

MINUTES
of the 187th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Zoom Meeting
June 26, 2025
6:00 p.m.

WELCOME AND DEVOTIONS

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley brought words of welcome to the Synod Council at 6:00 p.m. She noted that Vice President-elect Cheryl Lafferty is present and is being granted voice at this meeting. The Rev. Paula Lebo, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation, led the Council in devotions. Her reflection was based on Psalm 119:33-40

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the 187th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to order at 6:18 p.m. The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary, confirmed a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 186th Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council (April 10, 2025) were approved.

The Minutes of the 2025 Synod Assembly will come before the Synod Council in September.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda to the Synod Council.

The agenda was approved.

MISSION MOMENT

Synod Assembly

The members of the Synod Council were invited to share their impressions of the Synod Assembly. Among the comments were the following.

- + The Rev. Jonathan Steiner felt the Ministry Spotlights were well presented and powerful.
- + The Rev. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath asked if we needed as much time for the meals as was allotted.
- + Vice President Beasley had heard from some that the dinner on Friday was not necessary.
- + Dr. Sherrell Mickens noted her appreciation for the time during lunch, as it allowed for the holding of a seminar.
- + Deacon Kathie Afflerbach heard that many were happy with the setting. It was easily accessible, and there was plenty of room. They wondered why we had not held the Assembly there before.
- + Janet Neff asked what might happen if we had more people; would Trinity be able to accommodate a larger number?
- + Pr. Steiner shared that the capacity on the sanctuary is 800, so that would not be an issue.
- + Dr. Mickens: It was good to have a shorter walk to lunch and the mission center than was the case at Franconia.

- + Dr. John Connors asked if the mission center presenters felt as though this was a good space, or was being in the lunch area too much of a distraction.
- + V.P. Beasley shared that most of the Mission Center folk found the area to be an advantage, as people did not have to find a different space for the Mission Center, and everyone came for the meals.
- + Dr. Marcia Boraas shared that Bishop Penman's address on Friday was one of the best and most hopeful presentations she has heard.

Vice President-elect

Vice President Beasley thanked the Synod Council for their reflections. She then asked Vice President-elect Lafferty to share whatever she might wish to share with the Synod Council.

Ms. Lafferty was born and raised in Northeast Philadelphia. She still lives within a mile of where she was born. She has been married for twelve years; they have no children.

She has a passion for Christ and the Church. She had worked in archaeology for a while, then earned a Master of Divinity degree. She has been in ministry in both the ELCA and the Presbyterian Church, was a cofounder of Rhawnhurst Turning Point (an education ministry in the Northeast) and has been active in leadership at Redemption Lutheran in Northeast Philadelphia. She is currently the Senior Program Director at Philadelphia Academies, Inc.

Outside of her passion for the Church, she runs triathlons, crochets, and listens to books on tape. Vice President-elect Lafferty is excited to get to know the Council and the congregations of the Synod over the next months and years.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

New Staff

Bishop Penman introduced the Rev. Erika Wesch as the new part-time Assistant to the Bishop. She will be overseeing the Candidacy process, which had previously been part of the portfolio of the Rev. Karen Sease. Bishop Penman shared that this will be the last addition to the Staff for some time. There is still a desire to fill the position of Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult ministry.

Change is Coming

There has been a tremendous turnover in the leadership of the greater Church. Twenty-two synods held elections for bishop this year, with seventeen new bishops elected. In our Synod we have elected a new Vice President, and at the Churchwide level we will elect a new Presiding Bishop and a new Secretary for the Church.

Restructuring in progress

Bishop Penman is still working on an organizational chart for the Synod. Vice President-elect Lafferty will have a key role in this process. The needs of congregations are shifting, and we need to shift how we are structured to meet the needs of the church in this day. We are seeing the end of the institutional church that says you can have your own full-time ministry forever and always.

Thank You and Celebration

Bishop Penman thanked all who worked so diligently to make the Synod Assembly, “Ponder Anew,” a success. He expressed thanks to the entire staff, and particularly Ms. Carrie Schwab, the Synod’s Events coordinator.

He also gave thanks for the twelve years of service Ms. Tracey A. Beasley gave to the Synod as our Vice President, not counting her previous years of service on the Synod Council and many other ways in which she has been a leader in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. A celebration in her honor was held at Reformation, Mt. Airy, where there was much rejoicing.

Events Attended

Bp. Penman has attended several events since the last meeting of the Synod Council, including participation in LAMPA’s Advocacy Day at the Capitol, the Organizing for Mission Network Training in New Orleans, and the SEPA Pride Worship.

