

MINUTES
of the 183rd MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Hybrid Meeting – Reformation, Mount Airy with Zoom option
September 19, 2024
5:30 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasey invited the Rev. Dr. Anthony Scott, pastor of Reformation Lutheran, to bring greetings to the Synod Council. She then asked Dr. John Connors to lead the Council in devotions. His reflections focused on “Change.” He referenced information from Anna Wright, professor at Grand Canyon University, of how people react to change. He included Jeremiah 29:11 to remind us that change does not have to be fearful, because God has a plan for us, giving us a future with hope.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 183rd meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 5:53 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 182nd Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (June 27, 2024) were approved as presented.

The Minutes of the 36th Annual Synod Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod 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

Vice President Beasley welcomed the Rev. Richard Summy, newly appointed Director of the Love Revolution, to present the Mission Moment. Pastor Summy and Bishop Penman together described the basic concepts of the program for which we received a Lily Foundation grant of just over \$1 million. This is a plan to empower congregations and people to reach out in tangible ways that are not our standard programmatic offerings to spread the love of Jesus to our neighbors and our communities. It is based around the five promises in the baptismal liturgy: to live among God’s faithful people; to hear the Word of God and share in the Lord’s Supper; to serve all people, following the example of Jesus; and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. The intent is to intentionally build relationships through which people can experience the love of Christ, not to create programs to encourage people to join a congregation.

To do this we will work with a cohort of five congregations, helping them to explore this new paradigm of outreach and service. This is a three-year program, with the plan that these

congregations will be able to bring other congregations along with them as we develop a better, more relational way to bring people to faith in Jesus.

There will be a launch event on October 19th, which is open to all congregations, not just the five in the first cohort. Please encourage people from your congregation to attend and learn more about the Love Revolution and see how your community of faith may be able to engage in this venture as well.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Synod Operational Audit

Bishop Penman shared with the Synod Council several areas of focus in his first 6 months in office. His plan is to start with an intentional listening process before making any kind of sweeps at reorganizing or changing the focus of our synod's missional priorities. His desire is to begin to audit the current state of the synod to more fully understand how we carry out (or don't carry out) our missional priorities. From there, he intends to draft an organization chart, more clearly delineating how our committees and teams function, and the chain of accountability and reporting for each.

Bishop Penman is also reviewing our continuing resolutions and operational policies to ensure that we have helpful processes and procedures for how we function as a synod.

Bishop Penman is also exploring ways to ensure we have current congregational constitutions on file at the synod office so we can best assist congregations in times of concern.

Synod Assembly

Bishop Penman noted we will be looking at moving the Synod Assembly, both in terms of place, and possibly in terms of timing. The current site has had some changes in policy that will make our continuing there untenable. Moving the date later in the Spring may open other venues, such as college campuses. Bishop Penman is also considering the possibility of, in the future, expanding the Assembly to an overnight event, increasing the interaction and fellowship and making the Assembly an event broader than simply the business we need to complete.

Synod Council Sponsored Events

Bishop is considering how to engage congregational leaders using the skills and resources of the Synod Council and Officers.

Potential workshops would include:

- Breakfast with the Congregational Synod Council Executives, led by the Bishop and Synod Vice President.
- Church Finances and Financial Boundaries Training, led by Bishop and Synod Treasurer
- Church Administration and Keeping Good Records, led by Bishop and Synod Secretary
- Boundaries Training for Lay Leaders, Council Members, church staff, etc.

Bishop's Installation

Great thanks and appreciation were expressed by Bishop Penman for all who made his installation such an uplifting and inspirational service of worship. Especially noted were the efforts of the Rev. Meagan Esterby, chair of the Worship Planning team, Director of Operations Ms. Yvonne Curtis, and staff members Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, Mr. Martin Schwab, the Rev. Karen Sease, the Rev. Stacey-Kyle Rea, and the Rev. Dr. Moses Dennis.

Care for and Connection with Rostered Ministers

Bishop is considering how to engage leaders in segments of our synod who are not always seen, or who feel they are not seen. Creating affinity groups for support may include Rostered Women, Deacons and Diaconess, LGBTQIA+ clergy, BIPOC leaders, our Retired roster, First Call ministers, Urban ministers, Rural ministers, and Large congregations/Lead pastors. Bishop is also giving serious consideration to how we may revamp and strengthen the First Call Theological Education program to more effectively aid our first call ministers as they begin their service to the Church.

Congregations in Transition

A conversation has begun with the Transitional Ministry Development Team to consider how we work the process of transition in this time when congregations may not be able to afford a full-time interim pastor, or a full-time interim process. As congregations, demographics, and finances change, a “one-size” process does not fit all situations.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley noted the report of the Executive Committee was in the Council’s packet of materials. From those materials, she presented the SEPA Synod Urban Ministries Application for Grant Funds, stating that the process is structured in a similar fashion as the Forward Together in Faith grant process. The funds for Urban Ministry include \$63,000 from the ELCA, and \$100,000 that has been set aside by the Synod. When the form is approved, it will be made into a fillable PDF form to streamline applications.

