

MINUTES
of the 189th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
December 11, 2025
6:00 p.m.

WELCOME AND DEVOTIONS

Vice President Cheryl Lafferty welcomed the Synod Council at 6:01 p.m. and invited the Reverend Jonathan Steiner to lead the Council in devotions. Pr. Steiner led reflections on the first chapter of Ruth, in which he pointed out that Ruth was a Moabite, an “outsider,” and yet she becomes the grandmother of David, and an ancestor of Jesus. Outsiders are not to be outside for us. As God’s family, we are called to welcome all.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Lafferty called the 189th meeting the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:10 p.m. The Reverend Karl Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW SYNOD COUNCIL MEMBER

Vice President Lafferty placed the name of the Reverend Gwendolyn Johnson-Bond before the Synod Council for appointment to the open clergy seat, term ending May 2026. The Synod Council unanimously approved this appointment, and Pr. Johnson-Bond was admitted to the Zoom meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 188th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (September 18, 2025) were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Lafferty presented the agenda to the Synod Council. The agenda was adopted as presented.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Penman noted that it has been a busy fall. He is looking forward to a little down time for the holiday. He was pleased to share that there has been a luncheon held to recognize the diligent and faithful service of our Synod Staff.

Events coming in the New Year:

- + January 24 – Stewardship Extravaganza, a joint program with Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, which will be held at Trinity, Lansdale
- + February 21 – Council Leaders gathering
- + February 4 – First Faith Alive Learning Lab – 35 are already registered. We WANT KIDS to come! The program will consider how we use music in worship in ways that welcome and involve children.
- + March 20 – Tuscarora Lutheran Youth Retreat

Lilly Grant Initiatives

The Love Revolution “Proclaim” Retreat went well. We are looking toward the next wave of cohort congregations to register and begin this process.

Bishop Penman has travelled to Indianapolis, IN, twice since the last Synod Council meeting, both times in relation to our two Lilly Grants, the one for the Love Revolution, the other for our Faith Alive initiative for involving children in worship.

Bishop Installations

Bishop also attended the installation of Bishop Hirsch as Bishop of the Metro DC Synod, and Bishop Compton as Bishop of the New Jersey Synod. He also was present for the Retired Rostered Leaders Luncheon for those retired pastors and deacons of our Synod.

As our Mission Moment presenters became available, the Report of the Bishop was paused to hear from these presenters.

MISSION MOMENT – Gather, Philly

The Reverend Mycah McNett and Deacon Grace Markus were welcomed to provide a Mission Moment on the work of the Gather network.

Gather is a network of ELCA Young Adults, established to create a space for young adults to gather for fellowship, support, and conversation. There are fifty Gather sites across the country.

Gather began in 2018 in the Twin Cities of Minnesota, in response to a desire to have young adults know that they are not alone, and that they can be brought together for support and growth.

Gather Philly – “Wherever Young Adults are gathering in Philadelphia, that is Gather Philly+” Our village is still growing. Each event brings new friends, new ideas, and new community.

Events are grown from the group out, not from leaders down. Churches that host provide space for free, and the group brings food and beverages. Gather has an Instagram and Facebook presence. These are the best sources to find out where, when Gather events are taking place, and what the event will be.

Dr. Marcia Boraas asked if these are only social events, or if they are more programmatic? Deacon Markus shared that currently most of them have been fellowship, but within these fellowship events we have had either some sort of activity, such as petitioning our representatives, or some sort of program.

Pr. McNett shared the goal is to have three different types of events each year – fellowship, bible study, and service project. The Instagram posts give the focus of each gathering.

BACK TO REPORT OF THE BISHOP

New Candidacy Process

SEPA is a pilot Synod for the new candidacy program. Bishop finds it exciting that we will be getting in on the “ground floor.” This new process will jettison the idea that there is a one-size-

fits all process. It will expand the options of TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) and SAM (Synod Authorized Minister) training. It will also move from a solely academic process, to make room for skill-based assessments as part of the preparation for ministry. Kendyll Ward, one of our SEPA Synod college students, is likely to be one of the first of those to enter candidacy in this new process.

Another Grant

Our Synod has received a CASTLE Grant from Wartburg seminary for leadership training for “rural” congregations. This is a further reflection of the diversity we have in our Synod – from inner city Philadelphia to farmland in Upper Bucks, Upper Montgomery and Chester Conferences. We will be creating a video training center for congregations to prepare them for the possibility of receiving a SAM.

