

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

*God Has A Plan: We're It!*

**May 8-9, 2009**

**Franconia Mennonite Meetinghouse  
Telford, Pennsylvania**

**Friday Morning, May 8, 2009**

**The Service of Holy Communion**

The Service of Holy Communion began at 9:30 a.m. with the Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, serving as the presiding minister and preacher. The assisting ministers were Mr. David Swartling, Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); and the Reverends Serena Sellers and Patricia Davenport, Assistants to the Bishop. The lectors were Ms. Patricia Robinson, Vice President of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod; Ms. Ashley Brown; and Mr. Alexander Jenkins. The master of ceremony was the Reverend Patrick Seyler. Ms. Linda Beck and Ms. Lisa Travis provided musical direction. The Reverend Susan Lang, Sister Ramona Cecille, Daily, Sister Jane Roper, and Mr. Richard Frederick, AIM, led the prayers of the people.

The Bible readings were Jeremiah 29:8-14, Psalm 111:1-4, Philippians 1:3-6, and John 17:20-26.

Installed were the following persons authorized by the Synod Council for a synodical call: Sister Ramona Cecille Daily, Liberty Lutheran Services; Sister Jan Roper, Manatawny Manor; Mr. Richard Frederick, AIM, Bear Creek Camp; the Reverend Susan Lang, synodical ecumenical service; and the Reverend Leslie Richard, spiritual direction.

The following faithful departed rostered leaders were remembered in prayer: the Reverends Robert E. Bornemann, Robert J. Marshall, John H. P. Reumann, Carl H. A. Schmutzler, Charles R. Steinhauer, and Herbert W. Tobaben.

After reading the Gospel, Bishop Burkat preached the sermon, using Jeremiah 28:11 as a text, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

"[This verse] arises as a beacon of light," Bishop Burkat told the assembly, "because it reminds us of what God is able to do even in the worst of human circumstances. The prophet tells the people that, when Babylon's seventy years of rule are complete, God will visit them and fulfill God's promise to bring the Israelites back to their land. They wanted desperately to believe the other pundits and popular leaders who assured them the exile would only last a very short time. They were homesick for their old, comfortable life. 'No, no, no, not so fast!' says Jeremiah," who warns "the people that there will be no quick fixes, [and] no miraculous and heroic rescues ... because it's God's time and God's plan they are working with."

Relating the Israelites' experience to that of those feeling the pain of the current economic crisis, Bishop Burkat said, "God certainly did not cause this painful crisis, but God can and will use it to strip away our illusions of wealth, security, and power. We have had to learn that right here in our own synod," she continued. "Last year at this time, at this assembly, we were signing off on the building campaign for our new synod office at the seminary campus. We were embarking on a strategic planning process, which would give us five-year goals and objectives, which would culminate in a capital campaign some time soon. But last October we discovered that God has a different plan for us. It doesn't rely on money. It doesn't depend on financial stability of the world economy or even [of] the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. What we are learning is that God has a plan – and we're it.

"How many of you are mired in a rut, a disappointment, a pattern of behavior, an unhealthy circumstance, and just can't seem to move on?" she asked. "Perhaps God is telling us that, whatever it is, we need to dig a hole, bury it, stick a flower on it, and move on ...

"The experience of the Hebrew children in Babylon" [of letting go of their old stuff] may "be a lesson that we need to apply when assessing our own congregational and synodical future," she acknowledged. "God has a plan for us, and guess what? It includes us, it blesses us, and it will be accomplished and completed in God's time ...

"[God's] plan doesn't depend on a *what*," she indicated. "It depends on a *who*. It depends on God working through us. As we culled through the nearly 6,000 responses from the conference meetings this past fall, four themes emerged which we summarized by the acronym FACE, and FACE reminds us of God's extravagant and extraordinary plan for the world. God so loved the world that he came to us incarnate – in the flesh, he let us see his FACE in Christ. And Jesus Christ lived day to day and FACE to FACE with his twelve disciples, and then the seventy, and the other followers, to whom after the resurrection he revealed his FACE.

"We are realizing," she concluded, "that God's promise of completeness and fulfillment does not rely on our human finances. In fact, what we are learning ... is that God does indeed have a plan – and we're it! God can and is using us to build God's kingdom in this world in a new and energizing way. We can trust God's promise of fulfillment when the world around us is panicking and despairing, because we have seen what is possible ... Will we allow God's plan to be thwarted by a measly financial crisis, especially knowing what God did for the Israelites ... and our risen Lord?"

### **The Order for the Opening of the Assembly**

Bishop Burkat led the Order for the Opening of the 22nd annual assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod at 10:50 a.m.

### **Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Introductions**

Bishop Burkat welcomed those attending the assembly, especially those attending a synod assembly for the first time. She thanked the worship team for planning a “wonderful and inspiring” service.

“Over the past year,” Bishop Burkat told the assembly, “the people of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod have been listening together to God. Ten times last fall we gathered as leaders of [this synod] to celebrate God’s activity among us and through us, and to discern through discussion, prayer, and Bible study where God is leading us right here, right now! Almost 2,000 people all across our synod participated, and through them we received almost 6,000 responses...

“This assembly will not be business as usual,” she added. “We have suspended many of our regular oral reports and greetings in order to give substantial time to engage this assembly in [these] four directions, [forming the acronym FACE]:

- Faith formation,
- Faith in Action,
- Connecting and communicating, and
- Equipping and developing.

“God has a plan,” she concluded, “and together we are it!”

Bishop Burkat introduced Mr. David Swartling, Secretary of the ELCA; Ms. Barbara Swartling, Executive Director of the Deaconess Community, ELCA; the Reverend Larry Smoose, Parliamentarian; Synod Council members; and Deans. She invited the rostered leaders, who were new to the synod since the last assembly, to introduce themselves.

### **The Report of the Registrar**

Ms. Virginia Bailey reported that the total number of voting members was 581, the total number of voting members registered was 513, and 389 voting members were needed for a quorum. Bishop Burkat declared a quorum.

### **The Presentation of the Proposed Program**

The Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, presented the proposed program as printed in *The Bulletin of Reports*. The assembly approved the program.

### **The Presentation of the Rules of Procedure**

Secretary Miller reviewed the Rules of Procedure, approved by the 2008 synod assembly as a continuing resolution.

He presented the following rule of procedure, which the assembly approved:

**S. A. 09.05.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly shall limit each speaker on the floor to two minutes, alternating “for” and “against” whenever possible, and allowing a person who has not spoken on the floor on a particular issue to speak before someone speaks an additional time.**

Secretary Miller then presented the recommended procedure for an appeal of synodical administration as described in **S13.24** of the synod constitution. He reminded the assembly that, on June 7, 2007, the Synod Council invoked **S13.24** and placed Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), under synodical administration (**S. C. 07.06.11**). He added that, at the 2008 synod assembly, Redeemer’s voting member indicated Redeemer’s intention to appeal the Synod Council’s decision to place the congregation under synodical administration, and that the appeal would be considered at this year’s assembly on Saturday morning.

The Reverend Donna Wright moved to amend the recommended appeal procedure by lengthening the period of floor discussion from ten to twenty minutes. The assembly approved the amendment.

