

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS
OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD
OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

The Once and Future Church

May 6-7, 2011

**Franconia Mennonite Meetinghouse
Telford, Pennsylvania**

Friday Morning, May 6, 2011

Service of Holy Communion

The Service of Holy Communion began at 9:30 a.m. with the Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, serving as the Presiding Minister and Preacher. Also providing worship leadership were the following:

- The Assisting Ministers: the Reverend Gregory Villalon, Representative, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) ; Mr. Richard Reimet, Treasurer, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod; and Mr. David Alexander Jenkins, Reformation, Philadelphia;
- The Lector: the Reverend Charles Ness, Pastor, Perkiomenville Mennonite Church, Perkiomenville; and
- The Musician: the Reverend Bruce Todd, Pastor, St. Peter, Lafayette Hill.

Leading the Prayers of Intercession was Ms. Patricia Robinson, Vice President, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Bible readings were 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Psalm 98, and Matthew 6:25-34.

Installed were the following persons whose calls were approved by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council or the ELCA Church Council: Ms. Kathleen Afflerbach, Lay Theological Education Coordinator, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (LTSP); Sister Mary Julia McKenzie, Chaplain, Penn Foundation Recovery Center, Sellersville; the Reverend Jennifer Phelps Ollikainen, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Congregational Coordinator, Lutheran Congregational Services, Allentown; the Reverend Lindsay Rhodenbaugh, Chief Development Officer, Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia; and the Reverend Nancy Selinger, Pastoral Care Coordinator, Inglis House, Philadelphia.

The following faithful departed rostered leaders were remembered in prayer: the Reverends John Newpher, Richard Stephens, William Dennis, Arnold Spohn, and Richard Reinemann; and Ms. Dorothy Ricks, Associate in Ministry.

Noting that, in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, the Apostle Paul reminds his readers that “we are ambassadors for Christ,” Bishop Burkat invited those present to think of the implications of this title for their role as Christians:

“You are, in the eyes of the Church, an official of the highest rank representing the Church of Jesus Christ. You are like a diplomatic official, heading the Church’s permanent mission to your company, or your school, or your household, wherever your particular vocation places you at any given time. This means you are the representative of the church you attend on Sunday mornings, a representative of this synod, and of the ELCA. You are an ambassador of the Church of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ...

“Why God would choose *us* to make his appeal, to be his representatives, to be his ambassadors, is beyond my understanding, because I know that most of us do not have the credentials. I know I don’t. For some, your grades weren’t the best. For others, your foreign language skills are lacking. You don’t have top-notch business connections. You certainly don’t look like an ambassador. And, frankly, some of the things you do are a bit embarrassing.

“So why, of all people, did God choose you to make his appeal, to be his ambassador? Because there is no one who knows your situation, your context, the people in your circle, your friends, your co-workers, your family, better than you! You are the perfect person for this job!”

She continued by stating that the job of being an ambassador is about reconciliation – and that “the church must model what it means to be an ambassador in the ministry of reconciliation.” She cited the example of recent steps toward reconciliation worldwide between Lutherans and Mennonites.

She concluded: “And you, dear Ambassadors, have an equally critical and creative role to play in this ministry of reconciliation. You all do the work of ambassadorship, even if you’re not aware of it. Perhaps it is a commitment to doing the right thing. Maybe it’s the kind word you say to your fellow employee. Maybe it’s the way you stood up against a bully at school or addressed an unfair business practice. Maybe it’s your passion for helping your place of business ‘go green’ and be more environmentally sensitive. Maybe it’s your advocacy work for the poor. Maybe it’s the houses you have helped to build in Appalachia or the work details you did at the Native American reservation. Maybe it is your generous offering of time and money which contributes to the needs of the saints and to the partnership in mission we all share. Whatever it is, you do it. And when you do with quiet intentionality, you can be sure you are living out your calling as ambassadors of Christ.”

Order for the Opening of the Assembly

At 10:45 a.m. Bishop Burkat led the Order for the Opening of the 24th annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Welcome and Introductions

Bishop Burkat welcomed the assembly's voting members and visitors. She introduced the following:

- Special Guests: the Reverend Gregory Villalon, Associate Executive Director for Ministry Leadership, Congregational and Synodical Mission, and ELCA Representative; and Mr. Thomas MacPherson and Ms. Susan MacPherson, members, St. John, Philadelphia (Mayfair), appointed to serve as volunteer missionaries at the Irete Children's Home, North Eastern Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT);
- Parliamentarian: the Reverend Larry Smoose, Pastor, Reformation, Media; and
- Synod Council members and Deans.

She invited rostered leaders, new to the synod since the last assembly, to introduce themselves.

Lutheran-Mennonite Reconciliation

Bishop Burkat thanked the Reverend Steve Landis, Pastor, Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, for his congregation's warm welcome and hospitality, adding that the Synod Assembly has met at this location since 1997. She also thanked Pastor Charles Ness for participating in today's worship service, noting that Pastor Ness is a co-convener of a Mennonite-Lutheran Pastors Discussion Group, meeting in the Upper Bucks and Upper Montgomery area. She introduced the pastors participating in the discussion group.

She continued her remarks: "Unfortunately the history of Lutherans and Mennonites has not always been one of mutual appreciation. The Mennonite Church is a church of Anabaptist heritage. The name Anabaptist was first used in the 16th century by Lutheran reformers. Anabaptist literally means re-baptizers, because the direct descendants of the Amish, Brethren, Hutterites, and Mennonites practiced adult baptism, sometimes called believers' baptism. This was not used as a term of respect, in fact the early Lutheran reformers used the name in derision, condemning Anabaptists as heretics and accusing them of sedition.

"In the 16th century, Lutheran invectives against Anabaptists were treacherous and produced serious harm and death to the historic members of the Mennonite community. Hundreds of

Anabaptist Christians were put to death, imprisoned, and persecuted by Lutherans. Lutherans, by and large, developed an historical amnesia about this shameful part of our Reformation heritage.

“The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America established a liaison committee with the Mennonite Church USA in order to address the serious abuses of the 16th century... [In 2006] a document titled *The Declaration of the ELCA on the Condemnation of the Anabaptists* was developed. This 21st century Lutheran declaration affirms: ‘These 16th century Reformation writings are particularly problematic, because they advocate that secular authority ought to be used to resolve religious differences – a position especially dangerous in the light of much popular discourse since the terrorist attacks in September of 2001.’ The declaration continues: ‘No church should use the state to impose its own beliefs and practices on others. We therefore express our deep and abiding sorrow and regret for the persecution and suffering visited upon Anabaptists during the religious disputes of the past.’

“On April 24, 2007, a letter from the Executive Director of the Mennonite Church USA, Mr. Jim Schrag, was received by Bishop Hanson. The context of Mr. Schrag’s letter was, in fact, a public response to Bishop Hanson and the ELCA. Mr. Schrag wrote in his letter: ‘We receive this apology with gratitude for its honesty, courage, and humility, and accept it in a spirit of forgiveness. We all live many generations after these events and none of us has personally caused or suffered this persecution. Nonetheless, we pray that God will use this gesture to release both Lutherans and Mennonites from a past that may have bound us in ways we did not even know.’

“An enormous and spirit-led reconciliation occurred last summer at the Lutheran World Federation in Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany. The Lutheran World Federation presented a statement of regret to the Mennonite World Conference, asking forgiveness from God and from our Mennonite brothers and sisters. The expression of a ‘deep and abiding sorrow and regret’ from Lutheran people of the 21st century for atrocities perpetrated by our ancestors almost 500 years earlier, is a confession and subsequent reconciliation which I’m sure God has desired for centuries...”

In an emotional moment, Bishop Burkat turned to Pastor Ness, who was standing next to her at the podium, and said, ‘Pastor Ness, on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I offer our most sincere apology for the cruelties visited upon your people by our people centuries ago. As we make plans for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, let us never forget that our Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation for the sake of his mission in this world.’

