as the “mother” of Lutheran culture in Sub-Sahara Africa holding some of the major shrines of missionary work in West Africa. The LCL is one of the fastest growing Lutheran churches in Africa and is a place to gather critical information for Lutheran evangelism and mission in Africa. The LCL recognizes that candidacy and leadership development is a process of accompaniment and ongoing discernment that prepares rostered ministers for public leadership and development. The Lutheran Church in Liberia recently submitted a request to the National Commission for higher education in Liberia for the licensing and accreditation of the Lutheran University in Liberia.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TRIP

• The Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL) welcomed its regional and international partners to celebrate 163 years of God’s earthly mission in Liberia.

• Participated in the rich spiritual heritage of the oldest Lutheran Church on the continent of Africa (south of the Sahara).

• An immersive experience of live Christian worship and fellowship in a unique Liberian, West African context.

• Experienced the rich culture and traditions of Liberia and its historic connections to America.

For highlights of the conference and my sermon visit: <https://ministrylink.org/sepa-at-african-lutheran-conference/>

We hope to have an expansive visit with Bishop Mbilu and our North Eastern Diocese Companion Synod in the future, it would be great to have some of you from Synod Council go as ambassadors.

**Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (NEPA) Assembly**

Grateful to be among many invited guests to NEPA Synod’s assembly, I preached at the opening worship which offered wonderful spirit-filled music.  Plenaries included Spoken Word Artists: Mr. Joe Davis and Mr. Dave Scherer, along with Bishop Michael Girlinghouse, author of Embracing God's Future without Forgetting the Past: A Conversation about Loss, Grief, and Nostalgia in Congregational Life.  Bishop Girlinghouse shared the essence of his book’s message; beloved know there is hope and work to be done! I provide the link to my sermon <https://www.youtube.com/live/o9k3WHz_a08?feature=share&t=1236>

**Florida Bahamas Synod (FBS) Assembly**

Serving on the executive committee of the ELCA Conference of Bishops with Bishop Pedro Suarez may have led to an invitation to preach, preside, and give a keynote at FBS Assembly.  Bishop Suarez was re-elected on the first ballot, which really caused adjustments to the schedule.

Overall, I have appreciated having the opportunity to participate in other synods assemblies, listening, learning, and taking copious notes for our upcoming assembly where we too will be electing a bishop.  Watching from the balconies, I conclude that SEPA Synod does a wonderful job of overseeing her business, connecting with ELCA and the congregations she is called to serve in the name of Jesus! Take a look through these photos <https://keithspencer.smugmug.com/CHURCH-EVENT-PHOTOGRAPHY/FBSYNOD-ASSEMBLY-2023/>

**Ecumenism**

***“****No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.”*

*Isaiah 60:18*

***Religious Leaders Council (RLC)***

We continue to meet as a council for support, fellowship, and business.  Dr. John Hougen is doing an outstanding job with Zones of Peace, they are currently working in collaboration with several of our congregations on peace initiatives.  At our June meeting, Mr. Christopher Gruits, Executive & Artistic Director of the Annenberg Center extended an invitation to collaborate in using "the arts as a catalyst for positive social change and as a platform to advocate for a safer Philadelphia.” See attached the background for Mr. Gruits proposal.  We are requesting all urban congregations to participate in this effort to curb gun violence. Consider his proposal <https://ministrylink.org/resources/library/toll-the-bell-overview/>

**Episcopal Diocese Ordination and Consecration Service**

Supporting my colleague Bishop Tracie Bartholomew of the New Jersey Synod, I was privileged to serve in her absence as the ELCA bishop at this two-day event that concluded with the Service of Ordination and Consecration for New Jersey’s new Episcopal bishop. The Reverend Dr. Sally J. French was ordained and consecrated as the 13th Bishop of New Jersey at Trinity Cathedral in Trenton.  Dr. French is the first woman elected bishop of Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey.  It was a deeply moving and spirit-filled Ordination and Consecration for Dr. French.  We presented Bishop French with a gift from SEPA Synod Council and members. I provide the schedule for your consideration

<https://ministrylink.org/resources/library/ordination-and-consecration-weekend-schedule/>

As part of the arrangement between our two denominations, I was able to serve as one of the co-consecrating bishops.

**ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER**

**Invitation to UCC Ministers to Serve ELCA Congregations in SEPA Synod**

A minister of Word and Sacrament of a full communion partner church may be invited by the synod bishop to serve as pastor of an ELCA congregation, under contract with the congregation, for an extended period of time. Upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and approval by Synod Council, the synod bishop authorizes an extended service ministry. With such authorization the minister of Word and Sacrament enters service in the ELCA through the entry rite, “Invitation to Extended Service,” which acknowledges the service of the minister of Word and Sacrament as pastor in a congregation or ministry of the ELCA.

I recommend the **Rev. Lauren Cain,** a minister in good standing with the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference - United Church of Christ (UCC), to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council for entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, at Grace, Pottstown, PA beginning October 30, 2022 until October 29, 2023. This call requires an annual report to the synodical bishop for the length of this call. Extended service is renewable annually by Synod Council. Due to an administrative glitch this request is coming to you now.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, for the **Rev. Lauren Cain** at Grace Lutheran in Pottstown, PA beginning October 30, 2022 until October 29, 2023. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.

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I recommend the **Rev. Dr. Anthony Scott,** a minister in good standing with the Rocky Mountain Conference - United Church of Christ (UCC), to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council for entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, at Reformation (Mt. Airy), Philadelphia, PA beginning May 30, 2023 until May 29, 2024. This call requires an annual report to the synodical bishop for the length of this call. Extended service is renewable annually by Synod Council.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, for the **Rev. Dr. Anthony Scott** at Reformation Lutheran (Mt. Airy), Philadelphia, PA beginning May 30, 2023 until May 29, 2023. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.

**Call to Interim Ministry**

I recommend that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the

**Rev. Susan M. Lang** to interim ministry at St. John’s Lutheran Church (Spinnerstown) beginning February 13, 2023 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Lang resigns this call, whichever comes first.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Susan M. Lang** to interim ministry at St. John’s Lutheran Church (Spinnerstown) beginning February 13, 2023 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Lang resigns this call, whichever comes first.