Ordinations

Bishop Penman presided over two ordinations – Deacon Ali Clark, serving at KenCrest, and Deacon Sister Paula Estornell, serving at the Wellness Center of Grace, Broomall.

Over the past several months it has been good to see we have placed more misters in congregations than we have added congregations seeking ministerial leadership!

Document on how to redefine calls from full-time to less than full-time

As we work to provide appropriate leadership to congregations with different levels of resources, both human and financial, we find we may need to rework the call arrangement between several ministers and their congregations. As this requires a reset of the expectations of responsibilities for the rostered minister, and the compensation levels provided by the congregation, this necessitates a change in the call arrangement. The Reverend Karen Sease, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations, and Secretary Karl Richard, are working on a process for this to happen faithfully and appropriately.

New Roster Status

The Churchwide Assembly has made changes to the roster manual which has resulted in new rostered status requirements. “On leave from Call” will be designated “On Leave.” It will also and is extend the time one may be in this status from 3 years to 6 years, renewable once. The new provisions also lower the number of hours for a position to be considered a “call” from 15 hours down to 10 hours per week. (Portico Benefits still holds to 15 hours.) And there has also been a new category added called “supply,” which can prevent people from falling off the roster due to lack of a call.

The Rev. Dr. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath asked how this time will be tracked. Is there a minimum number of hours?

Bp. Penman said this is not fully clear, but we will work to help ensure this tracking happens.

The Rev. Dr. Nelson Rivera-Garcia asked if someone may request to be on this roster.

Bp. Penman replied yes, but there are some situations where he would not recommend this route.

Dr. Rivera-Garcia also noted that 12 years is a long time to be out of ministry. If a minister were to return to an active call after such a length of time, they may not be ready for where things are now.

Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations, and a member of the team that is working on changes to the roster manual, noted that there must be conversation with the Bishop as to whether being on the Supply roster is good for the minister and the church, and the same is true for if a person were to be considered for an active call.

Update from Federal Chaplain – the Rev. Chris Otten

The Conference of Bishops was given an update from the Rev. Chris Otten, who serves as the designated Ecclesiastical endorser for our Federal Chaplains at the direction, and by the designation of our Presiding Bishop. He wanted to bring some concerning developments happening at the federal level in our country.

First, he wanted us to know that a significant number of JAG's (which are the attorneys for the military) have been let go, leaving the military unable to enforce ethical and moral affairs for the military.

Second, it is most concerning to see the extra-judicial killings on boats in the Caribbean. These actions are completely illegal.

Third, the deployment of the national guard by the federal government goes against procedure and the norm for having them activated to support state specified matters.

Fourth, he wanted us to be aware that the military is preparing tactical strike forces that could be deployed in the event of civil unrest in our country.

Finally, he wanted us to be aware that the chaplains at the top levels of the military are no longer being invited to briefings, but that there is a strong possibility that we are headed towards some kind of global conflict with Russia, China and North Korea.

VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Updates on Task Forces

The Childcare task force has been empaneled and has met twice already.

The Childcare Task Force will bring a report to the February meeting of the Synod Council.

The Synod Authorized Ministers (SAM) Task Force is in process. We hope to have a proposal for the Council's consideration in February, after which we can determine who might be helpful people to serve on this team.

The creation of a Compensation Guidelines Task Force was approved at the last Synod Council meeting. The names of those proposed to serve on this committee are before you today:

S.C.25.12.33. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the following persons to serve on the Compensation Guidelines Task Force:

- + Ms. Joyce Adams Faith-Immanuel (East Lansdowne), Delaware Conference
- + Deacon Kathie Afflerbach* St. John's (Spinnerstown), Upper Bucks Conference
- + Ms. Tracey A. Beasley Reformation (Philadelphia), NE/NW Conference
- + The Rev. Bill Coleman St. Paul (Telford), Upper Bucks Conference, Dean
- + The Rev. Dan Eisenberg St. John (Mayfair) Philadelphia), NE/NW Conference, Dean

- + The Rev. Chris Franz Advent (West Chester), Chester Conference, Dean
- + Mr. John Menapace St. Luke’s Devon, Chester Conference
- + Mr. Frank Roth St. Paul’s (Ardmore) – former Portico Board Member, Delaware Conference
- + The Rev. Karen Sease, Synod Staff
*Member of Synod Council

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Recording of email vote

Secretary Richard stated that for the record, we will be including the results of an email vote from October 30, 2025, in which the Synod Council was asked to affirm the members to serve on the Childcare Task Force, requested by action of the 2025 Synod Assembly.