The assembly then approved the following procedure as amended:

**S. A. 09.05.02 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Assembly shall allow fifty minutes as the total amount of time for the consideration of the appeal.**

**The Synod Assembly voting member(s) from the congregation, appealing the Synod Council’s decision to place the congregation under synodical administration, as described in S13.24 of the synod constitution, shall have the opportunity to speak first. The presentation of the voting member(s) of the congregation shall not exceed fifteen minutes.**

**The trustee(s) of the congregation, appointed by the Synod Council, shall have the opportunity to speak second. The presentation of the trustee(s) shall not exceed fifteen minutes.**

**Synod Assembly voting members from the floor may have the opportunity to discuss the issue. The amount of time for discussion shall not exceed twenty minutes.**

**When the presentations, and the opportunity for discussion, have been completed under the allotted time, the Synod Assembly shall vote.**

**The Synod Assembly shall consider the following resolution, which shall be approved by majority vote:**

**RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly sustains the decision (S. C. 07.06.11) of the Synod Council to invoke S13.24, taking charge and control of the property of Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), and to hold, manage, and convey the same on behalf of the synod.**

**Vote YES to affirm the Synod Council's decision; vote NO to overrule the Synod Council's decision.**

### **The Report of the Nominating Committee**

Mr. William Bleam, the chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the report.

For **Ticket 1, Vice President** (One to be elected for a term ending 2013), the committee nominated Ms. Patricia Robinson. Mr. Barry Stock was nominated from the floor. The bishop declared the first ticket closed.

For **Ticket 2, Synod Council, Clergy** (Three to be elected for terms ending 2012), the committee nominated the Reverends Diedone Panzo Diela, Charles Leonard, David Lutcher, Lee Miller, and William Rex. The Reverend Regina Goodrich was nominated from the floor. The bishop declared the second ticket closed.

For **Ticket 3, Synod Council, Lay Man at Large** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012), the committee nominated Mr. Robert Bruns and Mr. Scott Nugent. Mr. Rodman Rothermel was nominated from the floor. The bishop declared the third ticket closed.

For **Ticket 4, Synod Council, Lay Woman at Large** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012), the committee nominated Ms. Sara Barber. Sister Jane Roper was nominated from the floor. The bishop declared the fourth ticket closed.

For **Ticket 5, Synod Council, Central Philadelphia Conference Representative, Male** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012), the committee nominated Mr. Al Hunter, Jr. The bishop declared Mr. Hunter elected.

For **Ticket 6, Synod Council, Chester Conference Representative, Female** (One to be elected for a term ending 2011), the committee nominated Ms. Jill Meuser. The bishop declared Ms. Meuser elected.

For **Ticket 7, Synod Council, Northwest Philadelphia/Olney Conference Representative, Female** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012), the committee nominated Ms. Margie Pendarvis-Wright. The bishop declared Ms. Pendarvis-Wright elected.

For **Ticket 8, Synod Council, Upper Bucks Conference Representative, Female** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012), the committee received no nominations from the Upper Bucks Conference.

For **Ticket 9, Synod Council, Youth Representative** (One to be elected for a term ending 2010), the committee, upon the recommendation of the Lutheran Youth Organization, nominated Mr. Micah Krey. Ms. Helen Squitieri was nominated from the floor. The bishop declared the ninth ticket closed.

### **The Report of the Secretary**

### *Approval of the 2008 Synod Assembly Minutes*

Secretary Miller reported that the Synod Council approved the minutes of the 2008 synod assembly on June 5, 2008 (S. C. 08.06.06).

### *Requests and Reminders for Voting Members*

He requested that voting members clearly identify themselves by name and congregation when speaking on the floor and that motions of significant length be submitted to him in writing. He reminded voting members that the times indicated in the agenda are estimates.

### **The Reception of Reports**

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.

### **The Report of the Treasurer**

Mr. Richard Reimet reviewed the *Financial Statements and Report of the Independent Certified Public Accountants*, dated January 31, 2009. He noted that mission support from congregations to the synod declined by 4% in 2008, compared to 2007. “That decline,” he said, “was not too bad in today’s economy.” He indicated that the Finance Committee was determined to keep synodical costs low, promising to keep congregations updated on the synod’s financial condition.

He presented the following resolution, which the assembly approved:

**S. A. 09.05.03 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 2008, subject to the receipt of the appropriate signatures.**

### **The First Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel**

Ms. Jill Meuser, the chair of the Committee on Reference and Counsel, reported that the committee received one resolution, *A Memorial Concerning Human Sexuality*, after the deadline, and asked for the assembly’s permission to consider the resolution. The assembly approved consideration by a vote of 344 to 150.

### *Book of Faith Initiative*

Ms. Meuser presented the first resolution, reporting that the committee recommended its approval.

The Reverend Gwendolyn King moved to amend the fourth “resolved” by adding the words “young adult and campus ministry” after “adult education.” The assembly approved the amendment.

The assembly then approved the following resolution as amended:

**S. A. 09.05.04 Whereas all the baptized promise when they affirm their baptism, “to hear the Word of God” and “to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed;” and**

**Whereas all parents and sponsors covenant to place the Holy Scriptures in the hands of their children and nurture them in faith and prayer; and**

**Whereas pastors, deaconesses, diaconal ministers, and associates in ministry vow at their ordination, consecration, or commissioning to be diligent in their study of the Holy Scriptures; and**

**Whereas the ELCA has begun a Book of Faith initiative inviting everyone to join the conversation, make a commitment, and become part of the initiative (see [www.elca.org/bookoffaith/overview/](http://www.elca.org/bookoffaith/overview/));**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT we [the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod] become a *Book of Faith* synod, committing ourselves to live in and from the Word of God in our preparations to teach and preach, as well as personally in our daily devotional practices, so that as we regularly and increasingly hear, read, study, share, and are engaged by God’s Word, we lead by example in faithful service and holy living; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the bishop of our synod – who, “as its pastor, shall be a teacher of the faith of this church and shall provide leadership for the life and witness of this church” – in coordination with the *Book of Faith* advocates appointed by the bishop, encourage this initiative both personally and through collaborative programmatic work with congregations of the synod; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT all voting members of this synod assembly covenant together to engage in a regular practice of Bible study and prayer, gathering with others in their congregation and/or community to speak and hear the Word from one another; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT we celebrate and continue to support and strengthen those places where Scripture is already taught and embraced, such as Women of the ELCA; Lutheran Men in Mission; Lutheran Youth Organization; Lutheran preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools; congregation councils; Sunday schools, confirmation, adult education, young adult and campus ministry; and other congregational groups; Lutheran social ministry organizations; and institutions of the church, including the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Muhlenberg College, and Bear Creek Camp; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT we encourage all congregations to become a *Book of Faith* congregation, which will find expression by**

- **Registering with the ELCA as a *Book of Faith* congregation,**
- **Exploring new opportunities for engaging the Bible,**
- **Sending lay people to synod events for training as Bible study leaders, and**
- **Including Biblical study and reflection as integral parts of all meetings and groups,**

**in order to become more fluent in the first language of faith – the language of Scripture – that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.**

*Ushering in Fullness of Leadership in the ELCA for All People*

Ms. Meuser reported that, in consultation with those submitting the resolution, a substitute resolution replaces the original second resolution. The committee recommended the approval of the substitute second resolution.