**On Leave from Call Request**

Rev. Timothy Ness 2nd year effective January 1, 2023

Rev. Janet Peterman 3rd year effective June 18, 2023

Rev. Julie Peterson 1st year effective August 16, 2022

**Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster Request**

Mr. Bruce Tonkin effective June 27, 2021

**Death**

The Rev. Harvey P. Davis on April 7, 2023

The Rev. John G. Huber, Jr. on May 17, 2023

**Bishop’s Activities**

**SEPA Synod**

Ordinations:  **0**

Installations:**1**

Worship Services: In-person: **10** On-line: **2**

Celebrations: In-person: **3**

Synodcommunicationsvideos: **3**

*Synod Meetings*

Rostered Leaders:  Zoom:  **2** Telephone calls: **9** In person:  **3**

Lay Leaders:  Zoom: **2** Telephone calls: **2** In person:  **1**

Deans Meetings:**3**

Healthy Boundaries Training:**0**

Confidential Meetings/Investigations:  Zoom:  **1** Telephone Calls: **1**   In-person: **2**

*Staff*

Zoom: **3** Telephone calls: **20** In-person: **18**

Full Staff Meetings:  In-person: **3**

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts:  In-person: **4** Telephone calls: **9**

Funerals/Memorials:  **4**

Days Off: **19** Medical Days: **0** Vacation Days:   **0**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA)**

Zoom: **2** Telephone calls: **2** In-person:  **1**

Conference Of Bishops (COB): Zoom:**1**   Formal in person:  **0** Telephone Calls: **9**

COB Exec. Committee: **1** Telephone calls: **1**   In person:  **0**

* Deaconess Community Board: **0** Executive Committee: **0**
* Muhlenberg College Board: **0** Student Life Committee:  **0**
* Churchwide Staff: Zoom:**2** Telephone calls:**2**   In person: **0**
* Rostered Minister Gathering Planning Team:  Zoom: **4**
* Tanzania Companion Synod Network:  Zoom:**2**
* Region 7 Bishops Zoom:**7**   In-person: **0**
* Stewardship of Life Institute Board:  **1**
* Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa):**0**

***ECUMENISM***

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings:  Zoom:**2**  Telephone calls: In person: **1**

Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity: **0**

BC Nominating Committee:  **0**

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

**Bishop’s Report**

**Virtual Synod Council Meeting September 21, 2023**

**SEPA**

*"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*

*1 Thessalonians 5:18*

*Voltaire says, “Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.”* It is with deep appreciation to you, Synod Council and for you, Secretary Richard for taking on the role of Acting Bishop during my sabbatical, thank you!

I read several books as a foundation for my time away; however, US The Resurrection of American Terror by Rev. Kenneth W. Wheeler, and Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto by Rev. Tricia Hersey launched me onto a continuing education experience.

In her book, Tricia Hersey, aka The Nap Bishop, encourages us to connect to the liberating power of rest, daydreaming, and naps as a foundation for healing and justice.

Dr. Hersey, poses the question, “What would it be like to live in a well-rested world?” She notes, “Far too many of us have claimed productivity as the cornerstone of success. Brainwashed by capitalism, we subject our bodies and minds to work at an unrealistic, damaging, and machine‑level pace –– feeding into the same engine that enslaved millions into brutal labor for its own relentless benefit.”

Reading and learning more of the history white supremacy and capitalism and its impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) for generation while pausing to rest (using Ms. Harriet Tubman model of listen to God) has cause a mental shift. I better understand the “Grind.” The excessive need to constantly work towards keeping the system flowing. Dr. Hersey used Ms. Harriet Tubman as one of her muses. I felt a connection to Ms. Tubman who was raised on a plantation in Maryland, the state in which I was born. Tubman’s faith was a major resource on her dangerous missions of freeing slaves. She often spoke of “consulting with God,” and trusted that God would keep her safe, according to Catherine Clinton’s account in On the Road To Harriet Tubman.

Ms. Tubman said she would listen carefully to the voice of God as she led slaves north, and she would only go where she felt God was leading her. The voice of God led her all the way to Canada, which is the path I decided to take for a mindfully listen to God and taking pauses for rest.

Abolitionist Quaker Thomas Garrett, who worked with Ms. Tubman said, “I never met with any person of any color who had more confidence in the voice of God, as spoken direct to her soul.” Her faith in God seemed to always bring immediate assistance. She used spiritual songs as coded messages, warning escaping slaves of danger or directing them toward a safe path as noted in historical accounts. I pondered, do I have a spiritual code to alert saints to the impending devices of the enemy, yes, the WORD.

Mr. Garrett’s words took me back to my internship at St. Timothy’s, Aston, where a young boy said, “You really believe this stuff,” after the children’s sermon. My faith in God and scripture have been my life’s guide. Reflecting, along my journey, the “Grind” has become overwhelming more prominent as I age.

Outcomes of the Experience:

· Learning to relax in who God has called me to be, a child of the Most High (show

up and do my best and trust God to do the rest)

· Daily listen to and meditate on the scriptures consistently

· Manage/steward time

· Take pauses (daydream, nap, meditation)

· Mindfulness (mindfulness practice is a way to gently retrain the mind to settle into

the present moment. It’s kind of like becoming a parent to your mind rather than

letting it control you.)

· Remain vigilant against white supremacy and capitalism within the system

Seek justice in all ways, for all people in the name of Jesus!

I traveled 412 miles to Ontario, Canada (part of Harriet Tubman’s trek on foot, horse, wagon, boat).

*“Let us remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm, and look forward to the future with confidence.” Pope John Paul II*

***Hospitality***

We had the opportunity to reciprocate the wonderful hospitality extended by Bishop Victor Padmore when we visited Liberia on his recent visit to the US. We were able to have a small lunch conversation with selected leaders and then a larger dinner conversation with those from the diaspora.

***What’s happening in our Community***

Pr. Bryan Penman was gracious to open his home for a gathering of our Rostered Ministers in our LBGTQIA+ Community. We had an open conversation on how people are feeling, what is bringing joy, what is causing stress and how can we as a Synod accompany them on the journey.

**ELCA**

“*I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart;*

*I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.”*

*Psalm 9:1*

***Conference of Bishops (COB)***

Conference of Bishops continue working through Microsoft Teams, with ongoing Zoom meeting to discuss specific ministry topics at times bi-monthly.

***Association of Lutheran Church Musicians***

I was privileged to preach and preside for the ALCM Biennial Conference at the historic Christ Church, Philadelphia (St. Thomase, Apostle). It was a gift to hear voices and musicians from across the ELCA lifting praises to God, it truly was a taste of heaven.

***Region 7 Bishops***

We continue meeting with Rev. A. Rebecca Resch, Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Regions 7 & 8 which is a large part of how we manage candidates available for call within our region. We have an open dialogue of the possibilities of a candidate based their Rostered Minister Profile and our synodical needs. We have found this method collegial and an effective way to fill vacancies.

***ELCA Rostered Minister Gathering***

So grateful to serve on the planning committee for the RMG and witness the team work bear fruit as Rostered Minister from across the ELCA gathered in Pheonix, Arizona (over 110 degrees every day). It was a joy to have many Rostered Minister from SEPA Synod attend for keynote speakers, worship, workshops, food and great fellowship.

***African Descent Ministries*** held RECLAIM; Embody, Embolden, Liberate Conference in Minneapolis, MN.

“RECLAIM is a curated gathering for people of African Descent of all ages and gender identities brought to us by African Descent Ministries. Building on well established community traditions and principles like Umoja, Sankofa, and Ubuntu, we will gather together to grow across generations. The African Descent community thrives most when gathered. This event is meant for our siblings in the pulpits, pews, and etc.”