She presented to Pastor Ness a basin, pitcher, and towel, symbols of Christian humility and service and signs of reconciliation.

Pastor Ness responded: "Bishop Burkat, it is with deep gratitude that I, on behalf of Mennonites in southeast Pennsylvania, specifically the Atlantic Coast, Eastern District, and Franconia Mennonite Conferences, receive your apology and extend forgiveness to you and those you represent. I echo the words of the President of the Mennonite World Conference, Danisa Ndlovu, last summer in Stuttgart, Germany, where he said, 'Today, in this place, we together, Lutherans and Anabaptist Mennonites, are fulfilling the rule of Christ. We cannot bring ourselves to this table with heads held high. We can only come bowed down in great humility and in the fear of the Lord. We cannot come to this point and fail to see our own sinfulness. We cannot come to this point without recognizing our own need for God's grace and forgiveness.'

"These words and actions today point to the truth that the Kingdom of God is more than denominational labels and doctrinal distinctions. Through these confessions I believe that Christ will heal the wounds of history and free us to become whole persons and renewed churches."

He presented to Bishop Burkat a framed print, depicting the story of Dirk Willems, a Dutch Mennonite who, while running to avoid capture, successfully crossed a frozen canal. His captor, however, fell through the ice. Willems turned back to rescue his captor and, subsequently, was arrested and put to death for heresy.

Bishop Burkat urged voting members and visitors to take the opportunity to better understand the past in order to live into God's preferred future.

Report of the Registrar

Ms. Cynta Outterbridge, Registrar, reported that the total number of voting members was 538, the total number of voting members registered was 457, and the number of voting members needed for a quorum was 355. Bishop Burkat declared a quorum.

Report of the Secretary

The Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, presented, and the assembly approved, the proposed program as printed in *The Bulletin of Reports*. He then presented as information the Rules of Procedure as printed in *The Bulletin of Reports*. By common consent, the assembly approved the following rule: "The Synod Assembly shall limit each speaker from the floor to two minutes, alternating *for* and *against* whenever possible, and allowing someone who has not spoken on a particular issue from the floor to speak before someone speaks a second or additional time."

Secretary Miller presented as information the reports of the various committees, task forces, organizations, and institutions of the synod and asked for any questions. There were no questions.

Report of the Nominating Committee

Ms. Barbara Spencer, Chair, Nominating Committee, presented the report:

TICKET 1, Secretary (One to be elected for a term ending 2015)

The Synod Council nominated Pr. Raymond Miller. There were no nominations from the floor. Bishop Burkat declared Pr. Miller elected.

TICKET 2, Treasurer (One to be elected for a term ending 2015)

The Synod Council nominated Ms. Janet Neff. There were no nominations from the floor. Bishop Burkat declared Ms. Neff elected.

TICKET 3, Synod Council – Clergy (Three to be elected for terms ending 2014)

The committee nominated the Reverends Sandra Brown, Dale Lura, Charles Leonard, Henrik Sonntag, and Christopher Weidner. There were no nominations from the floor. Bishop Burkat declared the ticket closed.

TICKET 4, Synod Council – Lay Man at Large (One to be elected for a term ending 2014)

The committee nominated Mr. Fred Brown, Mr. Fred Renigar, and Mr. James Shrimp. There were no nominations from the floor. Bishop Burkat declared the ticket closed.

TICKET 5, Synod Council – Lay Woman at Large (One to be elected for a term ending 2014)

The committee nominated Ms. Heidi Link and Ms. Jill Meuser. There were no nominations from the floor. Bishop Burkat declared the ticket closed.

TICKET 6, Synod Council – Chester Conference Representative (Lay, Male) (One to be elected for a term ending 2014)

The committee nominated Mr. Rodman Rothermel. Bishop Burkat declared Mr. Rothermel elected.

TICKET 7, Synod Council – Lower Bucks Conference Representative (Lay, Male) (One to be elected for a term ending 2014)

The committee nominated Mr. Walter Shultz. Bishop Burkat declared Mr. Schultz elected.

TICKET 8, Synod Council – Lower Montgomery Conference Representative (Lay, Female) (One to be elected for a term ending 2014)

There were no nominees.

TICKET 9, Synod Council – Upper Montgomery Conference Representative (Lay, Male)
(One to be elected for a term ending 2013)

There were no nominees.

TICKET 10, Synod Council – Youth Representative (Lay, Male) (One to be elected for a term ending 2013)

The committee nominated Mr. Malcolm Davis. There were no nominations from the floor. Bishop Burkat declared Mr. Davis elected.

TICKET 11, Synod Council – Young Adult Representative (Lay, Male) (One to be elected for a term ending 2013)

The committee nominated Mr. Brandon Starnes. There were no nominations from the floor. Bishop Burkat declared Mr. Starnes elected.

Report of the Treasurer

Mr. Richard Reimet, Treasurer, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, reviewed the *Report of the Independent Certified Public Accountants*, dated January 31, 2011. Dividing his report into “good news” and “difficult news,” he noted:

Good News

- 28 congregations gave at least 10% of their regular offering to the synod.
- This year 89% of the synod’s congregations sent partnership support intents to the synod.
- The balance of the *Fund for Mission* is now above \$500,000.

Difficult News

- In 2010 partnership support again fell below the level given in 1985.
- The deficit for 2010 amounted to \$85,000.
- Partnership support is now one-half of what it was in 1985.

Mr. Reimet invited congregations to consider growing one step, or one percent, in their partnership support to the synod.

Mr. Reimet presented the following resolution, which the assembly approved:

S. A. 11.05.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly receives as information the report of the auditors of the synod's financial statements for the fiscal year ending 2010, subject to the receipt of the appropriate signatures.

Thanksgiving for Ministry

After inviting Ms. Elaine Reimet, Mr. Reimet's spouse, to join Mr. Reimet and her at the podium, Bishop Burkat reported that, after 32 years of extraordinary service, Mr. Reimet is concluding his time as the Treasurer of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. She noted that Mr. Reimet has had the distinction of serving five synod bishops. "His wealth of knowledge of people and congregations, and his attention to the stewardship of the synod," she said, "has been a priceless gift to the Church for over three decades. You have not only been a faithful steward of the resources of this synod, but you have served us in many other ways, which will continue, God willing!" She added that Mr. Reimet has coordinated this synod's *Lutheran Night at the Phillies* for 36 consecutive years, making this project the oldest one of this type in Major League Baseball and raising over a half million dollars for Lutheran Charities and youth ministry. She also thanked Mr. Reimet for managing, caring for, and selling synod properties. In appreciation for his service, Bishop Burkat presented a plaque to Mr. Reimet.

Making reference to his 32 years of service, Mr. Reimet noted that his predecessor, Mr. Walter Hagey, also served 32 years as the synod's Treasurer. He then thanked the assembly for the opportunity to be the Treasurer of this synod.

Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel (First)

Energy Stewardship

Ms. Jill Meuser, Chair, Committee on Reference and Counsel, presented the following resolution, which the assembly approved:

S. A. 11.05.02 Whereas we are called to cherish and tend God's creation as a part of our loving and serving God and neighbor; and

Whereas we in the industrialized world are consuming energy and Earth's resources in a way that is both unsustainable in the future and unfair to those in the developing world; and we hear scientific reports of environmental degradation, global climate change, record rates of species extinction, and a depletion of non-renewable resources that should give us pause; and

Whereas human activity, especially the over-consumption of energy and natural resources, appears to be a critical driver in these changes in climate and environmental distress, causing harm to God's creation and exacerbating the already difficult situations for millions living with poverty and hunger, particularly as weather extremes such as flood and drought increase; and

Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, recognizing the gravity of these threats, has long been committed to addressing environmental issues as part of our call to justice, sustainability, and solidarity with affected communities and, along with our

partners in the Lutheran World Federation and Lutheran World Relief, committed to working to alleviate hunger, poverty, and unsustainable living conditions globally; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the congregations, administrative offices, and outdoor ministry facilities of this synod be encouraged to offer a public witness of their care for creation by making a commitment to reduce their “ecological footprint” through promoting and adopting energy stewardship measures by: (1) doing an assessment of energy use in their facilities; (2) taking steps to reduce energy use; (3) encouraging their members to save energy in their homes; and (4) sharing information on the steps taken with the synod’s “Green Team” as a way to encourage others to similar actions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this synod memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at its 2011 Churchwide Assembly to challenge all expressions of the ELCA to reduce their energy-related carbon emissions by at least 5 percent per year, with an ultimate goal of reducing our overall emissions by 25-40 percent by 2020, and to share this commitment and steps taken to achieve it in a public way in official publications and communication channels of this church.

Since the committee received the following three resolutions after the deadline for submission, the assembly granted approval, by the required 2/3rds majority, for considering them: (1) Memorial Acknowledging 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent, (2) Calling the Church to Speak and Act to Prevent Bullying, Harassment, and Related Violence (Resolution), and (3) Calling the Church to Speak and Act to Prevent Bullying, Harassment, and Related Violence (Memorial).

A Moment in Time

The assembly saw a video, highlighting the ministries of University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, Philadelphia.

A Minute for the Synod

The Reverend Leslie Richard, Faith Formation Team, invited voting members to “lift up” the ministry of the synod in prayer for one minute every day at 1:11 p.m.

Prayer

The Reverend Dr. Philip Krey, President, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, brought greetings and offered prayer.

The assembly recessed for lunch.

Friday Afternoon, May 6, 2011

Balloting

The Reverend Rebecca Eisenhart, Chair, Committee on Elections, explained the balloting process. The assembly then cast votes for the first ballot of Tickets 3, 4, and 5.

ELCA Representative

Pr. Gregory Villalon brought greetings from Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson; Pastor Stephen Bouman, Executive Director, Congregational and Synodical Mission; and 200 ELCA staff members. He thanked the assembly for meeting in “this venue” [Franconia Mennonite Church], adding that “you are showing us how to be the church.”

He told the story of his granddaughter who went up for the children’s sermon at their congregation. When asked by the pastor, “How many gave up something for Lent?” she replied, “I don’t have to give up anything because we’re Lutheran.” The congregation laughed. When his granddaughter returned to her seat, she looked sad. Asked why she was sad, she answered, “They didn’t hear what I said because of the laughter. I said, ‘Don’t give up anything; add something.’” “That’s what it means to be the church,” said Pr. Villalon, “Don’t give up anything, add something, so that others may see and hear Christ.”

The assembly then saw a video, highlighting ELCA ministries, including a new congregation in Arizona, a growing congregation in rural North Dakota, and relief and redevelopment efforts in Haiti.

Pr. Villalon thanked the assembly for choosing the theme, *The Once and Future Church*, because it models for the rest of the church what the church should be about, particularly in terms of diversity and the participation of young people. “You have a lot to teach us across church,” he said.

He thanked the synod for its mission support, stating that “you were part of starting 61 new congregations in the ELCA, 4 in this synod, and 250 missionaries in 48 countries.”

He admitted that these are not easy times for the ELCA or the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, noting “with sadness and pain” that 771 congregations took first votes to leave ELCA -- 247 of those votes failed, but over 500 congregations have left. “Economic struggles facing families, synods, and the churchwide organization have led to staff reductions at all levels of the church,”

he said, “but, focused on mission, grounded and standing firm, held up by the arms of Jesus Christ, we are a church that continues to move into the future.”

Pr. Villalon concluded by asking, “What are you going to give up? Give up nothing,” he said, “Add something. I give thanks to God for you, because we are part of a church freed in Christ to serve others.”

Recognition of Anniversary Celebrants

Bishop Burkat recognized the following rostered leaders, celebrating significant anniversaries:

- 65th Anniversary of Ordination: the Reverend Richard Hoffert
- 60th Anniversary of Ordination: the Reverends John Kinzel and Hubert Linn
- 50th Anniversary of Ordination: the Reverends Russell Jenkins, John Schilling, and Jerry Smith
- 40th Anniversary of Ordination: the Reverends Albert Douglass, David Mueller, Gordon Simmons, and William Welther
- 25th Anniversary of Ordination: the Reverends William Bixby, Carol Ficken, Pamela Gabel, Barry Harte, Derric Jackson, Patricia Johnson, Marcia Thompson, Warren Weleck, and Jo Wilhelmson
- 25th Anniversary of Certification as an Associate in Ministry: Ms. Ethel Geist and Mr. Bruce Tonkin

Pastor Jenkins brought greetings and offered prayer.

Bishop Burkat recognized the following congregations, celebrating significant anniversaries: 250 years, Christ, Pipersville; 240 years, St. Peter, Chester Springs; 185 years, Jerusalem, Sellersville; 175 years, Jerusalem, Schwenksville, and Trinity, Philadelphia (Germantown); 150 years, Christ Ascension, Philadelphia, St. John, Quakertown, and St. Paul, Doylestown; 125 years, Grace, Norristown; 100 years, Immanuel, Philadelphia (Burholme); and 50 years, Faith, Philadelphia, and Resurrection, Horsham.

Presentation: “From Soul Searching to Souls in Transition, Ministry with Youth and Young Adults”

The keynote speaker, Dr. Rodger Nishioka, Benton Family Associate Professor of Christian Education, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, began by reviewing a survey of growing churches which asked respondents, “Why did you join this church?” The number one factor reported by respondents, according to Dr. Nishioka, was that “this was a warm congregation.” More specifically, respondents indicated that the warmth of a congregation was

determined by someone turning to them and talking to them, welcoming them, and saying, “Hello” and “I’m glad you’re here.” The survey also discovered the following:

- Greeters do not count for warmth; most respondents viewed them as people who hand out programs.
- If someone comes to worship and no one speaks to them, they will not come back. People won’t come to cold church.
- Smaller churches tend to be less warm.
- Ritually “sharing the peace” is not necessarily sign of warmth.
- It does not matter whether the worship leaders are wearing robes or not.

The key question for churches that want to grow, according to the survey, is whether they are real and genuine.

Dr. Nishioka noted that congregations are systems and that leaders are able to influence those congregations for good or ill. If leaders are warm, they will be able to spread the warmth. If they are toxic, their toxicity will spread like a virus.

Noting that many Christians today are risking their lives in hostile environments because of their faith, he challenged those who are reluctant to welcome others because they might be embarrassed.

Focusing specifically on millennials, Dr. Nishioka explained that this group consists of people who came of age in the new millennium. They are persons born between 1981 and 2001, ten to thirty year olds. They resent the inference that they follow in the shadow of Generation X, because they believe that they are vastly different from the previous generation as well as from the Baby Boom Generation that raised them. Identifying some of the characteristics of millennials, he noted that this group came of age with:

- Miracle vaccines being contested,
- Electronic games of immense complexity,
- Access to Wikipedia rather than print encyclopedias (What this indicates is that knowledge is participatory; one does not give knowledge, one creates it.),
- School lockdown procedures,
- The most significant economic recession since the Great Depression,
- The most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U. S. history (In 2010, nonwhites accounted for 62% of the 21 and under population.), and
- 20% of millennials have an immigrant parent; 10% have a parent who is not a U. S. citizen.

