

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, Perkasie

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,

Clergy members:

Dr. John A. Berntsen, Trinity, Perkasie
Pr. Regina Goodrich, Mediator, Phila.
Pr. John Heidgerd, Emmanuel, Souderton
Dr. Philip Krey, St. Andrew's Perkasie

East Lansdowne
Mr. Damar Wilson, Reformation, Philadelphia

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 worshipping 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 Worshipping 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 Worshipping 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 Worshipping 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 Worshipping 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