The assembly approved the following resolution:

**S. A. 09.05.05 Whereas Project Connect, an initiative of the Eastern Cluster of ELCA Seminaries, has been endeavoring to strengthen the efforts of the ELCA to encourage young adults (specifically those under the age of 30) to consider that God might be calling them to public ministry in the church; and**

**Whereas the Multicultural Planning group of Project Connect has identified several factors that inhibit this initiative from effectively strengthening the Ecology of Call in the ELCA as identified in the document, “Is There a Place?,” particularly as it pertains to increasing the number of young adults of color in rostered leadership; and**

**Whereas the scripture reminds us 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.” We are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with all of God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2); and**

**Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is 97% people of European descent even as a commitment was made to be a church comprised of at least 10% people of color by 1998, this has not yet happened. We are convinced that one of the overwhelming factors in this reality is racism – a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice; and**

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

**Whereas studies have shown that in its institutional form, racism creates a system that allows those of European descent to stand at the center and pushes all others to the margins. Due to racism people of European descent not only maintain their privilege and status unconsciously, but all people are pressured into remaining silent about the realities of race relations even in the church;**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod appoint an intentionally multicultural task force on racism, and that the task force in concert with the Candidacy Committee of the synod conduct a review of the factors inhibiting people of color from experiencing the fullness of leadership in this synod, and that the task force present a report and recommendations to the 2010 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Conference Deans of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourage congregations to participate in a study of the ELCA Social Statement, “Freed in Christ;” and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Assembly to direct the Vocation and Education Unit of the ELCA in consultation with the Multicultural Ministries program unit to conduct a review of recent studies of the factors inhibiting people of color from experiencing the fullness of leadership in this church; develop action steps and recommendations to address these factors; and report these to the Conference of Bishops and the ELCA Church Council by the end of 2010; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Assembly to direct the Director for Anti-Racism Commitment, Office of the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, to formulate a model of reconciliation that would be distributed to congregations, synods, and the churchwide expression for the purpose of abolishing racism by:**

- **Confessing and repenting from the sin of racism and its harmful effects on the Body of Christ;**
- **Forgiving ourselves for our own culpability and forgiving those who have participated knowingly and unknowingly in the sin of racism;**
- **Fostering dialogue between the diverse members of the church and acknowledging the gifts that can be exchanged;**
- **Reformulating views on who can serve, at what levels they can serve, and in what context they can serve;**
- **Providing a forum for leaders of color to communicate to the whole church their “real-life” experiences as it pertains to the Candidacy and Call process in the ELCA for the purpose of uncovering the extent to which people of color are excluded from full participation;**
- **Accepting the varied expressions of the ELCA practiced throughout the diverse communities of the church as equally valid expressions of the Lutheran faith.**

### *Lutheran Disaster Response*

Ms. Meuser reported that those, who submitted the third resolution, withdrew the third resolution and replaced it with the fourth resolution. The committee recommended the approval of the fourth resolution.

The assembly approved the fourth resolution:

**S. A. 09.05.06 Whereas the Church in Society Program Unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages us to be “a public church that witnesses boldly to God’s love for all that God has created,”**

**Whereas the ELCA over the last decade, has developed a nationally recognized and effective tool for bringing comfort, healing and renewal to those affected by disasters known as Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR),**

**Whereas thousands of ELCA members have been empowered to do God's work through their hands by being inspired, trained, and deployed by LDR and its affiliates to provide life transforming ministry to those affected by disaster and offering on-going assistance to those in need well after others have left the affected area,**

**Whereas disasters can affect anyone – but disproportionately they affect the disenfranchised due to the historic location of poorer communities in vulnerable areas, mobility restrictions, and the lack of access to other resources,**

**Whereas disaster preparedness and response offer opportunities for members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church to manifest faith in action by growing spiritually and in striving for justice,**

**Whereas disaster preparedness and response offers opportunity for the Church to bear witness to the love of Christ through diverse efforts but coordinated response,**

**Whereas the scientific community is raising the alarm that natural disasters will be increasing due to climate change and, as a nation since September 11, 2001, we have become more acutely aware of the potential for disaster created by acts of terror,**

**Whereas the deficits in our nation's response to Hurricane Katrina visibly demonstrated our need to be better prepared and that research has demonstrated that preparedness is a primary predictor of survival and recovery in disaster,**

**Whereas professionals for local preparedness and response are integral for leadership and coordination of Lutheran congregations, agencies, institutions, volunteers, and resources for best response,**

**Whereas the national Lutheran Disaster Response office provides national coordination but the primary preparedness and response happens through the LDR local affiliates, and congregations,**

**Whereas LDR lacks the resources to support preparedness plans that would allow the Lutheran Church to be more effective in ministering to people affected by disaster,**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorializes the ELCA in assembly to request that the Church in Society Program Unit create an advisory committee charged with crafting a clear vision for LDR to help frame the expectations and requirements of LDR affiliates throughout the country and that the committee continue to develop guidelines to help affiliates create standard preparedness and response tools.**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorializes the ELCA in assembly to reaffirm its commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness through the Church in Society Program Unit by empowering the advisory committee to work with the staff of LDR to improve its funding streams to assure sustainability of the ministry and the work of LDR and of LDR affiliates.**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorializes the ELCA in assembly to request the Conference of Bishops and the Church**

**in Society Program Unit to collaborate in facilitating national and local conversation with ecumenical partners to create national and local coordinated service relationships in disaster response.**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Lutheran Disaster Response use the technological tools available to it to develop, support and maintain a national network to connect those affiliates engaged in response with the resources (equipment, supplies, and work teams) throughout the national network.**

*Resolution requiring Two-thirds Majority on Rostering Proposal*

Ms. Meuser presented the fifth resolution, both as submitted and also as amended on the recommendation of the committee, with the concurrence of those who originally submitted it.

*The fifth resolution as amended is printed in **boldface** type.*

**S. A. 09.05.07 Whereas the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted “to direct the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church;” and**

**Whereas the Constitutional and Legal Committee of the ELCA Church Council recommended that “any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption;” and**

**Whereas the ELCA Church Council voted 19-10 to delete this provision and is recommending rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly which would require only a simple majority vote to change ELCA standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender sexual relationships; and**

**Whereas a two-thirds majority vote is usually required for major decisions including the adoption of an ELCA social statement and for amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws, so that such decisions will be accepted by the entire church as legitimate; and**

**Whereas the 2005 Churchwide Assembly in Orlando in 2005 required a two-thirds majority vote for a similar decision and this was widely accepted as a legitimate requirement; and**

**Whereas a decision to change church teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender sexual relationships holds the potential to be very divisive in many ELCA synods and congregations and to cause both membership and financial losses for synods and congregations; and**

**Whereas the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly will adopt its rules for the assembly and could set a two-thirds majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders;**

[THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to add the following provision to the rules of procedure for the assembly: “Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this Church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

Because the rules of the Churchwide Assembly will be determined before Synodical Memorials are considered, a memorial to the Assembly, while expressing the will of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Assembly, may not have the desired effect. To give the resolution the effect the proposers desire, if adopted, the Committee on Reference and Counsel, with the concurrence of the proposers recommends amendment of the resolution, as follows: The title of the resolution shall be “Resolution Requiring Two Thirds Majority on Rostering Proposal.” The resolution shall be amended to read:]

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly recommends that the ELCA Church Council add the following provision to the rules of procedure for the Assembly: "Any motion to come before the Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church's current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the Assembly for adoption."**

The Reverend Eric Shafer moved the recommended amendment, which was seconded. The assembly approved the recommended amendment.

The Reverend Richard Mathisen spoke in favor of requiring a two-thirds majority, noting that allowing the rostering of gays in committed relationships would represent a major change in ELCA policy and be potentially church dividing.

The Reverend Leah Schade spoke against requiring a two-thirds majority, stating, “What we are seeing unfolding [in the rostering of gays in committed relationships] is the civil rights issue of our generation. At stake,” she added, “is who has the power to interpret scripture, to say what sin is, and to enforce church policy.”

Mr. Robert Werner, Good Shepherd, Southampton, spoke in favor of the two-thirds majority, characterizing the ELCA as a body that “does not discourage fornication by anyone.”

The Reverend Nancy Wiseman spoke in favor of the two-thirds majority, expressing concern for “the slippery slope” that the ELCA would be entering if it changed its rostering policy. “If we do this,” she asked, “then what?”

The Reverend Margaret Ainslie spoke against the two-thirds majority, reminding the assembly how, at the time of its approval, some thought that women’s ordination would split the church.

The Reverend Michael Tavella, speaking in favor of the two-thirds majority, noted that what is substantive in this discussion are theological issues, not socio-political ones. He expressed exasperation over those in the ELCA power structure who, he believed, continue to push this issue.

The Reverend William Erat spoke against the two-thirds majority, challenging the presumption that gay people held power in this church and in this society.

The Reverend Paul Sorcek stated his opinion that a two-thirds majority would more clearly show the will of the church.

The Reverend Donald Wright spoke against the two-thirds majority, inviting the assembly to see beyond politics and to trust that the Holy Spirit is leading and guiding the church.

Pastor William Rex called for the question. The assembly voted to end further discussion.

When a voting member called for a division, the pages counted the votes “for” and “against” the resolution.

While the assembly waited for the results of the vote, the Reverends John Kerr and Leah Schade, synodical *Book of Faith Initiative* advocates, offered an overview of the effort.

The assembly defeated the resolution – 242 voted “against,” 202 voted “for.”

### **Greetings from the Deaconess Community**

Ms. Barbara Swartling, Executive Director of the Deaconess Community, ELCA, brought greetings and offered prayer.

*The assembly recessed for lunch.*

### **Friday Afternoon, May 8, 2009**

#### **FACE – “F” – F Faith Formation**

This presentation was prepared and led by the Faith Formation team: the Reverends Patricia Davenport, Regina Goodrich, Leslie Richard, and Patrick Seyler, Ms. Bobbie Hoffman, and Ms. Christina Turner.

Pastor Leslie Richard and Ms. Turner began by offering a dialogue between the head and the heart, noting that this is where the conversation on faith formation begins. Pastor Goodrich added that Lutheran theology appeals to both the head and the heart.

The team identified the following focal points as central to the task of faith formation:

- To foster passionate and conscious relationships with Jesus Christ, both individually and collectively;
- To promote spiritual practices and guidance inspired by Scripture and framed by Lutheran theology; and
- To create contextualized and meaningful worship.

Pastor Seyler invited voting members to discuss the following questions in small groups:

- What do you do on a regular basis that really feeds your spirit?
- Who do you know that can teach you something about the Christian faith and a closer relation to Jesus (besides your pastor)?
- What would you love to learn about that would help you deepen your spiritual life?
- What are you sensing that God is calling you to do in the area of faith formation and spirituality?

### **The First Report of the Committee on Elections**

The Reverend Rebecca Eisenhart, the chair of the Committee on Elections, explained the election procedure. The assembly then proceeded to cast votes for the first ballots of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> tickets.

### **The Report of the ELCA Representative**

Indicating that, before his election as the Secretary of the ELCA, he had been a litigation attorney, Mr. David Swartling described his service as Secretary as “an encore career,” which has taken him on a multi-dimensional odyssey, manifesting itself in various facets: among them, vocational, geographic, climatological, and culinary. He said, “I love to visit synods, and to see and hear about ministry as it happens on the ground.” Describing the three expressions of the ELCA, congregation, synod, and churchwide organization, he told the assembly, “You are part of all of them. Each of them is the church but not the whole church.” Through these three expressions, he added, “we can do more together than we can do separately. We have the opportunity to do great things together.”

Mr. Swartling then introduced a video message from the Reverend Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA. “I am convinced,” Bishop Hanson said, “that we are called to witness to our faith not in fear but in hope. We need to be mindful of what fear can do to us. Nostalgia for the past numbs us to the present.” Describing the people of the ELCA as standing at the crossroads of fear and hope, he told the assembly, “We as the ELCA have so much to offer ... Let us live as messengers of God, not in isolation but among God’s faithful people, bearing Christ’s presence.” At this point, Bishop Hanson invited voting members to lay a hand on the person sitting next to them and offer prayer.

Following Bishop Hanson’s message, Mr. Swartling commended this synod for the financial and volunteer support that it gives to the ELCA. He described some of the issues with which this year’s Churchwide Assembly will deal, notably the proposed social statement on human sexuality and the recommendation on rostering gays in committed relationships. He said that the recommendation offers structural flexibility while acknowledging the bound consciences of all. “Don’t let the Churchwide Assembly divert your attention from the multi-dimensional ministry of the ELCA,” he added.

He thanked the assembly for their prayers of personal support and for the ELCA. “It is an honor and a delight to be with you on behalf of 4.7 million Lutherans,” he concluded.

## **FACE – “A” – Faith in Action**

This presentation was prepared and led by the Faith in Action team: the Reverends William Erat, Patricia Neale, Leah Schade, Serena Sellers, and Larry Smoose, Ms. Elaine Keller, Ms. Marissa Harris, and Ms. Susan Pursch.

“We asked you about God’s dream for [this synod],” Pastor Neale stated and then she listed some of the responses gathered at the conference meetings last fall: build community, overcome racism, love each other more, serve the poor, simple greener living and lifestyles, and working together in both an ecumenical and interfaith capacity to transform the world. She noted that a superhero would be needed to accomplish these goals, adding that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, “we are all superheroes” (Acts 1:8).

She indicated that the synod’s Green Team is looking for people of knowledge and passion, who are concerned about the stewardship of God’s creation.

At this point, Batman and Robin, played by Pastors Smoose and Schade, appeared and highlighted God’s call “to fight for peace, justice, and the Kingdom of God.”

Ms. Keller invited congregations to consider how they might support Lutheran Disaster Response efforts.

Pastor Erat described God’s dream as “the new stuff that we’re not doing.” That stuff, he said, might include the formation of weatherization teams, the development of community gardens, and the organization of “a Lutheran senior corps.”

Ms. Pursch invited voting members to discuss the following questions in small groups:

- What do you love to give away and/or share that makes a difference in the life of your neighbor?
- Who do you admire in your congregation or community that is making a difference in the world?
- What is happening in your community or in our world that is breaking your heart?
- What are you sensing that God is calling you to do in the area of faith in action?

In closing, Ms. Harris invited voting members to visit the tables of various organizations in the Mission Center.

## **The Second Report of the Committee on Elections**

Pastor Eisenhart reported the results of the first ballot of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> tickets.

### **Ticket 1, Vice President (One to be elected for a term ending 2013)**

478 total ballots cast, 1 invalid ballot, 477 valid ballots cast, 239 votes needed to elect

Patricia Robinson, 270; Barry Stock, 207

The bishop declared Ms. Robinson elected as Vice President.

**Ticket 2, Synod Council, Clergy** (Three to be elected to terms ending 2012)  
480 total ballots cast, no invalid ballots, 480 valid ballots cast, 241 votes needed to elect

Regina Goodrich, 359; Lee Miller, 276; Charles Leonard, 224; Diedone Panzo Diela, 219; David Lutcher, 155; William Rex, 109

The bishop declared Pastors Regina Goodrich and Lee Miller elected to the Synod Council, and that the names of Pastors Leonard and Diela would appear on the second ballot of Ticket 2.

**Ticket 9, Synod Council, Youth Representative** (One to be elected to a term ending 2010)  
480 total ballots cast, 1 invalid ballot, 479 valid ballots, 240 votes needed to elect

Micah Krey, 255; Helen Squitieri, 224

The bishop declared Mr. Krey elected to the Synod Council.

### **Greetings from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia**

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

*The assembly recessed for dinner, conversation, and the opportunity to visit the mission center.*

### **Friday Evening, May 8, 2009**

#### **The Second Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel**

##### ***A Memorial Concerning Human Sexuality***

Ms. Meuser presented the seventh resolution. The committee recommended its approval.

**S. A. 09.05.08 Whereas the Task Force for ELCA Studies in Sexuality has earnestly studied and struggled with these matters for eight years, and their work models and invites mutually respectful dialogue about sexuality throughout this church; and**

**Whereas the proposed Social Statement powerfully proclaims this church's teachings on trust, love, and service to the neighbor as the proper foundation of sexuality, while honestly recognizing that there is no consensus regarding same-gender relationships or the rostered ministry of people in them; and**

**Whereas the ELCA Church Council, at its March 2009 meeting, voted by an overwhelming margin to recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly the proposed Social Statement on**

**Human Sexuality, its implementing resolutions, and a Recommendation on Ministry Policies; and**

**Whereas the Recommendation on Ministry Policies allows a way to maintain a uniform standard and process for candidacy and call throughout this church while respecting the bound consciences of all; and**

**Whereas the time has come for both those in this church who support publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships and those who oppose them to join together in creating a means to continue living together faithfully in the midst of disagreement;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, meeting in Assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly as follows:**

- 1. To adopt the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and its implementing resolutions, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council.**
- 2. To adopt the four parts of the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council.**
- 3. To adopt the following additional implementing resolution of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality: “To direct appropriate churchwide units to develop, in consultation with those most affected, resources for congregations or faith-communities and ministers that choose to do so to support same-gender relationships by holding them publicly accountable in the exchange of promises of lifelong love and fidelity.”**
- 4. To adopt the following: “Resolved that the Vocation and Education unit be directed to develop, and the Church Council be directed to approve, procedures for the reception from another Lutheran church body and for the expedited reinstatement to the roster or to candidacy of those whose rostering was precluded by previous policies on same-gender relationships.”**

Among those participating in the discussion were the following:

The Reverend Bruce Todd, speaking in favor of the resolution, challenged heterosexuals to carry one another’s burdens by supporting full inclusion of gays in the life of the church.

Mr. Stephen Spry, St. Luke, Ferndale, spoke against the resolution, stating that the recommendation on ministry policies confuses social justice with the gay issue. “Homosexuality is sin,” he added.

Mr. Clyde Beury, Resurrection, Yardley, spoke in favor of the resolution, urging voting members to love their neighbors as they love themselves.

Pastor Paul Sorcek, speaking against the resolution, stated that there is no basis in Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions for the recommendation on ministry policies. “[The recommendation] is church divisive,” he added, “and not led by the Holy Spirit.”

Mr. Robert Werner, Good Shepherd, Southampton, speaking against the resolution, warned of changing the underlying fabric of the family.

Mr. Ron Madison, St. Peter, Philadelphia, spoke in favor of the resolution, lamenting that there is too much hate in the world today.

Mr. Fred Wolfe, University/Incarnation, Philadelphia, speaking in favor of the resolution, said that the assembly must pass the resolution “if we want to become the Kingdom of God on earth.”

Pastor Leah Schade spoke in favor of the resolution, decrying the double standard used to define sin.

Pastor Michael Tavella, speaking against the resolution, said that the church would lose integrity if it approved “local option.”

Pastor Donna Wright spoke in favor of the resolution, inviting voting members to read the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and urging them “to make room for the service of gays and lesbians as rostered leaders.”

Mr. Rodman Rothermel, speaking in favor of the resolution, urged voting members not to confuse promiscuity and homosexuality.

Pastor Lee Miller spoke in favor of the resolution, stating, “My sex life has nothing to do with my Lord and my church. Stay out of my bedroom, and I’ll stay out of yours.” He invited the assembly to keep mission central and to remember the poor.

The Reverend Craig Landis, speaking in favor of the resolution, described the exclusion of gays in committed relationships from rostered leadership as arrogant. “Gender is about reproduction,” he added, “and love is about relationship. Where God is, there is love.”

Mr. Mark Ristine, Gloria Dei, Huntingdon Valley, spoke in favor of the resolution, stating that God does not draw a line on marriage – only humans do.

The Reverend Sandra Brown called for the question. The assembly voted to end further discussion.

The assembly approved the resolution. The Reverend Mary Konopka abstained.

### **The Third Report of the Committee on Elections**

The assembly proceeded to cast votes for the second ballot of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ticket and the first ballots of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> tickets.

### **FACE – “C” – *Connections and Communications***

This presentation was prepared and led by the Connections and Communications team: the Reverends Stuart Luce and Carlton Rodgers, Mr. Robert Fisher and Mr. Joshua Kelly.

Pastor Luce introduced a series of video segments in which voting members responded to the question: What do you wish the world knew about Jesus? He then asked the questions: Why is it difficult for our congregations to connect Jesus and the world? What does it take to be a connecting church?

Mr. Kelly described how the synod might “work, connect, and collaborate better” through the Internet, e-mail, and Facebook. He illustrated the use of Facebook by creating a page for Bishop Burkat.

Pastor Rodgers invited voting members to discuss the following questions in small groups:

- How do you connect and communicate with your family, friends, and others?
- What is the most effective communication tool your congregation uses on a regular basis to connect with your neighbors?
- What form of communication would you like your congregation to learn more about an/or have access to for the sake of sharing the Good News with others?
- What are you sensing that God is calling you to do in your congregation for the sake of connecting and communicating better with your neighbors?

Mr. Fisher asked voting members to complete a survey, so that the team may find out what voting members need to learn.

## **Worship**

The worship service was Taize Evening Prayer, led by Pastors Patricia Davenport, Regina Goodrich, Leslie Richard, and Patrick Seyler, and Ms. Bobbie Hoffman. It concluded with the lighting of votive candles by those who wished to do so. Ms. Kristine Lang offered a cello solo.

*The assembly recessed.*

## **Saturday Morning, May 9, 2009**

### **Worship**

The worship service featured contemporary music, video segments, and a dialogue, attempting to provide “a Philadelphia re-thinking of Paul’s trip to Athens,” found in Acts 17.

“We are called to proclaim the Name of Jesus,” preached the Reverend Matthew Staniz, “and to engage in conversations with the world. Because the world is full of idols and god substitutes, our experience of Christ, crucified and risen, compels to share the gospel ... Jesus never told the world to find their way into the church,” he reminded the assembly. “Jesus told his followers to go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel.”

Pastor Staniz then identified two temptations that separate the gospel and the world: (1) conversation above us and (2) conversation beneath us. He described “conversation above us” as thinking of the gospel as a superior argument. “Connect the story of Jesus to the world,” he said, “and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.” He described “conversation beneath us” as Christians isolating themselves from others and letting others find the gospel for themselves.

Pastor Staniz told the assembly that, like Paul’s experience in Athens, “there is a marketplace waiting for you. Look around – there is a conversation waiting for you, not above us, not beneath us, but where we are called to live.”

### **The Fourth Report of the Committee on Elections**

Mr. Robert Hensil reported the results of the second ballot for the 2<sup>nd</sup> ticket, and the first ballot for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> tickets.

**Ticket 2, Synod Council, Clergy** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012)  
368 total ballots cast, no invalid ballots, 368 valid ballots, 185 votes needed to elect

Diedone Panzo Diela, 190; Charles Leonard, 178

The bishop declared Pastor Diela elected to the Synod Council.

**Ticket 3, Synod Council, Lay Man at Large** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012)  
362 total ballots cast, 2 invalid ballots, 360 valid ballots, 181 votes needed to elect

Scott Nugent, 152; Rodman Rothermel, 130; Robert Bruns, 78

The bishop declared that the names of Mr. Nugent and Mr. Rothermel would appear on the second ballot for the 3<sup>rd</sup> ticket.

**Ticket 4, Synod Council, Lay Woman at Large** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012)  
366 total ballots cast, no invalid ballots, 366 valid ballots, 184 votes needed to elect

Jane Roper, 240; Sara Barber, 126

The bishop declared Sister Jane Roper elected to the Synod Council.

The assembly proceeded to cast votes for the second ballot of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ticket.

### **FACE – “E” – *Equipping and Developing***

This presentation was prepared and led by the Equipping and Developing team: the Reverends Albert Douglass, Christopher Franz, Lawrence Hand, Mary Konopka, Larry Smoose, and Nancy Wiseman, and Mr. John Lewis.

Pastor Douglass introduced the team and said, “We see ourselves as disciples serving God by listening to what God is saying through you and using the gifts God gives us to do what God asks.”

Pastor Wiseman shared some of the responses from participants in last fall’s conference gatherings:

- We need to equip our people,
- Be able and willing to change as necessary,
- Lead people into deeper relationships with Christ,
- Provide leadership in the community for social justice, and
- Challenge ourselves, then the world, to listen and do.

Noting that the assets in this synod are amazing, Pastor Konopka expressed the team’s interest in developing “a leadership training model.” In this regard, she added, the *diakonia* program is already available.

Pastor Smoose discussed the possibility of establishing and implementing a process for mutual congregational assessment.

Pastor Franz indicated that the opportunity for serious change in congregational life might be made available through a “transformational leadership” program.

Pastor Wiseman discussed the possibility of identifying and showcasing a variety of creative models for emerging missional needs, and broadcasting them for implementation. She used the “house church” as an example.

Mr. Lewis described the possibility of on-line courses and communications.

Pastor Hand identified Mission Insight as “the best demographic resource available to faith communities.”

The assembly then discussed the following questions in small groups:

- How are people in your congregation equipped as leaders for ministry in the congregation and for ministry in everyday life?
- What is the most exciting thing your congregation has done in the past year?
- Who lives in your neighborhood that needs what you have to share?
- What are you sensing that God is calling you to do back home to help your congregation do a better job of bringing new people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ?

### **The Reception of Saints United Lutheran Church, Philadelphia**

Bishop Burkat invited the Reverends Patricia Davenport and David Hinkelman, along with the members in attendance from Saints United Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, to come forward.

Pastor Davenport described the formation of Saints United as the bringing together of Trinity, Philadelphia (Holme Circle), and Redeemer, Philadelphia (Mayfair).

Bishop Burkat led the order for the reception of a new congregation.

The members of Saint United presented to the synod a gift of \$5,000. Pastor Davenport presented to the congregation a gift of a framed print.

Pastor Hinkelman described the process of forming the new congregation as one in which the participants asked themselves daily, “What does God want us to do today?”

He thanked the Reverend Janet Corpus who, as an Assistant to the Bishop, led the two congregations in their early conversations. He also thanked the congregation’s three former vicars for their leadership.

### **The Bishop’s Address**

Bishop Burkat began her address with prayer. She then asked, “What does Craigslist, Wikipedia, e-Bay, and AA have in common? They are all self-organizing, self-regulating, self-initiating, and self-monitoring networks,” she continued. “They are harnessing the power of human connection. They are capitalizing on the desire of humans to be in communication and connection with one another. These four social networks are less about *what they are*, than *who they reach*, and, in that, there is a lesson for us as the Church.”

She cited John 17:20-21, 23, where Jesus prays for God’s purpose to be accomplished on earth through us, “I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” Repeating the assembly theme, *God’s has a plan – We’re it*, she said, “The gospel is spread and extended through relationships. The metaphor of FACE is a spiritual one. God [is] in the FACE of Christ – Christ meets us FACE to FACE. We FACE our own sin and we make an about-FACE in order to be the FACE of Christ to the world.”

She stated, “This assembly is not about introducing Facebook. Next year, next month, there will be a new tool, a new gizmo, and a new instrument for communication. No, this assembly is about listening to God and discerning God’s plan for us, and then doing it ...

“God is a missionary God,” she continued, “not just sitting around [and] waiting for something to happen here on earth, or watching from afar, but engaging us so that the world will be blessed, and all creation will be connected to God ...

“Once we realize it is always about relationships,” she explained, “people can use whatever tools they need to accomplish God’s plan – writing, e-mailing, cell-calling, face-booking, twittering, all in order to meet up and gather together to accomplish God’s plan – connecting in order to be released ...

“I may sound like I know where this is going,” she acknowledged, “but I honestly don’t. I am a woman of a certain age, and this is new to me too. It’s just that I am trying to be attentive to where God is leading me [and] leading us. We are breaking a barrier, and this global economic crisis has hopefully begun to release us from dependence on material resources alone to see God’s direction, and the abundance of resources we already have, right here, right now ...

“Some of you are wondering what is next – four directions, OK, what’s the plan? What happens after this assembly? I don’t know,” she admitted, “but let’s engage in this together ... we pray that, when we equip and release the people of God, we exponentially increase our capacity to do God’s work. These are turbulent times in our church, in our culture, [and] in our world.”

Making a reference to the shaking and turbulence experienced by pilot Chuck Yeager as he broke the sound barrier, she concluded, “History shows us that God is faithful through all the shaking – and turbulence will not throw God’s reign off course.”

### **The Report of the Synod Council**

Bishop Burkat congratulated Ms. Patricia Robinson, Vice President of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, on her re-election, citing her incredible support, visionary leadership, friendship, and involvement in the ELCA.

Vice President Robinson thanked Bishop Burkat and the synod staff for their many efforts. She then offered highlights of the Synod Council’s activities since the last assembly:

- Synod Council members attended a special meeting on June 24, 2008, and participated in the strategic planning process as developed by the deans, staff, and facilitation team.
- The Synod Council affirmed a partnership compact between Liberty Lutheran Services and Lutheran Congregational Services.
- The Synod Council approved the temporary re-location of the synod office to the Weidemann Center on the Philadelphia seminary campus.
- The Synod Council designated October 5, 2008, as SEKUCo Sunday.
- The Synod Council added a non-voting representative from Men in Mission.
- The Synod Council recommended to the Synod Assembly a resolution making this synod “a *Book of Faith* synod.”
- The Synod Council approved a *Memorandum of Understanding for the Lutheran Episcopal Campus Ministry at Temple University*.

She concluded that, despite the challenges facing the synod at this time, God’s grace remains faithful, making it possible “for us to do the things that God is calling us to do.”

### ***Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls)***

Bishop Burkat announced that the assembly would consider the appeal of Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls). She asked Secretary Miller to review the rules of procedure that the assembly approved for consideration of this appeal.

Secretary Miller read aloud **S13.24** of the synod constitution and explained that the Synod Council invoked **S13.24** on June 7, 2007, placing Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), under synodical administration (**S. C. 07.06.11**), and adding that the Synod Council reaffirmed its decision on April 2, 2009 (**S. C. 09.04.02**). On June 7, 2007, the Synod Council appointed for trustees, Pastors Lee Miller and Raymond Miller, Ms. Tracey Beasley, and Mr. Lawrence House, AIM, to function, in effect, as a congregation council. At no time, in the past two years, has Redeemer recognized the Synod Council's authority to place the congregation under synodical administration nor permitted the trustees to exercise their duties as trustees.

Secretary Miller stated that, according to **S13.24**, Redeemer has the right to appeal. He added that Redeemer had the opportunity to appeal at last year's Synod Assembly but declined to do so, indicating that they would appeal at this year's Synod Assembly.

Secretary Miller reviewed the rules for the appeal procedure approved by the Synod Assembly on Friday morning (**S. A. 09.05.02**).

Bishop Burkat then asked Vice President Robinson to take the chair during the appeal process. The Reverend Ellen Meissgeier, Dean of the Lower Montgomery Conference, served as acting Secretary during the appeal process.

*The minutes of the appeal process were based on notes provided by Pastor Meissgeier:*

### **Redeemer's Presentation**

Former Redeemer president, Mr. Stanley Meena, spoke on behalf of the congregation, requesting the assembly to overrule the decision made by the Synod Council. Making use of a digital presentation, Mr. Meena shared some basic statistics about the congregation, stating it was 118 years old as a congregation and has occupied the current building for 100 years. He went on to say that the congregation has not had a pastor for ten years, but has been able to develop strong outreach and able leadership. Redeemer is fast growing, diverse, and multi-lingual, and has increased its membership six-fold in the last ten years.

Mr. Meena reported that the former supply pastor, the Reverend Karl Schneider, sent a letter to the synod, complaining about the lack of Holy Communion at Easter. Reviewing **S13.24** phrase-by-phrase, he attempted to explain why he felt that the synod acted too quickly in placing the congregation under synodical administration.

On November 1, 2007, he reported, Redeemer presented to Bishop Burkat a carefully structured plan "which has been left out of every report." At that time, he said, Redeemer had 72 members and wanted to call a particular pastor. By placing the congregation under synodical administration, the synod has hampered Redeemer's growth. Citing ELCA statistics, he continued, Redeemer is a mid-size congregation, noting that 50% of ELCA congregations are smaller than Redeemer.

He challenged the "waste and deterioration" line of **S13.24**, and said the congregation maintains the property and has entered into a major renovation project. He claimed that the synod wanted

to take possession of the congregation's property in order to close the congregation. He asserted the congregation's right to hire an attorney.

He accused the synod of trying to compromise Redeemer's right to appeal by saying that the appeal was not filed properly. At last year's synod assembly, he said, the trustees presented a report that had not been shared with Redeemer, and that the report was filled with inaccuracies. As a result, Redeemer's right to appeal has been compromised by synod's control of the process and by suing Redeemer and two of its officers. "How can the future of a congregation be decided in fifteen minutes?" he asked. The congregation feels that the criteria for **S13.24** has not been met and indicated that the congregation has tried for the past 17 months to resolve the matter with the synod.

Mr. Meena further reported that he wrote to Presiding Bishop Hanson, who said Redeemer should try to work out its problems with the synod. He then presented and corrected "a litany of rumors":

1. Redeemer members tried to have the bishop arrested; they did not. The synod came with a lawyer and a locksmith to take away their church.
2. Redeemer squandered its money; the trustees gave no supporting evidence of this. Stewardship is strong at Redeemer. The congregation is meeting its budget.
3. Redeemer is adversarial; they are not, and have tried to work with the bishop and synod.
4. Redeemer leaders have failed to follow their own constitution; this only took place in 2005-2006 when they were exploring a relationship with Epiphany, Philadelphia (Roxborough).

*During the presentation of the second rumor, the fifteen minutes of time allocated for Redeemer's presentation expired. The assembly approved an extension of Redeemer's time by five minutes.*

Mr. Meena closed by proposing that the synod remedy the situation by providing a pastor for a three-year term and considering a process of "truth and reconciliation."

### **The Trustees' Presentation**

Pastor Lee Miller stated that on June 7, 2007, the Synod Council, having been assessed of Redeemer's plight, its fragile condition, and its diminished attendance, invoked **S13.24**, placing the congregation under synodical administration. On July 22, 2007, the trustees met with members of Redeemer. Pastor Davenport and two of the trustees, on separate occasions, later worshiped at Redeemer.

During 2005 and 2006, according to documents provided by Redeemer, he continued, the congregation received two new members, removed four members, and reported average worship attendance as 13. At the end of 2007, the congregation reported its membership as 27.

Pastor Lee Miller listed a number of violations of Redeemer's constitution made by Redeemer leaders: among them, a member of council serving on the audit committee, and the same person simultaneously filling both the positions of secretary and vice president. Ms. Tracey Beasley

added that checks were written in large amounts to individuals with no explanations, and that the congregation's total income decreased by 50% in the past two years.

On February 24, 2008, Pastor Lee Miller reported, Mr. Stanley Meena and Ms. Judy Gotwald cancelled a meeting that the bishop scheduled with the congregation and denied the bishop, and the trustees, access to the building, threatening to have them arrested if they did not depart from a public sidewalk in front of the building. In regard to the "threat of arrest" incident, he asked the assembly to decide who was telling the truth. On February 28, 2008, he added, Redeemer filed a lawsuit against the synod, asking the court to reverse the decision of the Synod Council. The court refused to do so and dismissed the case.

In June of 2008, Mr. Lawrence House, AIM, reported that he attended a meeting at which twelve Redeemer members voted to appeal Synod Council's decision. He noticed that, since in both February and March of 2008, Redeemer was reporting a membership of 72, there was not a quorum at the meeting.

In April of 2009, Pastor Lee Miller concluded, Secretary Raymond Miller sent Mr. Meena a letter informing him about the appeal procedure. Redeemer's attorney reported to the synod's attorney two days later that Redeemer would not appeal. Subsequently Redeemer decided to appeal.

### **Assembly Discussion**

The Reverend Roy Almquist indicated that the Redeemer situation took up a lot of his time when he served as the synod's bishop. At that time, he discovered the irresponsible signing of checks. Redeemer voted to close, but then postponed its action. The Synod Council placed the congregation under synodical administration and the synod staff tried to work with the congregation.

Pastor Bruce Todd shared that 18 members joined St. Peter, Lafayette Hill, from Redeemer. When he asked why they were transferring, they said, "Only a couple people are making the decisions at Redeemer."

Pastor Karl Schneider said that he was a supply pastor at Redeemer in 2006. During the Ash Wednesday service, he reported that he wanted to include Holy Communion, but Ms. Judy Gotwald said, "We never did it that way before." He also reported that the lights went out during the Easter breakfast because of a poor electrical system. He raised the question about Holy Communion at Easter, but was again told by Ms. Gotwald that it was not done. Two weeks later, Mr. Meena told Pastor Schneider that his services as a supply pastor were no longer needed.

Mr. Robert Werner, Good Shepherd, Southampton, asked what the checks were for and commented that lots of churches are suffering from declining revenue. Ms. Beasley said that some checks were for the congregation's attorney, and some had no indication, only amounts. Pastor Lee Miller responded that the decline was not a recent but an ongoing pattern.

Ms. Mary Sharp Lewis, former president of Redeemer said, “Judy Gotwald was driving [the congregation] from the back seat, and the fight [over her control of the congregation] got in the way of ministry.”

The Reverend Susan Ericsson explained that, when she served on the bishop’s staff, she spent a lot of time on the Redeemer situation. The synod tried a lot of creative strategies. She mentioned a list of energetic pastors who tried to help, the Reverends Harvey Davis, Jesse Brown, and Robert Matthias, but that the congregation was mired in dysfunction and fiscal irresponsibility. She closed by candidly saying that Bishop Burkat would not ask the assembly to close a vibrant congregation.

Mr. Alexander Jenkins, a Synod Council member, said that the Synod Council prayed about this situation a lot and he encouraged the assembly to vote yes.

Pastor Mary Konopka said that she visited Redeemer twice while off recovering from illness. At one service, there were 7 in attendance, and at the other, 15. No one spoke to her at either service. She commended the Synod Council for their work in this difficult situation.

Pastor Stuart Luce said, “If the synod tied to close my congregation, my members would be here in force. Could we ask the members of Redeemer to stand?” In response to Pastor Luce’s request, two people stood.

Mr. Hudson Ayo, who introduced himself as the new president of Redeemer, said that the congregation had received little help or support from the synod. Two pastors were taken away from them, so why are the doors being shut when their numbers are going up? If the congregation had proper support from the synod, most of the problems would go away.

Based on her legal experience, Pastor Donna Wright clarified that the term “waste” means that assets have not been used appropriately and does not necessarily refer to property being allowed to deteriorate. She said that she saw “a red flag” when the congregation’s endowment went down \$100,000 in 2005-2006 during a time when many others was making money.

One of the voting members from Redemption, Philadelphia, moved to amend the appeal procedure by allowing five minutes for prayer before voting. The assembly defeated the motion.

The Reverend Paul Beck called a point of order when Mr. Meena, Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), attempted to speak again. Pastor Beck said he had been next in line to speak. Vice President Robinson gave Pastor Beck the opportunity to speak. Pastor Beck asked Redeemer to submit to synodical administration, adding, “God can’t work his plan under these circumstances.”

Mr. William Bleam, St. Paul’s Applebachsville, requested prayer before voting. Pastor Serena Sellers offered prayer.

The assembly approved the following resolution:

**S. A. 09.05.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly sustains the decision (S. C. 07.06.11) of the Synod Council to invoke S13.24, taking charge and control of the property of Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), and to hold, manage, and convey the same on behalf of the synod.**

*At this point, Secretary Miller re-assumed the duties of the Secretary.*

Referring to the bylaw regarding youth and young adult representation at synod assemblies, approved by the 2008 assembly (S. A. 08.05.08), the Secretary Miller announced that, based on an unofficial count, 55 youth and young adults were registered as lay voting members at this assembly; last year there had been six. The assembly applauded with delight.

Mr. Andrew Barber, a youth ministry representative, offered prayer.

*The assembly recessed for lunch.*

### **Saturday afternoon, May 9, 2009**

#### **The Consideration of the 2010 Budget**

Ms. Janet Neff, the chair of the Finance Committee, began by observing that “all of us have [fiscal] joys and fears,” whether at the synodical level or the congregational level. She reviewed the proposed budget for 2010, noting the projected income of \$2,876,000 and the projected expenses of \$3,167,175. She encouraged congregations to increase their partnership support if that is possible. She reported that the anticipated deficit of \$291,175 would be funded by the Fund for Mission.

Ms. Neff presented the following resolution:

**S. A. 09.05.10 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Assembly approves the 2010 budget, with expenses in the amount of \$3,167,175, as recommended by the Synod Council.**

Mr. Robert Werner, Good Shepherd, Southampton, questioned whether an increase of \$50,000 in “congregations/partnership support” was realistic in the current economic situation. Ms. Neff responded that the committee hoped that the economic situation would improve by the time that the 2010 budget takes effect.

The assembly approved the resolution.

Mr. Tom Conroy, Reformation, Media, presented the following resolution, which the assembly approved:

**S. A. 09.05.11 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council set a special day for an offering by the synod’s congregations to help defray the anticipated 2010 synodical deficit.**

#### **Recognition of Congregations Celebrating Major Anniversaries**

Bishop Burkat recognized the following congregations celebrating major anniversaries: 75<sup>th</sup>, St. John, Folcroft; and 50<sup>th</sup>, St. Andrew, Audubon, and St. Michael, Unionville.

### **Recognition of Those Pastors Celebrating Major Anniversaries of Ordination**

Bishop Burkat recognized the following pastors celebrating major anniversaries of ordination: 25<sup>th</sup>, the Reverend Frederick DeRasmo; 40<sup>th</sup>, the Reverends Burlington Latshaw, Charles Eiss, Gordon Lathrop, Charles S. Miller, and William Phillips; 50<sup>th</sup>, the Reverends John Kinard, Walter Reimet, and Daniel Shook; and 65<sup>th</sup>, the Reverend John Kaufmann. Pastors Kinard, Reimet, and Shook, in turn, brought greetings.

### **The Fifth Report of the Committee on Elections**

Mr. Robert Hensil reported the results of the second ballot of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ticket.

**Ticket 3, Synod Council, Lay Man at Large** (One to be elected for a term ending 2012)  
439 total ballots cast, no invalid ballots, 439 valid ballots, 220 votes needed to elect

Scott Nugent, 289; Rodman Rothermel, 150

The bishop declared Mr. Nugent elected to the Synod Council.

### **Introduction of the Candidates for Rostered Leadership**

Pastors Lawrence Hand and David Hinkelman expressed thanks to the members of the Candidacy Committee, and introduced this year's candidates for ordination and certification: Ms. Kathleen Afflerbach, Ms. Diane Gilbert, Pastor Regina Goodrich, Mr. David Mueller, Ms. Stina Schaeffer, Ms. Josephine Wright, Pastor Christopher Duckworth (not present), and Ms. Marjorie Dean (not present). They also introduced candidates approved by other synods' candidacy committees but assigned to this synod: Mr. Benjamin Krey and Ms. Anita London.

Bishop Burkat took a moment to thank those who planned and assisted with the synod office's relocation to the Philadelphia seminary campus.

### **The Third Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel**

#### *The Resolution of Thanks*

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

**S. A. 09.05.12 Whereas it is right at all times and in all places to give thanks for God's grace and daily bread and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit which provide for a faithful servant church in a hungry world, and**

**Whereas the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod has found this 2009 Assembly a good time to be the church and has experienced the blessings of many gifted leaders, willing workers and volunteers, and**

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

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT we [the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly] offer our appreciation and thankful applause:**

**To all those who prepared for, planned and arranged the countless interconnecting details for this Assembly: Assistant to the Bishop for Global Vision and Events, Joanne Carlson, and all those at the epicenter of organization, youth from Helping Hands Day, Registrar Ginny Bailey, Floor Page Coordinator Jessica Smith and all assembly floor pages, Parliamentarian Pastor Larry Smoose, Ken Selinger and staff from CCI Communications, and Pastor Susan Lang for their efforts with 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, who planned the Friday morning Service of Holy Communion, to the Faith Formation Team for their leadership of Friday evening worship, to the Connecting Team for Saturday morning worship leadership, and for all leaders, preachers and musicians who opened our lips and our minds to embrace God's Word and beckon God's Spirit; to the Committee of Elections and the Committee on Reference and Counsel;**

**To the ELCA representative, Mr. David Swartling, Secretary of the ELCA;**

**To Bishop Claire S. Burkat, for her faithful service to the body of Christ in this Synod and in the ELCA and for her bold vision that for the greater glory of God "we can do more together than we can ever do alone;"**

**To the Synod Council and Officers of the Synod, Vice President Patricia Robinson, Secretary Pastor Raymond Miller, Treasurer Richard Reimet, the Pastoral staff: Pastor Patricia Davenport, Pastor Larry Hand, and Pastor Serena Sellers, Program staff, Robert Fisher, Molly Beck Dean, Peg Cameron; Administrative staff: Judy Koenig, Cynta Outterbridge, Ginny Bailey, Debbie Perez, Jessica McAlister, Pastor Regina Goodrich, and the synod's inimitable Director of Operations, Janine Niwinski;**

**To all our partners and companions in Christ, especially in the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania and the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Czech Republic;**

**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!* God has a plan!**

Mr. Robert Fisher took a moment to explain how voting members could access assembly information at the synod website.

### **The Report of the Registrar**

Ms. Virginia Bailey presented the final report of the registrar:

**Total voting membership, 623**; total number of pastors, 260; total number of lay voting members, 363; total number of voting members who are “persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English,” 111; percent of “persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English” in the total voting membership, 18%; number of female lay voting members, 318; number of male lay voting members, 319

**Total registered (actually in attendance) voting membership, 565**; total number of pastors registered, 209; total number of lay voting members registered, 356; total number of “persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English” registered, 111; percent of “persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English” in the total registered voting membership, 20%

**Total number of visitors and guests registered, 88**

### **The Order for the Closing of the Assembly**

Bishop Burkat reported that the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly was scheduled for May 7-8, 2010.

Bishop Burkat recognized the Synod Council members whose terms were ending at this assembly, installed the Synod Council members elected at this assembly, and led the blessing of this synod’s voting members attending the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

She then led the order for the Closing of the Synod Assembly.

The twenty-second annual Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod assembly adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller  
Secretary  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