In regard to religious practice, Dr. Nishioka shared the results of a survey, done in 2002 and 2003, in which 3,370 American youth, ages 13 to 17 years, identifying themselves as mainline Protestant, responded:

- Believed in God, 86%,
- Believed in Judgment Day, 63%,
- Believed in the presence of angels, 59%,
- Made a personal commitment to live one's life for God, 60%,
- Experienced worship as moving and powerful, 54%,
- Prayed alone at least one time per day, 32%,
- Lived in a family that prayed regularly before or after meals, 34%,
- Expressed faith at school among peers, 43%,
- Had been pressured or made fun of because of religious belief, 5%,
- Found their congregation rarely or never boring, 44%,
- Had adults in the congregation who enjoyed talking to them or offered encouragement, 84%,
- Believed that many religions may be true, 67%, and
- Believed that one needed to be involved in a congregation on a regular basis, 27%.

According to Dr. Nishioka, these findings indicate that young people tend to view God as a moralistic, therapeutic deity, who exists and who created and orders the world, watching over human life on earth. This God is all powerful and largely distant, and wants people to be good, nice, and fair to one another.

The problem with a moralistic, therapeutic God, said Dr. Nishioka, is that the central goal of life becomes one of being happy and feeling good about one's self. God is only needed to resolve a problem or a tragedy. Those who prefer a moralistic, therapeutic God do not place Christ at the center of their lives. Instead, they place themselves at the center with God orbiting around them. In response to this view, Dr. Nishioka offered an alternative goal and challenged his listeners to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ as a response to God's amazing gift of grace.

“Being near to faith and its traditions is pivotal to nurturing faith with youth,” concluded Dr. Nishioka. When adults live out their faith in natural and expressive ways, young people feel that they have a place in the church and develop deep relationships with adult Christian models. He continued:

- There must be specific times when faith is presented directly to young people.
- The gospel must be presented in an appealing, fair, and open way.
- The focus on a decision is one aspect of the journey of transformation and conversion.
- Decisions happen only on God's time table.

- Youth should be offered a faith decision only in relation to their maturity, experience, and interest.

“Our church is closer to the first and second century church, than it is to the twentieth century,” said Dr. Nishioka. The fastest growing religious group in the United States is those who say they have no religious affiliation.

Prayer

The Reverend Mark Wimmer, Regional Manager, Mission Investment Fund, offered prayer.

The assembly recessed for dinner, forums, and opportunities to visit the Mission Center.

Friday Evening, May 6, 2011

Report of the Committee on Elections (First)

Pr. Eisenhart reported the results of the first ballots for Tickets 3, 4, and 5.

TICKET 3, Synod Council – Clergy (Three to be elected for terms ending 2014)

474 total ballots, 474 valid ballots, 238 votes needed to elect

Sandra Brown, 298; Charles Leonard, 271; Christopher Weidner, 269; Henrik Sonntag, 230; Dale Lura, 132

Bishop Burkat declared Prs. Brown, Leonard, and Weidner elected.

TICKET 4, Synod Council – Lay Man at Large (One to be elected for a term ending 2014)

398 total ballots, 397 valid ballots, 1 invalid ballot, 199 votes needed to elect

Fred Renigar, 153; Fred Brown, 152; James Shrimp, 92

Bishop Burkat declared that the names of Mr. Renigar and Mr. Brown would appear on the second ballot.

TICKET 5, Synod Council – Lay Woman at Large (One to be elected for a term ending 2014)

415 total ballots, 415 valid ballots, 208 votes needed to elect

Jill Meuser, 298; Heidi Link, 117

Bishop Burkat declared Ms. Meuser elected.

A Moment in Time

The assembly saw a video, highlighting homeless ministries at various locations in the synod.

Bishop's Address

Preface

Addressing the assembly, Bishop Burkat said, "Let me begin by celebrating what awesome leaders you are! I can't remember a time when so many people, working together for the sake of the mission of the church, made themselves so available to serve and made sure they were knowledgeable about the issues we are facing." She then expressed appreciation for the faithfulness, resilience, generosity, and imagination of the Synod Council, the Deans, the synod staff, and the volunteers, both lay and rostered, who showed up and helped when called.

She acknowledged, "We all have been navigating some rough seas especially during these past two years... Our lives as we once knew them are changing. Our church as we once knew it is changing. The world as we once knew it is changing... How can we lean confidently, collaboratively, and creatively into God's future?" she asked.

Equipping the Saints and Congregations

"This is an incredibly exciting time," Bishop Burkat continued. "God's Spirit is moving in the world and the Church." Focusing on the synod's purpose statement, "Activated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we equip the saints and the congregations for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," she reminded the assembly, "Even with all our challenges, in good times and bad, with money or without money, in prosperity or adversity, God calls us to continually equip leaders and communities of faith to partner together in God's mission, as we proclaim that Jesus is Lord, confident that the Holy Spirit guides us."

How are we presently addressing the current synod challenges?

Bishop Burkat candidly stated, "The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod is feeling the impact of the ongoing recession, just like you are in your congregations and in your families, and in your places of business and in your schools. A significant decrease in partnership support from congregations over several years has led the Synod Council to take some cost-cutting measures in order to present a balanced budget for 2012. These measures include a reduction of grant support to some agencies and institutions, and synod staff reductions..."

"Because of insufficient funds to maintain our current spending plan, we had to make some difficult decisions. At the beginning of April, two administrative positions on the synod staff were eliminated, which meant, regrettably, losing two members of our staff. So including me, the synod staff number, part-time and full-time, stands at 12. I knew this was unprecedented in this synod, so I checked some records and saw that in 2003 we had 21 people full-time and part-

time, and close to a half million dollars more in receipts than we have today. Clearly this is a new environment for us as the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

“So, I must admit, it took me a while to live into this reality. At first I was in denial, then I summoned my magical thinking and, when that didn’t work, the financial planning task group which I had appointed to look into these matters, patiently prodded, until I finally accepted the situation. Don’t get me wrong, I was resentful for sure. Who wants to cut staff and programs? Who wakes up one morning and says, ‘This is fine day to change our system.’ Then I found out two more staff members were getting married and leaving the area. So now in the space of two months we were down four staff.

“My immediate concern was making sure [that] the work these individuals were responsible for [was] handled effectively. We now have a short-term plan in place, and are developing a process for a long-term plan to deal with this. In the short term, we are using a combination of existing part-time staff, stipendiary staff, and outsourcing. We are especially thankful for the very capable leaders, volunteers, committees, Synod Council [members], deans, and synod staff who are stepping up to take on additional responsibilities during this transition time... This transition is a timely opportunity for us to sincerely seek God’s direction, to boldly lean into God’s future, and to re-imagine the ministry we do together as a synod. It is an unprecedented chance to redesign the structure of the synod in order to address and meet the demands and possibilities of the 21st century church.”

Bishop Burkat continued, “Some of you may have heard I am taking a sabbatical this summer. It will be the first sabbatical I have had in 33 years of ordained ministry. During the time I am away, June, July and August, Pastor Pat Davenport will be Acting Bishop. She has the assurance and help of three neighboring bishops, as well as the staff, the deans and the Synod Council, not to mention all of you! It will be fine! (I am coming back for the Churchwide Assembly week in August.) During my time away from the office and daily responsibilities, I will be praying, playing, preparing and planning. I intend to rest and travel and to attend to my well-being in body, mind and spirit... I will be reading and thinking about the future of the church and especially the direction of the [this] synod. Isn’t it interesting that, while I had no idea when I planned this sabbatical what situation we would be in, God has blessed me (and our synod) with a chance to step back and look at the bigger picture just when we most need it! That is why I do not want to rush to fill two staff positions, but to give myself and all of us some time to breathe, to think, and to discern staffing for the future. This is an extraordinary opportunity to do just that. Let’s not rush. Let’s see what God is doing with us, through us and in us.”

Good News! God is in Charge! It’s God’s mission!

