

Report of the Synod Council to the Thirty-sixth Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, May 3 & 4, 2024

Included:

1. Minutes of the 176th Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, March 30, 2023
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2. 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
- Approved by the Synod Council June 29, 2023 *page 13*
3. Minutes of the 177th Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, June 29, 2023
- Approved by the Synod Council September 21, 2023 *page 50*
4. Minutes of the 178th Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, September 21, 2023
- Approved by the Synod Council December 14, 2023 *page 61*
5. Minutes of the 179th Meeting of the Synod Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, December 14, 2023
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MINUTES
of the 176th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
March 30, 2023
6:00 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

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

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

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

SETTING THE AGENDA

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

UPDATE ON TRINITY, SOUTH PHILADELPHIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pr. Lenget: Criminal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MISSION MOMENT

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

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

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

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

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

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

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

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

Individual meetings with staff should be 10 rather than 6.

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

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

Staff telephone meetings numbered 22, not 14.

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

Hospital contacts were 10, up from 8.

Funerals were 4, not 3.

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

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

Grateful!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

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

Mr. Glenn presented the following information.

Delegation of Authority for Distribution of Income from Grace Endowment

Background of Grace Endowment

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

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

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

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

Process for Distribution of Income from Grace Endowment

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

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

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

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

Mr. Glen moved the adoption of this process.

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

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Compensation Guidelines

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

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

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

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Actions on the Roster

Secretary Richard brought forward the following actions on the roster:

Call to Interim Ministry

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

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Move from Active Roster to Disability Roster

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

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Information not requiring action

Resigned from Roster:

The Rev. Daniel Phelps, effective March 16, 2023

Temporary Synodical Administration for St. Peter, Pottstown

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

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

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

From our Synod Constitution:

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

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

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

There are two resolutions before the Synod Council:

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

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

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

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

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

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

Sabbatical for Bishop Davenport

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

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

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

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

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

With no other concerns raised, the vote was taken,

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

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

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

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

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

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

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

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

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

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

Seminary Debt Relief

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

Budget for Fiscal Year ending January 31, 2025

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

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

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

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

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

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit Committee

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

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

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

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Investment Committee

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

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

Nominating Committee

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

Most slots have at least one nominee.

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

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

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

Constitution Committee

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

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

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

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

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

Approved by Synod Council, June 29, 2023

**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 5th

The 35th Annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod began with worship. Deacon Kathie Afflerbach preached on the Gospel of Matthew the 16th 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-Philippi, 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 35th 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 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 34th 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 worshiping 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 couterbridge@sepa.org. The form can be found on the synod’s website, ministrylink.org.

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

NAME	CONGREGATION
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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
Rev. Heeralal Mukesh Cheedie	Redeemer, Penndel
Rev. David Lutcher	Advent, Harleysville
Rev. Heidi Rodrick Schnaath	St. Luke, Devon

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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
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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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
Dr. John Connors	God's Love, Newtown

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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
Dr. Marcia Boraas	St. John, Melrose Park

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.*

NAME	CONGREGATION
Mr. Tredon Stevenson	Mediator, Philadelphia

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)

NAME	CONGREGATION
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.

NAME	CONGREGATION
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
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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.

NAME **CONGREGATION**

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)

NAME **CONGREGATION**

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 the 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 40th and 25th anniversaries were recognized. Those who were present at the Assembly were called forward for a photograph to mark this occasion.

40th 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

25th 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 50th Anniversary of Ordination

Our custom is to invite 50th anniversary celebrants to bring greetings to the Assembly. We have three rostered ministers celebrating their 50th 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 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 our 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 Bureaucracy 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 Emmanuel’s Pastor Emeritus, Richard Miller, who had lived in this house for many years, nearly 20 of those years as a quadriplegic. 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 Nueva 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 transformed 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 6th

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 they are 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. Mukesh 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 Eastern 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 Beverlin, the ELCA Representative to our Assembly, to present a video segment on the ministry we share between this Synod and the ELCA. Mrs. Beverlin is Program Manager for the Coaching Ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Mrs. Beverlin 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, if 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 into 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 a part 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 20th, 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**

	Revenue	
	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 change 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**

	Expenses	
	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:

	2024 Budget Income	
	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.

2024 Budget Expenses

	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 about 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 indication 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 6th

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 1st, 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 7th, 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 Beverlin returned to address the Assembly, sharing about her work as the Program Manager for Coaching Ministries.

Prior to her sharing about coaching, Mrs. Beverlin 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. Beverlin. 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. 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 1st 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 Schanely and members of the Elections Committee, for their tremendous work;

To the officers, staff, and volunteers of the SEPA Synod, including Ms. Yvonne Curtis and Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, who worked tirelessly to make this 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
TOTAL VOTING MEMBERSHIP	378

*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
TOTAL REGISTERED VOTING MEMBERSHIP	335

*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

MINUTES
of the 177th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
June 29, 2023
6:00 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:01 p.m. and invited the Ms. Pia Graham to lead the Council in devotions.

When Ms. Graham thinks of June, she thinks of celebrations. This June she celebrated Father's Day, Juneteenth, a family reunion, and her 50th High School reunion!

One celebration that is not always noted is the Feast of St. John, the Baptist, which is celebrated on the 24th of June.

Typically, we think of John the Baptist during advent preparing the way and in Epiphany with the baptism of Jesus. We don't really think of John the Baptist during this time of year.

John's story is told in the first chapter of Luke. It shows the angel Gabriel visiting Zechariah, informing him that he and his wife were going to have a child in their elder years. It tells of Mary having been visited by the Holy Spirit, and carrying Jesus, visiting her cousin Elizabeth, who was Zechariah's wife. It speaks of Elizabeth's son John, who leaps in her womb, recognizing the presence of Jesus. And when John is born, Zechariah's tongue becomes untied, and he has a prophecy.

"And you, child, will be called the Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways..."

If we look at the story of John, we see parallels with the Nativity Story of Jesus. There are summer solstice and winter solstice associations, as John was born 6 months before Jesus. John knows he's not the Messiah, and in the Gospel of John, John says, "He must increase, I must decrease." This parallels, metaphorically, with a day's length decreasing after the summer solstice and a day's length increasing after the winter solstice.

John's purpose was to point to Jesus and prepare the way for the Messiah. He used his voice to exhort people to change, repent, and think about their actions. In today's environment, he would be an influencer, but not a self-centered one. He knows he's not the Messiah. And he knows who is, and he keeps pointing all who would listen toward Jesus.

Now, what does this mean for us? John sets an example for us in how we behave and walk in our faith. What would he call us to do in these challenging days that we're all facing?

I think he calls us to bring attention to the community that we create within our church families, which is significant when so many people don't really feel part of any community. This story also reminds us that the Holy Spirit works in us and through us and for us. It reminds us God is alive and active in our world. And it calls us to point to Jesus.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 177th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:14 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 35th Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (May 5 & 6, 2023) were approved as presented.

The Minutes of the 176th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (March 30, 2023) were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

The Rev. Gwendolyn King asked if we needed to add a vote on a Young Adult member to Synod Council to the Agenda. Vice President Beasley stated that this is already included in the Report of the Secretary.

The agenda for the 177th meeting of the Synod Council was approved as presented.

MISSION MOMENT

For the Mission Moment, members of the Synod Council were asked to reflect on their experience of the first in-person Assembly we have had in three years!

- + The Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath – The Bishop’s joy was infectious, and she is to be commended for this. It was good to have such a tone set, and it was good for us to be able to share in her enthusiasm.
- + Ms. Graham – The worship both days was so joyful. To be able to sing together again after all this time was inspiring.
- + The Rev. Stacey-Kyle Rea – It was wonderful to have the Mission Center in the hallway, where we were together and able to share ministries. The energy was tremendous.
- + The Rev. Robert Fisher – I was impressed with the audio/visual upgrades the Franconia Mennonite Center has made. The new system worked really well.
- + The Rev. Marcia Bell – I was out of the country at the time, but I have heard wonderful reports from the members of the congregation who attended the Assembly.
- + Pr. King – I am grateful for all the pre-work done by Ms. Carrie Schwab, our Assembly coordinator. It was good to be in a familiar place as we returned to an in-person Assembly, and yet, it was set up differently, which gave a fresh perspective to this familiar space. The work of the staff prior to the Assembly was incredibly helpful for the event to run smoothly.
- + Bishop Davenport – I could take an hour to share all I liked about the Assembly, but I want to echo what Pr. King has said about the staff. Their work created an atmosphere filled with joy and excitement. We are blessed to have these faithful workers in the Gospel among us.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Davenport referred the Council to her written report. She asked Secretary Richard to capture her report for those who might read these minutes. A copy of her report, minus any confidential material, will be posted when these minutes are approved and posted.

Bishop asked the Synod Council to raise whatever questions the Synod Council might have from her report. As the members considered their questions, she offered a few pieces of information.

Prayer Requests

Bishop asked for prayers for Pastor Arlene Greenwald, for Pastor Sandra Ellis-Killian, and for Pastor Charles Miller. Two are hospitalized and one is in hospice. We want to keep them in their families in prayer.

Bishop Burkat and Sierra Pacific Synod

Bishop also asked for prayers for Bishop Burkat in her work with the Sierra Pacific Synod, as Bishop Burkat has denied former Bishop Rohrer’s request to be granted “on-leave from call” status. Sierra Pacific continues to struggle to find its footing. Bishop Burkat has been working with Sierra Pacific Synod for approximately 9 months, and during this time she has conducted hundreds of interviews with people on the territory of the Synod. No decisions she made were determined lightly, or without considerable research, thought and prayer. That does not mean the decisions were easy, nor are they well-received by everyone in the Synod. Sierra Pacific will be looking to elect a new Bishop this fall. Please keep them in your prayers.

Lutheran Theological Center, Atlanta

Bishop Davenport had the privilege of serving on a roundtable at the Lutheran Theological Center of Atlanta. They had offered 5 courses on adaptive leadership. This program is to help prepare participants for the future church, as the ELCA is looking to do. It was called “Seed of a Seed: Adaptability in Our Leadership.” Pastor Bryan Penman also participated in it. He is on vacation. If he were here Bishop would ask him to share his impressions, also.

Bishop was invited to be part of the last session with the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Wheeler, who wrote the book, Us: The Resurrection of American Terror, talking about white supremacy within the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and with Ambassador Susan Johnson Cook, who served under President Obama as the faith initiative person. To be able to have open honest conversation with the participants about what we see was just a joy and a privilege, and we learned so much about ourselves.

One of the things that Bishop included in her report was an experience she had when attending the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod Assembly, where she was accosted by a person at the Assembly. She said “When someone steps into your space and touches your person, that is a problem. And it is certainly a problem when they feel as though they have power and privilege to do it.”

To be able to be in conversation with a very diverse group of people was so important, so that we can understand what that means. To be able to empathize with one another when we have those types of conversations is significant. It was a great dialogue, as they talked about adaptive leadership. How do we learn how to lead in these pandemic times? Not just with the trauma of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the trauma of the pandemics of gun violence, and white supremacy, and food insecurity, and what's going on with the LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters, and the Trans Community.

Dr. John Connors – I read your report with interest. There were a number of good questions posed at the annual Interim Ministers meeting, but I did not see many answers. I am a new person on the Council, and I am particularly interested in the last question, “Where it seems fewer pastoral candidates are interested in coming to our Synod, what is different now than had been in our not-too-distant past?”

Bishop Davenport: That is a great question. The good news, if you can see this, is that it is not just our Synod. The question is posed to us, but it is true across the board. Across denominational lines there is a crisis. No one has enough pastors to fill their congregations that are in transition. We also do not have enough candidates coming through the seminary system to fill all the transitions.

Currently in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod we are working to create a process by which we could take lay leaders and help them become synodically authorized ministers, to help fill some of these congregations.

Pastor Sease and Dr. Jennifer Phelps are working on this initiative for us. We are looking forward to hearing some word from them soon with regard to how they're coming along with the

process. But we are aware of the crisis, and we are trying our best to meet it the way we are able to meet it.

If you see someone who is exhibiting gifts for ministry, or someone who has a desire to point people to Jesus, or if *you* are feeling a call to do that, please let us know. Pr. Sease will gladly walk with you, either through candidacy or by introducing you to this new ministry that we are launching into, so that our congregations do have the leadership they need in order to do what God has called them to do.

Dr. Connors – Thank you, I appreciate that.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley noted that the report is before the Council, and asked if there were any questions or comments.

Secretary Richard noted a concern from Pr. King, a member of the Executive Committee, that we had noted the timing of Bishop Davenport's sabbatical, which will be July, August, and January. She also wanted it noted that we did indeed close with prayer.

Confidentiality Statement and Committee Requests

Vice President Beasley asked all members of the Council to fill out both forms: the Confidentiality Statement, and the form on which each may request the committees on which they would prefer to serve. These requests are reviewed by the Vice President and the Bishop, who then make the proposed assignments.

Some committees meet more regularly than others. For instance, the Administration Committee generally only meets once before the Assembly. If you are interested in serving on this team let us know, and please select another committee as well.

The Rev. Mukesh Cheedie asked if members are placed on the committee they choose, or if they are they just placed where they are needed.