S.C.25.12.34. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the following members of the Childcare Task force as proposed by the Executive Committee:

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| + Dr. Sherrell Mickens | Synod Council Rep | lay | |
| + Ms. Becca Shelor | Christ, Oreland | lay | |
| + Ms. Joanne Steinly | Trinity, Perkasio | lay | |
| + Ms. Catherine Carmen | Trinity, Perkasio | lay | |
| + Ms. Cheryl Detweiler | Grace, Pottstown | lay | |
| + MS. Laura Steiner | Trinity, Lansdale | lay | Young Parent |
| + Pr. Axel Kaegler | Christ, Oreland | roster | Clergy couple |
| + Ms. Lisa Hand | Good Shepherd, KOP | lay | |
| + Mr. Andrew Bruno | St. John’s Ridge, Valley | lay | Young Parent |
| + Dcn. Ali Clark | St. Paul’s Red Hill | approved | rostered minister |

The Synod Council adopted the resolution. 18 responses received, 17 yes, with Pr. Steiner choosing to abstain as his wife was under consideration.

N.B. – The parameters of the task force was that it be comprised of nine members, and this list included 10. Consequently, since Ms. Steinly and Ms. Carmen are both members of Trinity, Perkasio, Ms. Steinly has been asked if she will be willing to serve the Synod in a different capacity at a future time.

Actions on the Roster

Call to Interim Ministry:

S.C.25.12.35. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call The Rev. Dr. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath to interim ministry at Redeemer Lutheran Church (Jamison) beginning September 21, 2025, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Rodrick-Schnaath resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Call to Specialized Ministry:

S.C.25.12.36. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a renewable call to Specialized Ministry to the Deacon Alison Clark as Faith Engagement and Outreach Coordinator at KenCrest beginning December 6, 2025, to December 5, 2026. This call requires an annual report to and meeting with the synodical bishop for the length of this call.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

2026 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 2025 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 2026

The Rev. Annemarie Cook - \$42,728.00

The Rev. Paula Lebo - \$12,753.00

The Rev. Violet Little - \$32,677.44

The Rev. Linda Manson - \$46,476.00

Bishop Bryan Penman - \$54,240.00

The Rev. Karen Sease - \$23,000.00

The Rev. Erika Wesch - \$30,000.00

S.C.25.12.37. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the 2026 housing allowances for the Reverends Cook, Lebo, Little, Manson, Penman, Sease, and Wesch, 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 adopted the resolution.

Reception of the property of a former congregation

WHEREAS the congregation of St. John-Tinicum Lutheran Church, Essington, PA has voted to end its ministry,

S.C.25.12.38. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of St. John-Tinicum Lutheran Church, 601 Seneca St., Essington, PA, to close, effective November 2, 2025, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of St. John-Tinicum Lutheran Church, Essington, 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 11, 2025, authorizes the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, or the Bishop's representative(s), to disburse the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Synod Council 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.25.12.39. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorizes the following ministries that are continuing as Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities in 2026:

- + The Welcome Church - The Rev. Violet Little, mission developer
- + The Well - The Rev. Shaunel Steinnagel, mission developer
- + Kairos - The Rev. Robert Fisher, mission developer
- + Mindfulness Plus Church - The Rev., Tom Natalini, mission developer

The Synod Council 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.25.12.40. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorizes the following as Strategic Ministries continuing in 2026:

- + Grace Lutheran, Broomall - The Rev. Kayla Sadowy, pastor
- + Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creacion - The Rev. Lyzette Rios-Sanchez, pastor
- + Mediator Lutheran, Philadelphia - The Rev. Regina Goodrich, pastor
- + St. Michael's Lutheran, Philadelphia - The Rev. Dr. Noah Hepler, pastor
- + Trinity Lutheran, Philadelphia - The Rev. Eric Allison, pastor

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Authorization of the Share the Love Family Boutique as a Synod Authorized Outreach Ministry

WHEREAS the work of the former Community of Love Lutheran Church in Oxford, PA, had begun a boutique to provide for the needs of the members of that community, and

WHEREAS that ministry to the community has proven to be an ongoing need for the residents of Oxford and the surrounding area, and

WHEREAS the congregation of Community of Love ended its ministry as a worshipping congregation, but the property remains the responsibility of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod,

S.C.25.12.41. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council designates the Share the Love Family Boutique as a Synod Authorized Outreach Ministry (SAOM) of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod/ELCA, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council designates the property of the former Community of Love Lutheran Church to be the host site for this ministry.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA.