Bishop Burkat then made reference to the term, “in real time” (IRT). “The definition varies,” she said, “and it is usually used for computer programs which support live feed of an actual event. But the general definition seems to be ... the actual time during which a process takes

place or an event occurs. As Dr. Nishioka reminds us, young adults today want relationships, community, purpose, authenticity, and connections *in real time*. Isn't that what we all want?

"There is no time like the present," she continued, "to see for ourselves the ways in which the people of God in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod are living in the present for the sake of the Gospel, making relationships, finding community, aligning with God's purpose, being authentic, and making the kind of real life connections that bless the world and please God."

Making use of video, she cited the following examples:

- The *Holy Hot Dish* program in which members of St. Peter, Lafayette Hill, and St. Michael, Philadelphia (Germantown), provide nutritious meals to those in need.
- The *Turning Point* program of Redemption, Philadelphia, and Rhawnhurst Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, in which "20 something" volunteers are ready to listen to and be with youth.
- The emerging ministry of Center City Philadelphia's *Welcome Church*, which provides respite, pastoral care, and worship to the homeless.

Bishop Burkat concluded, "It is not easy to change when the world is undergoing a fundamental shift, but the Church of Jesus Christ has been faithful in this work for centuries, well before any of us were on the scene, and will grow long after every single one of us is gone... We pray that, in this century and for this time, we too may be faithful in our proclamation and participation, so the world may be blessed for generations to come."

Worship

The assembly participated in a brief worship service, led by young adults and focusing on Ephesians 4:11-16.

The assembly recessed.

Saturday Morning, May 7, 2011

Worship

The assembly participated in a multimedia worship service, focusing on Ephesians 2:19-22. Making use of the image of building blocks, those present were told, "God is building a home, using us all," and were then asked to consider the following questions:

- What are your foundation stones? At church? At home?
- How have you re-arranged your building blocks for new purposes? How has your church re-arranged its building blocks?

Following worship, Bishop Burkat introduced the newly elected Treasurer, Ms. Janet Neff.

Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel (Second)

International Year for People of African Descent

Ms. Meuser presented the following resolution, which the assembly approved:

S. A. 11.05.03 Whereas the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/64/169, which Proclaims 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent; and

Whereas this global vision seeks to:

- **Remember that people of African descent are the most affected by racism;**
- **Promote greater awareness of and respect for the diverse heritage and culture of people of African descent;**
- **Strengthen the political commitment to eradicating discrimination against people of African descent;**
- **Recognize the vast contributions made by people of African descent to the advancement of the political, economic, social and cultural development of all societies;**
- **Encourage concerted efforts across the United Nations systems, and the international, national, regional and local communities; and**

Whereas the Lutheran Office for World Community for the ELCA and the Lutheran World Federation seeks to serve “in response to God’s love to meet human needs” by “advocating dignity and justice for all people” and “working for peace and reconciliation among the nations...” by monitoring the work of the United Nations (ELCA Constitution 4.02.c); and

Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, together with the whole Church, look forward to the time when people will come from east and west, north and south to eat in the reign of God (Luke 13:29) (ELCA Social Statement Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity & Culture); and

Whereas the Christ to whom the Church witnesses is the Christ who breaks down walls of cultural exclusivity (Mark 7:24-29; John 4); we of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have recognized ourselves to be in mission and ministry in a multicultural society, and have committed ourselves to welcome cultural diversity (ELCA Social Statement Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity & Culture); and

Whereas the ELCA in its social statement *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture* acknowledges racism as sin, a violation of God's intention for humanity that fractures and fragments both church and society; and

Whereas the ELCA's efforts on behalf of the local and the international community in opposition to racism recognize the multicultural nature of the world by promoting international respect for human rights and supporting the international movement to eliminate discrimination; and

Whereas the commitment was made through these and other ways, including:

- **the goal that, within the first ten years of the ELCA's existence, ten percent of this church's membership would be people of color and/or whose primary language is other than English;**
- **the adoption of an organizational principle providing for the representation of cultural diversity on churchwide staff and on boards and other decision-making bodies;**
- **the encouragement of ethnic-specific associations;**
- **efforts to start and to support ethnic-specific and multicultural ministries;**
- **the recognition and empowerment of pastoral leaders while honoring their cultures;**
- **the effort to provide resources in languages other than English;**
- **the public policy advocacy at state, federal, and international levels that seeks to eliminate racial or ethnic discrimination and the private sector advocacy that encourages corporate social responsibility for community development;**
- **the attention to inclusivity by seminaries, colleges, and social ministry organizations of the church;**
- **the respect for cultural diversity in the work of global mission; therefore,**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to:

- 1. Support 2011 as the United Nations "International Year of People of African Descent" by recognizing and celebrating the rich history, diverse cultures, vast contributions and gifts for ministry of people of African descent within the ELCA and society.**
- 2. Acknowledge this proclamation within every expression of the ELCA community and its affiliates by educating people about and participating in this international year through ministry, forums, presentations as well as artistic, cultural and worship expressions that lift up and affirm the gifts of people of African descent.**
- 3. Continue efforts to eradicate racism by examining the factors inhibiting people of color from experiencing the fullness of leadership and inclusion in this church and society.**

4. **Safeguard and pray for the rights and work of human rights defenders, who fight to end all forms of racism and discrimination both domestically and internationally.**
5. **Advocate for full social, economic and cultural inclusion for ethnic-specific and multicultural ministries and pastors within congregations, synods and churchwide organization.**
6. **Utilize the resources of this church to foster deeper cross-cultural relationships between European Americans and people of color as the ELCA lives into the future as a welcoming and multicultural church.**
7. **Deepen the ELCA's call to serve its companion churches in Africa and around the globe by respecting and affirming cultural diversity.**

Bishop Burkat reminded the assembly that 33 of the rostered leaders serving this synod are “persons of color,” the largest number among synods in the ELCA.

Ms. Karen Santiago, Nueva Creacion, Philadelphia, noted that the term “persons of color” refers to more than African Americans.

Since 62% of the under 21 population is non-white, the Reverend Serena Sellers asked, “How many of those under 21 at the assembly were ‘persons of color’?” The “persons of color” under 21 raised their hands.

The Reverend Patrick Seyler indicated that the term “persons of color” implies that white people have no color.

Calling the Church to Speak and Act to Prevent Bullying, Harassment, and Related Violence (Resolution)

Ms. Meuser presented the following resolution:

Whereas, “*If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it,*” (1Cor. 12:26); and

Whereas, in the *ELCA Social Statement on Education (2007)*, we declared, “*The ELCA expects communities of learning and teaching to be safe places. We recognize that school safety is an issue for all students, staff, and teachers. Unfortunately, incidents of bullying, intimidation, and other forms of violence are becoming all too common. We affirm that personal safety and security are requirements for optimal teaching and learning,*” and

Whereas research indicates children with disabilities or special needs are at a higher risk of being bullied than others (Rigby, K., 2002, *New Perspective on Bullying*. London. Jessica Kingsley Publications); and The National School Climate Survey, 2005 concluded that “*Bullying around issues of sexual orientation, non-conforming gender behaviors, and dress was the most common form of bullying, second only to issues of appearance (e.g., body size and disability)*”; and

Whereas, in the ELCA Social Statement on Sexuality: Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust (2009), we declared, “*Likewise, it will attend to the particular needs of children and the families of those with actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation or gender identity because they are especially vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse.*” and

Whereas increased media attention has made us acutely aware of tragic consequences (including youth suicide) if steps are not taken to prevent bullying, harassment, and other related forms of violence; and

Whereas the voice of the church addressing the intersection of race, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability is a powerful witness to the healing and life affirming Gospel promise,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages new partnerships among our congregations, with other synods, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, Lutheran School Associations, Lutherans Concerned/North America, Lutheran Social Services organizations, public schools, counseling centers and other governmental organizations in order to support and offer preventative programs addressing bullying, harassment, and other related violence, especially with higher risk populations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT these partnerships be encouraged these to create or join with existing preventative programs which:

- a. utilize positive, inclusive, empowering and developmentally appropriate materials,
- b. raise participants’ awareness about the issue,
- c. focus on prevention,
- d. seek to change bystander behavior into ally behavior,
- e. create partnerships between youth and adults,
- f. address the use and abuse of social media, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod develop an anti-bullying policy for the synod, through the collaboration of the Lutheran/Bryson LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual & Bi-Sexual) Task Force and the LYO (Lutheran Youth

Organization) Board, to be presented for approval to the Synod Council and then shared at next year's Synod Assembly, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT each congregation strive to develop an anti-bullying policy by next year's Synod Assembly, and to have trainings and conversations with their leaders and members, with the Lutheran/Bryson Task Force and LYO Board available as resources, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT each congregation have conversations with schools and other community groups and professionals in their communities, to find ways to partner with each other, to develop resources for support and education, and to establish themselves as safe places, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT these partnerships seek funding for these efforts from a combination of existing funds and new funding sources not otherwise accessible individually such as foundation grants, synod and other Lutheran organizational grants, private and governmental funding sources.