The first time the African Descent community has gathered since the early 2000’s. It was a time of worship, learning, healing and fellowship. Powerful worship services at Central Lutheran Church and Redeemer Lutheran to allow people to experience city and suburban contexts. In depth conversations on building, supporting and raising up leaders for ministry in unsettled times. Food from the diaspora, books authored by African Descent leaders and clergy wear presented in Kente prints.

**Ecumenism**

*“All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.” 2 Corinthians 4:15-16*

***Religious Leaders Council (RLC)***

*The purpose of the Religious Leaders Council is to build relationships of mutual support, and offer a moral and spiritual voice in our region. The Council will identify issues and concerns for dialogue and action.*

On May 11, 2023, the Honorable Curtis Jones Jr., 4th District of Philadelphia, PA, introduced resolution 230365, naming the 6000 block of Callowhill St. as “Bishop O.T. Jones Way,” in honor of the late Bishops Ozro Thurston Jones, Sr. & Jr. who dedicated their lives to serving their community and the Holy Temple Church of God in Christ

(C.O.G.I.C.). The dedication took place on Saturday, September 16th, we could not be present; however, in partnership and support of Bishop Guy L. Glimp, a RLC member, who is currently pastoring we place an ad in the program booklet.

Zones of Peace, John Hougen invited Family Promise of Philadelphia

(formerly Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network - PIHN) Robert Byrne, Executive Director gave an overview of Family Promise and its relationship with congregations and other partner organizations. The following summary is from 2019.

Founded in 1991, Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network (PIHN) has moved more than 325 families—910 individuals— from homelessness to stability. Operating primarily in Northwest and Northeast Philadelphia, PIHN provides assessment and referrals, emergency housing, supportive services, and transitional housing. 92% of the families served do not return to shelter programs after their PIHN experience.

PIHN offers a safe and child-friendly alternative to more chaotic public shelter settings, allowing families to remain intact. It accommodates intact couples, single father households, adolescent boys, as well as single women with children. Guests call PIHN “the shelter that’s more like a home.” PIHN is comprised of over 1,500 caring volunteers, 52 congregations, concerned citizens of the community, community businesses, and institutions, and they are growing! Over its 20 year history, PIHN has expanded supportive services to include career development and education planning, family therapeutic services, financial literacy training, housing support, material support and parenting education. Homelessness and hunger increase the probability that family members will become victims or perpetrators of violence. By reducing the stress of chaos and uncertainty about where the basic needs of life will come from and replacing isolation and fear with caring and supportive staff and volunteers, PIHN addresses the root causes of violence. By modeling constructive interaction with people in need, and moving its guests from instability to strength, PIHN frees its guests to have more time, inclination and skill to be peacemakers themselves.

Key Council Updates:

* Heeding God’s Call, Bryan Miller, we continue with the T-shirt campaign recognizing those lost to gun violence throughout the city and surrounding area.
* We discussed the most significant violence reduction effort that our denominations and/or local congregation is doing. We offered point persons for those interested in connecting and learning.
* In small groups, we discussed ways religious communities can partner to impact the culture of violence in our region.

Upcoming Opportunities to Act Together:

* 2024 Toll the Bell (Penn Live Arts) <https://ministrylink.org/resources/library/april-12-2023-rlc-admin-group-meeting/>
* 2024 Mayoral Inauguration, we will host a prayer breakfast
* Fall 2023 Opportunities to Collaborate concerning Violence Reduction (Prayer revivals across the city)
* Supporting the Episcopal Bishops in the effort <https://www.diopa.org/news/seeking-peace-in-our-commonwealth-2-16-23>

**ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER**

**Call to Interim Ministry**

I recommend that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the

**Rev. Janet Peterman** to interim ministry at Christ Ascension Lutheran Church (Philadelphia) beginning March 1, 2023 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Peterman resigns this call, whichever comes first.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Janet Peterman** to interim ministry at Christ Ascension Lutheran Church (Philadelphia) beginning March 1, 2023 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Peterman resigns this call, whichever comes first.

**On Leave from Call Request**

Rev. Norbert Hahn 1st year effective August 7, 2023

**Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster Request**

Rev. Karen L. Hart effective 10/01/2023

**No Action Required (Information Only)**

**Resignation from the Roster**

Rev. Deborah Ann Glod effective August 1, 2023

**Transfers**

The Rev. Julie Peterson to Metro Chicago Synod effective August 7, 2023

**Death**

The Rev. Danny Bodine Tuesday, September 5, 2023

The Rev. George E. Keck Monday, September 18, 2023

The Rev. Dr. Robert G. Hughes September 3, 2023 (former president of LTSP, honorable mention, not for our official necrology.)

**Bishop’s Activities**

**SEPA Synod**

Ordinations:   **2**

Installations: **1**

Worship Services: In-person: **3** On-line:  **3**

Celebrations: In-person: **4**

Synodcommunicationsvideos:

*Synod Meetings*

Rostered Leaders:  Zoom:  Telephone calls:**3**  In person:  **3**

Lay Leaders:  Zoom:  Telephone calls:**2**  In person:   **3**

Deans Meetings: **1**

Healthy Boundaries Training:**0**

Confidential Meetings/Investigations:  Zoom:  Telephone Calls: **2**   In-person: **1**

*Staff*

Zoom: Telephone calls: **16** In-person: **7**

Full Staff Meetings:  In-person: **1**

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts:  In-person: **2** Telephone calls: **4**

Funerals/Memorials:

Days Off: Sabbatical:  **50** Medical Days:  **1** Vacation Days:

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA)**

Zoom: Telephone calls: In-person:

Conference Of Bishops (COB): Zoom:  **0** Formal in person: **0** Telephone Calls: **2**

COB Exec. Committee:  Telephone calls:  **1** In person:   Zoom: **1**

* Deaconess Community Board: **0** Executive Committee: **0**
* Muhlenberg College Board: **0** Student Life Committee:  **0**
* Churchwide Staff: Zoom: **1** Telephone calls: **3**  In person: **0**
* Rostered Minister Gathering Planning Team**:  1** Zoom:  **0**
* Tanzania Companion Synod Network:**0** Zoom:
* Region 7 Bishops Zoom:  **4** In-person**:  0**
* Stewardship of Life Institute Board:  **0**
* Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa): **0**

***ECUMENISM***

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings:  Zoom:  **1** Telephone calls: **1** In person:

Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity:  **0**

BC Nominating Committee:  **0**

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

**Bishop’s Report**

**Virtual Synod Council Meeting December 14, 2023**

**SEPA**

*" I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."  John 13:34-35*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says in *The Cost of Discipleship*, “Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating.  By judging others, we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace which others are just as entitled to as we are.”  It has been challenging to see God’s love in the world via CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC with the constant on the war in Israel, the war in the Ukraine, the war in our political governmental offices, etc.  It is very disheartening, but thanks be to God we can see God’s love expressed in SEPA Synod.  Our congregational members and our rostered ministers continue to reflect God love in words and deeds making a difference in the lives of those they a called to serve as disciples.  I know that it has not been easy, which makes me even more proud of their willingness to be the light of Christ in times of darkness.