Two events that did not take place were the Congregational Secretaries and Congregational Treasurers gatherings. Low registration numbers made it impractical to hold these events. The plan is to offer some version of each event in the future.

Story Telling Project Grant

This third application for a Lilly Grant was not successful, but Bishop Penman plans to build a network of story tellers and story collectors to aid in our proclamation of the Gospel.

Bishop’s Convocation

Plans are underway for this annual event of fellowship and learning for our rostered ministers. The program will be led by the Organizing for Mission Network (OMN), a network of faith leaders organizing in the ELCA around Spiritual community organizing.

Bishop Penman opened the floor for questions or comments.

Dr. Mickens expressed disappointment that the Secretary and Treasurers gatherings were canceled. She suggested that even when enrolment is low, it may be good to hold these events anyway. Many of our congregations need help, and whatever chance we have to assist them can be worthwhile.

Bp. Penman said we will revisit this and perhaps include these sections as a track when we have our annual congregational council leaders meeting.

Mr. Craig McJett asked how many people from our Synod attended the LAMPA Advocacy Day.

Bp. Penman said that it was around twenty, so we had a strong showing.

Mr. McJett then asked how many legislators received our people.

Bp. Penman did not have an exact number, but he was certain that it was more than we have had in the past. The event had been moved up this year to ensure that it was held while the legislature was in session. This has not been the case every year.

Bishop also commented that the process for updating the recommended compensation guidelines for the coming year is underway. The goal is to approve such changes before congregations begin their budgeting process. There is a need to revamp the entire document, as it is based on congregations offering full-time calls, which is increasingly not the case.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley noted that the minutes of the Executive Committee were in the packet of materials and asked if there were any questions regarding them.

She then noted two forms for the members of the Council to complete.

1. The Confidentiality Report, which needs to be filled out each year.
2. The Committee Preference form, indicating the areas in which the members would like to serve.

These choices are used as the Bishop and Vice President make recommendations for the make-up of the various committees of the Synod Council.

Vice President Beasley then brought forward a resolution on grants for Renewable Energy to be distributed by the Care of Creation Ministry Team. The Grant Application was in the packet of materials for this meeting.

S.C.25.06.20. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod approves the Care of Creation Ministry Team Renewable Energy Grant application as presented.

Pr. Rodrick-Schnaath asked if we had not already approved this application at a previous meeting. Dr. Connors, member of the Care of Creation Ministry Team, noted that we approved a different form for micro-grants to congregations. This is second grant form for a different purpose, and from a separate funding source.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Dr. Connors asked that it be noted that he abstained from this vote.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Affirmation of Email Vote

Secretary Richard asked for affirmation of the results of the June 14, 2025, email vote appointing Mr. Kenneth Anderson as an alternate voting member to the Churchwide Assembly.

S.C.25.06.21. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod affirms the appointment of Mr. Kenneth Anderson to be a lay voting member to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The results were 19 yes, 0 no.

The Synod Council affirmed this vote.

Reception of the Property of a Closed Congregation

S.C.25.06.22. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of Community of Love Lutheran Church, Oxford, PA, to close, effective May 4, 2025, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of Community of Love Lutheran Church, Oxford, in accordance with the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, specifically 9.71.b., +S13.23., and *C7.01.; and, on this date, June 26, 2025, authorizes

the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, or the Bishop’s representative(s), to sell the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Actions on the Roster

Invitation to Full Communion Partners to Serve ELCA Congregations in SEPA Synod:

S.C.25.06.23. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves entry rite, Invitation to Extended Service, to the Rev. Teresa A. McNamara as Interim Pastor at The Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion, Philadelphia, PA beginning July 15, 2025, for 5 years at ¾ time. This Invitation to Extended Service requires an annual report to the synodical bishop for the full length of service. Extended service is eligible for renewal annually by Synod Council.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Request to Move from Active Roster to On Leave from Call

S.C.25.06.24. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant “On Leave from Call” status to the Rev. George R. Steele, 1st year, effective May 1, 2025.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

S.C.25.06.25. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant “On Leave from Call” status to the Rev. W. Roger Randolph, III, 1st year, effective June 1, 2025.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Request to Move from Active Roster to On Leave from Call, graduate study

S.C.25.06.26. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grant “On Leave from Call” status to the Rev. Daniel Smith, 1st year study leave, effective August 15, 2025.

The Synod Council adopted the resolution.

Dr. Mickens asked that it be noted that she abstained from this vote.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Janet Neff presented her report to the Synod Council.