Vice President Beasley said that while it is not guaranteed, she and Bishop try to place you on your first or second choice of committee.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Actions on the Roster

Secretary Richard brought forward the following actions on the roster. As they were brought forward, it was noted that some dates have already passed. In brief, we can only act when we have the paperwork from the Rostered Minister who is seeking to remain on the Roster, but who is requesting to be listed on the proper designation of the Roster. It is incumbent upon the Rostered Minister to make a request to go on leave from call, or be placed on the retired roster, or to have a yearly call extended. Sometimes this is not understood by the Rostered Minister, sometimes the follow-through is not timely. When we know the desire, we can propose the Synod Council take the appropriate action.

Invitation to U.C.C. ministers to serve in ELCA congregations in SEPA Synod

S.C.23.06.14. 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.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.06.15. 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, 2024. This invitation is renewable annually by Synod Council.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Call to Interim Ministry

S.C.23.06.16. 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 Requests

S.C.23.06.17. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant "On Leave from Call" status to the Rev. Timothy Ness, 2nd year, effective January 1, 2023.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.06.18. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant "On Leave from Call" status to the Rev. Janet Peterman, 3rd year, effective June 18, 2023.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.06.19. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant "On Leave from Call" status to the Rev. Julie Peterson, 1st year, effective August 16, 2022.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Request to Move from the Active Roster to the Retired Roster

S.C.23.06.20. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve moving the Deacon Bruce Tonkin to the retired roster effective June 27, 2021.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Information not requiring action

Deaths

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

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

Action from Synod Assembly

Four of the five resolutions adopted need no further action by the Synod Council. The third resolution of the five does:

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.

To this end, Secretary Richard moved the following resolution to go the ELCA Church Council:

Restoration of Language to the Constitution for Synods

Whereas the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly has directed 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,”

S.C.23.06.21. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council requests that the ELCA Church Council recommends to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly the restoration of the words “proclaiming God’s love to the world” in S14.12., S14.32., and all parallel instances in the Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Open Seat on Synod Council

One of the seats not filled at the Assembly was that for Lay Young Adult. When seats are not filled by the Assembly it falls to the Synod Council to find people to fill the seats. On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Richard moved the following resolution:

S.C.23.06.22. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council appoint Ms. Emily Valentine to fill the seat of Lay Young Adult, term ending 2025.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Ms. Valentine will join the Synod Council at its next meeting.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Neff was in Europe at the time of this meeting. Mr. Martin Schwab, Senior Accountant for the Synod, presented the Report in her stead. Mr. Schwab referred to Ms. Neff’s written report, and hoped people had the chance to review it.

For the first 4 months of the fiscal year our mission support revenue is under budget by about \$29,200. For details on individual congregations and giving history, please see the Congregational giving report. Since mission support is down, on the expense side our ELCA proportionate share is also under budget by about \$14,600. This is because we send 50% of what we actually receive to Churchwide.

Overall, our Unrestricted Fund is under budget by \$41,000 for the first 4 months. This is mainly due to expenses being under budget in multiple departments.

The second page of the financial statements is the Temporarily Restricted Funds. If you turn to page 5, you can see the details of the income and expenses for the specific restricted funds that we have.

The third page is our Mission Budget. This currently has a surplus of \$79,000, including the investment income that's allocated to the mission.

The fourth page is our Permanently Restricted Funds. This account usually has no surplus or deficit. Any income we receive is distributed in accordance with the restrictions.

The sixth page of our financial statements is the Statement of Financial Position. As Janet always says, our assets to liabilities ratios are in good order. We have about 8.5 million dollars of unrestricted current assets, and only \$121,000 in liabilities. We've got sufficient assets to pay our bills.

Mr. Schwab asked if there were any questions.

Pr. King asked for clarification as to whether this information is able to be shared with the congregations of the Synod. As we are concerned with confidentiality, what are we allowed to share, and what should we not?

Vice President Beasley asked if this is posted on MinistryLink. Secretary Richard stated that he shares the approved minutes of the meetings, not the financial statements.

Bp. Davenport: I've had this conversation with Senior Accountant and with Pr. Sease about how we share information. I'm transparent. We do not try to hide anything. This is where we are. This is what you give. This is what you don't give.

It is good to share vignettes with people of the impact of their giving, and to say, "Thank you." It is also important to remind people that even when they are away, the bills still need to be paid. We want to thank people for their mission support AND encourage them to continue to give it, because expenses continue. Share not only the thank you. Share where we are. This way nobody is surprised if you get to Synod Assembly and we say, "This is what it is."

Pr. Rodrick-Schnaath: I'm wondering if there is a question underneath Pr. King's question. Anecdotally, in the congregation I'm serving right now, I listened to the chair of the Finance Committee say more than once that they were at the top of the list of givers to the Synod. I asked Martin to send me a report, and then went back and said, "Yeah, that's not true." And it was an important, but probably one of the hardest conversations I've had with the Church Council, having to say you're not the top giver, and you're behind, and your methodology for determining this needs to change. It did have a positive ending, but that makes me wonder if my friend Gwen has a question under her question.

Pr. King: Not necessarily. I just want to be clear.

We have a variety of people within our congregations who know who we are as Synod Council members. Some will approach you and say, "I really want to know what the line item is here in terms of this particular area." And from the impression I am getting here, I can give a general response. But we have some folks who are paper and ink kind of folks who want to know exactly, and I guess my question is, so I don't break any sense of confidentiality, of the things that are shared with me, how much may I share?

Is it possible to share what we receive in terms of the financial position statements, and the fund balance statements, and the income statement, with a person who specifically asked for that information?

Bishop Davenport: If someone has a question, I'm always going to send them to the person who has the answer, and so I would refer them to the treasurer, or refer them to the senior accountant. What I'm what I'm referencing is mission support.

People know this is what mission support is coming in. That's why we give you these sheets with where your mission support is, so that you can take it to your congregation. Thank you Pr. Rodrick-Schnaath for having the hard conversation and saying, "No, this is what it says right here on the paper what this congregation does."

That's what I thought you were referencing, Pr. King. For other things, I would send the person to the Finance Committee or the Treasurer so they can get the information from the ones in the position to fully answer those questions.

Pr. Cheedie: At Redeemer what we do weekly is have a very basic report of our finances: income, expense, and the difference: it is very brief. Secretary Karl was saying he posts the minutes on MinistryLink. Could we also post Janet's report there, which is very basic and gives us the kind of nutshell reporting of the financial statement for the 4 months with these 2 pages. Can that be included as a way of being transparent, and letting those who would like to know where the Synod stands? And then if they have any more questions about the details, they may be referred to the treasurer.

Bp. Davenport: I'm not going to speak for the treasurer, but we will ask her that question.

Pr. Cheedie: That sounds good to me.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Investment Committee

Pr. John Heidgerd, Chair, noted that the market has begun to rebound. Our investments have posted a 9.2% return, which is a significant improvement compared with previous months. The Investment Committee is still in the process of updating the Investment Policy. When it is complete, it will go to the Executive Committee, and then will come to the Synod Council for endorsement.

Constitution Committee

Pr. Marie Sager, Chair, is not present because of the death of her grandmother. Please keep her, and her family, in prayer. Her updates were included in her written report. No action is needed at this time.

OLD BUSINESS – none

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is comprised of the four officers of the Synod, Bishop, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and three other members of the Synod Council, 1 clergy, 1 lay man, and 1 lay woman. The Executive Committee helps to plan the Synod Council Meetings, the

Synod Assembly, and serves as an Advisory Team for the Bishop. The Executive Committee has also filled the role of the Mutual Ministry Committee for the Bishop.

Vice President Beasley began the process of election of members to the Executive Committee with the position for a clergy person.

As nominations were not forthcoming, Vice President Beasley nominated current clergy member Pr. Gwendolyn King. Pr. John Heidgerd seconded the nomination.

With no other nominations, **Pr. King was declared elected.**

Vice President Beasley then asked for nominations for Lay Man. Pr. Mukesh Cheedie nominated Dr. Connors. Mr. Everett Wick seconded. With no other nominations, **Dr. Connors was declared elected.**

Finally, Vice President Beasley asked for nominations for Lay Woman. Pr. King nominated Ms. Pia Graham. Dr. Borass seconded. With no other nominations, **Ms. Graham was declared elected.**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Closing of Trinity, South Philadelphia

Mr. Wick expressed his dismay and concern regarding the decision of Trinity, South Philadelphia to close. He said that this news weighs heavily on his mind. It feels as though we as the Church have failed this congregation in some way. This had been a strong congregation. They had raised $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million dollars, so they were not poor. How did we end up in this situation? It is said that this congregation is in a bad community. But we have to find ways to being committed to being there, for and in the community. Bishop calls us to do this, but we need to find ways for each of us to be involved in some way.

Mr. Wick said he can imagine how this change in the community likely happened. People moved to the suburbs, and the houses they left were bought by people of different cultures or ethnicities. But since this was their church, people kept coming back from where they moved, doing business as usual. They did not find ways to reach out to the new residents of the community. The congregation did not take the time to learn the ‘language’ of the people who were now moving into the community.

When we want to be in mission to the community, and the people there speak, for instance, Somali, we cannot expect them to know English. We need to get to know the community, and we need to speak in ways they can hear. We need to be open to change.

Mr. Wick feels very strongly and deeply that we must begin to change our ministry sites and their involvement; we have to be cognizant of what the community is, now. We do a lot of excellent work for the community through our congregations, but are we in tune with what is going on as our communities change?

Bishop Davenport replied that she agrees; we need to be doing just what Mr. Wick has called us to do. But in this case, Trinity also had a role. While the Synod was not there for them as fully as might be, Trinity had pulled away from the Synod, not wanting help from outside. We need to be in this together. In ministry, connections are the key.

Bishop noted a question raised by Andrew Root and Blair Bertrand, “What happens when the Church stops working?” All of us, preachers, and members in the pews, need to be telling the

story of Jesus, in good times and in bad times, and to all whom we meet. We cannot ignore or disrespect the community. We need to reach out to all. And we need to do this together.

Announcements from Bishop Davenport

Bishop noted that there are several events being planned, both by the Synod, and by the United Lutheran Seminary, where we can be in worship and fellowship together. All of these come as responses to the evaluations from the Synod Assembly.

On December 2nd, there are plans for a Faith and Family gathering at the Synod Offices. The point of this is to give thanks to God and join in fellowship.

On December 3rd there will be Advent Vespers at the chapel on seminary campus.

There will be a gathering of the Rostered Ministers of Color, and a gathering of the Women Rostered Ministers. More details will be sent as the events are planned.

Vice President Beasley will also be holding another gathering for congregational Council Leaders, at a time not yet determined.

Youth and Young Adult Ministry Updates

Pr. Rea shared some Youth Ministry events that are coming soon.

This September there will be something new. We will have a Mardis Gras kick-off event for people to learn about the ELCA Youth Gathering, and to start making connections with others who may be going. Because of the missed Gathering of 2021, and then 2022, cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have an entire generation that has no real idea of what a Youth Gathering is, and we want to help build both knowledge of and excitement for the event.

Then, in October, we will have an overnight event, also with a New Orleans theme, to help congregations, particularly those without Youth Leaders, to learn more about what we are going to do at the Gathering, and perhaps do some of the Pre-Gathering exercises together.

Pr. Rodrick-Schnaath asked if there were any plans to get the young adults, who missed out on the last Gathering, together so they can learn about the Young Adult Gathering that is also happening in New Orleans at the same time as the Youth Gathering.

Pr. Rea said she is reaching out to as many of these young adults as she can, and she is trying to build excitement for this concurrent event. In addition, she noted that we are working to form a new Young Adult Group, following the ELCA initiative called “Gather.” It is in the early stages, but conversations are being held to see what such a group might look like here in our Synod.

Process for the Election of a Bishop

Vice President Beasley told the Council that information will be shared at the next meeting regarding the upcoming election of a bishop. She also noted that the process in our Constitution only applies if there is no incumbent. Vice President asked Bishop if she was planning to stand for re-election.

Bishop Davenport said, “The Holy Spirit and I have already had that conversation! I am not running!”

With no other business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m. with prayer by Pr. Bob Fisher. The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be September 21, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

Approved by Synod Council, September 21, 2023

**MINUTES
of the 178th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
September 21, 2023
6:00 p.m.**

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley welcomed the Synod Council at 6:02 p.m. and welcomed our newest Synod Council member, Ms. Emily Valetine.

She then invited the Rev. Brayn Penman, Co-Director for Evangelical Mission, to lead the Council in devotions.

Pr. Penman noted that this would be an interactive devotion, as he would ask a few questions to begin discussion and group discernment. His first question:

What is something you would gladly give up?

- Mr. Everett Wick – I have a spaetzle maker I haven't used for years. If any of you want it, you may have it!
- The Rev. John Heidgerd – we have given this up recently: our large house. Downsizing has been helpful.
- The Rev. Nathan Krause – I have twice as many books as I need, and no one wants them.
- The Rev. Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations, Candidacy, and Mission Development – My husband Axel has a collection of troll dolls I would gladly give up!
- The Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath – I have way too many beads and way too much yarn.
- Ms. Emily Valentine – I have too many water bottles.
- Pr. Penman – we have way too much camping gear. Nobody needs to have 12 tents!

Pr. Penman read from Acts 4:32-35

³² Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³ With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵ They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

He then asked:

What does it mean to be of one mind?

- Dr. John Connors – to be an active listener, not a person who has already decided what one wants to say before the person shares what they need to say.