We continue to pray that God would grant world leaders wisdom, opening their eyes and hearts beyond their wants to see the needs of others. Our Lutheran tribe in SEPA is living into our baptismal covenant: “Serve all people following the example of Jesus and strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”

Again, I start my report with deep appreciation to our staff and you, Synod Council, for your prayers pre and post my hip replacement surgery.  Special thanks to Secretary Richard for his willingness to be on call as needed.

***What’s happening in our Community***

*Rostered Ministers Equipping Event*

Rostered Ministers from across our synod gathered for a day of worship, learning, and relationship building on Tuesday, Nov. 14. Presentations and experiences were focused on the theme Spirit of Gentleness, Blow Through the Wilderness. Our time together focused on how we, as rostered ministers, can claim the grace of the Spirit of God who proclaims release from that which burdens us.

It was more than a learning event; it was about self-care. We had worship and learning on Tuesday, and all rostered ministers were invited to devote Monday, November 13 as a day of preparation for the Learning Day, by spending time in prayer, gathering with colleagues for lunch, taking a hike or other mindful activities. And we encouraged rostered ministers to devote the day after the event as a quiet time to reflect on the ideas and insights from our time together on Tuesday – whether alone or with friends and colleagues.

Our Rostered Ministers Event was wonderful, worship was inspirational as we heard a lifegiving word by Pr. Leslie Richard, giving us opportunity to breathe. We laid an excellent foundation for our gathering of rostered ministers and guests from ULS, with worship, keynote, lunch, multiple workshops, followed by happy hour and dinner conversations with me as a farewell as this was my last opportunity to participate in a RME as bishop. Visit <https://ministrylink.org/vocations-and-leadership/rostered-ministers-equipping-event/>

*Small Group Gatherings*

I also met with the rostered ministers who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and rostered ministers who happen to be women.  We had an opportunity for food, fellowship, and conversation.  I am so grateful for the awesome and resilient ministers in SEPA Synod who love God and faithfully serve others.

The work of the Office of the Bishop continues through these departments.

*Finance – Mr. Martin Schwab*

This department is responsible for recording all deposits, processing accounts payable checks, preparing monthly financial reports and processing payroll.  In December and January, he will work with staff to develop the annual budget for the Treasure and Finance Committee to review.  In January he will send out W2s, 1099s and year end donor statements.  In February and March, he will prepare for the annual audit.  He will work with an audit firm to complete the annual audited financial statements.  He also manages properties for sale and cemeteries of closed congregations.  He works with Pr. Paul Jann and congregations in Holy Closure to make sure the Synod and Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia receive required documents.  He works closely with the Director of Operations, Treasurer of the Synod and chairs of the Finance Committee, Investment Committee and Audit Committee.  He would like to thank everyone for their Mission Support contributions in these challenging times.

*Co-Directors for Evangelical Mission – Rev. Dr. Moses Dennis and Rev. Bryan Penman*

* Attended a training at ULS led by Partners for Sacred Places teaching congregational leaders more about historic preservation and networking various community partners together to help support the buildings of many of our congregations. September 27-30
* Annual Approvals and Reviews of our Missional Communities with churchwide
* Attended the DEM Yearly Gathering October 11-13 & Mission Developers Training October 13-15th
* Gathered with DEM's from Region 7 & 8 November 1-3 to talk about regional training events and ways we can more collectively support each other
* Supporting the work of our strategic ministry at Grace, Broomall with partnership conversations at Reformation, Media.
* Exploring conversations with Arab Ministry Desk at churchwide about possible Arab mission development on our territory.
* Hosted a Synod wide Vitality Open forum via Zoom on the book by Andrew Root - When Church Stops Working on October 21st.
* Advocacy Trip to Washington DC for the Farm Bill on October 26th
* Consulting with congregations in Upper Bucks about future collaborative ministries.
* Supporting Pastor Elect Tom Natalini as he starts his new call and mission start Mindfulness + Church with final paperwork.
* Supporting the work of our Closure in our Synod with the final worship service for Trinity, South Philadelphia and beginning conversations with others in our synod.

*Vocations and Leadership / Mission Advancement – Rev. Karen Sease*

* The 2023 All Saints Appeal launched November 1 with the theme “Living Stones.” This annual campaign ensures that our work together is funded to sustain the mission God has given us. We will continue to receive donations through the end of the fiscal year on January 31, 2024. If you would like to make a one-time gift or a recurring gift to invest in our synod ministries, Senior Accountant Martin Schwab ([mschwab@sepa.org](mailto:mschwab@sepa.org)) can help.
* 5 successful call/contract votes were held October-December. We celebrate with these congregations that have found new leaders. 31 other congregations remain in transition. Please pray for God’s guidance in their continued discernment.
* Inquiry conversations were held October-December with 6 people wondering if God is calling them to join the ELCA rosters for pastors and deacons. This brings SEPA to a total of 37 inquirers and candidates who are somewhere between initial conversations about joining the roster and waiting for their first call.

*Communications – Rev. Robert (Bob) Fisher and Mrs. Cynta Outterbridge*

Communications has been engaged in efforts to make our email newsletters more user friendly. We’ve added a table of contents at the top of each MinistryLink so that readers can quickly scroll to what they are interested in (example: <https://conta.cc/3Gs8dro>). Our percentage of email “opens” is 8% higher than the average for religious organizations, and our click rate is 5% over the average.

We have also been involved in planning and implementing several events – the Rostered Ministers’ Equipping Event, the Faith, Family and Fellowship open house, and the upcoming generosity event “Tools for Today” (<https://ministrylink.org/generosity-extravaganza-2024-tools-for-today/>). We prepared print materials, email and website (<https://ministrylink.org/give>) and videos (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0Gu74bQcORttzeg4xd1lzXlpBd1rV0Du>) for the All Saints Appeal.

*Youth and Young Adult Discipleship – Rev. Stacey-Kyle Rea*

YOUNG ADULT

Gather Philly+ - we will have our first event in Lent 2024.  
There are a few Young Adults interested in attending the YA Gathering in New Orleans.

YOUTH

So far, the Youth Gathering has over 12,000 registrations. SEPA Totals to date: MYLE 42 youth; Gathering 75 youth, 31 adults.

Thanks to everyone who participated in our Popcorn fundraiser. We will receive $284 for our youth scholarship fund.

SEPA Synod and ADLA Philadelphia Chapter Annual Memorial Service 1/14 @ 3pm Christ's, Oreland

MLK, Jr. Day of Service - 1/15 9-2pm  
SEPA Synod, ULS and Lutheran Congregational Services are collaborating on a joint celebration, beginning with the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Service.

There will be an offering received of hygiene kits/items and cleanup bucket kits/items.