Secretary Richard directed the Council to the following information which was included in the packet of materials for the December meeting of the Synod Council, which contains recommended amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA. These changes are from the action of the Churchwide Assembly, reflecting the proposed changes to the Constitution for Synods. Text ~~struck through~~ is to be removed, text underlined is to be added.

Changes to Required Provisions

The amendments to required provisions in section 1, and the redesignation of one provision from “recommended” to “required” in section 2, are mandatory, and have been incorporated into our constitution.

Change from Required to Non-Required Provisions

In section 3 is the reclassification of three provisions from “required” to “non-required” provisions, with a suggested change of one word in the third provision.

The Synod may choose to eliminate these provisions altogether by a majority vote at the Assembly. These are simple provisions with which I find no concern and recommend we keep them.

I further recommend that we make the one proposed update that changes “The” to “A”. This one-word change will need a majority vote by the Assembly in May.

S.C.25.12.42. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council recommends the Synod Assembly adopts the change to S11.04. from “**The** Mutual Ministry Committee” to “**A** Mutual Ministry Committee.”

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Amendments to Non-Required Provisions

Section 4, the last page of the document, contains suggested amendments to non-required provisions.

Under this section, I recommend we propose the adoption of the changes to S7.26., S9.04., S10.05., and S13.41.

I further recommend that we propose the adoption of the new non-required provision of S10.06. If we adopt this, the next changes are renumbering the subsequent provisions and bylaws, as there is currently a provision numbered S10.06. in the Constitution.

I further recommend that we delineate the following as the committees that would apply in the open space: Candidacy Committee, Finance Committee, and Nominating Committee, Mutual Ministry Committee, Consultation Committee, and the Committee on Discipline.

S.C.25.12.43. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council recommends the Synod Assembly adopts the following changes to Non-Required Provisions of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA:

Chapter 7.
SYNOD ASSEMBLY

S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit persons currently serving as synod-authorized ministers and/or lay representatives of authorized worshiping communities and/or outreach ministries 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.

Chapter 9.
NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

S9.04. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot shall be necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes (including ties in the final qualifying position) on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the three persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes (including ties in the final qualifying position) on the third ballot, and 60 percent of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes (including ties in the final qualifying position) on the previous ballot.

Chapter 10.
SYNOD COUNCIL

S10.05. ~~No e~~Elected members of the Synod Council shall not receive compensation solely for ~~such their~~ service as council members.

S10.06. No person related to a synod staff member shall be eligible for nomination to or membership on the Synod Council or the following synod committees: Candidacy Committee, Finance Committee, and Nominating Committee, Mutual Ministry Committee, Consultation Committee, and the Committee on Discipline. For this purpose, a related individual is one who, with respect to the synod employee, is a spouse, parent, son, daughter, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, including corresponding members of blended families and in-laws (parent, son, daughter, or sibling of a spouse, spouse of a sibling, or the parent or sibling of the spouse of a sibling).

S10.0607. If a member of the Synod Council ceases to meet

S10.0708. The composition of the Synod Council

S10.0809. *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern

Chapter 13.
CONGREGATIONS

S13.40. Synod-authorized Worshiping Communities and Outreach Ministries

S13.41. Authorized worshiping Worshiping communities and outreach ministries, authorized by the synod and 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.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

These proposed amendments will be shared with the Synod for adoption at the 2026 Synod Assembly.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Ms. Janet A. Neff, Treasurer, presented the following statistics with the Synod Council:

**Statement of Financial Position
Highlights as of 1/31/2025 and 10/31/2024**

	1/31/25	10/31/25
Total Cash & Investments	\$ 18,413,573	\$ 20,961,267
Total Assets	\$ 22,337,569	\$ 24,886,820
Total Liabilities	\$ 191,226	\$ 141,578
Total Net Assets	\$ 22,146,343	\$ 24,745,242
Unrestricted	\$ 15,539,313	\$ 18,297,749
With donor restrictions	\$ 6,607,030	\$ 6,447,493