- Pr. Rodrick-Schnaath – It can be difficult to be of one heart and one mind in a congregation. This is where simple things such as a T-shirt with a phrase or motto on them can help us keep focus.
- Bishop Davenport – God has given us all these wise leaders to help us be of one mind in monitoring the activities of this Synod.
- The Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis, Co-Director for Evangelical Mission – in this passage the way in which they shared all in common is a story that unites them, and the way in which we share the story of the Gospel through the many ministries we have in this Synod is how we claim unity in the Gospel and are of one mind.

Pr. Penman shared the passage from Acts reminds us that it is in our working together, sharing all we have, and giving from our abundance that we spread the Gospel.

“When we devote ourselves to sharing our resources towards that collective work well, that's when we begin to see church. And I know a lot of people are like, well, the church is declining right now, but it's not. It's alive in those places that are telling those stories and sharing their resources, and doing what those early disciples did in coming together and telling the story of how deeply God is on the move in our world.”

Apart from that which we would like to get rid of, what is it that we have to share for the kingdom?

He closed the reflection by reading a “spoken word” by Lutheran rapper AGAPE* (David Scherer), “We Rise Higher”, in which we are reminded we rise higher, and do more, when we are together.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 178th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:19 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 177th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (June 29, 2023) were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

The agenda for the 178th meeting of the Synod Council was approved as presented.

MISSION MOMENT

The Rev. Marcia Bell, Director of Mobility, was invited to present the Mission Moment. Pr. Bell noted it had been some time since she was able to share an update with the Synod Council, and she is glad to be able to do so. One of the difficult things to do, however, is answering the question of “How many congregations do we have in transition?” This is a difficult question, because we have many congregations in different stages of the process, and we also have different types of processes depending on the congregation in question. To give as complete a response as she could, Pr. Bell decided to go Conference by Conference, sharing how many sites in each are seeking what type of leadership.

She began with the Central Philadelphia Conference.

- Central Philadelphia Conference has five congregations seeking pastoral leadership, but only one of these congregations is in a “traditional” process, looking for a full-time pastor for its own site. The pastor of this congregation is retiring on Sunday, and so they are also just beginning the process of transition. The other congregations are in conversation for different styles of coverage. One of them is in the process of closing its ministry.
- Chester Conference has four congregations in transition. All have been in process for some time. Zion, Spring City, has been in transition for several years.
- Delaware Conference has two congregations in transition. One is in a traditional process, although it is moving from full-time to part-time pastoral coverage. The other is looking at innovative ways to approach pastoral care and ministry in a new configuration.
- Lower Bucks Conference has four congregations in transition, all following a traditional process.
- Lower Montgomery also has four congregations seeking pastoral coverage, and all are in a traditional process.
- Northeast/Northwest Philadelphia Conference has two congregations in transition. One of these is a full-time call and is nearing the end of the process. The second is a part-time call, and this congregation is investigating sharing a pastor with a neighboring congregation.
- Upper Bucks Conference has the most congregations in pastoral transition with a total of eight in process at this time. All are following a traditional process, and one of them is close to calling a pastor. Some of these are full-time calls, but most can only afford part-time pastoral coverage.
- Upper Montgomery Conference has six congregations, all in a traditional process. At least one of these congregations will be part-time.

Pr. Bell shared there was a retreat for the Deans, held in the Poconos, where the Deans held both their regular meeting and considered some new possibilities for working the transition process. As there are not enough trained Intentional Interim Pastors or Interim Consultants, how do we determine which settings are in most need of an interim, and which might be cared for in other ways?

Two new Deans will be elected soon, as Dean Jenn Casey is not seeking a second term in Delaware Conference, and Dean Norbert Hahn has moved to South Carolina.

The desire to find new and more adaptable ways of filling the pastoral needs of congregations is an ongoing concern and opportunity, not just in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, but across the ELCA. With all the changes in the church, and in our society, there is a constant desire to discover new and more helpful ways to provide the care congregations need, while encouraging innovation in congregational ministry. Pr. Bell does not always want to make this conversation one of shortages, but it is a reality that we do not have enough people in seminary to keep up with the number of retirements, the number of people leaving ministry for other work, or the openings made by people moving to other ministry settings.

With the fewer number of interim pastors and consultants available, a possible piece of the puzzle may be an expanded use of term calls. By being willing to enter into a relationship for two or three years, congregations and clergy can serve together, and then make an informed

decision if this relationship is aided by regularizing the call, if it is better to have the minister move to another site, or if the congregation needs to re-evaluate what it needs in pastoral coverage and possible arrangements for such leadership.

Pr. Bell asked the Synod Council to pray for these different possibilities to arise and bear fruit. She also asked the Council to continue to pray for, and raise up, leaders to serve the Church. We have been blessed by the quality of leaders that have come from our Synod, and from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. It gives a renewed sense of hope when we see the quality of those who are choosing to enter the service of the Lord.

Pr. Bell asked if the Rev. Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership/ Mission Advancement, if she would like to add anything to this presentation.

Pr. Sease echoed Pr. Bell's point that there is a great need for leadership across the Church, and we need to continue to raise faithful people to the rostered ministries of our Church. She also noted that there is a changing climate coming, as congregations that, in the past, would ever think of doing anything innovative or creative are now reaching out to our Directors of Evangelical Mission to consider new possibilities for ministry and leadership.

Pr. Bell expressed her thanks to Bishop Davenport, the Staff, the Deans, and the Candidacy Committee for all their efforts in finding leaders to serve the congregations and ministry sites of our Synod. She then asked if the Synod Council had any questions she might answer.

Mr. Everett Wick asked how many congregations in total are in mobility.

Pr. Sease replied about 40, which is approximately one-third of our congregations, are searching for pastoral leadership.

Pr. Bell added that many of our congregations are looking for part-time leadership, mostly due to the expense. Those serving in part-time calls are still entitled to benefits, and this is a great cost for congregations. Sharing clergy is not easy, because it means sharing Sunday mornings. While this is not what many of our congregations are used to, please be open to, and encourage the participation in, such shared ministry.

Bishop Davenport thanked Pr. Bell for the work she does for the Church in this capacity. She also echoed that we are seeing this kind of challenge across not just the ELCA, but also across denominations. In the ELCA the number of people in the candidacy process to discern a call to rostered ministry is down 49% since before the pandemic. In order to address some of the issues of the shortage of leaders, Pr. Sease and Pr. Jenn Phelps are working on a possible plan to bring lay people into service as Authorized Lay Ministers. We await their proposal for further consideration.

Vice President Beasley thanked Pr. Bell for being with the Council and sharing this informative update.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Davenport began by expressing her gratitude to the Synod Council for authorizing her sabbatical. She also thanked Secretary Richard for filling the role of acting bishop during her time of renewal and refreshment.

Bishop asked the secretary to include her report as an addendum to these minutes when posted. A copy will be attached.

Bishop then asked for questions the Synod Council might have for her from her written report. Vice President Beasley asked Bishop to share about her trip to Canada, a trip she made to Ontario, following the path of Harriet Tubman as she led enslaved persons to freedom.

Bishop said it was more than the trip – it was the journey. It was powerful for her to be able to sit with all the emotions of this trek. It was refreshing to be in a space where she could meet with people from across the globe, and not have it be a “thing.” She spoke with people from Eastern India, from Georgia, from Italy, and everyone was warm and welcoming, regardless of color or gender or age or ethnic origin. Being by the Falls you felt the water on your face, you greeted people, you offered to take photos for each other, and divisions did not matter. Then you return home, turn on CNN, and it’s back to the craziness of the real world.

The experience made her reflect on how to live differently, knowing the obstacles before us, but looking for the opportunities to move forward.

She expressed her gratitude for the Synod Council and the Synod Staff, who kept moving things forward during the time of her sabbatical. They did not just hold things together, they moved forward.

Dr. Connors – Given your learning and experiences, do you have any changes for the goals you have for the remainder of your term?

Bp. Davenport – No, not really, except to push a little harder on the issues before us and the Church. As a woman of color, Bishop Davenport has sometimes found herself walking gently around these issues. She wants us to consider how can we confront the issues of racism and white supremacy more head on. She wants to encourage us to work smarter and not harder. We need to keep at the grind, while doing better at self-care. We are still called to the work of kingdom building. She may be experiencing a shift in leaning into these things, but not different goals.

Bishop Davenport then asked Secretary Richard to offer a report of his time as acting bishop. Secretary Richard thanked Bishop Davenport for trusting him with this role. He shared that a statistical report of what he had done was included in the materials the Synod Council had received. Beyond that, he shared the following:

Secretary Richard echoed the Bishop’s assessment of the Synod Staff. The Staff works well together, and they do the work of the Synod. Secretary Richard noted he came in only when needed to deal with issues of pastoral care and some other administrative matters. He did some emails, he offered encouragement, but his role was not to move into the Bishop’s office and direct the programming. He filled the role of acting bishop; he was not the actual bishop. Some of the things he was asked to care for were challenging, others less so. He shared two events that he was particularly honored to help with, one was the installation of Pr. Roger Randolph, the second was the funeral of Mr. Noman Geist, husband of Deacon Ethyl Geist. Pr. Randolph is serving at Christ, Upper Darby, and Secretary Richard would have attended this installation of a colleague anyway, but on the day before the installation, he received a call from

Dean Jenn Casey, who had become quite ill. She asked if he would cover for her, which thing he was pleased to do.

Deacon Geist was a colleague of Secretary Richard when he served as a pastor in Upper Bucks Conference. Her husband had served as his organist, while Deacon Geist served at Trinity Perkasio when Pr. Leslie Richard was serving there. Secretary Richard was happy to bring some remarks on behalf of the Bishop and the Synod at this time of loss for one of our rostered ministers.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley reminded the members of the Synod Council of the importance of returning their preferences for where each would like to serve on Synod Committees. The process of appointing these committees needs to take place soon, and if there is no preference stated, people will be placed without their input. She also stressed the importance of returning the confidentiality statements distributed at the last meeting.

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley then noted that there are two reports before the Council. She began by asking if there were questions regarding the August meeting of the Executive Committee.

As there were none, she moved to the second report from the September meeting of the Executive Committee, which contained the proposed members of the teams for the process for the election of a bishop.

The teams were described, and the potential members of these teams were presented as follows:

Transition Team: Develops a Synod Mission Profile for consideration by the Synod and potential candidates for Bishop, describing demographics, patterns, and possible direction of the Synod.

Names proposed by the Executive Committee:

12 total. 6 lay, 6 clergy.

Chairperson: Pending

Co-chair: Pr. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath, Good Shepherd, Coatesville

Lay members:

Ms. Jill Meuser, Calvary, West Chester
Ms. Patricia Moore, Tabernacle, Philadelphia
Mr. Brett Shaw, St. Paul's, Applebachsville
Mr. Martin Vaughn, Christ, Philadelphia
Mr. Connor Watson, Trinity, Lansdale
Mr. Everett Wick, St. Andrew's, Perkasio

Clergy members:

Pr. Ghislaine Cotnoir, Artman Home
Pr. Nathan Krause, Redeemer, Jamison
Pr. Thomas Russert, St. Paul's, Doylestown
Pr. Maeve Schurz, St. Stephen, Feasterville
Dn. Thomas Snyder, St. John's Phoenixville

Discernment Team: Develops a process by which possible candidates might be pre-identified and discussed so that particularly lay people can have an understanding of people who may be good possibilities to serve as Bishop of this Synod.

Names proposed by the Executive Committee:

13 total. 6 lay, 7 clergy.

Chairperson: V.P. Tracey A. Beasley, Reformation, Philadelphia

Co-chair: Pr. Lauren Bruno, St. John's, Ridge Valley

Lay members:

Ms. Robin Alderfer, St. Peter's, North Wales
Mr. Bert Glenn, St. John, Melrose Park
Ms. Yvonne Perri, Good Shepherd, Coatesville
Ms. Abee Tabolo-Weiah, Faith-Immanuel,
East Lansdowne
Mr. Damar Wilson, Reformation, Philadelphia

Clergy members:

Dr. John A. Berntsen, Trinity, Perkasio
Pr. Regina Goodrich, Mediator, Phila.
Pr. John Heidgerd, Emmanuel, Souderton
Dr. Philip Krey, St. Andrew's Perkasio
Pr. Stuart Luce, St. Paul's, Lionville
Pr. Paul Neff, St. Luke, Devon

Committee on Bishop's Election: Serves at the Assembly, overseeing the actual voting for the Bishop. This team will also consider the way in which the election might best be held. E.g., should this be a paper or electronic process?

Names proposed by the Executive Committee:

14 total. 9 lay, 5 clergy.