Reporting that half of her students report were being bullied, Ms. Ashley Herr, Good Shepherd, Coatesville, a high school teacher, said, "Our youth need this [resolution]."

Describing this resolution as being "important," Ms. Katie Schnaath, Holy Trinity, Narberth, asked, "Who in this room is not being bullied?"

Ms. Alexa Epstein, University/Incarnation, Philadelphia, moved to replace the words "**social media**" in (f) of the second "resolved" and insert "**all forms of technology.**"

The Reverend George Keck stated that "**all forms of technology**" is too broad and moved to amend the words "**all forms of technology**" by substituting "**social media and technology.**" The assembly approved the substitution.

The assembly approved the following resolution as amended by substitution:

S. A. 11.05.04 Whereas, "*If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it,*" (1Cor. 12:26); and

Whereas, in the *ELCA Social Statement on Education (2007)* we declared, "*The ELCA expects communities of learning and teaching to be safe places. We recognize that school safety is an issue for all students, staff, and teachers. Unfortunately, incidents of bullying,*

intimidation, and other forms of violence are not unusual. We affirm that personal safety and security are essential for optimal teaching and learning,” and

Whereas research indicates children with disabilities or special needs are at a higher risk of being bullied than others (Rigby, K., 2002, *New Perspective on Bullying*. London. Jessica Kingsley Publications); and has concluded that *Bullying around issues of sexual orientation, non-conforming gender behaviors, and dress was the most common form of bullying, second only to issues of appearance (e.g., body size and disability).*” (The National School Climate Survey, conducted in 2005); and

Whereas, in the ELCA Social Statement on Sexuality: Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust (2009) we declared, “*Likewise, it will attend to the particular needs of children and the families of those with actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation or gender identity because they are especially vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse.*” and

Whereas increased media attention has made us acutely aware of tragic consequences (including youth suicide) if steps are not taken to prevent bullying, harassment, and other related forms of violence; and

Whereas the voice of the church addressing the intersection of race, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability is a powerful witness to the healing and life affirming Gospel promise, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages new partnerships among our congregations, with other synods, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, Lutheran School Associations, Lutherans Concerned/North America, Lutheran Social Services organizations, public schools, counseling centers and other governmental organizations in order to support and offer preventative programs addressing bullying, harassment, and other related violence, especially with higher risk populations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT these partnerships be encouraged to create or join with existing preventative programs which:

- a. utilize positive, inclusive, empowering and developmentally appropriate materials,**
- b. raise participants’ awareness about the issue,**
- c. focus on prevention,**
- d. seek to change bystander behavior into ally behavior,**
- e. create partnerships between youth and adults,**
- f. address the use and abuse of social media and technology, and;**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod develop an anti-bullying policy for the synod, through the collaboration of the Lutheran/Bryson LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual & Bi-Sexual) Task Force and the LYO (Lutheran Youth Organization) Board, to be presented for approval to the Synod Council and then shared at next year's Synod Assembly, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT each congregation strive to develop an anti-bullying policy by next year's Synod Assembly, and to have trainings and conversations with their leaders and members, with the Lutheran/Bryson Task Force and LYO Board available as resources, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT each congregation have conversations with schools and other community groups and professionals in their communities, to find ways to partner with each other, to develop resources for support and education, and to establish themselves as safe places, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT these partnerships seek funding for these efforts from a combination of existing funds and new funding sources not otherwise accessible individually such as foundation grants, synod and other Lutheran organizational grants, private and governmental funding sources.

Report of the Committee on Elections (Second)

Pr. Eisenhart reported the results of the second ballot for Ticket 4.

TICKET 4, Synod Council – Lay Man at Large (One to be elected for a term ending 2014)
300 total ballots, 299 valid ballots, 1 invalid ballot, 150 votes needed to elect
Fred Brown, 166; Fred Renigar, 133
Bishop Burkat declared Mr. Brown elected.

Pr. Eisenhart thanked the members of the Committee on Elections.

Commissioning for Mission

Bishop Burkat and Ms. Joanne Carlson, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Vision and Events, led the order for commissioning Mr. Thomas MacPherson and Ms. Susan MacPherson as volunteer missionaries at the Irete Children's Home in the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. Mr. and Ms. MacPherson were joined by their

pastors, Lee Miller and Patricia Neale; members of St. John, Philadelphia (Mayfair); family members; and members of the synod's Tanzania Companion Synod Team.

Mr. MacPherson said, "I thought that I was in charge of planning my future, but my visit to Tanzania [in 2008] changed by mind. I saw God in the faces of the people." He concluded, "This story does not end here; it's just beginning."

Ms. MacPherson added, "Our work at Irete is a joint mission that includes all congregations of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod." She asked for voting members' prayers and financial support, noting the significant expense of their mission.

The assembly expressed their appreciation to Mr. and Ms. MacPherson by sustained applause.

Secretary Miller reported that voting members had contributed \$3,572 to Southern States Disaster Response at worship on Saturday morning.

Presentation: "Eight Trends Worthy of Our Attention"

Dr. Nishioka offered comments on the following trends among millennials that challenge the church to change:

- From tribal education to immigrant education,
- From mission out here to mission right here,
- From reason spirituality to mystery-filled spirituality,
- From rostered leadership to gifted leadership,
- From long-term planning to short-term planning,
- From mass evangelism to one-on-one evangelism,
- From traditioning to experiencing, and
- From discipleship to apostleship.

"Change the world, change one life," Dr. Nishioka told the assembly. "Jesus' one life changed the world."

Introduction of Candidates for Ordination

The Reverends Lawrence Hand, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership, and Nancy Brown, Chair, Candidacy Committee, introduced the candidates approved for addition to the ELCA roster: Ms. Wende Blead, Ms. Rebecca Horn, Mr. Matthew Carpenter, Mr. Kevin O'Hara, Mr. Robert Kilby, the Reverend Karl Krueger, the Reverend Stephen Keiser, the Reverend Jay Wiesner, and Mr. Mark Rigg.

Reception of New Life Ministries

Bishop Burkat invited the following persons to come forward: the Reverend Patricia Davenport, Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Evangelical Mission; the Reverend Derric Jackson, Pastor, New Life Ministries, Philadelphia; and Mr. Wayne Simms, President, New Life Ministries, Philadelphia. Entering by singing, members of New Life Ministries joined those gathered at the front. Bishop Burkat led the order for receiving New Life Ministries, Philadelphia, as a congregation of this synod.

Secretary Miller reported that voting members had contributed \$4,701.00 to the ELCA Malaria Campaign at worship on Friday morning.

Prayer

Mr. T. J. Mueller, President, Lutheran Youth Organization, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, offered prayer.

The assembly recessed for lunch.

