

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 the 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

Edmond 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 to 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