Chairperson: Mr. Bruce McCullough, University Lutheran, Philadelphia

Co-chair: Ms. Joanne Carlson, Good Shepherd, Coatesville

Lay members:

Ms. Linda Beck, Upper Dublin, Ambler
Ms. Barbara Blount, Reformation, Philadelphia
Mr. Glenn D. Bryan, Christ, Philadelphia
Ms. Sarajeon Grainson, Comm. of Love, Oxford
Ms. Doreen Kinzler, St. John's, Mayfair
Ms. Annette Sample, Reformation, Philadelphia
Ms. Dorothy Wilson, Faith, Philadelphia

Clergy members:

Dn. Kathleen Afflerbach, St. John,
Spinnerstown
Pr. Chris Franz, Advent, West Chester
Pr. Kathleen Kerin, St. Paul's, Olney
Pr. David Lutcher, Advent, Harleysville
Pr. Raymond Miller, St. Peter, Hilltown

The following resolution was then before the Council:

S.C.23.09.23. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the appointment of these members to serve on their respective teams in the process for the election of a bishop.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Ms. Beasley then gave an update on Trinity, South Philadelphia. This process has been extensive and challenging. She thanked Pr. Bryan Penman, co-Director of Evangelical Mission, and Mr. Martin Schwab, Synod Senior Accountant, for their many hours working on this issue. The date for the closing service of this historic congregation will be October 8th at 3:00 p.m. Vice president Beasley expressed her hope that members of the Synod Council will be able to attend this service of Holy Closure.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Actions on the Roster

Call to Interim Ministry

S.C.23.09.24. 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.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

On Leave from Call Request:

S.C.23.09.25. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant “On Leave from Call” status to the Rev. Norbert Hahn, 1st year, effective August 7, 2023.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Request to Move from the Active Roster to the Retired Roster

S.C.23.09.26. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves moving the Rev. Karen L. Hart to the retired roster effective October 1, 2023.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

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

Deaths

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.)

Changes to Constitutional Provisions

With the concurrence of the Executive Committee, Secretary Richard proposed the following changes to the Constitutional provisions of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. The changes are highlighted in yellow, and they are described in red following each of the affected sections.

By acting on these at this meeting of the Synod Council, if approved, they will meet the requirements of S18.13.b. and can be presented for adoption at the next Synod Assembly with only one reading.

†S18.13. Other amendments to this constitution may be adopted by this synod through either of the following procedures:

- a. Introduced with the support of at least fifteen voting members and having been approved by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly, an amendment may be adopted unchanged by a two-thirds vote at the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.**

- b. The Synod Council may propose an amendment, with notice to be sent to the congregations of this synod at least six months prior to the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. Such an amendment shall require for adoption a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at such a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
All such amendments shall become effective upon ratification by the Churchwide Assembly or by the Church Council.

Chapter 7.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY

- †S7.21. The membership of the Synod Assembly, of which at least 60 percent of the voting membership shall be composed of laypersons, shall be constituted as follows:
- a. All rostered ministers under call on the roster of this synod shall be voting members of the Synod Assembly.
 - b. A minimum of one lay member elected by each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation with 175 or more baptized members related to this synod, typically one of whom shall be a man and one of whom shall be a woman, shall be voting members. The Synod Council shall establish a formula to provide additional lay representation from congregations on the basis of the number of baptized members in the congregation. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be women and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men.
 - c. Voting membership shall include the officers of this synod.
- S7.21.01. Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until the opening of the next regular Synod Assembly.
- †S7.21.02. If a special Synod Assembly is called and voting members at the previous assembly are unable to serve as voting members, where permitted by state law, the congregation through the Congregation Council may elect new members who shall continue to serve until the next regular Synod Assembly.
- S7.21.11. In addition to the congregation's election of voting member(s) of the Synod Assembly as established by †S7.21.e, each congregation may elect one additional voting member of the Synod Assembly who shall be a voting member of the congregation up to the age of 25.

Correcting citation – add “dagger”, remove “c”

- 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 †S7.21. 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.

S7.22.10. Retired rostered ministers who have indicated to the bishop their willingness and availability to serve in the synod and whose intent meets with the concurrence of the bishop shall be permitted to vote at meetings of the Synod Assembly.

S7.22.11. In establishing a formula pursuant to Chapter †S7.21.e of this Constitution, the number of retired rostered ministers permitted to vote at meetings of the Synod Assembly shall be a factor in determining the number of additional lay representatives necessary to comprise at least 60% of the membership of the Synod Assembly.

Correcting citation – add “dagger”, remove “c”

†S7.23. The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of the churchwide organization as may be designated by the presiding bishop shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.

S7.24. Ministers under call, or on leave from call but available for call, as determined by the Office of the Bishop, on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call, or on leave from call but available for call, as determined by the Office of the Bishop, 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.

†S7.25. Except as otherwise provided in this constitution or in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, each voting member of the Synod Assembly shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod.

S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit lay representatives of authorized worshiping 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. **Authorized worshiping communities, acknowledged under criteria, policies, and**

procedures approved by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith and Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and shall be subject to the discipline of this church.

As of May 2017, Sections S13.40. and S13.41. (included below) were added which describe the criteria of authorized worshipping communities. It is no longer necessary to include here, nor germane to the issue being addressed here. This provision is no longer in S7. in the Model Constitution for Synods.

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 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.

S7.28. Duly elected voting members of the Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly under †S7.21. shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly.

S7.29. All **rostered** ministers **of Word and Sacrament**, on leave from call but available for call, as determined by the Office of the Bishop, on the roster of this synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly shall be voting members, **consistent with †S7.21. above.** ~~All ministers of Word and Service, on leave from call but available for call, as determined by the Office of the Bishop, on the roster of this synod shall have both voice and vote as lay voting members in the Synod Assembly, in addition to the voting membership of lay members of congregations as provided in item †S7.21.e.~~

Correcting an oversight from revisions related to changes at 2019 CWA. Ministers of Word and Service are no longer considered "lay," but "clergy."

~~**S7.30.** Retired ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of the synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly may serve as voting members of this synod consistent with †7.21 above, and as specified in the bylaws.~~

This is covered under S7.22. and S7.22.10. above, which sections also include Retired Ministers of Word and Service, which this section does not include.

†S7.31. Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted in the transaction of any business of the Synod Assembly.

S13.40. Synod-authorized Worshipping Communities

S13.41. Authorized worshiping communities, acknowledged under criteria, policies, and procedures approved by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith and Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and shall be subject to the discipline of this church.

After walking through each of the proposed amendments, Secretary Richard put forward the following resolution:

S.C.23.09.27. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the revisions to S.7. for presentation to the Synod Assembly for adoption.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

**Authorization of the Mindfulness Plus Church as a
Synod Authorized Worshiping Community**

The Secretary then directed the Synod Council to the resolution on the addendum to his report. This resolution came from the work of the Directors of Evangelical Mission, particularly the Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis, and was endorsed by the Fund for Mission Trustees at their August meeting.

S.C.23.09.28. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council officially designates Mindfulness Plus Church as a Synod Authorized Worshiping Community (SAWC) of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod/ELCA, and **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council designates Vicar Thomas Gerald Natalini as the servant leader for this Synod Authorized Worshiping Community.

Dr. Dennis was then asked to describe this proposal in more detail.

We began this endeavor with Vicar Tom Natalini, who has been raised from within our own Synod, and has been identified as having gifts for mission development. He has been through the training for mission developers and will be serving in a dual capacity – caring for one of our smaller, settled congregations, while simultaneously working to develop this new ministry. This process is similar to how Dr. Dennis developed his congregation: serving the settled congregation of Immanuel, East Lansdowne, while developing Faith Worshiping Community, which has since become Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church.

The mission Vicar Natalini will be developing alongside the congregation he will care for will focus on reaching out to people who might not see church in a traditional sense, but who may be open to experiencing church and faith in other ways – either in cyberspace through meditation, or in person, but doing forms of worship that are not traditional. He will gain strength and stability by having an established congregation as a base from which to operate.

Dr. Moses opened the floor to questions or comments.

Dr. Marsha Boraas: This is a fascinating concept. Is there any precedent? Where geographically will this be based?

Dr Moses: As for this exact type of ministry, no there is no precedent; as for trying new configurations, Kairos Community is trying to work in a non-traditional manner. As for 'Mindfulness,' Grace in Broomall is working on being a wellness center, addressing people's needs in a more holistic manner.

We do not have a home base for this ministry yet, but it is in the works. We are working for him to serve as a pastor for a congregation, but then do this as an outreach, similar to what happened at Faith-Immanuel.

With no further discussion, the resolution was put to a vote.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Housing Allowances

2024 Housing Allowances for Rostered Ministers on Synod Staff

WHEREAS, Internal Revenue Code Section 107, as well as the associated Regulations and Revenue Rulings, provide that a portion of a minister's remuneration, designated as rental/housing allowance by the employing church or other qualifying organization, is excludable from the minister's gross income under Section 107 of the code; and

WHEREAS The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a qualifying organization, and

WHEREAS, of the compensation paid by SEPA Synod to ministers listed below in the calendar year 2024 the amount stated in each instance is designated as a rental/housing allowance in accordance with the provisions of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

S.C.23.09.29. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2024 housing allowance for Bishop Patricia Davenport, Pastor Violet Little, Pastor Stacey-Kyle Rea, and Pastor Karen Sease, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the recipients be reminded that the amounts so designated as rental/housing allowance are excludable from the gross income of the respective recipients only to the extent that said amounts are used to rent or provide a home. Further the amount eligible for the Section 107 exclusion may not exceed the fair rental value of the minister's home (including furnishings and appurtenances) plus the cost of utilities. To the extent a greater amount is designated as rental/housing allowance, the designation will be ineffectual with respect to such amount.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Treasurer Neff directed the Council to her report and the financial statements. She shared the following observations.

These reports reflect the finances through July. Overall, our unrestricted revenue is \$139,000 over budget. However, this is mostly due to unrealized gains in our investments. Our Mission Support from congregations is below budget by \$42,000. It is not unusual to be below budget at this time of the year, but we are further behind than last year. Ms. Neff asked the members of the Synod Council to check the progress of their congregation, and those in their Conferences, and, if possible, encourage them to remember the Synod with their offerings.

Unrestricted expenses were also below budget, by approximately \$60,000. This was due to less travel expenses than budgeted, and lower office expenses than anticipated.

Treasurer Neff then shared with the Council some of where our where our Mission Support goes. Fifty percent of what we receive in Mission Support is shared with the Churchwide expression of the ELCA. (When our receipts are lower, we share less with Churchwide.)

We also support Muhlenberg College, United Lutheran Seminary, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Bear Creek Camp, LAMPA (Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania), and Lutheran Congregational Services.

In our Temporarily Restricted funds we have a surplus of \$54,309. This is due to investment gains for St. John's Quakertown cemetery and St. Michael's, Germantown cemetery as well as the Grace, Norristown endowment. The balance of the account is for the receipt of funds for which the activity has not taken place yet.

In the "Mission" portion of our budget we again have a surplus, but as with the Unrestricted Funds this is from gains in our investments. Without those investments we would show a deficit of \$61,000. This is why we allocate 5% from the Fund for Mission to assist with this portion of our budget, as well as programs proposed by our Directors of Evangelical Mission, such as the Mindfulness Plus Church.

Finally, we have our Permanently Restricted funds, which are used for the purposes designated by each fund.

Statement of Financial Position as of July 31:

The unrestricted current assets and investments total \$9,132,335. Our liabilities total \$99,050. Therefore, our current ratios are in good order.

OLD BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS – None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

With no other business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 7:42 with prayer by Bishop Davenport. The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be December 14, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

Approved by Synod Council, December 14, 2023

MINUTES
of the 179th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
December 14, 2023
6:00 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasey invited Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, to lead the council in devotions.

Ms. Neff's devotions were based on Isaiah 40:3-5

³A voice cries out:

*"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.*

*⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

The stories of Jesus remind us that Jesus came to this world in tumultuous times. He was born in the days of King Herod, a murderer and tyrant who would slaughter innocent children. Now, in 2023, we also live in tumultuous times. There are wars and conflicts in Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic. But even now, God breaks into the world, giving us the Prince of Peace, who brings hope to the world.

Ms. Neff and Ms. Pia Graham then shared a Litany of Hope for Advent from Alan Zak, a South African pastor, along with two songs of hope for our reflection, "Go Tell it on the Mountain" and "Silent Night."

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 179th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:17 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 178th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (September 21, 2023) were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda with the request that the Synod Council approve adding to it the consideration of two people to serve in open seats on the Synod Council. Such action will be taken following the Setting of the Agenda and before the Mission Moment. The agenda was approved as amended.

CONSIDERATION OF PEOPLE TO FILL OPEN SEATS

Two clergy members of the Synod Council were recently elected Dean of their respective Conferences. The Rev. Nathan Krause was elected Dean of Lower Bucks Conference, and the Rev. Marie Sager was elected Dean of Delaware Conference. Our constitution states that a person may not serve on Synod Council and be Dean at the same time, and so each of these pastors have stepped off the Council. As successors the Executive Committee is placing before the Synod Council the Rev. Dedra Florence-Johnson to fill the remainder of the term of Pr. Krause, and the Rev. Jennifer Casey to fill the remainder of the term of Pr. Sager. The biographies of these two pastors were shared with the Synod Council in the packet of materials for this meeting.

The term Pr. Florence-Johnson would assume ends with the 2024 Synod Assembly. She would be eligible to serve two full terms, if she is willing to have her name placed in nomination. The term Pr. Casey would assume ends with the 2025 Synod Assembly. She would be eligible to serve one more full term, if she is willing to have her name in placed nomination.

The following motion was placed before the Synod Council:

S.C.23.12.30. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the appointment of the Rev. Dedra Florence-Johnson and the Rev. Jennifer Casey to fill the seats previously held by the Rev. Nathan Krause, and the Rev. Marie Sager, respectively.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Pastors Florence-Johnson and Casey were then admitted to the Zoom meeting.

