

## **CANDIDACY COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE 2018 SEPA SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

The ELCA candidacy process is meant to be a welcoming and joyful opportunity for people to discern how to serve in and through the church. It is a formalized, yet personally and relationally focused, journey that assists people in discernment for church leadership. Discernment is a life-long process which continually assesses how God may be calling a person into ministry. It is a means for determining who might serve as a rostered leader, as well as who might serve in a variety of lay leadership roles in the church or in the world. The candidacy process is successful when a person graciously discovers, through the nurturance of mentors, congregations, and others how and where to serve according to the Spirit's leading. ---Taken from the current *ELCA Candidacy Manual*.

Those called to be rostered leaders of our church begin their journey in local congregations where fellow members and the called leaders of the congregation nurture and encourage them. These future leaders then formally enter the Candidacy Process through the Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Synod. Guided by seminary faculty and staff, as well as, the Candidacy Committee and with the input of Field Education Supervisors, Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisors and internship congregations, a candidate comes to serve as a Minister of Word and Service (Deacon) or a Minister of Word and Sacrament (Ordained Pastor).

The ELCA has created a Churchwide process for candidacy to provide consistency for all candidates in the denomination. The three major steps of candidacy – Entrance, Endorsement and Approval-- are prescribed by the wider church. Our committee also manages the process of Reinstatements to the ELCA Roster as well as the process that reviews and approves pastors ordained by other Lutheran or Christian traditions that desire to be rostered in the ELCA.

The committee, under the leadership of our Director of Candidacy, Deacon Allison Wilcox and the recently appointed Candidacy Committee Chair, Rev. Sarah Stobie, reviews all stages of candidacy for each individual and provides structure to follow the candidacy manual here in SEPA. As a committee, we are also continuing to look at how we function and can make our practices more flexible and adaptable. We have restructured the committee to have relator teams with three committee members per team. We have worked term limits in and are working on streamlining our meeting structures.

In 2017, we said farewell to the following committee members and gratefully thank them for their service: Chair Mr. Fred Renigar, Rev. Serena Sellers, Ms. Elizabeth Stewart, and the Rev. Dr. Bob Robinson who served as our LTSP liaison. Dr. Robinson has agreed to serve as a mentor to our candidates as needed and able in the future. In 2017, we also saw the creation of the United Lutheran Seminary (ULS) and the new initiative for students involving free tuition. Just as the seminary has a larger incoming class, we anticipate having more candidates in SEPA.

Currently, there are 12 rostered leaders on the committee: Deacon Allison Wilcox, *Director*, the Rev. Dr. Charles Leonard *ULS representative*, Rev. Dr. Paul Baglyos,, *Churchwide Representative*, Rev. Sarah Stobie, *Chairperson*, Rev. Thadd Book, Deacon Beth Barkhau, Rev. Mukesh Cheedie, Rev. Dr. Moses Dennis, Rev. Dr. Shirley Guider, Rev. Noah Hepler, Rev.

Nathan Krause, and Rev. Thomas Rusert, The following 7 lay members make up the remainder of the committee roster: Ms. Diane Casey, Mr. Rick Eberts, Mr. Chase Ferguson, Ms. Charmaine Hamilton, Ms. Margie Pendarvis-Wright, Mr. Tom Salber, and Ms. Arlette Stansbury.

We also have others who serve on behalf of the committee in a variety of roles: Rev. Maggie Ainslie, *Chaplain*, Rev. Steve Kesier, *Initial Interviewer*, and Rev. Susan Lynch and Ms. Bobbie Hoffman, *Life Keys Instruction*. We are grateful for their dedication to our candidates.

The committee meets 5-6 times annually, including 1-2 gatherings spent in fellowship and formation. We seek members of our committee to be diverse including and not limited to rostered ministers and lay people, age, gender, race LGBTQ, and ecumenical representatives. Each contact team relates to a number of candidates and is in conversation with each of these individuals on a regular basis to provide support and guidance. Please thank our committee members for the ministry and service that they provide.

We currently have a total of 18 candidates in active pursuit of rostering representing both Word and Service and Word and Sacrament tracks. The 2017 class of approved candidates includes:

- Minister of Word and Sacrament - Lenny Duncan, Ron Dziuk, Bradley Gow, Heidi Link and Sharon Richter

A special thank you to Bishop Burkat for her support of the committee and her guidance and leadership with appointments in her tenure as bishop. We appreciate her engagement in the process, and her overall vision of candidacy in the ELCA. We are grateful for her years of service to our synod and candidates.

We also give thanks to Bill Harp, synod staff member, for his enthusiasm and dedication to our committee and to our candidates. Bill is often the first response to inquiries, and his joy for ministry and love for our synod overflows to our candidates.

Our committee is well-equipped to serve our current and future candidates. We ask that our congregations and their members lift up future leaders within their communities and nurture their development as leaders of the church. Our denomination needs strong, visionary leaders for the future. The future begins now—within each of our congregations. As you return to your places of ministry, actively pray for and seek new leaders for the church. Thank you for partnering with us in this important ministry.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Rev. Sarah Stobie  
*Candidacy Committee Chairperson*

## SEPA FIRST CALL EDUCATION RETREAT

Last year, due to the elimination of the ELCA Regional Coordinator positions, the bishops of Region 7 decided to end the Regional First Call Education Retreat and instead each move forward with building a new model for First Call Education in their synods. This past summer, Bishop Burkat gathered together nearly 30 pastors and deacons from our synod ranging from 1 to 40+ years of experience to imagine what new leaders in the church need most to help support them in their ministry. We reviewed what had been done before, celebrated its work, critiqued assumptions, and imagined what we might do if we were to build something new and different. Following this gathering, Bishop Burkat and Rev. Bradley Burke invited several key leaders from our synod to create a team to review our current expectations of first call ministers, and to design an educational retreat to meet the needs of our congregations and rostered ministers.

In fall of 2017 this planning team began to meet, consisting of Rev. Chris McKinstry, Rev. Marcia Bell, Rev. Jennifer Ollikainen, Rev. Thadd Book, and Rev. Bradley Burke. As we reviewed the input from our summer visioning session, it quickly became clear that while there is an endless list of skills and abilities that every pastor and deacon needs, what is most critical in the church today is leaders of a certain kind of character – a character of leadership with the resiliency to face the challenges of ministry in a changing world. Drawing from the brainstorming from the visioning gathering, we quickly identified several key values that would rest at the very foundation of our new First Call Education program – (1) We needed something that would fill the gaps of seminary education and equip participants to be effective leaders in the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, (2) We needed to be good stewards of the leader’s time, financial resources, and leadership experience that they brought to the table, and (3) We needed to create something that would help strengthen and inform participants ministry not just during a retreat, but throughout the entire year. Most importantly, our goal from the start was to build a program that could serve as a model for Professional Development for all of our synod’s pastors and deacons – not simply those in their first few years of call.

Building from these foundational values, we created a reimagined model for First Call Education that is all about providing participants with the opportunity to customize their experience in a way that will be most useful to their ministry. This new program launched at our very first SEPA First Call Education Retreat this past February 6-7 at *Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center* in New Jersey. The retreat was planned as a launching-off point for each participant to build their own *Ministry Growth Plan* for the coming year – a plan focused on growth in several key core competency areas identified by the nearly 30 leaders from our synod who gathered this summer. We introduced these plans to the participants over the course of the retreat, as well as each of the core competency areas for their plan: Leadership, Wellness, Administration, Mission and Vision, Mentorship, and Systems. At the end of our time together, each participant – whether they were in their First Call or not – created a draft *Ministry Growth Plan* for the year ahead – a plan focused on growth in each of these key areas and follow-up with peers from the First Call Planning Team.

From our synod, we had 29 participants on the retreat: 16 First Call pastors and deacons, 5 planning team leaders, and 8 other leaders and ministry partners, including Bishop Claire Burkat. The overall feedback by participants, and thoughts of the planning team, were that it was a wonderful and successful event. The respect for participant’s time, leadership experience, and finances was

deeply appreciated, and it was a much-needed time of sharing, fellowship, and learning. The participants love that it had a much more collaborative, collegial feel to it than past events, and felt that the materials shared and areas emphasized were very worthwhile. All in all, people were happy with the retreat and found it valuable. Everyone who attended also provided valuable feedback to help shape the direction of this retreat and First Call Education in our synod as we move forward.

Your Partners in Ministry,  
Rev. Marcia Bell  
Rev. Thadd Book  
Rev. Bradley Burke  
Rev. Chris McKinstry  
Rev. Jennifer Ollikainen

## **SEPA's New Leadership Ministry: Brave New Church**

In March of 2017, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod launched a new, different, and unique ministry in the ELCA. Prompted by the shifting landscape of faith and spirituality in the modern American landscape, this ministry is devoted entirely to helping congregations and church leaders wrestle with the new and different challenges of ministry in today's changing world. It is becoming increasingly clear that the organizational and leadership methods of the 20th century – both in and out of the church – do not translate to the emerging 21st century world. And so new tools, leadership models, and ministry methods are needed to carry the work of the church forward into the 21st century. These are new, fundamental challenges that none of us have faced in our lifetimes. But here in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, we are doing something to help you navigate these challenges in your ministry and the life of your congregation.

And so this past year, we launched Brave New Church, a new ministry built to equip you and your congregation to be pioneers of a bold, new kind of church – for a rapidly changing world. When you visit [www.bravenewchurch.org](http://www.bravenewchurch.org), you will find partners to walk with as we set out into the bold new future God is calling us into. Through a podcast on iTunes, a library of forward-thinking resources, blog posts by both lay and clergy voices, and training events such as this past April's Vibrant Faith Summit, we are working hard as a synod to find ways to equip our congregations and leaders for powerful ministry in today's changing world.

In Spring of 2018, we launched the second major step of this project, the Brave New Church App. Now all of the resources, videos, podcasts, information and more that you can find on the Brave New Church website can be right at your fingertips with the brand new Brave New Church App. The App is completely free, and available for download on all iPhone, Ipad, and Android devices.

In today's changing world, being leaders in the church is a more challenging and exciting task than in any of our lifetimes. But as we go into this new and uncharted future we know that God goes before us, and that God's hand is leading us, whether we know where we are going or not. This is important, holy work that we all get to do together, and we hope that the new tools this

ministry provides will allow us to connect and learn with one another in ways that will help shape our ministry towards what God desires for us as we move forward together into the future.

Your Partner in Ministry,  
Rev. Bradley Burke

## **THE COMMITTEE OF DEANS**

Deans are generally elected by the conference (on occasion appointed by the Bishop) and serve three- year terms. The Committee of Deans meets with Bishop Burkat on a monthly basis. In June of each year, the deans participate in a two-day planning meeting. In 2017, that meeting was held at Paradise Falls Lutheran Association near Cresco in the Pocono Mountains.

Much of the responsibility of the Committee of Deans centers on mobility situations in our synod. This work includes conducting exit interviews when a pastor retires or takes another call, explaining the basics of the transition time, interviewing candidates interested in serving in SEPA Synod, reviewing Ministry Site Profiles and Rostered Minister Profiles, and making recommendations of possible candidates in congregations. In addition, deans conduct installations, work with congregations in times of conflict and unfortunately also walk with congregations through the steps of closing if they have voted to end their ministry.

The following pastors are currently serving as deans: The Rev. Regina Goodrich (Central Philadelphia), The Rev. Ronald Wesemann (Chester), The Rev. Leslie Richard (Delaware), The Rev. Paul Sorcek (Lower Bucks), The Rev. Julie DeWerth (Lower Montgomery), The Rev. Jane Marston (NE/W Philadelphia), The Rev. Carolann Hopcke (Upper Bucks), The Rev. Rebecca Schanley (Upper Montgomery)

Working closely with the Committee of Deans is The Rev. Christian McMullan (Director of Interim Ministry), The Rev. Marcia Bell (Directory of Mobility), Rev. Pat Davenport (Director, Evangelical Missions), The Rev. Bradley Burke (Director of Youth and Young Adult Faith Formation), Mr. William Harp (Coordinator, Vocation and Leadership), and Bishop Claire Burkat.

### **The Report of the *Forward Together in Faith* Campaign:**

As *The Forward Together in Faith* campaign winds down, there is still a great deal of excitement throughout our synod for transforming dreams for vital ministries for the 21st century into realities. Kicked off at Synod Assembly 2015, as we close out the third year of the campaign we are more committed than ever to utilizing the resources provided by generous donors in order to support the church of the 21st century. Generous individuals, lay people, rostered leaders, and congregations of all sizes and capacities have participated in this exciting campaign, offering the

gifts of their financial resources, their time offered to share the many blessings already being realized through this campaign, their energy and expertise in generating excitement within groups and congregations of all sizes, and so much more. This is a vital, innovative campaign, created in anticipation of the changes, challenges, blessings, and growth faced by the modern church. And as we near the end, those working on the campaign are thrilled to offer applications for grants born out of the campaign, which will bring to life the hopes and dreams of those striving to share the Gospel throughout our synod.

Among the many successes of the campaign is the Missional Assessment Profile (MAP), a robust and helpful tool to generate ministry ideas, find out the overall energy level of the congregation, and to discover the invaluable input of a congregational Navigator that was used by many congregations within our synod. The goal of the MAP was different for every congregation, but most congregations who took the MAP found it to be an invaluable resource for determining how best their congregation might move forward, together.

Sharing the story of the campaign, including the four pillars upon which the campaign stands (Networking, Innovating, Communicating, and Equipping) was the mission of the Ambassador program, which launched following Synod Assembly 2016. Many congregations hosted Ambassadors, who are pastors and lay leaders well-versed in the importance of the campaign, eager to assist congregations in discerning how to best become involved in this vital campaign for the future. By preaching on a Sunday morning, leading a Bible study or forum, speaking at a council meeting or talking with a congregation over coffee, the Ambassadors represent the *Forward Together in Faith* campaign and shared the story of all of the incredible things that have already been realized as a result of the campaign, and the story of the many hopes for the future of Lutheranism in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

A team was established to assist congregations in improving the communication of their mission and ministries to a larger audience by suggesting improvements for congregational websites, social media pages, and more. These talented people are available now and will continue to work with congregations to best communicate their stories to web-visitors. Over the course of the campaign, there have been many dedicated people working behind the scenes of the campaign, actively engaged in furthering the mission of the campaign, sharing the successes, and creating more successes along the way. As we near the end of this campaign for the future, we are so grateful to those who have dedicated themselves to the future ministries of congregations and communities within the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The time is now to focus on supporting sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ by networking together within and beyond our communities, creating innovative opportunities to share our faith, communicating our faith in effective ways with each other and with our neighbors, and equipping future and current leaders to tell the story of our faith in the 21st century. We offer our thanks to those individuals and congregations who have given so generously, in great hope for the future. We know that the many ways in which you have supported the campaign will bless our Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod for generations to come.

## **Report of the Synod Hunger Ministry Team**

*Jesus said to them, “You give them something to eat.” (Luke 9:13)*

The Hunger Ministry Team’s mission is to educate congregations about hunger, initiate, support, and enhance hunger ministries, and advocate together for God’s promised justice. The team seeks to make a difference in a world where far too many are hungry. Composed of a group of lay and rostered leaders from across the Synod who possess a passion about the issues of hunger and food insecurity, we support programs that seek to end hunger, teach about hunger-related issues, and encourage people to advocate on behalf of the hungry. We strive to build awareness of the issues, while working to alleviate hunger in our communities and we accomplish this through Education, Service, and Advocacy.

The team has organized and administered hunger simulation workshops in which participants are provided with an experiential, educational opportunity that explores issues of food access and availability; we have worked to identify, document, and share best practices of hunger ministries within our Synodical region and across the ELCA; and we provide materials and training to congregations which equip people to lobby elected representatives and governmental agencies for fair laws and just policies with regard to hunger and food insecurity. This past year, the team also reviewed five domestic hunger grant applications from organizations within the Synod territory and made recommendations for the award of those grants.

In Christ,  
The Rev. Michael McKillip  
Chair

## **INTERIM MINISTRY - SYNOD ASSEMBLY REPORT 2018**

Intentional transitional ministry is conducted by experienced pastors and lay people who have gone through specific training to work with congregations through a transition time. In addition to the intentional interim pastors in our synod, we also have one lay consultant. Intentional interims and consultants are assigned by the Director of Mobility in consultation with the Director of Interim Ministry and the Bishop. Throughout the transition the interim pastor/consultant attends required continuing education meetings, submits quarterly reports, and at the end of each transition process an evaluation is conducted. These are some of the ways we are accountable for our work. The interim pastor/consultant guides the congregation through the transition process and the preparation of the Ministry Site Profile. In addition to these tasks specific to transitional ministry, the interim pastor is also responsible for all of the normal pastoral duties of the church.

More and more we are using interim consultants in congregations that are in transition but for various reasons, do not have an interim pastor. In some cases, these congregations are being served by bridge pastors who are contracted for pastoral services. Every church is different, and this is another example of how we are being flexible in meeting the transitional needs of a congregation. Interim consultants have participated in extensive interim training and work with congregations on a limited, part-time basis.

Some topics of our consultations this past year: A discussion of how to prepare the congregation to “bond with its newly called pastor” (Phase IV); the new compensation guidelines and how to use them with congregations; a refresher on “systems dynamics” and the use of checklists in our work. As a group we are very intentional about being responsive to changing ministry contexts and learning new tools for the benefit of the people we serve.

**Pastors and Consultants:** The Rev. Marcia Bell, The Rev. Katherine Cartwright-Knodel, The Rev. George Detweiler, The Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir, The Rev. Susie Folks, The Rev. Arlene Greenwald, The Rev. Kim Guiser, Ms. Teri Lanan, The Rev. Dick Mathisen, The Rev. Christian McMullan, The Rev. David Mueller, The Rev. Daryl Nelson, The Rev. Janet Peterman, the Rev. Kris Peterson, The Rev. Elaine Quincey, The Rev. Jack Saarela, The Rev. Wayne Shelor, The Rev. Chris Weidner, The Rev. Donna Wright.

Rev. Christian McMullan- Dir. of Interim Ministry

## **REPORT OF THE SYNOD GENEROSITY (AKA STEWARDSHIP) TEAM**

The synod Generosity Team would like to thank the congregations of our synod for their Mission Support, and especially for those congregations that are modeling good stewardship to their members by giving at least 10% of their regular giving towards Mission Support.

Most of our congregations have a wide range of contributors, both with regards to percentage of income and actual dollars. And, in any given year some of our best contributors can have circumstances that necessitate a substantial decrease and in other cases a substantial increase in support. That is true for our congregations also.

This year, the congregations that were able to substantially increase their mission support outpaced those that found it necessary to decrease support. Thus, we experienced a modest gain in mission support of \$11,000 when compared to 2016. This is especially hopeful as we anticipate the election of a new bishop and the importance of providing as much support as possible, especially with regards to financial support for the important work of the synod.

The synod sends half of these offerings to the ELCA in support of the work of national church. The specific uses of these funds are outlined on annual report covers used by many congregations for their annual meetings, and additional reports on how your Mission Support dollars are used by the ELCA can be found at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org), and our synod work can be viewed at [www.ministrylink.org](http://www.ministrylink.org). The ELCA also provides Stories of Faith in Action, including bulletin inserts that can help your congregation appreciate the tremendous work we do together as an ELCA.

Many young people from our synod will be traveling to the National Youth Gathering this summer in Houston. It will be an unforgettable, spiritually uplifting experience of personal growth. Without the strong commitment of the national expression of our church, it would not happen. It once again shows that just as our congregations rely on the continued faithfulness of

all of our members, the synod and ELCA rely on the faithful response and proportional gifts of all of our congregations.

That is why the Synod Stewardship team urges congregations to model good stewardship by committing a proportional amount of its regular giving to Mission Support, with intentional efforts to grow that proportional amount until your congregation is giving at least 10%. Nothing encourages generosity than good examples of joyful generosity.

Your synod Generosity Team is committed to working with you to strengthen generosity in your congregation. Here are some of the programs and resources for our congregational partners during the past year:

- Seven congregations of our synod established leadership teams to participate in a major pilot program, Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity. The team met for two days to learn about the keys to Generosity and develop a plan for their congregation. The congregations ranged in size from 45 average worship to over 400 average worship with a wide range of demographic makeup. As the congregation develop their strategies, we will share successes and learnings with other congregations of the synod.
- VISIT our Resource Table and workshops at the Synod Assembly
- Partnered with the Upper Bucks conference on a day-long event “From Fearful to Faithful.” It was very well organized and had over 80 in attendance.
- Initiated electronic giving with a QR Code at the synod assembly to provide alternative ways of giving and model giving alternatives for congregations.
- Sent two rostered leaders to the ELCA Coaching seminar to expand our coaching team. You can request coaching for either Stewardship or Discipleship opportunities. Contact Mukesh Cheedie ( [mukeshcheedie@aol.com](mailto:mukeshcheedie@aol.com) )
- Sent three rostered leaders to a 3-day Ecumenical Stewardship Center leadership Seminar, to gain new insights and knowledge on stewardship.
- Stewardship “Tip of the Month” is on [www.ministrylink.org](http://www.ministrylink.org) and are archived with other valuable stewardship tips and information on the synod website, [www.sepa.org](http://www.sepa.org).
- Met with congregational officers to encourage renewed efforts in our congregations to utilize best practices in stewardship and move beyond a single, annual appeal as our primary stewardship effort.

If you are interested in serving on our Generosity Team or one of our conference teams, contact me at [lvsfish1@aol.com](mailto:lvsfish1@aol.com)

Members of the Synod Stewardship Team are Pr. Larry Smoose, chair, Carl Reitz, Bob Hensil, Pr. Mark Singh-Hueter, Doreen Kinsler, Pr. Tim Ness, Pr. Axel Kaegler, Yvonne Lembo, Pr. Karen Sease and Pr. Mike Carlson. We also want to thank our entire Synod staff, and especially The Rev. Patricia Davenport and Courtney Smith, along with Bill Harp, Martin Schwab, Bob Fisher, and Cynta Outterbridge who do so much to support congregational stewardship ministry.

Larry Smoose, Chairperson



North Eastern Diocese  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania



Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

## **THE SEPA TANZANIA COMPANIONSHIP TEAM: 2018 UPDATE**

The Tanzania Companionship Team promotes and supports relationships between SEPA Synod and the North Eastern Diocese (NED) of Tanzania. For many years, our synod has had a rich and close partnership with the North Eastern Diocese, its ministries, and organizations. From our congregation to parish partnerships, to working with the Diocese to build, launch, and grow SEKOMU University, to sending visitors and missionaries to work beside our Lutheran brothers and sisters in Tanzania – this has been a life-giving and abundant ministry for many years.

In 2017-18, the Tanzania Companionship Team has been working with the North Eastern Diocese in three primary initiatives – continuing to support SEKOMU in their rebuilding and security efforts, sending several Brailers to Irete School for the Blind and SEKOMU, and laying the groundwork for a program to help send Massai girls in the North Eastern Diocese to Secondary School. As you may be aware, while our team was visiting the NED on September 1, 2016, several men armed with automatic weapons and grenades attacked Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University (SEKOMU). They raided the property, shot and killed a guard protecting the university, and shot and injured another. They then proceeded to set fire to two hostels housing approximately 40 students and faculty, although all were able to escape safely. Throughout 2016-17, congregations and individuals from across SEPA collected resources to help them rebuild from this attack and install much-needed security measures around the university. In total, SEPA congregations raised just over \$30,000 to help support this effort, and we were blessed to deliver the final donations to them for this new initiative when we visited SEKOMU this past June.

Another initiative that began in 2016 also saw completion this year, a project to send several brailers to SEKOMU and Irete School for the Blind, a school operated by the diocese for young children who are blind or severely sight impaired. Brailers, and modern materials for the sight impaired, are difficult to acquire in Tanzania, and through generous donations from SEPA congregations, partnerships with the International Association for Special Education (IASE), the American Council of the Blind, and the hard work of SEPA member Susan Pursch, we have been able to send 23 brailers, an embosser printer, and other materials to Irete School for the Blind and SEKOMU. These supplies have made an important impact on the work that is able to be done there, and the accessibility of learning to the blind and sight impaired in the diocese. We are grateful to all our partners who made this important ministry happen, and excited for the impact it will have for our partner in the North Eastern Diocese!

Finally, we have been working on a new initiative this past year that began when several visitors to the North Eastern Diocese from our synod were very moved by their conversations with the Massai people about the challenges of providing education and options for their young women. In Massai culture, girls are often married at a very young age, and their whole life is devoted to child-bearing and care for their families. It is an incredibly patriarchal and traditional Tanzanian sub-culture, and some of the mission initiatives of the North Eastern Diocese and similar organizations

are just beginning to provide other options for these young Massai girls. For the past year, SEPA and the NED have been collaborating on what a program to help Massai girls attend Secondary School – an incredibly rare occurrence in Massai villages – might look like. We are hopeful that our partnership with the diocese will lead to exciting new ways that our congregations can partner with them in this important work in the year ahead.

This past year, three groups from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod also visited our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. This past June, Bishop Claire Burkat, Rev. Bradley Burke, and Synod Director of Operations Yvonne Curtis travelled to the NED for Bishop Burkat's last official visit to Tanzania in her term as Bishop. Over the past 12 years Bishop Burkat has cultivated a close and meaningful relationship with Bishop Stephen Munga, Bishop of the North Eastern Diocese, and this trip was Bishop Burkat's fifth and final visit to Tanzania as Bishop of our synod. It was a meaningful and emotional visit for her and many of our partners in the diocese, as they said farewells after over a decade of ministry and partnership with one another. We worshipped with the diocese, toured the diocesan radio station, visited Irente Children's Home, SEKOMU, and a mission in the Massai area of the country, and met with the pastors and members of several of our companion congregations – including Mikanjuni, Koragwe, and Cathedral Parish in Lushoto. During our visit to SEKOMU, Bishop Burkat was asked to lead a moving gathering in prayer and remembrance at the very spot where a guard was shot to death while defending students from the brutal attack that occurred there in September of 2016 while our SEPA team was visiting.

In July and August, two other groups from our synod also travelled to visit their congregation's partners in Tanzania. St. Luke Lutheran Church in Devon and Upper Dublin Lutheran Church in Ambler both sent sizable groups from their congregation to visit their partner parishes in the North Eastern Diocese, Mikanjuni and Cathedral. Each delegation included both a pastor from their congregation and many lay people, and significant time was spent visiting with friends from their partner parishes, serving and learning with their Tanzanian partners, and visiting several of the organizations and ministries of the North Eastern Diocese to learn about their work across the region. *If you or your congregation are interested in exploring a congregational partnership with one of our sister parishes in Tanzania – please let us know!* It is a rich and rewarding experience for any church, and every companionship is different. You can start a partnership without investing money or sending a group to Tanzania – although we're sure you'll eventually want to go! If there is an energetic group of folks in your church interested in growing this ministry – that is all you need! Please reach out to any member of the Tanzania Team or Pastor Brad Burke, Assistant to the Bishop, at [bburke@sepa.org](mailto:bburke@sepa.org) for more information!

Your Partners in Mission,

The SEPA Tanzania Companionship Team: Rev. Bradley Burke (Synod Staff), John Chesters, Jr., Sheldon Erb, Susan MacPherson, Tom MacPherson, Adrienne Nash Melendez, Rev. Lydia Posselt, Sharon Smith

## **TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

The work of the TMDT is to support congregations going through pastoral transitions as well as the pastors and lay persons trained to lead congregations through such transitions. To that end, we review quarterly reports submitted by the trained interims and conduct exit interviews. This year, in response to what we heard in exit interviews, members of the TMDT have begun to contact the lay leaders of congregations in transition, to hear from them how they think the process is going.

A key aspect of our work is ensuring that our transition practices are flexible, to suit varying needs and situations, while maintaining integrity and quality. We are in the process of reviewing standards and practices for transition ministry in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. We have also devoted time and effort to revising the Transition Guide, which was last revised in 2015. The Rev. Donna M. Wright, chair

Members, the Rev. Marcia Bell, the Rev. Sandra Brown, the Rev. Fritz Fowler, the Rev. Regina Goodrich, Ms. Teri Lanan, Mr. Karl McClellan, the Rev. Christian McMullan

## **WOMEN OF THE ELCA - SEPA Synod Region 7F Annual Report 2017-2018**

The Synodical Board of the Women of the ELCA has worked for many years to support the congregational units throughout the synod. Our continuing goals have been to evaluate and strengthen our purpose within the Church and increase our communications with and support of the women of the Southeastern PA Synod.

We were thrilled to coordinate the synodical Ingathering of quilts and kits for Lutheran World Relief at last year's Synod Assembly. This year the Ingathering will take place at Messiah Lutheran in Downingtown on June 2, the morning of our synodical convention. We're looking forward to another successful collection – in 2017 we collected more than 500 quilts and hundreds of kits, and transported them directly to LWR in New Windsor, Maryland.

“Luther's Ladies – Celebrating 500 Years of Women in the Church” was the theme of our Synodical Gathering held June 3, 2017 at Christ Ascension Lutheran Church in Philadelphia. Our keynote speaker was Reverend Violet Little of The Welcome Church. Ms. Fern Lee Hagedorn offered a review of The Lutheran Social Statement on Women and Justice. In-kind gifts of disposable hot drink cups, bowls and small plates; sugar, creamer, tea bags, plastic forks and spoons, coffee and cookies were presented to Reverend Little and Reverend Schanel Steinnegal for use by The Welcome Church ministries.

In July, several of our synodical women traveled to Minneapolis, MN to attend the Triennial Convention and Gathering. The delegation from our synod included Joy Grace, Carol Herstine

and Lisa Brown, accompanied by Churchwide Board Member Reverend Gwendolyn King. A summary of the actions taken by the Convention can be found on our webpage. At the Gathering, we explored a life of “All Anew” through worship, bible study, workshops and fellowship with more than 3000 women from across the nation and around the world. Read about and see pictures of this amazing event at [www.welcatg.org](http://www.welcatg.org), while planning to experience it firsthand in Phoenix, AZ in 2020! You won’t regret it.

As I write this report, planning is underway for our upcoming Synodical Convention - “Marys and Marthas – Celebrating the Diversity of our Spiritual Gifts”, to be held June 2 at Messiah Lutheran Church, Downingtown. Representatives of Lutheran World Relief and inFaith WomenGive will present the keynote address, and both organizations will offer workshops during the day. We’ll also be electing our next synodical board, collecting and sorting in-kind gifts for LWR kits, and enjoying the diversity of our synodical sisters. Registration forms are available on our webpage. And don’t forget to bring your LWR Ingathering donations!

As a member of the Churchwide organization, we’re especially proud of our scholarships; our Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls initiative; the ways in which we address racism, domestic violence, human sex trafficking, bullying and immigration issues; and our many resources, magazines, and publications, including Gather and Café. A new challenge to raise \$4,500,000 for Katie’s Fund by 2020 is underway. This is an endowment named for the wife of Martin Luther, and the funds are used to support ministry in leadership development, global connections and living theology. Consider a gift in honor of a special woman in your life. You can find information on resources, scholarships and advocacy at [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org).

We continue to look for ways to serve and support the women of the Southeastern PA Synod. We’re actively working on an assessment of our active congregational units, and we’re committed to rebuilding our conference structure to strengthen networks of women throughout the synod. You can find us at <http://ministrylink.org/women>, where we’ll post events and other news to reach more SEPA women. Be Bold and connect with us!

All Anew in Christ,

Joy Grace  
WELCA Board President, SEPA Synod

## **YOUTH, YOUNG ADULT & SPIRITUAL FORMATION MINISTRY**

This past year has been an exciting time for faith formation and discipleship in Southeastern Pennsylvania, as we continue to work to help our congregations and leaders reimagine ministry that shapes lifelong faith with children and youth! Our synod is well on its way to becoming a pioneer in the ELCA when it comes to shaping faith among young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. The world has changed greatly in the past 50 years, and here in the Northeastern U.S. we are rapidly learning that the church must now play catch-up with the culture, or the institutional church will be relegated to an increasingly marginal place in people’s lives. This is particularly true of

ministry with young people, and one of the most vital challenges we face in our church – and our synod – is how to reimagine ministry in ways that speak to and engage the issues younger generations are wrestling with in meaningful ways.

Much of the work we have been doing in our synod this past year to address these challenges has been focused into three key areas. Here are the ways that we are leading the charge in the ELCA to explore new models for faith formation, and better equip your congregation for meaningful discipleship in a changing world:

### *Moving From Ministry to Youth to Ministry Led by Youth*

- **SEPA Youth Leadership Team** – One of our primary Youth Ministry goals for 2017 had been the redesign and launch of the new *SEPA Youth Leadership Team*, a new model for synodical youth ministry replacing our previous LYO (Lutheran Youth Organization) model. After a process of visioning and planning for this new leadership program with key youth and adult leaders throughout the previous year, we launched this new model in March 2017, with our first group of about 20 youth beginning the program in August. This new model has been very successful this past fall, beginning with a powerful leadership retreat in August and allowing the participants to take a more active role in leading synod youth ministry throughout the year. I am excited to see how this new program will continue to empower youth from our synod's congregations in the year ahead, and equip them to be leaders not just in the synod, but also in their home congregations, communities, and schools.

### *Launching Innovative Experiments to Reimagine Congregational Faith Formation*

- **SEPA Cross+Gen Faith Formation Project** – Over the past year and a half, our synod has partnered with lay and clergy leaders from about 12 SEPA congregations to help them experiment with and launch non-traditional, intergenerational faith formation models in their congregations. Prompted by the drastic failure of the traditional Sunday School model over the past few decades, the goal of this project is to equip and encourage congregations to together work in new directions for faith formation – hopefully shifting the culture of the synod as a whole regarding faith formation and discipleship. In this enterprise, we have partnered with Rev. Dr. Rich Melheim and other key leaders at the forefront of innovative faith formation in the ELCA to do something truly unique and promising here in SEPA.

In 2017 we held a key event in March where 200 lay and clergy leaders from SEPA (and neighboring synods) gathered together for a full day training around the reasons for and practices of Cross+Gen Faith Formation. Rich Melheim, David Lose, William Nelsen, Natalie Hall, and others helped lead the event, and leaders from the congregations involved in our synod's Cross+Gen project met with these presenters for conversation and sharing the night before. We have had a number of additional congregations experimenting with Cross+Gen ministry in the past year, largely as a result of this event, and 3 new congregations sign on for participation in this project so far this year. In the new *Killing Sunday School* book, SEPA will have two case studies featured – one focusing on this project as a whole and another on the congregational perspective of a church participating in this project. We will also be presenting both of these case studies at the upcoming *Cross+Gen Ministry Conference* in Colorado this October.

*Equipping Congregations for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ministry that Connects with Younger Generations*

- **Brave New Church** – A year ago, *Brave New Church* was still in the design and strategy phase, and the website was entering into final development. In March 2017 we launched the website, podcast, and blog for *Brave New Church* at the Council Officers Gathering, followed by a public rollout between then and synod assembly in May. At synod assembly we further promoted the new ministry with tables of publicity materials and a very well attended workshop on the new ministry, as well as the demographic and cultural challenges currently faced by the church. We continued to engage leaders across the synod in this new ministry throughout 2017, and worked throughout the fall to build and imagine the *Brave New Church App*. This past January, we launched the new *Brave New Church App* – an innovative one-stop-shop for congregational leaders to access resources that help equip them to face the adaptive challenges that congregations face today. We hope to continue to build upon this initial work and grow this new ministry in the coming years, as we work to continue to equip congregations to reimagine ministry for the new and different 21<sup>st</sup> century world we now live in.

As always, we of course also had some amazing retreats, trips, and equipping events to forward the work of these ministry areas in the past year. Last summer, 65 youth from our synod's congregations travelled to downtown Philadelphia to learn about food insecurity and help provide sustainable food to those without access in SEPA's very first Philadelphia Urban Servant Trip. Then last fall we gathered 120 Confirmation students at our 2017 Junior Youth Gathering to teach about the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation and why it really still matters for us today. Then this spring we gathered just over 300 young people together for our final Harvey Cedars Youth Retreat – having experienced such growth with the retreat in the past few years that we will be moving to a new, bigger venue next year! And, building upon the momentum from last year's *Cross+Gen Faith Formation* event, SEPA hosted this past April's *Vibrant Faith Summit* at Reformation Lutheran Church in Media – bringing together pastors and leaders from across our synod for three days of intentional training in building lasting faith for today's 21<sup>st</sup> century world. Finally, committed lay and rostered leaders across our synod are currently working to prepare over 450 people to attend this summer's ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston! It has – and continues to be – an exciting and eventful time for youth, young adult, and spiritual formation ministries in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod!

Please be sure to check out our workshop during Synod Assembly offering an opportunity to dialogue with young leaders from our synod about what they feel is most needed in the church as we discern the election of a new Bishop. We can't wait to walk with you as we all continue to shape a *Brave New Church* – for a Brave New World.

Yours Partner in Ministry,



**Rev. Bradley R. Burke**  
*Assistant to the Bishop*

# Congregational Vitality Team

## Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

### Mission / Purpose Statement

The Congregational Vitality Team (CVT) will seek to partner with communities of faith to increase the sense of vitality within their mission and ministry. In conjunction with our Vitality Coordinator we will seek to identify new and emerging communities of faith and provide a team to accompany them. We will partner with established communities of faith to renew and resource their existing ministry efforts by providing financial assistance, leadership development and educational resources. We will provide missional consultations that assess a community's needs and if necessary provide a process of holy closure.

### Working Subgroups:

#### *Leadership Empowerment*

- ▶ Training rostered ministers and lay leaders with the principles and practices of vital missional leadership.

#### *Holy Innovations*

- ▶ Prayerfully and proactively looks at possible new ministry sites within the synod.

#### *Adaptive Change*

- ▶ Assists congregational leadership in navigating the complex and changing landscape of church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by identifying churches who are ready for change.

#### *Resources and Grants*

- ▶ Oversees the grant application process and distribution of funds from the national church (ELCA Domestic missions unit) and our local SEPA Synod Mission fund.

#### *Buildings and Facilities*

- ▶ Working with faith communities to create functional sites for their vital ministries.

Submitted by Co – Chairs. Mrs. Donna Johnson and the Rev. Bryan Penman