



Assistant to the Bishop

2020 Report to the Assembly

Pastor Jim Reents

The pandemic throws us back to the foundation of our life and faith. Because of Jesus Christ our house is built on a rock rather than sand.

The past year has been filled with many positive changes. The changes began with the Bishop's Sabbatical Report. We broke into small groups at the 2019 synod assembly to discuss the Sabbatical Report and recorded the feedback. Two results are the implementation of an emphasis on " Dwelling in the Word " and the matching of " Sister Congregations " for fellowship and support.

In the Northern Conference we considered an Adaptive Challenge each month from the Sabbatical Report. The discussions were excellent. I led a discussion at the February Conference Meeting on the Adaptive Challenge of providing Word and Sacrament Ministry in a context that is shifting. I relied heavily on Tod Bolsinger's book Canoeing the Mountains. I recommend this book.

Rostered Minister Reports are completed by rostered leaders who desire to move. I read them and make suggestions to Bishop Roth and Pastor Ken Sandlin. We need more pastors.

The Lay and Professional Leadership Support Committee seeks ways to support our rostered leaders. We have recommended a 1% increase in the salary guidelines for 2021. The guidelines are posted on the synod website.

As Assistant to the Bishop I relate to 20 congregations in the NE Conference and 6 congregations in the Northern Conference. I enjoy worshipping with these congregations on Sunday and visiting with the members.

Congregations seeking a pastor make out a Ministry Site Profile. I led an "Initial Call Process" at Immanuel LC, Lincoln, and American LC, Bourbonnais to help them make out a Ministry Site Profile. The key to fulling out a Ministry Site Profile is for the congregation to define its mission.

Each year Wartburg Seminary hosts a "Rural Ministry Conference." I attended this year in March and appreciated the help with geographic parishes.

After many congregation council meetings, a Town Hall meeting and congregation meetings, St. John LC, Cullom decided to leave the ELCA. We will miss them and are grateful for the ministry of Pastor Mauricio Vieira and members who remained faithful to the ELCA. Many of them are worshipping at St. Paul LC, Chatsworth.

A high point of ministry is the Installation of new pastors. I attended the following this year: Pastor Amy Berger-St. Petri LC, Flanagan

Pastor Matthew Berger-St. Paul LC, Pontiac

Pastor Julia Rademacher-Christ LC, Monticello

Pastor Anne Christiansen-St. John LC, Bloomington

Pastor Nathan Johnson-St. John LC, Toluca

Pastor Becky Swanson-Advent LC, Morton

I thank God for each pastor and congregation.

Sorry to say some of our pastors passed away in the previous year. I attended the funerals of Pastor Le Uden and Pastor Paul Park.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have attended meetings by way of zoom and I have been calling pastors to check in with them.

The past year has been filled with important events. Our synod is taking important steps to build up the body of Christ. Now we face the pandemic. By the grace of God we will emerge stronger. Our house is built on a solid rock.