MISSION MOMENT

Vice President Beasley welcomed Mr. Collin Grooms, Executive Director of Bear Creek Camp, and invited him to share what has been happening at the Camp as our Mission Moment.

Mr. Grooms thanked the Vice President for the opportunity to share. He began by saying to the Synod Council, “If we were all in a room together, I would ask you, ‘What are your camp stories?’” It can be powerful to think back and hear from others what camp meant to each who has attended. Camp is more than we sometimes think. It is about being family together. It is about being set apart, when we are set apart, we step away from our technology. We step away from our routines. We step into a place where we find ourselves, we find community, we find God. He then shared a bit of his own camp story as illustration.

Collin grew up in Northwest Ohio and attended Lutheran Memorial Camp. He went as a shy, timid kid, nervous to try new things. But Camp provides moments where you can do things for the first time, and he found he was able to do more than he could ever have believed. As a junior in High School, he was in a staff training program. His counselor, Tony, said, “Hey, you’re really cool. You should talk more.” That was the day he became an extrovert. Camp is the place where he first met a person of color that wasn’t a television character. There was also a day when he was sitting by the pool and someone asked, “Are you sure there isn’t a hell?” He met his wife at Camp, and now their six-year-old son says he wants to be a Camp Director someday.

Camp can have a formative effect on a person, their life, and their faith. In a world that is becoming more and more siloed, Camp is a time when we can sit around a picnic table with people who are not like us.

Bear Creek has recently completed a strategic planning process. This included pastors and lay people from both Northeastern and Southeastern Pennsylvania Synods, and included campers, parents, donors, staff, congregations, and the two bishops. From this process, the following was determined.

Our Purpose:

- Bear Creek Camp's mission is to invite all people to explore, celebrate, and grow in relationship to God, nature, and community.
- Our vision is to have all people feel accepted and loved in this community so they can reflect on their experiences to make a positive difference in the world.
- Our values are building an inclusive community, caring for creation, promoting adventure and fun, sharing grace filled faith, cultivating empathy, and developing leaders.

What We Do:

- Summer Camp: 750 overnight campers; 85 family campers; 211 nature day campers
- During the rest of the year, we offer:
- Retreats: Winter Connect Youth Retreat; Labor Day and Family Camp; Women's Retreat
 - 63 User Groups: including Churches, Families, Field Trips, Scouts, and Colleges.

The Summer Staff are key to the effectiveness of the Camp and are young people who are making a huge difference in the world. Last year there were approximately 40 college age young adults that were leading in new ways. They learn new skills – how to be on their own, how to work as a team. Sometimes we are their first job. Sometimes we teach them how to do laundry. Our staff includes future teachers, nurses, physical therapists, politicians, and caregivers of various kinds. But all of them are people who care for others, and particularly the young people in their care the summer of their service. This is a challenging job. It is 23 hours a day, 6 days a week commitment they make, for very modest pay. It is a labor of love on their part.

SEPA participation at Camp this past summer:

Of the 750 summer campers, 197 of them were from 45 congregations of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. The numbers from Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod are similar. Nearly 50% of our campers do not identify a church home. Of the 50% that do identify a congregation, about 20% of them do not identify as being Lutheran. We are having an impact that is much broader than our Lutheran heritage. It is a tremendous opportunity to share the Gospel with a broad constituency of people, where they can overhear the good news, and it can become a part of their understanding. The idea that faith is caught, not taught, can apply.

Philly Connect is a program that allows us to bring some of our summer staff to churches in Center City. We share our story with the community, we participate in worship, we offer sermons, and most importantly, share meals with the community to meet the folks of that community. Our staff is predominantly middle class and white, and it is important for our staff that we learn about, gain understanding of, and build community with people who are broader in

diversity than we tend to be. Following our time in those congregations, the children of these churches are invited up to Camp, and there is thereby a connection with those campers with some of the counselors they may have.

Further connections with SEPA Synod include the commissioning of our summer staff, which we rotate between the two supporting synods, and weekly chaplains for our summer program. This year 7 of our 8 chaplains were from SEPA Synod.

Our Impact

Following camp parents are asked what changes they see in their camper after attending camp. Their responses include that their camper is:

- Happier
- More social and connected to others
- More confident
- Willing to try new things
- More independent
- Want to use screens less

Increased horizontal faith (faith relevance) – 6 months after attending camp there is a measurable increase in:

- Faith practices in the home
- Devotional practices
- Increased church attendance

Revenue and Expenses

Mr. Grooms gave a summary of the finances of the Camp so that the Synod Council would have an awareness of how their camp is operated.

The annual budget, post-Covid, is about \$900,000.

On the revenue side:

- The largest source of income is from the Summer Programs, roughly 47% of the Camp's revenue.
- Retreat and User Groups make up about 16% of the revenue.
- Giving from congregations and individuals provides 30%.
- Camp store sales of snacks and Tee Shirts comprise 5% of the income.
- Support from both Synods makes up 4% of the Camp's annual revenue.

On the expense side:

- Staffing: We have 8 year-round professional staff. We have seasonal staff that includes summer counselors and people that work with retreat groups in the off seasons.
- Property maintenance, insurance, and food supplies are a large part of our expenditures.

Post Covid the Camp has been blessed with strong support from congregations and individual givers. This allowed for a balanced budget for each of the past three years. Over the course of the pandemic the Camp has taken advantage of various government programs, and there has

actually been a slight surplus in a few of these years. This money has then been reinvested in the maintenance of the property.

Moving toward the Future

There are five main points that came from the strategic planning process.

1. Inclusive Practices – this has been who we have striven to be. Yet because we claim this, it does not mean we have fully incorporated all we need to be a truly inclusive community. We have adopted a Welcome Statement, and we are exploring the Reconciling in Christ process.
2. Strategic Planning – looking particularly at our physical plant and facilities, to ensure the housing can truly sustain our year-round staff.
3. Increasing efforts at fundraising and marketing – we are working with GSB for fundraising and to support the annual campaign.
4. Programming will continue to focus on creation care and fully using the property.
5. Strengthening our resource relationships – Rather than remaining an island in the wilderness, there is a desire to more intentionally connect with our Synods and other community partners to strengthen the ties we have.

2024 is the 50th Anniversary of Bear Creek Camp. We are making plans to truly celebrate this milestone in the life of Bear Creek Camp.

Bear Creek Camp is here for you. We are a critical piece of what our two synods are doing together. We are ministering to your youth, but in a different way. We have relationships with our college age staff that many congregations envy. But this is a ministry that we do together, and we are grateful for the ways in which we can partner in ministry.

Bishop Davenport: Thank you so much. My children experienced camp and were so excited they became camp counselors. I can attest that what you are saying is true. Thank you.

Vice President thanked Mr. Grooms for his presentation, and all he and his staff do at Bear Creek.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop began by expressing her thanks for the prayers raised for her during her recent hip surgery. The day of her surgery she was asked what her pain level was, and she told the nurse, “0,” she felt no pain. When the nurse looked at her, Bishop said, that as a woman of faith she believes the prayers of the righteous avail much, and many are praying. Then on the second day she was asked what her pain level was, 0 – 10, and again Bishop said “0.” A skeptical look came, because this was after physical therapy. Prayer works. She is sore, but there is no pain.

As she spoke of prayer, she requested the Council keep in prayer the family of Pr. John Schilling on the occasion of his death, for Pastor Arlene Greenwald for healing and strength, for all who are grieving or ill across the synod, for all who find Christmas challenging or painful, those who are depressed, particularly our young people, for peace across the world.

Please continue to pray for Presiding Bishop Eaton on her sabbatical, and for the executive staff as they move into transition again. The Churchwide expression is looking at a possible 10-million-dollar deficit.

Pray for our Synod as we move into 2024 and look to elect our next Bishop. Pray the Holy Spirit lowers the anxiety. Pray for our Synod Staff, as they are all co-terminus with the Bishop.

Conversations have been had with ELCA Secretary Rothmeyer, who has affirmed that we are doing well going into this process. It is an ecclesiastical ballot, which means that the Holy Spirit is going to do what the Holy Spirit is going to do.

Pray also with thanksgiving for the rostered ministers and the lay ministers and leaders of our congregations who continue to show up and are generous to the Kingdom building work of the Synod.

Sharing by Bishop's Staff

Bishop Davenport asked members of her staff to give and update on their work and ministry. She began with **Pr. Bryan Penman, co-Director of Evangelical Mission**, who had guests with him at this meeting.

Pr. Penman was in the conference room at the Synod Office, where he had guests from the Churchwide offices. Ian Chester, the executive director for innovation, and Tyra Dennis, the program manager for the innovation home area, were in from the Innovation Home Group, on our territory to visit with our Urban Ministry Task Force, see some of our churches, and get a sense of the ministry that is happening here.

Mr. Chester commented that the devotion for this evening spoke to him. As he speaks with people of faith, he hears how we have hope in the midst of the struggles we face. He is interested in hearing how hope looks in this Synod.

Ms. Dennis shared that it has been wonderful getting to know the Urban Ministry Task Force, and thinks Bishop Davenport is awesome in the way she constantly shows servant leadership.

Pr. Penman noted that the Urban Ministry Task Force has been working with the Innovation Team at Churchwide as part of our partnership between local congregations, the Synod, and the ELCA to deepen our witness and work. He is excited for this weekend, and all that will be discovered and discussed as they dive into the ministry we have in the City.

There were also members of the Task Force present, who introduced themselves.

- + Mr. Clifton Heyman, Trinity Lutheran, Germantown, co-chair of the Task Force
- + Pr. Robert Novak Jackson, New Life Ministry, co-chair of the Task Force
- + Pr. Regina Goodrich, Mediator Lutheran Church, and Dean of Central Philadelphia Conference
- + Ms. Karen Paulus, Task Force member
- + Ms. Maureen Tang, secretary of the Task Force

Before Bishop moved to the next staff person, she asked Pr. Penman to share some good news.

Pr. Penman shared that we have received a million dollars from the Lilly Endowment!

We are one of the recipients of the Vibrant Congregations Initiative. There were one hundred and five recipients out of over 800 applications. Our program is "Love Revolution," and its purpose is to bolster congregational and rostered leadership as we work to turn the tide on what

is happening in our culture now, and as we move away from institutional church toward missional church, helping people connect with loving God and loving neighbors. A revolution of love, in the city of love, with a God of love, in a city where we began a revolution, so the imagery is full, and the possibilities are exciting. This money will cover programming for the next five years. Many thanks to the whole grant writing team: Pr. Karen Sease, Pr. Stacey-Kyle Rea, Pr. Kayla Sadowy, Mr. Martin Schwab, Ms. Janet Neff, Pr. Lisa Jester, and Dr. Phil Krey. Thanks also to Vice President Beasley and Bishop Davenport for signing off on the project.

Additions to Bishop's Activities

Bishop Davenport returned to her report. She asked the Council to add to the list of her activities two ELCA Zoom meetings and one Synod Staff meeting, 8 Synod calls, 3 lay calls, 6 Synod Staff calls, 1 Deans Zoom meeting, 1 Synod Zoom with Staff, 1 Synod Zoom with Executive Committee and Investment Committee.

Religious Leader's Council

Bishop is grateful for the abundance of God's love, and the way in which that love is being shown and shared throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. She expressed gratitude to each member of the Synod Council, and to Secretary Richard for being ready when called to help. She shared this quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which has taken on particular meaning for her in her work with the Religious Leaders council. Bonhoeffer said, "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." This spoke to her in a Religious Leaders Committee where one of the Rabbis said the one thing he hoped for was for someone to acknowledge that pain and hurt that have been done to the Jewish Community.

Several of the leaders did reach out to him, but the plea is broader; that we can see each other, and sense the pain of the other, and reach out to each other. The Council has many religions represented, including Muslims and Sikhs and all forms of faiths. But Bishop was moved to consider how Bonhoeffer's quote seems so applicable. How can we view each other without judging, but with love, not being blind to what is happening in the world, but being able to care for those around the table.

Rostered Ministers Equipping Event

Bishop is grateful for all the Rostered Ministers who attended. We need to lean into self-care, and to do this so that we can care for others.

Meetings with groups of Rostered Ministers

Bishop was happy to meet with the pastors of color, and with the pastors who happen to be women. It is important to hear from, and offer support to, these different ministers in their particular concerns. Context is everything. We need to hear joys and concerns. Bishop is looking forward to having a conversation with our "elders," that is, our retired ministers.

Return to Staff Sharing

Senior Accountant Martin Schwab – at this time of year he is working with co-workers to develop the 2024 budget forecast, and the 2025 budget. It is also time to print all the tax documents for 2024: W-2s, 1099s, giving statements, ensuring that they are all accurate so that in January they can be printed and sent. Following that, it will be time to close out the fiscal year and prepare to meet with the auditors.

The Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis, co-Director of Evangelical Mission – Speaking of sharing the love, he is currently spending time with our Episcopalian brother, as their Bishop is visiting, and we are celebrating the work they are doing in the community. Dr. Dennis has been sharing time with members of the Southeast Synod, helping them to train new developers, and in our own Synod we are celebrating our new development calls, and our new baby, the Mindfulness Plus church. We are supporting all our developers as they are exploring new possibilities.