On Monday 1/15, we will gather at ULS for a day of service. We will put together hygiene kits and cleanup buckets for Lutheran Disaster Response. Worship, lunch and more. Email Heidi Shilanskas to reserve a spot for lunch [hshilanskas@gmail.com](mailto:hshilanskas@gmail.com)

Future dates:

1/17 - 1/22 I will attend ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza  
3/15 - 17 Tuscarora Retreat  
4/6 - 4/7 Box City  
4/13 - 4/14 Tentative dates for Joe Davis and Dave Scherer (AGAPE) benefit concert for youth scholarship fund  
May 31 @ 6:40pm Lutheran Night at the Phillies (against St Louis Cardinals)

Fall 2024 - SEPA Youth formation event for grades 6-12

Formation Event for Leaders and Families: Dawn Rundman, possibly Lyle Griner

*Administration – Mrs. Yvonne Curtis*

The administrative work in the Office of the Bishop is consistent as its primary purpose is the fulfillment of the constitutional requirements of the office by working with closely with officers of the synod, ECLA Office of the Secretary, other synods, as well as filing and processing paperwork with appropriate offices and units of the Church (e.g., ordinations, transfers, retirements, calls, etc.). Recently, as someone who works closely with roster management, I along with 14-17 other individuals were elected by the ELCA Church Council Executive Committee to serve on the ELCA Task Force on OLFC and Specialized Ministry. This Task Force was called for by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to review the Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**ELCA**

“*He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’”*

*Mark 8:34*

***Conference of Bishops (COB)***

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Executive Committee approved Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton’s request for a four- to six-month leave of absence, which began November 17, 2023. The Council then appointed the Rev. Michael Burk as presiding bishop pro tempore.

Secretary Sue Rothmeyer reports, “The work of research and evaluation in the churchwide organization has been “re-evaluated,” and we have some exciting news to share.  Mr. Adam DeHoek will now serve as the Senior Director for Research and Evaluation and as a member of the Office of the Secretary Leaders Team.

Dr. Phil Hirsch, Executive Director, Christian Community and Leadership, Churchwide – ELCA, shared while our Presiding Bishop is on leave Bishop Burk will serve as Pro Tem, CCL and the churchwide staff will continue working as usual in every aspect. They continue to register youth and young adults for the Gathering, receive grant requests, work on candidacy, and work to hire a new Sr. Director for Discipleship.

Our Conference of Bishops continue working through Microsoft Teams, with ongoing Zoom meetings to discuss specific ministry topics at times bi-monthly.

Grateful to have completed my term as Vice-Chair of the COB and elated to witness the election of our first COB Chair of Color, Bishop Yehiel Curry.  Thankful for the leadership of former chair, Bishop Tracey Bartholomew, effective December 1, 2023, Bishop Curry was tasked to continue the work of strengthen the COB and our witness in our 65 synods.

***Deaconess Community***

I consider it a great privilege to serve on our Deaconess Community Board. Our Deaconess Community does phenomenal ministry across the ELCA, these Sisters serve as chaplains, administrators, teachers, and they fill the void during long pastoral vacancies, etc.  This community is collaborative, but not afraid to take a stand and “speak truth to power” as they advocate for those in poverty, and they exhibit an extreme abundance of generosity in granting financial resources.

***Region 7 Bishops***

I continue meeting with my Region 7 colleagues, it remains a place where I garner wise counsel and support.  We meet monthly with Rev. A. Rebecca Resch, Candidacy and Leadership Manager, she is a large part of how we manage candidates available for call within our region and with Pr. Sease’s assistance in our office. We find open collegial dialogue of the possibilities of a candidate based on their Rostered Minister Profile and our synodical needs are still our best way forward.

**Ecumenical**

*To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

*John. 8:31-32.*

***Religious Leaders Council (RLC)***

I so appreciate this gathering of religious leaders and their willingness to have hard conversations but more so to take action steps to assure that our mission of peace, equity and justice is made available to all of humanity.  An example of hard conversations was at our last meetings an Imam and Rabbi sat face-to-face to dialogue on the October 7th Hamas attack and the personal impact on each and share their opinions on the global ripple effects.

RLC, as a large diverse group, we are hard pressed to keep focus as so many things are happening globally, in addition to our religious organizations, government, and communities; nonetheless, we started with thanksgiving for a new Zones of Peace recipients, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of Pennsylvania.  “Founded in 1882, HIASPA was devoted to welcoming Jewish immigrants and refugees to a new life in America. In the 1970s, its mission expanded due to the needs of large numbers of refugees coming to America from Vietnam. Today, HIASPA helps immigrants and refugees from all over the world, people in need of HIASPA’s services and expertise which are offered to people of all religions, races, ethnicities, and cultures.” They work much like our Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, not quite as large, but doing big things.

Heeding God’s Call as a “means of keeping the ongoing epidemic of gun violence and the toll it takes on city neighborhoods before the public, attract the attention and actions of people and institutions of faith and create opportunities for people to live into their faith through prophetic action.  Heeding God’s Call is initiating a series of monthly religious ceremonies at street corner sites near locations of gun murders in varied city neighborhoods, intended to reclaim the sites through interfaith worship.  We are also visiting gun stores known for straw gun purchases with the support of the RLC in the hopes of shutting them down to stop the flood of unlicensed guns on our streets.  Everyone is invited and encouraged, especially those of the relevant neighborhoods to join this initiative.

The Religious Leaders Council purpose is to build relationships of mutual support and offer a moral and spiritual voice in our region which is sorely needed in these divisive times. The Council continues to identify issues and concerns for dialogue and action locally and globally.

As a result of serving on the Religious Leaders Council, building relationships, I was invited to give a keynote speech at the *Metropolitan Christian Council*Prayer Breakfast at the Hilton Hotel on City Avenue.  It was a privilege to represent our Lutheran Tribe in this ecumenical setting with renown African Descent Christian Woman in this ecumenical service. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/women-of-faith-female-sr-pastors-church-planters-summit-tickets-681292061897?aff=ebdsshwebdesktop&utm-source=cp&fbclid=IwAR0M3I5XLfEAOqhizySRSBtRoh5gHiTk0XsqreNqoYSLqS6MXZOn7biODL8&utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing>

**ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER**

**Move from Active Roster to On Leave from Call Request**

Rev. Cornelius Eaddy 1st year beginning November 1, 2023

**Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster Request**

The Rev. Josephine Wright effective September 28, 2014

Sister Mary Julia McKinzie effective September 1, 2016

**No Action Required (Information Only)**

**Transfers**

Rev. Paul E. Bartlett ***from*** Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod effective August 24, 2023

Rev. Julie Peterson ***to*** Metro Chicago Synod effective August 7, 2023

Deacon Beth A. Barkhau ***to*** South Carolina Synod effective December 6, 2023

**Death**

Rev. John R. Schilling December 2, 2023

**Bishop’s Activities**

**SEPA Synod**

*"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God."*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

Ordinations:   **1**

Installations: **1**

Worship Services: In-person:  **6** On-line:   **4**

Celebrations: In-person:    **2**

Synodcommunicationsvideos:

*Synod Meetings*

Rostered Leaders:  Zoom:   Telephone calls:**15** In person:   **3**

Lay Leaders:  Zoom:   Telephone calls:  **6** In person:    **2**

Deans Meetings: **1**

Healthy Boundaries Training:**0**

Confidential Meetings/Investigations:  Zoom:  **4**  Telephone Calls: **2** In-person:**1**

