From the General Presbyter

By the time you read this annual report, my tenure with the Presbytery of Winnebago will be complete. I arrived here in 2005 to fill the position of Associate Executive Presbyter and moved to the role of General Presbyter at the end of 2010. I never imagined that I’d be here for 15 and a half years.

I have loved serving this presbytery and getting to know people from all over the Northeastern part of the state. I have loved having fabulous colleagues in the presbytery and the denomination. I have loved working with the wonderful pastors who serve in each and every one of our congregations, and the ruling elders who serve alongside them with dedication and passion.

At the last presbytery meeting of this year, I said that we’ve done some wonderful ministry and mission together and we absolutely have – even in a year like 2020. Check out some of the ways we made the best of a very difficult and strange year in the rest of this report. But I think it’s worth noting that we’ve had some pretty spectacular failures as well. I’m grateful to have served an organization that was willing to take risks, try new things, and stretch to see what is possible. In the end, we learned from all of that as well.

In my time here, I have learned so much, grown so much, developed friendships and collegial relationships that I will treasure. As I move on and the presbytery does too, I look forward to seeing what the next era brings.

It has been a joy. Thank you.

Sarah

From the Moderator

When I was asked to write a report to sum up 2020 from the perspective of the Moderator, I laughed a bit. I know it’s normal for the moderator to do a write-up, but… what do you write about 2020? The year none of us were prepped for, the year that seemed to have decades instead of months, the year of the Zoom presbytery meeting.

It’s been a year of transition, planned and unplanned. A year of fear and a year of hope, a year of struggle but also a year of new things.

In November of last year, when I went to moderator training to learn how to run presbytery meetings, very little time was spent on virtual meetings, they happened, but were just a small part of the overall curriculum. How things have changed, eh?

It’s also been a very divisive year, a year that has seen political identity become more visibly important in how we run things than ever before. Perhaps this was inevitable, in an election year where an unignorable and devastating pandemic has become the #1 partisan issue, and that has made our undeniably purple denomination struggle with its identity more than once.

I face the new year, taking my position of Moderator of the Leadership Commission, following in Jennifer Zander’s very competent footsteps and doing so in the imminent absence of our General Presbyter, with some nervousness. But the power and love of God continues unabated, even in the midst of our fear and our anger, God remains God.

God’s blessings on you all. And here’s to a healthier 2021.

Dan
A Look Back at 2020

This year was certainly memorable. Covid-19 required that we change nearly everything about the way we work. None-the-less, committees, commissions, volunteers, staff and officers all shifted quickly and here are a few of the things that happened in Winnebago Presbytery in 2020.

- We held three virtual presbytery meetings and by the third one, we got pretty good at it!
- We hosted one of the Co-Moderators of the General Assembly — the Rev. Cindy Kohlmann — at our May presbytery meeting.
- The General Assembly Commissioners from Winnebago Presbytery participated in the first-ever virtual General Assembly meeting.
- Many churches pivoted to electronic gatherings and electronically delivered Sunday worship. The presbytery made available technology grants to support a quick shift to meeting online and hosted gatherings to facilitate the sharing of ideas and best practices.
- We applied for and received four grants for food pantries on behalf of four churches in the presbytery. Additionally, we used some reserve funds to match the grant to help keep pantries open early in the pandemic.
- Hosted two presbytery-wide book discussions focusing on systematic racism.
- Welcomed two new pastors, the Rev. Debbie Pagels and the Rev. Katie Estes to FPC Shawano and FPC Green Bay respectively.
- Said goodbye to seven pastors as they retired or moved on from their calls the Rev. Jon Nelson (Marinette), the Rev. Dan McCurdy (Weyauwega — remains a member-at-large), the Rev. Lee Jennings (Forest Larger Parish), the Rev. Agnes Brady (Athelstane and Wausaukee), the Rev. Melody Long (Interim — Oshkosh), the Rev. Paul Huxtable (Neenah) and the Rev. Judine Duerwaelder (Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry).

Your generosity through MISSION GIVING supported Winnebago Presbytery as we provided:

Due to COVID, we didn’t run our usual programs and events. We diverted these funds to support people, programs, and institutions in need of extra help during COVID.

- $10,000 in local mission grants to five organizations in the presbytery for programs in their local communities
- $5,000 to one congregation for window replacement from the David Jones Small Church Fund
- $22,000 in grant monies to our community partners: Samaritan Counseling Center, Wisconsin Council of Churches, and United Church Camps, Inc.
- $3,000 contribution to the opening offering at General Assembly offering supporting the Youth Rising Coalition
- $5,000 gift to support our Presbyterian colleagues in Colombia during COVID
- Hope and Clarity - a retreat for women in leadership and Coping with Covid: Reopening and Beyond a four-part virtual workshop for pastors
- “An Online Journey into the Heart of Christmas” an advent retreat with Jan Richardson to all members of Winnebago Presbytery
- Support to Wisconsin Council of Churches from the Peacemaking fund for their Faith and Gun Violence Initiative