Pr. Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for vocations, leadership, and mission advancement – Pr. Sease is celebrating what God is doing with people who are wondering what God is doing in their lives, and whether that is leading them to Rostered Ministry. She has had more inquiry conversations in this past quarter than she has had in the several of the previous year. It seems clear that the Spirit is up to something. She asks the Council to pray for all those who are discerning a call to rostered ministry. She is also grateful for the work of the Deans in the mobility process, and it is wonderful to celebrate with several congregations who have called new leaders. She is also grateful for the work of Ms. Yvonne Curtis and the deputies who oversee these call votes. And she extended an invitation for the Synod Council to be invested in the work of the Synod. The All Saints Appeal is underway, and the support of the Council members is very much appreciated.

Pr. Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communications and Mission Interpretation – you get to see a lot of what his team does: videos and newsletters and other visible means of communication. What is not always evident is the planning and coordination that goes into supporting events. There is a great deal of working with planning teams. Preparing for the Synod Assembly is exciting, as we are no longer using an external audio/visual provider; we are doing this in-house. Pr. Fisher is pleased and excited that several young people have reached out to him about joining the team.

Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, Database Manager and Communications Assistant – we continue to work to get word out about all the work we do as a Synod, and work to make our Synod better. We recently held the Faith, Faily and Fellowship event. We are pleased for all who came, and hope you had a good time. As we get ready for the new year and the upcoming Assembly, she is working to distribute the nomination forms for the many positions beyond the election of a bishop.

Pr. Skyle Rea, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Discipleship – among the many things she has in Bishop's report, she mentioned first a timely issue. The Synod is in partnership with United Lutheran Seminary and Lutheran Congregational Services to do an MLK Jr. Day of Service at the Seminary. This event will be putting together hygiene kits and flood bucket kits for Lutheran Disaster Response. The day prior to that, on Sunday January 14, the

African Descent Lutheran Association will be holding a service at Christ's Lutheran in Oreland. If you are available, please come and make some kits, hear from Julia Menzo Frank about what Lutheran Disaster Response does, and support our youth and young adults. Second, we have a date for Lutheran Night at the Phillies. Friday, May 31st, 6:40 p.m., against the St. Louis Cardinals. A challenge: if we are the first group to sell 500 tickets, Bishop Davenport can throw out the first pitch!

Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations and Executive Assistant to the Bishop – Ms. Curtis is the executive for administration in the Office of the Bishop. Primarily, she supports the Bishop in her constitutional requirements, ensuring forms and credentialing are submitted to proper offices and units of the ELCA, and that communication with other Synods is done well and faithfully, particularly with regard to transfers of Rostered Minister from one Synod to another. She is delighted to continue this work and is thankful for the opportunity.

Conference of Bishops and Region 7

Bishop Davenport concluded her report by sharing that she is grateful to have been able to serve as the Vice-Chair of the Conference of Bishops, and she is also grateful that this term is over. She also noted that the Region 7 bishops have been engaging in the work of anti-racism, using the work of Robert Woodrow, Faith Communities and the Fight for Racial Justice: What has worked, what hasn't worked, and what can we learn? as the basis of their conversations.

Pr. Mukesh Cheedie gave a word of praise and congratulations to Ms. Yvonne Curtis for her election to the ELCA Task Force reviewing the Manual of Policies and Procedures for the Management of the Roster of the ELCA.

Pr. Gwendolyn King told Bishop Davenport that while Bishop may be glad to end her term as Vice Chair of the Conference of Bishops, Pr. King is grateful for her service in that role. As a member of the ELCA Church Council Pr. King is aware of how diligently Bishop has worked in this position, and Pr. King is proud of her Bishop.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley pointed out that there were two sets of meeting minutes from the Executive Committee. She asked if there were any questions. With no questions raised,

Agenda for 2024 Synod Assembly

Vice President Beasley called the attention of the Synod Council to Agenda for the 2024 Synod Assembly. Ms. Carrie Schwab, Synod Assembly Coordinator, was not able to attend this meeting, so the Vice President shared some items of note.

- + The date of the Assembly is May 3 &4, 2024.
- + Deacon Sue Rothmeyer, ELCA Secretary, will be our Churchwide Representative.
- + ELCA Vice President Imran Siddiqui will also be present, so that Secretary Rothmeyer can help him understand how to oversee the election of a Bishop.
- + We are working to bring back the WELCA In-gathering.
- + The theme is "Chosen, Called, and Sent."
- + Friday will start a little earlier than originally planned to allow time for the pieces of the election of a Bishop.

- + We will not have Friday evening forums or dinner to shorten the day, as requested by the surveys from last year's Assembly.
- + There will again be two shifts inside the church for lunch.
- + There will be multiple stations for snacks during breaks.
- + Registration should open late January, with early bird registration closing March 4th.

The Synod Assembly Agenda was placed before the Council for approval.

S.C.23.12.31. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the Agenda for the 2024 Synod Assembly.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Synod Council Committees

Ms. Beasley directed the Council to the sheet with the assignments to Synod Council Committees. These appointments are proposed by the Bishop and the Vice President, and then affirmed by the Synod Council. There are two changes from the original draft, reflecting the change in membership of the Synod Council with Pr. Florence-Johnson and Pr. Casey. We are still working on a Chair for the Constitution Committee. With no questions raised, the following resolution was placed before the Synod Council:

S.C.23.12.32. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the appointments to Synod Council Committees as proposed by the Bishop and Vice President.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Survey for the Transition Team

The Vice President encouraged the members of the Council to complete the Survey from the Transition Team by Monday. The Team will be using his information as they put together the Synod Profile for the election of a Bishop. The Discernment Team will be meeting soon to determine how to present the Profile, and how to encourage the process for pre-identifying people who may have the gifts to serve as our next bishop. Part of the process will include praying every day in January that the Holy Spirit guide us in this process.

Investment Policy

The Executive Committee received the proposed Investment Policy from the Investment Committee. It was presented to them by Pr. John Heidgerd, Chair of the Investment Committee. The Executive Committee recommends adoption of this policy. Pr. Heidgerd was asked to provide some background on the changes before the Synod Council voted on the proposal. The proposal was included in the Synod Council's packet of materials.

The motion on the floor is:

S.C.23.12.33. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council adopts the proposed investment policy.

Pr. Heidgerd thanked the members of the Investment Committee for their diligent work on this policy, and the Executive Committee for their thoughtful review and comments on the policy.

Our current policy was enacted in 2014, and at that time our portfolio was significantly smaller than it is now. In 2014 our investments were approximately \$2 million; we now have \$11 million dollars invested. The Committee did well with the portfolio, but now that we have such a large sum, and with the growing complexity of the market, we feel that there are people who are more seasoned and who have the time and expertise to optimize the performance of our portfolio, and who can give us some comfort in managing the fiduciary responsibilities that go along with the portfolio.

We did not make this policy up. It is drafted and based on the Investment Policy that Metro New York Synod uses. Metro is a Synod of similar size to Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, is experiencing a similar concern with the closing of ministry sites, and has other characteristics similar to our Synod.

This policy also adds a “socially responsible investing” component that was not in our previous policy. I believe this is important.

This proposal calls for us to engage an investment manager. This manager would propose investments in line with our parameters, and would report to the Investment Committee. The Investment Committee would provide ultimate oversight of these investments, ensuring the manager is following our investment parameters, and making the ultimate decision on where the investments are made. This is not giving away our money or our decisions over it.

We would select such a manager by requesting proposals from a variety of companies who could potentially represent us.

I trust you have read the proposal. I am willing to answer questions from the Council.

Dr. Marcia Boraas – You say the socially responsible language is new with this draft.

Pr. Heidgerd – Yes, and it reflects the language of the ELCA guidelines for socially responsible investing.

Mr. Wick thanked Pr. Heidgerd and the Investment Committee for their work on this. It is difficult and time-consuming work, and such a review is probably long overdue.

Pr. King, member of the Investment Committee – How would you describe for the Synod Council the way the policy says that we are looking for the portfolio to give a 5% return, where the current one seeks a 10% return?

Pr. Heidgerd – 5% is the expected draw that the Synod makes on a yearly basis to fund mission. Therefore, the goal is to make at least 5%, and to go beyond that number to provide even greater growth in the Fund. If you look at the markets over time, there is a 40-year average of about 10%. There are, of course, peaks and valleys over that time period, but there is significant optimism that the portfolio will yield greater returns than the 5%.

Vice President Beasley asked if there were any other questions.

Pr. Jenn Casey noted a typo in footnote number 2.

Pr. Heidgerd made a note of this and said there were a few other typos that will be corrected before final submission of the policy.

Vice President Beasley called for the vote:

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Actions on the Roster

On Leave from Call Request:

S.C.23.12.34. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant “On Leave from Call” status to the Rev. Cornelius Eaddy, 1st year, beginning November 1, 2023.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

The next actions deal with moves to the retired roster. The dates are from a significant time ago. It is incumbent on the Rostered Minister to inform the Office of the Bishop of the time of their decision to go to the Retired Roster. We do not automatically know when this decision is made, and it is not on the administration or the staff to determine that date. While Portico will report a date to the bishop’s Office, not every Rostered Minister is in Portico. And even for those who are, as with any roster change, it is the responsibility of the minister to inform the Office of the Bishop of the desired change, and the timing of it. The following Rostered Ministers were not in Portico, and so we did not have the date of this move until recently. It is the Synod Council that authorizes such moves, and we act when we have the information.

Request to Move from the Active Roster to the Retired Roster

S.C.23.12.35. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves moving the Rev. Josephine Wright to the retired roster effective September 28, 2014.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.12.36. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves moving Sister Mary Julia McKinzie to the retired roster effective September 1, 2016.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

No Action Required (Information Only)

Transfers:

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

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

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

Death:

The Rev. John R. Schilling, December 2, 2023

Reception of the property of a former congregation of the SEPA Synod

Trinity, South Philadelphia, has experienced “holy closure.” To formally receive the assets of this former congregation, I move the following:

S.C.23.12.37. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of Trinity Lutheran Church, Wolf Street, Philadelphia, to close, effective October 8, 2023, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of Trinity, South Philadelphia, in accordance with the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, specifically 9.71.b., +S13.23., and *C7.01.; and, on this date, December 14, 2023, authorizes the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, or the Bishop’s representative(s), to sell the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Trusts related to St. Michael’s Cemetery

There are two small trusts related to St. Michael’s cemetery in Philadelphia which have been held by Wells Fargo, and which are being transferred to the Synod. The Mary Mertz Trust is valued at approximately \$18,000, and the Isabel Cummings Trust is valued at about \$5,300. Mr. Bruce McCullough has been working on this process for the Synod. As we are approaching the time of distribution, we need to formally authorize him to execute the documents so we may receive the value of the trusts.

S.C.23.12.38. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, authorizes Mr. Bruce W. McCollough, Esquire, to act as its agent in all matters pertaining to the Order issued by the County of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County, Orphans Court Division, IN RE: CEMETERY TRUSTS (HELD BY WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A.), ORPHANS’ COURT NO. 546 CM OF 1966, CONROL NO. 232137, with Wells Fargo Bank N.A. and any other financial institutions regarding the Mary Mertz Trust and the Isabel Cummings Trust., including but not limited to, the closing or transfer of any accounts held by Wells Fargo Bank N.A. or any other financial institution.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Request to Affirm Board Members

Liberty Lutheran Services is one of the Social Ministry Organizations with which we have a shared ministry. While they operate as their own entity, their by-laws tie them to the ELCA, and as such their Board Members need to be affirmed by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Dr. Luanne Fisher, Executive Director of Liberty Lutheran, has sent word of the members they have re-elected at their September meeting, asking the Synod Council to affirm them in keeping with their by-laws.

S.C.23.12.39. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the re-appointment of the following people to serve as board members for Liberty Lutheran Services: Linda Breckenridge - Upper Dublin Lutheran; Max Buchheister - Gloria Dei Lutheran, Blue Bell (LCMS); Wayne Matthias-Long - Reformation Lutheran, Media; Frank Roth - St. Paul's Lutheran, Ardmore; Pam Steitz - Upper Dublin Lutheran; and Reverend David Young - Gloria Dei Lutheran, Blue Bell (LCMS).

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Renewal of Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities

We have several Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities in our Synod. This authorization requires renewal on an annual basis. To that end:

S.C.23.12.40. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorizes the following ministries that are continuing as Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities in 2024:

The Welcome Church - The Rev. Violet Little, mission developer

The Well - The Rev. Shaunel Steinnagel, mission developer

Kairos - The Rev. Robert Fisher, mission developer

Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creacion - The Rev. Lyzette Rios-Sanchez, mission developer

Mindfulness Plus Church - The Rev. Seminarian, Tom Natalini

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Strategic Ministries

In like manner to Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities, we have several Strategic Ministries in our Synod, which also need annual authorization.