*Staff*

Zoom:**2** Telephone calls: **33**  In-person:  **12**

Full Staff Meetings:  **2** In-person: **2**

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts:  **2**In-person: **2** Telephone calls: **3**

Funerals/Memorials:   **4**

Days Off: **17** Medical Days: **3**Vacation Days:  **0**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA)**

Zoom: **1**Telephone calls: **22**In-person:  **3**

Conference Of Bishops (COB): Zoom: **1**Formal in person: **1**Telephone Calls: **3**

COB Exec. Committee:    Telephone calls:  **2** In person:  **1**   Zoom:   **1**

* Deaconess Community Board: **1** Executive Committee:
* Muhlenberg College Board: **0** Student Life Committee:  **0**
* Churchwide Staff: Zoom:  **1** Telephone calls: **3**  In person: **0**
* Rostered Minister Gathering Planning Team**:**Zoom:  **1**
* Tanzania Companion Synod Network:**0** Zoom:
* Region 7 Bishops Zoom: **5** In-person**:  0**
* Stewardship of Life Institute Board:  **0**
* Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa): **1**

***ECUMENISM***

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings:  Zoom:**2**Telephone calls: **2**In person: **1**

Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity:  **0**

* BC Nominating Committee:  **0**

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

**Bishop’s Report**

**Virtual Synod Council Meeting February 22, 2024**

**SEPA**

*“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” 1 Corinthians 15:58*

Beloved, here we go, what a way to start the new year, completing my third month of the sabbatical you so graciously granted. Again, I am so thankful for the opportunity to spend time in retreat with other Bishops who happen to be women. Spending time intentionally reflecting on what areas God would have us redirect our missional focus to strengthen Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod’s infrastructure, as well as widen our partnerships with ministries in our five-county area making life-changing differences. In addition, it was a joy spending time with family and friends pondering my next season.

*MLK Service*

I attended our joint African Descent Lutheran Association’s (ADLA) Martin Luther King, Jr. service at Christ’s Lutheran Church in Oreland. Rev. Axler Kaegler and the saints of Christ’s extended welcoming hospitality. A wonderful, spirit-filled worship with excellent preaching offered by Rev. Dr. Anthony Scott, Reformation, Mt. Airy supported by wonderful music provided by Mr. Glenn Bryan, Christ, Strawberry Mansion.

I was honored during worship for my service to the Synod with a tiara, sash, and a flora money bouquet. I shared that colleague bishops have been trying to get me to wear a miter for the last 5 years, but it took a lay person sister Beverly Gore for me to wear a tiara. God has a profound sense of humor, ha, ha. <https://christs-oreland.org/boxcast/>

*Stewardship*

Our SEPA Generosity Team partnered with Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for our 2024 Generosity Extravaganza “Tools for Today”. A learning opportunity for congregations looking for practical, usable ideas and programs to help them develop a culture of generosity. It was held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale. I was grateful for the invitation to preach, prayerfully laying a foundation for our stewardship education, noting that stewardship is a faith practice that begins with each of us. Stewardship is a personal act that can go communal and global. Keynote speaker – Grace Duddy Pomroy offered a wonderful PowerPoint presentation with statistics on “Alternative Funding Methods for congregations.” Followed by great workshops with excellent leadership from Churchwide and across the ELCA. <https://ministrylink.org/we-are-the-tools-of-transformation/>

I was moved by the generosity of Teri and Mark Lanan who donated the break food and lunch for the entire extravaganza. It was a profound display of individual, “tools” giving to the glory of God!

**ELCA**

*“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

*Hebrews 10:24-25*

*Bishop’s Retreat*

Grateful to experience the beauty of Puerto Rico during a Spiritual Retreat with Bishops who happen to be women. Bishop Idalia Negron and Roberto, her husband, were gracious host. We were blessed to have a guided tour from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean Sea visiting Lutheran and Catholic churches among the historic sites. Our travels took us up the mountains to El Yunque Natural Rainforest and Waterfall, but most importantly to celebrate the visit of the Three Kings.

We witnessed the children’s anticipation of the arrival of the Three Kings, we could feel the excitement and magic of the holiday as adults prepared gifts. Our time cumulated with a photo with the Three Kings. (see photo below)

A group of people in clothing

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A group of people posing for a photo

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*Our Companion Synod* *-* North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania Zoom Meeting

It was a joy to meet with Pr. Perucy Butiku, our interim global ambassador and Bishop Joseph Mbiliu to share updates on what is happening in Synod/Diocese. Bishop Mbiliu was happy to report given all the challenges of restoring order with the closing of the University things are moving in a good direction.

*Stewardship of Life Institute (SOLI)*

SOLI Board gathered to Toni Morrison’s short story “Recitatif.” The Rev. Dr. Teresa Smallwood, Professor of public theology at United Lutheran Seminary was our gracious facilitator. The introduction was by Zadie Smith which informed the only short story written by Ms. Morrison. Ms. Smith’s introduction shedding light on Recitatif was actually longer than the story. Twyla and Roberta are two young girls whose arresting story provides space to discuss race, gender, cultural sensitivity, and class to name a few items. I deeply appreciate those willing to have a conversation on such sensitive subjects, sorely needed in times like these.

**Ecumenical**

*“Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.”*

*Romans 15:2*

*Episcopal Partnership*

I am incredibly grateful for technology, especially during my recovery from hip replacement surgery that allowed me to participate via zoon in a Service of Christmas Lessons and Carols Simulcast from The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem Palestine and The Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral. Relationships are particularly important, especially in the pluralistic society in which we live today. When I offered to send a representative from the Office of the Bishop to participate, Bishop Gutiérrez responded immediately, no I want my sister here, we can include you via zoom. Praise God, that our communication teams were able to bring me on screen at the appropriate times. I appreciate that Pastors Alina Gayeuski and Daniel Smith were present at the cathedral representing SEPA Synod. All this happening in the midst of the Israel/Hamas war, our Palestinian siblings are standing strong, please note the picture of the crèche in the rubble. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlYuE6K9fM4>

*Interfaith Philadelphia, Religious Leaders Council*

It was a privilege to be invited to attend the prayer service for Mayor-elect Cherelle Parker at Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church. Members of the Religious Leaders Council filled a pew and other seats as Former Mayor Wilson Goode was invited to sit with Ministers from Enon and Rev. Bonnie Camarda was present to receive a $40,000 donation from Enon to support the New Day to Stop Trafficking Program of the Greater Philadelphia Salvation Army.

Worship began with praise and worship followed by a laying on of hands and prayer by Rev. Dr. Alyn Waller, Senior Pastor for Mayor-elect Parker. Guests were invited to extend their hand during the prayer. Music and powerful preaching filled the rest of the worship. Dr. Waller’s theme was “Reset,” it is their theme for 2024 based on Isaiah 43:18-19 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” I so appreciated sitting with my interfaith siblings listening, learning, and questioning their new experiences in a building that holds 5,000 people. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1376681472958439>

*Jewish Federation*

Participating in a Jewish/Christian Dialogue on Israel/Hamas war and the impact on Palestinian people in American society. How we deal with the atrocities of October 7, 2023, in our religious organizations and affiliations was a central question. Antisemitism is real, it is different than racism, and DEI has not dealt with the ongoing hate towards Jews noted one rabbi. It was good to converse, agreeing that we could agree to disagree while continuing to work on building relationships.