Vice President asked for questions or comments. She then moved the following:

S.C.24.09.21. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the SEPA Synod Urban Ministries Application for Grant Funds.
The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Actions on the Roster

Calls to Interim Ministry

S.C.24.09.22. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the **Rev. Dr. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath** to interim ministry at St. Mark Lutheran Church (Conshohocken) beginning September 1, 2024, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation, or until Pastor Rodrick-Schnaath resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

Requests to Move from Active Roster to Retired Roster

S.C.24.09.23. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves moving the Rev. Robert R. Kilby, II. to the retired roster, effective August 1, 2024.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, shared the following overview of the finances of the Synod.

Statement of Financial Position

	7/31/24	1/31/24
Total Cash & Investments	\$15,200,012	\$12,068,926
Total Assets	\$18,988,074	\$15,859,964
Total Liabilities	\$ 203,936	\$ 235,326
Total Net Assets	\$18,784,138	\$15,624,638
Unrestricted	\$13,334,261	\$10,367,555
With donor restrictions	\$ 5,449,877	\$ 5,257,083

Statement of Activities

Revenue

as of 7/31/24

	Actual	Forecast	2025 Budget
Mission Support	\$ 713,761	\$ 708,196	\$1,500,000
Other Contributions	\$ 286,832	\$ 202,833	\$ 421,817
Registration Fees	\$ 69,739	\$ 78,124	\$ 113,799
Investment Income	\$ 1,232,394	\$ 370,889	\$ 800,273
Beneficial Interest in Trust	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 60,000
Proceeds from Property	<u>\$ 2,422,198</u>	<u>\$ 2,050,000</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 4,724,924	\$ 3,410,042	\$3,895,899

Statement of Activities

Expenses

as of 7/31/24

	Actual	Forecast	2025 Budget
Operating Expenses	\$ 869,362	\$ 985,255	\$1,941,169
ELCA Proportionate Share (50%)	\$ 356,880	\$ 354,098	\$ 750,000
Property Management	\$ 116,297	\$ 81,500	\$ 61,203
Distributions to Other Agencies	\$ 47,000	\$ 48,000	\$ 93,000
Remit to Designated Agency	\$ 22,345	\$ 6,250	\$ 12,500
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 157,388</u>	<u>\$ 110,693</u>	<u>\$ 230,837</u>
Total Expenses	\$1,569,272	\$1,585,796	\$3,088,708

Ms. Neff stated that as of July we have received more than anticipated from congregational mission support. She also noted the main reason for the increase in assets is the reception of the Lilly Grant, and the sale of properties of the former Trinity, South Philadelphia.

Treasurer Neff reviewed for the Synod Council the process for disbursing funds from the sale of properties.

- 15% of the net sale price goes to the “Mission” portion of our budget.
- We then reimburse the general fund for the expenses of maintaining the properties we have under management.
- The remainder of the proceeds is then placed in the Fund for Mission

In this case, \$400,000 was placed in the fund we have for perpetual care of the cemeteries for which the synod is responsible: that of the former Trinity, South Philadelphia, St. James, Chalfont, and St. John’s, Quakertown.

Secretary Richard noted that this action diverges from the process we have for disbursing money from such sales. While it makes sense to fund our responsibility for perpetual care of cemeteries, and while he finds this to be a decision made in good faith and for honorable reason, he questioned the process of the decision. He feels a deviation from the process should ideally come to the Synod Council prior to such a disbursement.

It was decided that the Executive Committee will review the process to see if we should revise what we do with funds from the sale of properties.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ms. Pia Graham, chair of the Finance Committee, reported that the team has reviewed the financial statements, and received word of the Fund for Mission Disbursements. All is in order.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Investment Committee

Pastor John Heidgerd, chair, shared the portfolio assets continue to yield strong returns of \$1.68 MM and 16.5% line with the YTD performance of the S&P 500. Within the portfolio, there is about \$430,000 of immediately liquid capital to fund upcoming Mission budget needs of the Synod.

We have received the proceeds of the sale of Trinity South Philadelphia which makes up most of the \$1.7MM added to the portfolio. Another \$600K will be added in September reflecting the sale of Bethany Roxborough.

Following those transactions the assets under management will exceed \$14MM.

A decision on an Investment Manager is still pending, but the committee is still actively working on this issue.

Constitution Committee

Chairperson Ms. Dorothy Wilson had included the report in the materials sent to the Council for this meeting. No constitutions are ready for ratification at this point.

OLD BUSINESS –

Committee Assignments

Vice President Beasley noted that assignments are still pending, as not all members of the Synod Council have not submitted their forms. She also reminded the Council of the need to submit confidentiality forms as well.

NEW BUSINESS – none

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – none

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m. with prayer by Vice President Beasley.

The next meeting of the Synod Council will be held in person, December 12, 2024, at St.

Matthew, Springfield. A Zoom option will be available for those unable to attend in person.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Approved by Synod Council, December 12, 2024