S.C.23.12.41. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorizes the following as Strategic Ministries continuing in 2024:

Trinity Lutheran, Philadelphia - The Rev. Eric Allison, developer

Mediator Lutheran, Philadelphia - The Rev. Regina Goodrich, developer

St. Michael's Lutheran, Philadelphia - The Rev. Dr. Noah Hepler, developer

Grace Lutheran, Broomall - The Rev. Kayla Sadowy, developer

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

2024 Housing Allowances for Rostered Ministers on Synod Staff

WHEREAS, Internal Revenue Code Section 107, as well as the associated Regulations and Revenue Rulings, provide that a portion of a minister's remuneration, designated as rental/housing allowance by the employing church or other qualifying organization, is excludable from the minister's gross income under Section 107 of the code; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a qualifying organization, and

WHEREAS, of the compensation paid by SEPA Synod to ministers listed below in the calendar year 2024 the amount stated in each instance is designated as a rental/housing allowance in

accordance with the provisions of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Clergy Name/ Housing Allowance Amount for 2024

Pastor Robert Fisher – \$47,029.88

S.C.23.12.42. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2024 housing allowance for Pastor Robert Fisher, and **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the recipients be reminded that the amounts so designated as rental/housing allowance are excludable from the gross income of the respective recipients only to the extent that said amounts are used to rent or provide a home. Further the amount eligible for the Section 107 exclusion may not exceed the fair rental value of the minister’s home (including furnishings and appurtenances) plus the cost of utilities. To the extent a greater amount is designated as rental/housing allowance, the designation will be ineffectual with respect to such amount.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Treasurer Neff presented her report via a PowerPoint slideshow, in the hope that it will be clearer for the Synod Council. Here are summaries from her slides:

Statement of Financial Position	
Cash and Investments –	\$ 9,777,128
Total Assets -	\$13,331,131
Total Liabilities -	\$ 86,334
Total Net Assets -	\$13,244,797
In that total	
Unrestricted -	\$ 9,198,019
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 806,288
Permanently Restricted	\$ 3,240,490

Revenue

Total revenue is down by about \$163,000.

Mission Support is behind about \$75,000.

Our investment income is lower than we hoped by \$240,000

Total Revenue \$ 1,769,519

Total Expenses \$ 2,004,898

Edmonds Estate

We recently received an estate gift, given to the Synod to “Do God’s Work.” The amount of the Trust is \$375,000.

The Bishop has determined to where we will disburse this money:

Urban Ministry Task Force	100,000
Bishop's Discretionary Fund	75,000
Bishop Transition (retirement & installation)	5,000
Religious Leaders Council	30,000
Black Clergy	10,000
Lutheran Congregational Services	50,000
Care for creation	10,000
Hospitality Committee	10,000
Fun time magazine	10,000
Little Jimmies Staff, ULS housekeeping, facilities & security	10,000
Gemma Services	10,000
Lutheran Settlement House	10,000
Retired Pastors gatherings 5,000 per conference	5,000
for community events	40,000
Total	375,000

Bishop Davenport spoke to these disbursements. She said some people would ask why we would not just put this money into the budget? We were blessed to receive this money from a member of one of our congregations whose heart was in the city, and for specific things. Distributing this outside of us honors the giver, and recognizes we were blessed to be a blessing. We are using \$100,000 for the Urban Ministry Task Force because we authorized the team, but we did not designate any money for it. This makes it possible to do their work. The other items are of a similar nature – paying forward a gift that had been gifted to us, in areas that will make an impact in doing God’s work.

Dr. John Connors - when should we be concerned with the fact that the revenue is down?

Bp. Davenport – we should always be concerned, but I am never worried. Our mission will continue one way or another.

Ms. Neff – we are coming out of the pandemic, and I sense that we are finally starting to gear up in ways that we have not had for some time. I am anticipating that we are going to have a rebound as our congregations re-invigorate. We do not live with our heads in the sand; we will adjust downward as we move forward. Pr. Sease is working on encouraging giving.

We also try to communicate regularly with congregations regarding their intent, and their level of giving. So, we are reaching out to them.

Pr. King – regarding the Edmonds Estate distribution – is this an annual amount?

Ms. Neff – no, this was a one-time gift.

Finance Committee

Chairperson Pia Graham stated that we have several new members on this committee, so she asked Treasurer Neff to provide an overview of the areas of the budget, an overview of the Fund for Mission, and how we deal with process of holy closure and receipt of those assets to the synod.

The committee will be meeting late in January or early in February. At that time, they will review the budget to be presented to the Assembly in May.

Ms. Graham noted that some congregations give annually, not monthly, so we hope that the numbers will improve as we meet the end of the year.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Investment Committee

Pr. John Heidgerd, Chair, noted that the market is rebounding. It looks like we will end the year well with more money for mission.

Nominations Committee

Chairperson Emily Valentine said the committee met earlier last month to review slots open. An email has been sent soliciting nominees. Notice has also been posted on the website, MinistryLink.

Ms. Valentine then reviewed the openings for which we need nominations for the 2024 Synod Assembly, and she asked all members of the Synod Council to work to encourage qualified people to place names in nomination.

Constitution Committee

Pr. Marie Sager has been the Chair of the Constitution Committee, and we have not yet found her successor. She submitted a report as past chair, with recommended actions for the Synod Council. In her report she noted several congregations are working on updates, but are not ready yet for ratification by the Synod Council. These include New Hanover in Gilbertsville; Advent, Richboro; Zion, Spring City; and Trinity, Perkasio.

She submitted the constitutions of 5 congregations for approval. These include Trinity, Havertown; Temple, Havertown; Gloria Dei, Huntingdon Valley; Christ, Upper Darby; and St. John (Mayfair), Philadelphia.

Ms. Dorothy Wilson, member of the Committee, expressed concern over some of the congregations, as these constitutions had not come before all members of the committee, and therefore she was not certain she could assent to their status.

Secretary Richard noted that, depending on who has led the Constitution Committee, they do not generally come before the whole prior to going to the Synod Council for approval. Often it has been one reviewer and the Chairperson who determine when a document is appropriate to be submitted for ratification.

Pr. King asked that, if nothing else, could we adopt the constitution of Trinity, Havertown, as the Interim Process needs this action before the congregation can move to the next step.

It was agreed that the constitutions would be considered, but not *en bloc* in order to allow dissent on some if that felt necessary by any Synod Council member.

S.C.23.12.43. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the amendments to the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of Trinity Lutheran, Havertown.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.12.44. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the amendments to the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of Temple Lutheran, Havertown.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.12.45. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the amendments to the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of Gloria Dei Lutheran, Huntingdon Valley.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.12.46. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the amendments to the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of Christ Lutheran Community Church, Upper Darby.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

S.C.23.12.47. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the amendments to the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of St. John Lutheran, (Mayfair) Philadelphia.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

OLD BUSINESS – none

NEW BUSINESS – none

UNFINISHED BUSINESS –

Mr. Everett Wick spoke on an issue raised at a previous meeting, of the need to be vocal about our faith. He noted that several years ago the Bishop gave sandalwood crosses to members of Synod Council. This simple cross has become quite a witness. He shared several examples: A new resident came to the area and goes to the same dentist Mr. Wick uses. The dentist said to the new resident, you will recognize him, he is the man who always wears a wooden cross. At a concert a man came up to Mr. Wick and said, “I see you are wearing that cross – what does it mean to you?” To which Mr. Wick was able to respond, “It means that He is always with me.” Then, at another concert, yet another person asked him, “What does that mean to you?” Mr. Wick feels this is a lesson from the Holy Spirit that we need to witness. We need to not only do God’s work, but we need to speak about it!

Pr. Jennifer Casey closed the meeting with prayer at 8:49 p.m. The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be February 22, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom.

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

Approved by Synod Council, February 22, 2024

MINUTES
of the 180th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
February 22, 2024
6:00 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasey invited the Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath to lead the council in devotions.

Pr. Rodrick-Schnaath presented a video set to the song “Under Pressure,” which is performed by Queen and David Bowie. In this video she included clips of the pressures people are facing around the world, from Gaza to Ukraine to Somalia, to climate change, to the violence and intolerance we face on the streets of America. As we move through Lent, we are aware of the pressures around us, both within and without. We experience the pressures to fulfill the tasks of meetings and worship services and care for the people in our charge. Around the world we feel the pressure of the sin of the world, as war and violence are moved forward by greed and misinformation. And yet, in Lent, we are reminded of the One who is always with us, and who strengthens us to make a difference in the world.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 180th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:07 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 179th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (December 14, 2023) were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda to the Synod Council. The agenda was approved as presented.

MISSION MOMENT

The Rev. Dr. Moses Suah-Dennis and the Rev. Bryan Penman, our co-Directors of Evangelical Mission, gave an update on the work of the Synod Vitality Team and efforts toward congregational vitality that are taking place across our Synod. The focus on Congregational Vitality grew out of the Future Church Initiative. The goal is to have congregations shine in their relationship with God, each other, and their communities. The signs of vitality in a congregation include: a heightened sense of worship and prayer, studying Scripture, sharing testimony, and discerning the presence of God in their midst.

What is Vitality? Helping congregations connect to God, to each other, and their communities. These are three key relationships. And that is what vitality is at its root: relationships.

As we see institutional church fade, which was grounded in programming, we are seeing the missional church emerge, which is grounded in relationships. Vital congregations are those

whose leadership is able to articulate the ways in which God shows up in their congregations, have a clear understanding of what God is doing among them, and have a clear sense of purpose and a plan for how they are reaching out to their community. They work well together as leaders, pastors, and staff, and have ownership in the mission of the congregation. And they have an openness to the community, opening their doors to the community to share the love of Jesus, not just keeping the mission to those in the congregation.

Qualities of a vital community:

- Embody God's presence
- Invite and welcome all
- Worship in spirit and truth
- Share faith and tell stories
- Promote healing
- Show mercy, do justice, and serve all
- Practice radical generosity in all things
- Grow and connect leaders
- Are rooted in their communities
- Create change
- Are grounded in hope

Not every vital congregation has all, but congregations that are thriving will exhibit many of these characteristics. We are hopeful that all of our congregations do at least one or two of these very well.

The work of the Vitality Team is primarily done with established congregations. There are eight aspects to their work:

- **Renewed Spiritual Vitality:** moving from traditional metrics of number of dollars and number of people to qualitative metrics of relationships changed by connection with Jesus and others.
- **Clarifying Vital Work:** helping congregations clarify their work and lean into what their congregation is uniquely gifted to do.
- **Leading Change:** helping leaders learn to use adaptive tools for a landscape that is not the same as it has been, and where the way forward may be unclear.
- **Renewing Evangelism:** helping congregations see their communities with fresh eyes and discover new ways to reach people through new and vital relationships.
- **Generosity of Scarcity:** helping congregations live in a sense of God's abundance, rather than our feeling we lack what we need.
- **Finding ways to Collaborate:** exploring if there are ways to partner with other congregations to share resources and do mission together.
- **Making a Difference:** working with networks of service providers to impact housing, healing, feeding, or justice efforts in the congregation's community.
- **Raising up New Leaders:** seeking ways to find and raise up new leaders to serve in new and diverse ways across the Synod.

While most of the work of this Team is with established congregations, there are also new efforts that are being pursued. New and emerging communities of faith are being developed among us as well. These include:

- Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities: new starts from the ground up, with support of neighboring congregations. (Welcome Church, The Well, Mindfulness + Church)
- Fresh Expressions: where people gather around particular interests that may lead to a community of faith.
- Service Outreach: new ministries started around providing services to the community, in such areas as feeding programs, medical needs, housing concerns, etc.

The Team also provides a variety of other resources, such as Learning Day, Coaching Services, Building Consultations, Strategic Planning, Ministry Surveys, and more.

The most exciting new part of the work of the Vitality Team is the Love Revolution Lilly Grant.

How is the work funded? From benevolence dollars from our congregations, grants from the ELCA, and Synod mission funds such as the Fund for Mission and the Forward Together in Faith grants. It is a visible sign of the three expressions of the Church.

Some of the work of the Vitality Team across the Synod:

We have “New Starts and Vital Ministries” (definition being redefined) such as the Welcome Church, The Well, the Kairos Community, Nuevo Creacion, Mindfulness + Church.

There are “Strategic Ministries,” such as Trinity Germantown, Mediator Philadelphia, St. Michael’s Kensington, and Grace Broomall.

We have congregations who have been in consultation with the Team, such as St. John Spinnerstown, Good Shepherd Coatesville, Little Zion Telford, Trinity Haverford, and Centennial Kimberton.

Collaborative conversations have been held with Palisades Cluster of Upper Bucks Conference, Quakertown Cluster in Upper Bucks, Centennial and Zion in Chester Conference, and several congregations in Delaware Conference.

Vitality is more than a buzzword; it is a process that God is using to help renew the church.

Vice President Beasley thanked Pastors Penman and Suah-Dennis for their presentation, and their work in Vitality for the sake of our Synod.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

“Therefore, stand firm. Give yourself fully to the work of the Lord for your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” The work of the Synod Council is *work*, but it is not in vain! We are in the position we are in because of the work of the Synod Council.

We as a Synod are called to make life-changing decisions, based on the Love of Jesus Christ.

Item to Ponder

Something for us to ponder together. Bishop was approached by a white lay man who had attended the Martin Luther King, Jr. service in Oreland. A wonderful service was held. When she encountered him at a later event, he asked how many pastors of color we have in our Synod. We have about 28, between both active and retired pastors. His question was why didn’t they attend the service?

It caught Bishop's attention, because she realized that many of our pastors of color have not attended synod events. We can view some of these on a digital platform, and maybe some of them participate that way, but it is worth pondering if something more is going on. We are Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, and we are diverse. We have wonderful events, and we anticipate a diverse group to attend, and so Bishop asks the Council to ponder this with her.