*Black Clergy*

Grateful for the privilege of participating in the installation of the first woman elected President of the Baptist Pastors and Ministers Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity, the Rev. Dr. Marsha Brown Woodard. The service was four hours long; however, it was filled with great choral music, spirited greetings, powerful preaching and inspirational transfer of power with the passing of the gavel. We are slowly building and strengthening relationships with the Historic Black church. They acknowledge the Lutheran Tribe in the five-county area as partners in making a difference in our communities (e.g., gun violence, financial literacy, food insecurity, etc.)

*Leadership Forum*

What an honor to be asked by Rev. Dr. Malcolm T. Byrd, President & CEO of Forum Philly to serve on a panel: 2024 MLK Day Leadership Forum: Preserving Leadership Equity…While navigating a “Walk Back” Culture. Monday, January 15, 2024, the forum was hosted in collaboration with Eastern University at its Philadelphia Campus, situated at the Monroe Building, Ste 200, 1 Winding Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19131. <https://forumphilly.pixieset.com/2024mlklead/>



A poster for a prayer service

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**ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER**

**Invitation to Presbyterian Church USA Word and Sacrament Minister to Serve an ELCA Congregation in SEPA Synod**

A minister of Word and Sacrament of a full communion partner church may be invited by the synod bishop to serve as pastor of an ELCA congregation, under contract with the congregation, for an extended period of time. Upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and approval by Synod Council, the synod bishop authorizes an extended service ministry. With such authorization the minister of Word and Sacrament enters service in the ELCA through the entry rite, “Invitation to Extended Service,” which acknowledges the service of the minister of Word and Sacrament as pastor in a congregation or ministry of the ELCA.

I recommend the **Rev. Karen Nelson,** a minister in good standing with the Presbyterian Church (USA), to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council for entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, at Trinity Lutheran Church (Fairview Village) beginning April 21, 2024 until April 20, 2025. This call requires an annual report to the synodical bishop for the length of this call. Extended service is renewable annually by Synod Council.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, for the **Rev. Karen Nelson** at Trinity Lutheran Church (Fairview Village) beginning April 21, 2024 until April 20, 2025. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.

**Renewal of Invitation to United Church of Christ Word and Sacrament Minister to Serve an ELCA Congregation in SEPA Synod**

A minister of Word and Sacrament of a full communion partner church may be invited by the synod bishop to serve as pastor of an ELCA congregation, under contract with the congregation, for an extended period of time. Upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and approval by Synod Council, the synod bishop authorizes an extended service ministry. With such authorization the minister of Word and Sacrament enters service in the ELCA through the entry rite, “Invitation to Extended Service,” which acknowledges the service of the minister of Word and Sacrament as pastor in a congregation or ministry of the ELCA.

I recommend the **Rev. Lauren Cain,** a minister in good standing with the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference - United Church of Christ (UCC), to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council for **renewal** entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, at Grace, Pottstown, PA beginning October 30, 2023 to October 29, 2024. This call requires an annual report to the synodical bishop for the length of this call. Extended service is renewable annually by Synod Council.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve **renewal** entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, for the **Rev. Lauren Cain** at Grace Lutheran in Pottstown, PA beginning October 30, 2023 until October 29, 2024. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.

**Request for Continuation of On Leave from Call**

Rev. Timothy Ness effective January 1, 2024 – 3rd Year

**Request to Move from Active Roster to On Leave from Call**

Rev. Elaine Quincey beginning September 16, 2023 – 1st Year

**Request to Move from On Leave to Retired Roster**

Rev. Elaine Quincey beginning March 1, 2024

**Renewal Request for Disability Roster**

Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps effective March 13, 2024

**No Action Required (Information Only)**

**Transfers**

Rev. Jonathan Steiner ***from*** South Dakota Synod effective November 17, 2023

Rev. Thomas Lang ***from*** Northeastern Pennsylvania effective February 12, 2024

**Deaths**

Rev. Dr. LaVonne Althouse December 15, 2023

Rev. Hycinth Mordey-Imhof January 16, 2024

**Bishop’s Activities**

**SEPA Synod**

*"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God."*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

Ordinations:   **0**

Installations: **0**

Worship Services: In-person: **5** On-line: **4**

Celebrations: In-person:    **2**

Synodcommunicationsvideos:   **3**

*Synod Meetings*

Rostered Leaders:  Zoom:   **3** Telephone calls:**14**   In person:   **2**

Lay Leaders:  Zoom:  **0**Telephone calls: **4**  In person:  **2**

Deans Meetings:  **1**

Healthy Boundaries Training:**0**

Confidential Meetings/Investigations:  Zoom:  **3**  Telephone Calls: **3** In-person:**3**

*Staff*

Zoom:**2**  Telephone calls: **31**  In-person:  **6**

Full Staff Meetings: **2** In-person: **2**

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts:  In-person: **3**  Telephone calls: **2**

Funerals/Memorials:   **1**

Days Off: **4** Medical Days: **4**Vacation Days:  **0**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA)**

Zoom: **1**Telephone calls: **11**In-person:  

Conference Of Bishops (COB): Zoom: **1**Formal in person: **1**Telephone Calls: **1**

* Deaconess Community Board: **0** Executive Committee:  **0**
* Muhlenberg College Board: **1**  Student Life Committee:   **1**
* Churchwide Staff: Zoom:  **2** Telephone calls:  **3** In person: **0**
* Rostered Minister Gathering Planning Team**:   0**Zoom: **0**
* Tanzania Companion Synod Network: Zoom:  **1**
* Region 7 Bishops Zoom:  **5** In-person**:** **0**
* Stewardship of Life Institute Board:  **1**
* Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa):Zoom**: 0**  Telephone Calls: **1**

***ECUMENISM***

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings:  Zoom:**2** Telephone calls: **3** In person: **1**

Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity:   In person: **3**

* BC Nominating Committee:   **0**

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

**Bishop’s Report**

**Synod Council Meeting April 4, 2024**

**United Lutheran Seminary**

**Philadelphia, PA**

**SEPA**

*My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ. Colossians 2:2*

Beloved, what can we say, 36 days until our Synod Assembly, gathering to handle our fiduciary responsibilities and elect a Bishop! Our Synod Council has done an excellent job of preparing the way for our election process. Another word of gratitude to our Vice President, Ms. Tracey A. Beasley, her leadership over the entire process has been exemplary. Ms. Carrie Schwab continues to hold all of the plates in the air to assure that all fronts are covered with Franconia. Pr. Sease has been walking with Pr. Casey and our Reference and Counsel team to make sure that all things come before the assembly decent and in order. Ms. Cynta Outterbridge has been feeding registration data to our Deans encouraging a personal point of contact for those not registered.