Saturday Afternoon, May 7, 2011

Consideration of the 2012 Budget

The Reverend Christopher Weidner, Chair, Finance Committee, reviewed the process by which the Finance Committee, the Financial Planning Group, the Bishop and the synod staff, and the Synod Council prepared the proposed 2012 budget. Making use of a series of power point slides, he identified the “guiding principles” by which the budget was developed:

- The desire to present a balanced budget for 2012;
- The decision to base anticipated partnership support on congregational intentions and history;
- The commitment to maintain partnership support to the ELCA at 53.5% of partnership support from congregations;
- The desire to sustain support for partner agencies and institutions; and
- The desire to preserve salary and benefits for the staff.

He noted that 28 congregations gave at least 10% of their regular giving to partnership support and that 17 gave nothing. The giving of 39 congregations was unknown because they did not file a congregational report.

Assuming that congregational income would not increase significantly in 2011 or 2012, he reported, the Synod Council took the following actions:

- Reduced staff by eliminating one full-time position and one part-time position;
- Reduced staff by attrition, moving one position from full-time to half-time;
- Reduced support to all partner agencies by 38%, except Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia;
- Offered the staff no salary increases for a fourth year and no benefit changes; and
- Reduced administrative and program expenses wherever possible.

He indicated that partnership support provides 90% of the synod's income, and that the synod's expenses include churchwide support, equipping congregations and leaders, administration, and support for agencies and organizations.

He thanked participants in the budget process for their commitment, and offered appreciation and encouragement to congregations for their partnership support.

Pr. Weidner presented the following resolution:

S. A. 11.05.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly adopts a spending authorization in the amount of \$2,548,880 for fiscal year 2012.

Pr. Jay Wiesner thanked the synod for its support of campus ministry, but expressed a concern for cuts in funding to Muhlenberg College, Bear Creek Camp, and campus ministry, noting that all of them are ministries with youth and young adults.

The Reverend Martin Lohrman expressed a need for teaching people "where the money goes" and "what does the money for benevolence do."

The Reverend Lynette Chapman asked, "What makes a church that gives 10% or more do that?" and "How may those practices be brought to congregations that give less?"

Mr. Patrick O'Rourke, Grace, Wyndmoor, asked whether the 90% of synod income from congregations is normal or going down. Mr. Reimet answered that it has always been around 90%.

Mr. Jim Nilsen, Trinity, Coopersburg, emphasized the importance of congregations tithing to church at large.

Mr. Tom Conroy, Reformation, Media, asked how the Finance Committee feels about using proceeds from building sales for operating expenses. Mr. Reimet clarified the synod's use of the

proceeds from building sales, stating that 10% goes to the operating fund, and that the rest goes to *Fund for Mission* as unrestricted.

Noting that the budget line for the Philadelphia Seminary has not changed, Mr. Stephen Heckler, St Paul, Applebachsville, asked, “Does the seminary need money?” Pr. Weidner noted concerns by seminary students over increasing debt.

Pr. Serena Sellers commended those who worked on budget and stated that the budget process is “a gift for the future, opening our eyes to what God wants to do through us.”

The Reverend David Stickley said that, when his congregation went from a full-time to part-time pastor, it increased its benevolence by 25%. He asked, “Are we part of bigger church or are we just here for ourselves?”

Mr. Joshua Kelly, Synod Council member, explained that the reductions for some agencies were based on the possibility that other financial resources might be available.

The Reverend Mary Koponka urged the assembly to move ahead and pass budget and, by doing so, “kick starting” mission again.

In response to funding for the Philadelphia Seminary, Ms. Jessica Hahn, Christ Ascension, Philadelphia, described the \$120,000 debt that she and her husband, both students, anticipated after seminary. She thanked congregations that are able to give 10% or more to partnership support and invited others to increase their giving.

Mr. Bradley Burke, St. Michael, Unionville, said that the current financial situation challenges the church to do ministry in different ways.

Mr. Paul Keener, Holy Trinity, Wallingford, said that the financial challenge facing the synod is really a stewardship question. “We can do it with commitment,” he said, encouraging voting members “to go back to their congregations and say that we need to re-start benevolence.”

The Reverend Karl Schneider noted that those, who put pennies in the offering plate, can afford to give more.

The assembly approved the resolution.

A Moment in Time

The assembly saw a video, highlighting the answers of various voting members to the question: What's new and exciting in your ministry?

Report of Synod Council

Bishop Burkat introduced Vice President Robinson and thanked her for her wisdom, counsel, support, and remarkable patience.

Vice President Robinson began by saying that “this has been a very challenging year for the ELCA, this synod, and its congregations,” particularly in regard to how to use limited resources for accomplishing goals.

She added that Synod Council members have worked very hard this year, participating in an increased number of special meetings and congregational consultations. She thanked Synod Council members for their commitment to serve.

She noted that, in the process of preparing a balanced budget, Synod Council members realized that some practices could not continue and had to balance hard realities with a commitment to missional principles. She said that the Synod Council is now living into a new way of doing things, which requires a more cooperative effort by all of us. “We are going to the best synod in ELCA,” she challenged the assembly. “We have talents that we can share not only with ourselves but with the larger church.”

She thanked the congregations, the conferences, and the social ministry organizations that hosted Synod Council meetings.

She listed some of the Synod Council's activities over the past year:

- Participated in consultation processes with two congregations seeking to terminate their relationship with the ELCA;
- Took action to close Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), noting that some of the legal issues have not yet been resolved;
- Received as a new congregation New Life Ministries, Philadelphia, the product of the consolidation of Calvary, West Philadelphia, and Immanuel, West Philadelphia; and
- Supported a continuing partnership with the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, noting, that in December 2010, SEKUCo graduated its first class.

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Identity
As a Practicing Anti-Racist Synod**

On behalf of the Synod Council, Vice President Robinson presented the following resolution:

S. A. 11.05.06 Whereas, as followers of Christ, we are given the Biblical imperative to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), to love one another as Jesus has loved us (John 14:34), and to cultivate unity among ourselves that we may be one (John 17:21); and

Whereas we are reminded that we are all inheritors of God's promises because we know that Christ "has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us."(Ephesians 2:14); and

Whereas scripture further states, "I therefore a prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:1-6) ; and

Whereas the ELCA in its Social Statement, "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture," August 1993, defines racism as "Racism - a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice - is sin, a violation of God's intention for humanity, and the resulting racial, ethnic, and cultural barriers deny the truth that all people are creatures of God and therefore, persons of dignity. Racism fractures and fragments both church and Society;" and

Whereas "racism infects and affects everyone. It deforms relationships between and within racial, ethnic or cultural groups. It undermines the promise of community and exacerbates prejudice and unhealthy competition among these groups" (ELCA Social Statement-Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture August 1993); and

Whereas racism is a systemic issue; and is found in the culture of the United States and the policies, procedures, and practices of institutions within the United States, including the Church; and

Whereas Women of the ELCA made anti-racism one of its organizational principles and has addressed systemic racism since 1997; and

Whereas anti-racism is not a program, but a way of life that works to dismantle racism; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod shall claim and practice an anti-racist identity and actively seek full participation and shared power in its committees, task

forces, policies, procedures, and practices and in its mission and ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod place a high priority on anti-racism education, training, and awareness within the Synod and among its organizations, conferences, congregations, and members; examine its own systems, institutional and cultural practices for racist policies, procedures, and practices and intentionally change those that do not reflect an anti-racist identity, that we may dismantle racism in its various manifestations wherever it may be found; and be it further

RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, through its Bishop and other leaders call upon its organizations, conferences, congregations, and members through prayer, education, attitude shifts, and actions to diligently work to be anti-racist in their own practices and lives; and prayerfully and actively support anti-racism education, training, and work as central to its future.