**Statement of Financial Position
Highlights as of 1/31/2025 and 4/30/2025**

	1/31/25	4/30/25
Total Cash & Investments	\$ 18,413,573	\$ 17,634,851
Total Assets	\$ 22,337,569	\$ 21,565,539
Total Liabilities	\$ 191,226	\$ 135,601
Total Net Assets	\$ 22,146,343	\$ 21,429,938
Unrestricted	\$ 15,539,313	\$ 14,860,760
With donor restrictions	\$ 6,607,030	\$ 6,569,178

Statement of Activities

Revenue

as of 4/30/25

	2025 Actual	2025 Forecast	2026 Budget
Mission Support	\$ 378,515	\$ 392,825	\$ 1,600,000
Other Contributions	\$ 117,643	\$ 129,285	\$ 498,686
Registration Fees	\$ 57,926	\$ 27,564	\$ 114,256
Investment Income	\$(1,038,253)	\$ 291,887	\$ 1,226,630
Beneficial interest in Trust	\$ 0	\$ 15,000	\$ 60,000
Proceeds from property	<u>\$ 601,119</u>	<u>\$ 477,500</u>	<u>\$ 700,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 116,950	\$ 1,334,062	\$ 4,199,572

Statement of Activities

Expenses

As of 4/30/25

	2025 Actual	2025 Forecast	2026 Budget
Operating Expense	\$ 488,527	\$ 578,549	\$ 2,257,645
ELCA Proportionate (50%)	\$ 189,258	\$ 196,413	\$ 800,000
Property Management	\$ 54,094	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Distributions to other agencies	\$ 23,750	\$ 24,681	\$ 98,725
Remit to designated agency	\$ 1,750	\$ 3,135	\$ 12,540
Grants to Organizations	<u>\$ 81,486</u>	<u>\$ 44,891</u>	<u>\$ 178,460</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 838,864	\$ 872,688	\$ 3,372,370

Treasurer Neff shared the following:

- + Investments are down, but that is due to the turbulence in the market.
- + Liabilities – We only owe current payables from this past month.
- + Net assets – Mission support is lower than forecast. We do want to see which congregations are down, and if there is any way to encourage their support. There are many that are in transition, and that often impacts congregational giving.
- + Registration Fees are up due to the Synod Assembly
- + “Proceeds from property” were from the sale of the former St. Paul, Lansdowne. The net amount received will be distributed as per our formula. 15% to the unrestricted (general) portion of the budget, then we reimburse the costs of properties under management, with the remainder going to the Fund for Mission.

Treasurer Neff had a meeting with the Investment Advisor from Girard. The Investment Committee will be meeting by Zoom next week to discuss what they plan to do.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ms. Pia Graham, chair of the Finance Committee, noted the committee met on June 11 by Zoom. They reviewed the financial statements that were distributed in the packet of materials and found all to be in order.

A review of the balances of the various designated and donor restricted assets shows the Synod has \$12,217,571 in designated fund assets and \$3,029,192 in donor restricted assets. Monies are

being disbursed from the two Lilly grants (\$34,936 from Love Revolution and \$21,950 from Faith Alive), primarily for hiring and getting programs started.

The Committee also reviewed the Fund for Mission minutes, and saw what disbursements were approved by the Trustees.

The Finance Committee will meet again in September prior to the Synod Council meeting.

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

Thank You

Vice President Beasley expressed her thanks for the farewell celebration held for her, and for the many years she has been able to serve in leadership in our synod. She noted that her term has come to an end, and she will not be getting in the way of our new Vice President. However, she is available to Ms. Lafferty for any insight or advice that may be helpful.

Election of Executive Committee

Vice President Beasley described the work of the Executive Committee in preparation for election of members to this Committee. The Executive Committee is comprised of the four officers of the Synod, the Bishop, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and three other members elected from the Synod Council. These three are a clergy, a lay man, and a lay woman. She noted with thanks the people who served on the Executive Committee this past year: Deacon Kathie Afflerbach, Dr. John Connors, and Ms. Pia Graham.

V. P. Beasley began by asking for nominations for the clergy seat. Placed in nomination were Pastor Jonothan Steiner and Deacon Kathie Afflerbach. Deacon Afflerbach was **elected**.

She then asked for nominations for a lay man to serve. Dr. John Connors was nominated. As there were no other nominees, Dr. Connors was declared **elected**.

Finally, nominations were opened for a lay woman to serve. Ms. Pia Graham was nominated. Dr. Marcia Boraas was nominated but declined. With no other nominations, Ms. Graham was declared **elected**.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – none

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m. with prayer by Vice President-elect Cheryl Lafferty. The next meeting of the Synod Council is scheduled for September 18, 2025, and will be held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Doylestown.

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

Approved by Synod Council, September 18, 2025