We are so grateful that we are able to have our meeting in person, so that we can personally thank you all for your faithful service in sacred cyber space. We have come to truly see that what we thought were obstacles in the pandemic where truly opportunities to draw people into a deeper relationship with Jesus and one another on a digital platform. We also learned that we could save people time and mileage, but there is no substitute for our social gathering in person. We trust the Holy Spirit is always at work, we marvel at how efficiently we have managed over the last five and half years, through the pandemics, the insurrection, the Holy Closures, the Rostered Ministers leadership crisis, congregations in transition with few, wish I could say no complaint. It is by God’s amazing grace that we have always been moving forward, yes, trusting we are called, chosen and sent to do more in 2024.

*Tuscarora Youth Retreat*

I always consider it a joy to be with our youth, young adults and lay youth leaders. It was a privilege to participate in the singing, meals, presentation but most importantly our question-and-answer session. Yes, they asked more questions than our Synod Council leaders, and I am happy that I was able to answer. Our time together was rooted in Philippians 1:3-18; 4:4-7, in my two sessions we examined Joy in Tough Times and Living Joy. It gave me an opportunity to share two of my favorite books: Pete the Cat and His Magic Sunglasses (Dean, 2013) and Pete the Cat I love my White Shoes (Dean and Litwin, 2010). I know we are raising up awesome disciples of Christ, thanks Pr. Rea for the invite.

*Synod-authorized Ministry (SAM)*

Synod-authorized ministry recognizes the need to be flexible and adapt to the ministry challenges and needs of smaller congregations and other ministry settings. And synod-authorized ministry recognizes that individuals may have the gifts and ability to serve this church through the proclamation of the gospel in a local context, but not the resources, ability or call to serve the whole church as ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. The purpose of synod-authorized ministry is to pair the gifts of individuals with the ministry needs of local communities in order to assist them to carry out their calling to be the church in the world.

It is my joy to share that I have appointed the first Synod-authorized Minister in the history or our synod. Beginning April 15, 2024 Ms. Barbara “Bobbie” Hoffman who has over two decades of lay ministry leadership will begin serving as a SAM at St. Luke Lutheran Church (Gilbertsville). I give praise to God that we can be synod and congregation together in this way.

**ELCA**

*“May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands.” Psalm 90:17*

*Conference of Bishops*

My last COB meeting in Chicago with my colleagues and the Churchwide staff that works intimately with bishops, i.e., our attorneys, and Executive Directors of Home Area, etc. It was a great meeting, filled with wonderful worship which included awe inspiring sermons, uplifting music and prayers. I attribute this to not having any responsibility, at our last meeting we elected a new Chair and Vice Chair of the COB. Bishop Curry and Bishop Hutterer respectively, and our executive committee did a stellar job of guiding our time together. Please see notes: <https://ministrylink.org/resources/library/elca-conference-of-bishops-calls-for-cease-fire-in-gaza-stands-in-solidarity-with-migrants/>

My Region 7 colleagues offered a farewell presentation, and my class of 2019 colleagues, joined by Bishop Gohl offered the sending prayer. There was much joy, laughter, tears and of course dancing.

**Ecumenical**

*“Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.” 1 Chronicles 29:11*

*Full Communion Partners*

The Philadelphia Chapter of National Black Presbyterian Caucus in Partnership with the Presbytery of Philadelphia invited me to be the keynote at their Annual African American Heritage Celebration Worship Service. I was honored to preach at Oxford Presbyterian Church, 8501 Stenton Ave., Philadelphia. The theme: SANKOFA: Learning From The Past and leaning into the future gave me an opportunity to exegete Jeremiah 29:11 through a difference lens and to learn more of our full communion partner’s history in the Presbytery. Link to the full service: [The 2024 African American Presbyterian Heritage Celebration](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzsmfqG_CBc)

*Religious Leaders Council*

Our interfaith leaders are building stronger personal relationships which is leading to a stronger alliance. So, grateful we have Pr. Fritz Fowler as my representative on the Administration team, our Lutheran Tribe is well represented. See notes: <https://ministrylink.org/resources/library/rlc-admin-notes-march-4-2024/>

ACTIONS ON THE ROSTER

Request to Move from Active Roster to On Leave from Call

Request for Continuation On Leave from Call

Request to Move from On Leave to Retired Roster

Request to Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster

No Action Required (Information Only)

Transfers

Rev. Thomas Lang ***from*** NEPA Synod effective February 12, 2024

Rev. David N. Penman ***to*** North Carolina Synod effective March 13, 2024

Rev. Robin D. Mattison ***from*** New England Synod effective March 13, 2024

Deaths

**The Rev. Arlene K. Greenwald**

*Which occurred on February 29, 2024*

**The Rev Norman A. Hjelm**

*Which occurred on Tuesday, February 12, 2024*

***The Rev. Dr. Gilbert E. Doan***

*Which occurred on Saturday, January 27, 2024*

**Bishop’s Activities**

**SEPA Synod**

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4*

Ordinations:   **1**

Installations: **0**

Worship Services: In-person: **7** On-line: **4**

Celebrations: In-person:    **2**

Synodcommunicationsvideos:   **6**

*Synod Meetings*

Rostered Leaders:  Zoom:   **1** Telephone calls:**14**   In person:   **2**

Lay Leaders:  Zoom:  **0**Telephone calls: **4**  In person:  **2**

Fund for Mission: **1**

Synod Assembly: Zoom: **1** In person: **2**

Executive Committee**: 1**

Worship Services: In-person: **6** On-line: **2**

Celebrations: **1** In-person:  **2**

Synod communications videos:    **6**

Deans Meetings:  **1**

Healthy Boundaries Training:**0**

Confidential Meetings/Investigations:  Zoom:  **0**  Telephone Calls: **1** In-person:**1**

*Staff*

Zoom:**0**  Telephone calls: **23**  In-person:  **8**

Full Staff Meetings: **2** In-person: **2**

Hospital/Sick/Pastoral Contacts:**3**In-person: **3** Telephone calls: **2**

Funerals/Memorials:   **1**

Days Off: **6** Medical Days: **0**Vacation Days:  **0**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA)**

Zoom:**0**Telephone calls: **1**In-person:  **1**

Conference Of Bishops (COB): Zoom: Formal in person: **3**Telephone Calls: **3**

* Deaconess Community Board: **0** Executive Committee:  **0**
* Muhlenberg College Board: **0**  Student Life Committee:   **0**
* Churchwide Staff: Zoom:  **0** Telephone calls:  **3** In person: **1**
* Rostered Minister Gathering Planning Team**:   0**Zoom: **0**
* Tanzania Companion Synod Network: Zoom:  **0**
* Region 7 Bishops Zoom:  **4** In-person**:** **1**
* Stewardship of Life Institute Board:  **0**
* Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa):Zoom**: 0**  Telephone Calls: **1**

***ECUMENISM***

Ecumenical/Interfaith Meetings:  Zoom:**2** Telephone calls: **3** In person: **2**

Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity:   In person: **2**

BC Nominating Committee:   **0**

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Davenport, Bishop