The Reverend Lee Miller expressed support for the resolution, inviting full participation by all.

Stating that racism is a non-issue for millennials, Mr. Michael Craven, Little Zion, moved to amend the second “resolved,” substituting “encourage on an ongoing basis” for “place a high priority on.” The assembly defeated the substitute amendment.

The Reverend Susan Folks encouraged voting members to take the resolution seriously and offered the assistance of the Anti-racism Team in congregational planning and conversation.

The Reverend Gwendolyn King said, “We need to educate each other individually and collectively, so that we may dismantle racism.”

Victoria Mohr, Trinity, Lansdale, added that racism is still an issue that needs to be resolved.

The assembly approved the resolution.

Concluding Remarks

Vice President Robinson added her thanks to those already expressed to Mr. Reimet for his faithful years of service as the synod’s Treasurer.

She wished Bishop Burkat “rest, renewal, and reflection” on her sabbatical.

Ms. Helen Davis, Old Zion, Philadelphia, identifying herself as a friend of Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), questioned the propriety of the synod’s legal actions against Redeemer members, noting that “it is wrong for the church to turn on its own.”

Pr. George Keck requested that Synod Council minutes be made available online.

The assembly approved a motion to extend its current session by 30 minutes.

Taking a moment of personal privilege, Bishop Burkat expressed thanks to Pr. Lawrence Hand and Ms. Janine Niwinski for their service to the synod. Pr. Hand has served the synod for 13 years as the Assistant to the Bishop for Vocations and Leadership and accepted a call to a congregation in Hawaii. Ms. Niwinski has served the synod for 9 years as the Director of Operations. Both of them recently announced their engagement. Bishop Burkat presented leis to both.

Pr. Hand stated that he departs with joy and sorrow, and then he added, “But that’s what change is all about.” He thanked the assembly for the opportunity to serve the synod. “You will always be special,” he said.

Ms. Niwinski said that it has been a privilege to work with Bishops Almquist and Burkat. She concluded by saying, “I did not know that I had a ministry until you told me. God did not call -- God screamed.”

Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel (Third)

Calling the Church to Speak and Act to Prevent Bullying, Harassment, and Related Violence (Memorial)

Ms. Meuser presented the following resolution, which the assembly approved:

S. A. 11.05.07 Whereas, *“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it,”* (1Cor. 12:26); and

Whereas, in the ELCA Social Statement on Education (2007) we declared, “The ELCA expects communities of learning and teaching to be safe places. We recognize that school safety is an issue for all students, staff, and teachers. Unfortunately, incidents of bullying, intimidation, and other forms of violence are becoming all too common. We affirm that personal safety and security are requirements for optimal teaching and learning,” and

*Whereas research indicates children with disabilities or special needs are at a higher risk of being bullied than others (Rigby, K., 2002, *New Perspective on Bullying*. London. Jessica Kingsley Publications); and The National School Climate Survey, 2005 concluded that “Bullying around issues of sexual orientation, non-conforming gender behaviors, and dress was the most common form of bullying, second only to issues of appearance (e.g., body size and disability)”;* and

Whereas, in the ELCA Social Statement on Sexuality: Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust (2009) we declared, “Likewise, it will attend to the particular needs of children and the families of those with actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation or gender identity

because they are especially vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse.” and

Whereas increased media attention has made us acutely aware of tragic consequences (including youth suicide) if steps are not taken to prevent bullying, harassment, and other related forms of violence; and

Whereas the voice of the church addressing the intersection of race, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability is a powerful witness to the healing and life affirming Gospel promise, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage new partnerships among our congregations, synods, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, Lutheran School Associations, Lutherans Concerned/North America, Lutheran Social Services organizations, public schools, counseling centers and other governmental organizations in order to support and offer preventative programs addressing bullying, harassment, and other related violence, especially with higher risk populations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage these partnerships to create or join with existing preventative programs which:

- a. utilize positive, inclusive, empowering and developmentally appropriate materials,**
- b. raise participants’ awareness about the issue,**
- c. focus on prevention,**
- d. seek to change bystander behavior into ally behavior,**
- e. create partnerships between youth and adults,**
- f. address the use and abuse of social media and technology, and;**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage these partnerships to seek funding for these efforts from a combination of existing funds and new funding sources not otherwise accessible individually such as foundation grants, synod and other Lutheran organizational grants, private and governmental funding sources, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage, support, and publicize new partnerships in ministry that emerge in our church addressing the prevention of bullying, harassment, and related forms of violence, especially with higher risk populations.

Resolution of Thanks

Ms. Meuser presented the following resolution, which the assembly approved by acclamation:

S. A. 11.05.08 Whereas it is right at all times and in all places to give thanks for God's grace, mercy and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit which bless and release the people of God to serve Christ and His Church, and

Whereas the 2011 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly has earnestly engaged in prayerful discussions, deliberations and decisions, and has experienced the blessings of many gifted leaders, workers and volunteers, and

Whereas God continues to call the church to be grateful for the energy, skill, generosity, and commitment of all who have labored, both visibly and behind-the-scenes, to prosper the work of this year's Assembly;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT we offer our appreciation and thankful applause to all those who prepared for, planned, and arranged the countless interconnecting details for this Assembly:

To youth from Helping Hands Day, the Floor Page Coordinator and all Assembly floor pages, our Parliamentarian, the Synod Communications team, the staff from CCI Communications, Franconia Mennonite Church whose gracious hospitality is a true blessing, our food service providers, prayer partners, and sign language interpreters;

To the Worship Committee, and for all leaders, speakers, and musicians who opened our lips and our minds to embrace God's word and beckon God's spirit; to the Committee on Elections, the Committee on Reference and Counsel, and the Committee on Nominations, for their dedicated work and contribution to the orderly functioning of the Assembly process;

To our presenter, Dr. Rodger Nishioka, Associate Professor of Christian Education, Columbia Theological Seminary, for challenging us to new ways of doing ministry with youth and young adults;

To the ELCA representative, The Rev. Dr. Gregory Villalon, Associate Executive Director for Ministry Leadership, Congregational and Synodical Mission, for his missional focus and support of synod ministries;

To Bishop Claire S. Burkat, for her faithful ambassadorship for Jesus Christ, especially in this synod and in the ELCA;

To the Synod Council and Officers of the Synod, the synod Administrative Staff, synod Program Staff, and synod Pastoral Staff.

For all these gifts of God and for all other random acts of kindness, and unplanned moments of reunion and renewal, reconciliation and resolve, that we experienced in these holy days together, *solī Deo gloria!*

Final Report of the Registrar

Ms. Niwinski presented the final report of the Registrar:

Total voting membership, 578 ; total number of pastors under call, 190; total number of retired pastors voting, 31; total number of associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers under call, 14; total number of retired associates in ministry and deaconesses voting, 2; total number of lay voting members certified, including council members, 341; total number of "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" in the previous total, 57; percent of "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" of total voting membership, 10%; number of female lay voting members, 148; number of male lay voting members, 130; number of youth/young adults members, 51.

Total registered (actually in attendance) voting membership, 512; number of pastors under call registered, 161; number of retired voting pastors registered, 27; number of associates in ministry and deaconesses under call registered, 13; number of retired associates in ministry and deaconesses registered, 2; number of lay voting members registered, including council members and youth/young adult, 309; total number of "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" in previous total, 57; percent of "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" of total voting membership, 11%; total number of visitors and guests registered, 84.

Bishop Burkat reported that the 25th annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod was scheduled for May 4-5, 2012.

Recognition, Installation, and Blessing

Bishop Burkat recognized the Synod Council members whose terms were ending at this assembly and installed the Synod Council members elected at this assembly. She also blessed the synod's 2011 Churchwide Assembly voting members.

Order for the Closing of the Assembly

She led the Order for the Closing of the Assembly. The twenty-fourth annual Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller
Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA