

Synod Council Meeting
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Summer Hill, Pennsylvania
October 21, 2015

Attendance

Synod Council Members Present: Pr. June Bair, Dr. Donald Boyer, Stacie Bray, Pr. Oliver Brown, Madeline Deegan, David Derr, Marlane Druckenmiller, Linda Eroh, Martin Everhart, Pr. Charles Grube, Ruth Major, Ethan Melber, Martin Milne, Pr. Deborah Scheffey, Pr. Carl Shankweiler, Donald F. Smith Jr., Victor Unks, Pr. Gary Walbert, Bishop Samuel Zeiser.

Synod Council Members Excused: Jim Carey, David Hinrichs, and Pr. Suzanne Trump. Donna Austin-Ahner resigned prior to this meeting.

Synod Council Members Absent: Taylor Seymour.

Synod Staff Members Present: Pr. D. Michael Bennethum, Executive Associate of the Bishop and Director of Evangelical Mission.

Guests: Marilyn Mazsa (representing Women of the ELCA), Pr. Amy E. Reumann, director of LAMPa, Tracey DePasquale, associate director of LAMPa, Pr. Dennis Ritter (representing LAMPa), Pr. Bruce Osterhout (representing LAMPa), Pr. Daniel Scharnhorst (representing Bear Creek Camp), Pr. Kathleen Ash-Flashner (host pastor), Georgia Suranofsky (representing the synod's Mission Interpreter Program).

Opening

Call to Order. Vice President Donald F. Smith Jr. called the Synod Council meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Host Pastor's Greetings. Pastor Kathleen Ash-Flashner of the host congregation, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Summer Hill, welcomed the council, spoke about the congregation's ministries, and distributed the form that they use for their annual Time & Talent Survey.

New Council Members. Bishop Samuel Zeiser welcomed new members Madeline Deegan and Ruth Major, who gave brief self-introductions.

Special Presentations

Bear Creek Camp. Pastor Daniel Scharnhorst, executive director of Bear Creek Camp, spoke about the camp and gave three handouts: "Bear Creek Camp Summer Attendance Since 1995," "Comments From Campers," and "NEPS Campers," which told how many campers came from the synod's congregations from 2012 through 2015. Pastor Scharnhorst noted a 44 percent

increase in camperships over the past three years, with an increase occurring even in 2015 when there was a national Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Youth Gathering. Bishop Zeiser responded by saying that (1) he tells those congregational councils that lament that they have no youth programming that every congregation does have a youth program in Bear Creek Camp and (2) he wants the council to express its thanks to Pastor Scharnhorst for the great work he has done.

Mission Interpreters. Georgia Suranofsky explained that she and Brenda Stauffer are the co-conveners of this program, which provides mission interpreters for congregations to thank them for mission support and to tell them stories about the mission of the synod and ELCA. She distributed (1) a pamphlet titled "Mission Interpreters of Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and The ELCA," (2) "NEPA Synod Unleashed for Reformation 2017," and (3) the current issue of "Stories of Faith in Action."

LAMPa. Pastor Amy Reumann, director of LAMPa, explained that LAMPa has been carrying out its ministry for thirty-six years and has been a model for the rest of the ELCA. Hunger is the core of LAMPa's ministry. She said that LAMPa is a partner of all seven ELCA synods in Pennsylvania and the ELCA-related social ministry organizations operating in Pennsylvania. She thanked the synod for supporting LAMPa through a line item in the synod's budget. She distributed a handout concerning hunger and indicated that one emphasis has been to encourage school breakfasts. Comments were also made by Tracey DePasquale and by Pastors Bruce Osterhout and Dennis Ritter. A discussion ensued involving various Synod Council members, with Mr. Smith encouraging all members to subscribe to LAMPa's action alerts. Issues considered in the discussion included education, volunteer recognition dinners, celebrating local advocacy, the existence of many resources, the school breakfast issue, and refugees. "State of Hunger: Pennsylvania 2013" flyers covering most of the synod's counties were distributed as well.

Regular Business

MINUTES OF THE JULY 11 MEETING. The minutes of the last meeting were distributed and approved as corrected concerning the date of the installation of John I Williams Jr. as president of Muhlenberg College.

BISHOP'S REPORT. Bishop Zeiser requested that his gratitude to Donna Austin-Ahner for her service on the council be recorded in the minutes; she needed to resign her position. He next welcomed two new members, Madeline Deegan and Ruth Major. In 2016 the major emphasis for Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA will be world hunger; the goal is for the ELCA to rise above the \$20 million dollar level that has been normal in recent years; Guy Ehler is our coordinator for this effort. Bishop Zeiser reported about the cooperative ecumenical work that is moving forward in regard to (1) St. John's Lutheran, Shenandoah, and (2) the Susquehanna Initiative, wherein a Lutheran intern, Paul Theiss, is involved in developing new ministries in a county where there is no ELCA congregation. Concerning the 2015 Synod Assembly, June 17-18, plans are already being made with Pastor Christopher deForest and the

deans of the three area mission districts, which are working together and considering a Thursday evening block party for downtown Allentown. Lutheran Congregational Services is looking into settling Syrian refugees in the Lehigh Valley. Pastors Roger Timm, Catherine Ziel, and Fred Opalinski will be the planning team for the synod's observation of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Bishop Zeiser reported that he attended the October 1-6, 2015, meeting of the ELCA Conference of Bishops.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT. Mr. Smith spoke about the work of the Closing Congregations Task Force. Four documents were distributed for review and possible action: (1) a proposed letter to go to all synod congregations, (2) a related questionnaire on congregational vitality, (3) an essay about the possibility of having hope even when congregational life is changing, and (4) a proposed resolution for implementing these materials. The questionnaire drew the greatest amount of discussion with some persons arguing for a more modern approach. The cover letter was seen as too negative by some persons. No action was taken.