Statement of Activities

Revenue

as of 10/31/25

	2025 Actual	2025 Forecast	2026 Budget
Mission Support	\$ 1,044,493	\$ 1,048,868	\$ 1,600,000
Other Contributions	\$ 335,992	\$ 322,570	\$ 498,686
Registration Fees	\$ 90,476	\$ 100,506	\$ 114,256
Investment Income	\$ 1,738,527	\$ 831,654	\$ 1,226,630
Beneficial interest in Trust	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 60,000
Proceeds from property	<u>\$ 1,834,546</u>	<u>\$ 1,910,000</u>	<u>\$ 700,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 5,044,032	\$ 4,213,599	\$ 4,199,572

Statement of Activities

Expenses

As of 10/31/25

	2025 Actual	2025 Forecast	2026 Budget
Operating Expense	\$ 1,445,289	\$ 1,721,568	\$ 2,193,776
ELCA Proportionate (50%)	\$ 522,246	\$ 524,434	\$ 800,000
Property Management	\$ 123,319	\$ 126,750	\$ 84,000
Distributions to other agencies	\$ 76,208	\$ 76,044	\$ 98,725
Remit to designated agency	\$ 10,529	\$ 9,405	\$ 12,540
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 272,802</u>	<u>\$ 76,172</u>	<u>\$ 153,460</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 2,450,393	\$ 2,534,373	\$ 3,342,501

Ms. Neff then shared the following to go along with the statistics.

Balance Sheet

We are in good ratios in terms of assets and liabilities.

Some highlights regarding Income

We are down slightly in partnership support. We trust this will rebound as the year moves on. The All Saints Appeal brought in \$16,000.

We have garnered Registration Fees for the Stewardship Extravaganza.

Investment Income – we have done very well, which has helped our bottom line significantly.

We also have proceeds from property sales. The property of the former St. Paul Lansdowne sold for approximately \$600,000, and that of the former St. Paul, Norriton, sold for approximately \$1.2 million.

Some highlights regarding Expenses

Our gifts to the ELCA are a little lower, but they still represent 50% of what we received. Management of properties includes the expenses of the properties we have from former ministries.

Designated agencies have received payments from the Synod.

Operating expenses are down, but there is nothing unusual in terms of the current levels of spending.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ms. Pia Graham, chairperson of the Finance Committee, shared the following.

The Committee reviewed the reports and agreed with the Treasurer's assessment and report. Seminary debt relief applications were reviewed.

The Committee also reviewed the Fund for Mission disbursements to be aware of the use of those resources, and looked at some Mission Development projects.

And the Committee disbursed money for food ministries, as Bishop Penman brought a request for the support of 24 food ministries in our congregations.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Investment Committee

Dr. Marcia Boraas referenced the submitted report, noting the minutes are complete.

She highlighted that the Committee is impressed with our investment team from Girard, and noted that they are available if the Committee has any other needs.

Bp. Penman made the observation that when we went with Girard, we did consolidate our funds, but this means our investments in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund were wiped out. Was this planned?

Treasurer Neff stated that this was not the intent. The Committee will reach out to Girard to have the investments in the MIF reestablished.

Constitution Committee

Dr. John Connors, chairperson, noted the text in their report in dark blue are changes since last SC meeting. There are no actions required at this meeting.

Nominating Committee

Dr. Rodrick-Schnaath is the chairperson. The process for securing candidates will begin in the new year. Synod Council members were reminded that if you are eligible to serve another term, you need to fill out a nomination form to declare that intention.

OLD BUSINESS

2026 Synod Assembly

The Synod Assembly will not be held at Muhlenberg College this year. Construction projects will not be completed in time.

We are not likely to meet at the Episcopal Cathedral in Philadelphia, as the parking lot is likely to be the site of a new building by then, the space for eating within the building is not enough for our needs, and there are not enough rooms for breakout sessions.

We need to rethink how or if an urban Assembly is possible with the costs, and the few settings with adequate space for our needs.

The current plan for the 2026 Assembly is to return to Trinity, Lansdale. We are considering a shift in the timing to accommodate working people. The theme is “Imago DEI,” with the intentional double meaning of “Dei” as “of God,” and DEI as “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.”

Muhlenberg College is still being considered as a possible site for the 2027 Synod Assembly.

NEW BUSINESS

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

The meeting was adjourned with prayer by Dr. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath at 7:55 pm.

The next meeting of the Synod Council is scheduled for February 19, 2026, and will be held via Zoom.

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

Approved by Synod Council, February 19, 2026