Stewardship Extravaganza

Another place where pastors of color were not present was the Stewardship Extravaganza. Bishop was grateful; to be present to be part of this event; it was a great event; it was wonderfully attended, even in a snowstorm, from Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, and yet we did not see many of our pastors of color present.

Spiritual Retreat

Bishop was grateful to be refreshed in a time of spiritual retreat with other bishops who happen to be women. It was a defining moment for Bishop Davenport, as it was in this place that her decision not to stand for another term was both confirmed and affirmed.

North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

Bishop is grateful for the work of Pastor Perucy Butiku, our interim global ambassador and Bishop Joseph Mbiliu to share updates on what is happening in our Companion Synod/Diocese. Bishop Mbiliu was happy to report given all the challenges of restoring order with the closing of the Irete University things are moving in a good direction. They do need financial resources to make the transition of some of these ministries happen, so the offering from our Synod Assembly will go to the North Eastern Diocese.

Stewardship of Life Institute

The Board created a space for a conversation on Toni Morrison's "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 Relationships

Episcopal Partnership

During her recovery from hip surgery, Bishop was able to participate in a service of Lessons and Carols from the Christmas Church in Bethlehem, Palestine, simulcast at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral. Even with all that is going on with the Israel/Hamas war, worship happened in the Christmas Church, cradling the image of Jesus in a time of war.

Interfaith Philadelphia, Religious Leaders Council

It was a privilege to be invited to attend the prayer service for Mayor-elect Chelle 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.

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 Church Relationships

The ELCA wants to build stronger ties with the historic black churches, and we in SEPA are leaning into this. This is why you see me at the Church of God in Christ, the Enon Baptist Church, the AME Church, and other expressions of the Black church in the Philadelphia area.

Additions to Bishop's Activities

Since the report was submitted, there were other items in which the Bishop engaged, including:

In-person meeting with the Religious Leaders Council at the Archdiocese

Confidential in-person meeting

3 in-person staff meetings

Ash Wednesday service

Black Clergy meeting regarding "57 Blocks" (now 72 Blocks)

1 Zoom meeting regarding a retirement

Religious Leaders Council prayer service for Mayor Parker at the Basilica

2 days of meetings with the bishops of Regions 7 and 8 on the ULS campus

Prayer breakfast with these bishops this morning

Bishop then opened the floor for conversation.

Dr. John Connors as I having a new mayor opens any new opportunities for our Synod.

Bp. Davenport answered that she hopes so, but it is hard to say yet. So far, she has filled many positions with men from the Black churches. She is trying to be intentional about diversity and the visuals of her cabinet, but so far it is very male dominated.

Pr. Rodrick-Schnaath reflected back to the beginning of Bishop's report, where she had spoken about our pastors of color not, historically, been attending synod events. Has there been any intentional asking them as to why they do not participate? Do they see the events as not being for them? Are they caught working two jobs, and therefore are not able to make these events? Is it a cost concern?

Bp. Davenport said she is curious about the same things. She plans to have another meeting with our Black clergy and raise the question with them. There was a luncheon held recently that was well attended by many of the clergy, but there were laity present as well, and so going deep into some topics was not possible.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley noted that there were minutes from two meetings under her report. In December the Executive Committee met with the Transition Team for the Process for the Election of a Bishop. In February the Executive Committee had its regular meeting. She also noted the Report from the Forward Together in Faith Team is present as part of her report to the Council. Seventeen (17) applications were received, and fifteen (15) grants were awarded. Two were not because they did not fall within the parameters of the grant process for these funds. In all, \$25,000 in grants were awarded.

Martin Luther King Jr. Service

Vice President Beasley thanked the Synod Staff for their tremendous help with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. service.

Election of a Bishop

Next step will be on March 2nd at 10:00 a.m. at the Brossman Center on the United Lutheran Seminary Campus. The Discernment Team will lead a Bible study on the role of a bishop, and will encourage dialogue and prayer regarding the qualities of a bishop. The Synod Mission Profile will be presented, with Pr. Rodrick-Schnaath leading this on behalf of the Transition Team. The Bible Study is out and available for use by groups around the Synod – clergy groups, lay groups, Conferences, congregations, or any who are interested in using it.

ELCA Task Force

Vice President Beasley is on a task force to review the processes used by all 65 Synods of the ELCA and how they hold elections for bishops. There is a great variety of processes, and the thought is to collect best practices and see if there can be some consistency across the Church in how we hold such an election.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Actions on the Roster

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

S.C.24.02.01. 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.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

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

S.C.24.02.02. 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.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

On Leave from Call Requests:

S.C.24.02.03. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant “On Leave from Call” status to the Rev. Timothy Ness, 3rd year, beginning January 1, 2024.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.24.02.04. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant “On Leave from Call” status to the Rev. Elaine Quincey, 1st year, beginning September 16, 2023.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Request to Move from the Active Roster to the Retired Roster

S.C.24.02.05. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves moving the Rev. Elaine Quincy to the retired roster effective March 1, 2024.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.24.02.06. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves moving Deacon Gayle King to the retired roster effective January 1, 2008.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.24.02.07. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves moving Deacon Carol Detweiler to the retired roster effective February 1, 2023.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

S.C.24.02.08. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves moving the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps to the disability roster effective March 13, 2024.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

No Action Required (Information Only)

Transfers:

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

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

Deaths:

The Rev. Dr. Lavonne Althouse, December 15, 2023

The Rev. Hyacinth Mordey-Imhof, January 16, 2024

Report of Acting Bishop

January was the third and final month of Bishop Davenport’s sabbatical, and thereby the final month of my service as acting bishop. It was a very quiet month. I made about a half-dozen pastoral calls to Rostered Ministers.

There were two events I attended, events I would have attended regardless of the role of acting bishop – The African Descent Lutheran Association’s Martin Luther King, Jr. worship service at Christ’s, Oreland, and the installation of Pr. Russ Crouthamel at St. John, Phoenixville.

There was one funeral I attended specifically to represent Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. The Rev. Dr. LaVonne Althouse, the 12th woman to be ordained in the Lutheran Church, was remembered at a service at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Lancaster, PA. Dr. Althouse had retired to Lititz, the area where she was raised as a child, but she had served her pastoral ministry in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

I am honored to have been trusted with the pastoral care of the Synod during Bishop’s sabbatical, and I am very pleased that she has been able to take this time for renewal and re-engagement with God, her family, and her heart.

Churchwide Assembly

Since the Nomination letter went out, we have become aware of the need to hold one lay voting member seat open. According to our allotment, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod may select seven (7) lay voting members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix, AZ. One of those seats is reserved for our Vice President. Since Vice President Beasley is on Church Council, she will attend the Churchwide Assembly in that capacity. As a result, we would have an open seat for a lay voting member in place of the Vice President. However, while Ms. Beasley will attend as a member of Church Council, by August of 2025 she will no longer be our Vice President. Her term concludes with the May 2025 Synod Assembly and this position is limited to three terms, which she will reach at that time. Consequently, we will need to leave one seat open for whomever is elected as our Synod’s next Vice President, and will need to elect six (6), not (7), lay voting members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly at this year’s Synod Assembly.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Treasurer Neff presented her report via a PowerPoint slideshow. She asked the Synod Council to pay particular attention to the proposed budget for fiscal year 2025, as we will need to approve what is sent to the Assembly for adoption.

Statement of Financial Position

	1/31/23	1/31/24
Total Cash & Investments	\$ 9,979,761	\$12,068,393
Total Assets	\$13,622,258	\$15,685,533
Total Liabilities	\$ 144,031	\$ 117,279
Total Net Assets	\$13,480,227	\$15,568,254
Unrestricted	\$ 9,443,415	\$10,159,178
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 766,322	\$ 2,114,315
Permanently Restricted	\$ 3,240,490	\$ 3,294,760

Statement of Activities Revenue as of 1/31/24

	Actual	Forecast	2025 Budget
Mission Support	\$1,505,128	\$1,600,000	\$1,500,000
Other Contributions	\$1,780,394	\$ 433,800	\$ 421,000
Registration Fees	\$ 78,058	\$ 91,100	\$ 113,799
Investment Income	\$1,621,898	\$ 675,335	\$ 800,273
Beneficial Interest in Trust	\$ 54,270	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000
Proceeds from Property	<u>\$ 192,503</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$5,232,250	\$3,860,235	\$3,895,899

The reason “Other Contributions” is so high in the “actual” column is because we received \$1 million from the Lilly Grant, and we received a gift of over \$300,000 from the Edmonds Estate. These will not be repeated in coming years.

Mr. Wick asked if the actual investment income includes unrealized gains.

Treasurer Nef indicated that it does. While this is not “cash,” it is the way in which we need to account for the value of the investments.

Pr. Heidgerd noted that while it is true that the unrealized gains are part of the line, and are not cash, these investments may be immediately liquidated if we should choose to do so, and so the value is available even as it is now “unrealized.”

Statement of Activities

Expenses

as of 1/31/24

	Actual	Forecast	2025 Budget
Operating Expenses	\$1,840,575	\$1,564,305	\$1,941,169
ELCA Proportionate Share (50%)	\$ 752,564	\$ 800,000	\$ 750,000
Property Management	\$ 151,934	\$ 100,000	\$ 61,203,
Distributions to Other Agencies	\$ 91,517	\$ 93,000	\$ 93,000
Remit to Designated Agency	\$ 21,190	\$ 17,500	\$ 12,500
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 286,392</u>	<u>\$ 222,186</u>	<u>\$ 230,837</u>
Total Expenses	\$3,144,172	\$2,796,991	\$3,088,708

Mission Support is 50% of what we receive in partnership support from congregations. It does not include “other income.”

Property Management is the costs of managing the facilities we receive when congregations close.

Other Agencies include such institutions as the Seminary, Campus Ministry, Bear Creek, Lutheran Congregational Services, and the like.

Within “Grants to Organizations” we include seminary debt relief for our rostered ministers.

This is also where we have our Forward Together in Faith grants, and is the area from which we will pay administrative costs for the Lilly Grant.

In comparing the Income slide with the Expense slide, we are anticipating a positive at the end of the Fiscal year (1/31/2026).

With no questions raised, Vice President called for a vote on the proposed budget for 2025.

S.C.24.02.09. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2/1/2025 – 1/31/2026 to be presented to the Synod Assembly for adoption.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Treasurer Neff then gave a summary of the Finance Committee report on behalf of Ms. Pi Graham, Chair, who had to leave this meeting early. The Finance Committee had received the report of the Fund for Mission Trustees, and was informed of the amount available for the Mission portion of the Synod Budget, as well as the other ministries being supported. The Committee also received a report from Dean Erica Wesch on the Fisher Trust, which is a part of the guidelines of the Funds usage. Each of thirteen congregations was given \$1,000.

Ms. Neff thanked Mr. Martin Schwab for all the faithful work he puts into the finances of the Synod, and particularly for his assistance with the proposed budget.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Investment Committee

Pr. John Heidgerd, Chair, noted that the Committee is in the process of seeking an investment manager, per the policy adopted at the last Synod Council meeting. If anyone knows of a possible candidate, please let the Committee know. The total portfolio valued as of December 31, 2023, was \$10,443,241.

Nomination Committee

Ms. Emily Valentine reported on the seats for which the Committee has nominees. More can still be added, and there are some seats for which there are no nominations at this time. Please be sure to seek out nominees, and encourage people to serve either on Synod Council, Consultation Committee, the Committee on Discipline. There is also the ability to nominate people to attend the Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix, AZ, in August of 2025. The nomination deadline has been extended to March 30th. The positions with no nominees at this point are:

Synod Council:

- 1 Lay Man, Central Philadelphia Conference
- 1 Clergy

Consultation Committee:

- 1 Clergy, term ending 2030
- 1 Lay Man, term ending 2030
- 1 Lay Woman, term ending 2030

Committee on Discipline:

- 2 Clergy, term ending 2030
- 1 Lay Woman, term ending 2030

Churchwide Assembly:

- 2 Lay Men
- 2 Additional Lay Persons – 1 a youth or young adult, 1 a person of color or primary language other than English.

Constitution Committee

Ms. Dorothy Wilson, Chair, was not available for this meeting, so Dr. John Connors presented the report.

There are 8 congregations that are at various stages in the constitutional revision process. One congregation has reached the point of ratification by the Synod Council. On behalf of the Constitution Committee, Dr. Connors recommended that the Council ratify the constitution of Zion, Spring City, as revised.

S.C.24.02.10. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the revised constitution of Zion, Spring City.
The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

OLD BUSINESS – none

NEW BUSINESS

April Meeting Request

Pr. Gwendolyn King asked if it might be possible for our April meeting of the Synod Council to be in person. She noted Bishop Davenport’s emphasis on the importance of relationships, and she feels this would be an important step toward building relationships among the members of the Synod Council.

Vice President Beasley said the Executive Committee will consider this request as they plan the April meeting.

Position Posted

Pr. Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop, shared that the posting for the position of Director of the Lilly Grant has been posted. Please prayerfully discern if you, or someone you know, may be called to this work.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – none.

Pr. Dedra Florence-Johnson closed the meeting with prayer at 8:07 p.m. The next meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be April 4, 2024, 6:00 p.m., and will be held via Zoom, unless it is determined we can meet in person with Zoom as an option for those not able to make an in-person meeting.

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

Approved by Synod Council, April 4, 2024