SECRETARY'S REPORT. Pastor Carl Shankweiler reported that all official letters related to actions taken at the July 11 meeting of the council have been sent, mainly by Barbara Belón, who was secretary at that time. He also indicated that minutes of the October 7, 2015, Executive Committee were available.

TREASURER'S REPORT. David Derr reported on behalf of Treasurer David Hinrichs and distributed his "October 2015 Treasurer's Report." Mr. Derr reported that the audit of the synod's financial records for 2014 was satisfactory.

FINANCE COMMITTEE. Mr. Derr reported that the Finance Committee recommended that the council act affirmatively on two requests for grants.

(2015.10.01) Resolved, that a loan in the amount of \$60,000 be made from the Church Loan and Development Fund to St. John, Fogelsville, for various repairs to the church building. The terms of the loan will be \$60,000 with a 7 year repayment schedule at 2% interest. The resolution was adopted.

(2015.10.02) Resolved, that a loan in the amount of \$27,500 be made from the Church Loan and Development Fund to St. John, Tremont, for various repairs to the church building. The terms of the loan will be \$27,500 with a 7 year repayment schedule at 2% interest. The resolution was adopted.

Bishop Zeiser explained the changes that will begin on February 1, 2016, when the synod will no longer operate its own finance office; the work of receiving funds, disbursing funds, and managing the Synod's financial assets will be taken over by MIF Synod Financial Services.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE. No report.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE. Stacie Bray reported that the committee is working on personnel policies and expects to have a report for the January council meeting. The committee also asked that the council adopt a resolution concerning housing allowances paid to the staff.

(2015.10.03) Resolved, that the portion of the 2016 Executive Staff salary to be designated as housing be as follows:

Bishop Samuel Zeiser	\$20,000
The Rev. Mary Gade	\$24,000
The Rev. Kurt Garbe	\$16,000

The resolution was adopted.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE. Marlene Druckenmiller reported that at least six nominees are needed for positions on the council in time for action by the 2016 synod assembly. The committee will write to the deans for suggestions, and current council members are encouraged to make suggestions as well.

EN BLOCK RESOLUTIONS. The following resolutions were approved unanimously.

(2015.10.04) Resolved, that Hope's Table, housed at Hope Lutheran Church, 601 N. Front Street, Reading, PA 19601, be reauthorized as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

(2015.10.05) Resolved, that in accordance with sections 7.31.16. and 7.52.22. of the ELCA Constitution, "on leave from call" status be approved as follows:

Clergy (first year):	The Rev. Phyllis Wolkenhauer
Clergy (first year):	The Rev. Mark Swanson
Clergy (first year):	The Rev. George Grubb

(2015.10.06) Resolved, that a call to special service be issued to the Rev. Lori Kochanski to serve as the interim pastor of St. John, Allentown (three-quarter time), beginning November 1, 2015.

(2015.10.07) Resolved, that a call to special service be issued to the Rev. Dody Siegfried to serve as the interim pastor of Messiah, Bethlehem, beginning November 1, 2015.

(2015.10.08) Resolved, that in accordance with ELCA bylaw 7.41.17. and upon endorsement by the bishop, the following rostered leaders be granted the roster status of "retired":

The Rev. Jimmy Lee Werley, effective December 1, 2015
The Rev. David Hess, effective December 31, 2015
The Rev. Lester Stephenson, effective December 31, 2015
The Rev. Bruce MacLaughlin, effective January 1, 2016

NEW BUSINESS.

(2015.10.09) Resolved, that in accordance with section S13.21 of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Constitution, approval be given for the congregation of St. John's Lutheran Church in Farmersville to dissolve; and, that approval be given for the Lutheran congregation to transfer its property and remaining assets to the St. John's United Church of Christ, Farmersville. The motion was made by Dr. Donald Boyer, seconded by Pastor Oliver Brown, and was adopted.

(2015.10.10) Resolved, that the date of the March 2016 meeting of Synod Council be changed from Thursday, March 17 to Thursday, March 31, 2016. The motion was made by Pastor Brown, seconded by Mr. Derr, and was adopted.

Ms. Druckenmiller reported that the Task Force on Bullying will hold a workshop on April 16.

Marilyn Mazsa, president of the synodical Women of the ELCA, distributed "Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church NEPS Oct. 2015."

ADJOURNMENT. Mr. Smith declared the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

ADDENDUM. Between the July 11 and October 21 meetings of the council, a synod council email vote was conducted beginning August 18 and concluding on August 19 concerning a resolution to affirm two trustees for the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network. This request came from Good Shepherd. Of the 24 email votes possible, 21 were affirmative (Donna Austin-Ahner, Pr. June Bair, Dr. Donald Boyer, Stacie Bray, Pr. Oliver Brown, Jim Carey, Madeline Deegan, David Derr, Marlane Druckenmiller, Linda Eroh, Martin Everhart, Pr. Charles Grube, David Hinrichs, Ruth Major, Martin Milne, Pr. Deborah Scheffey, Pr. Carl Shankweiler, Donald Smith, Pr. Suzanne Trump, Victor Unks, Pr. Gary Walbert); the other members did not vote. There were no negative votes.

(2015.10.11) Resolved, that Sandra L. Bodnyk and Jonathan P. Warner be elected to three-year terms on the Board of Trustees of the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, with their terms commencing on September 30, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl D. Shankweiler, Secretary