



Pastor Ken Sandlin
Assistant to the Bishop / Staff Report

Report to the Assembly June 2021

Last year, I ended my report to the 2020 Synod Assembly with this short paragraph:

“Next year, when I write my report to the 2021 Synod Assembly, I pray that we all will have made it through the pandemic safely and in good health; and that we’ll be able to gather together in Peoria to worship the God who holds us close, in all of our highs and lows, from now until forever.”

Over a year has passed since the Covid “lockdown” began on March 18th. By now I expected that I would, once again, be working from the office in Springfield, eating in restaurants, going to movies, and worshipping and singing in church without masks or social distancing. But the pandemic has hit harder and lasted longer than I, and probably most of you, could have imagined.

When will we return to normal? Look around you. The signs are there. More and more people are being vaccinated. Restrictions are being eased. Churches are returning to in-person worship; social distancing and wearing masks, but also singing softly and waving to friends whom they haven’t seen in worship for a long, long time.

I am still working from home and joining lots of zoom meetings. The candidacy committee continues to accompany seminarians from our synod as they navigate their coursework. Congregation councils put together their Ministry Site Profiles and Call Committees wait anxiously to receive a pastoral nomination letter from the Bishop.

During 2020, we received fewer Rostered Minister Profiles from pastors who felt that God was calling them to a new location. Nevertheless, congregations in Altamont, Bourbonnais, Champaign, Lincoln, Morton, Springfield, Urbana and the Three Saints Parish in Golden, Liberty and Mendon were able to call and install their new pastor. Currently we have fourteen congregations actively looking for a pastor. And I am hoping that this year, we will see an increase in paperwork from pastors who are seeking a new call.

Working from home does work for me, but I miss in-person interaction with Congregation Councils and Call Committees. I miss visiting congregations on Sunday morning and joining them in worship. I miss talking with colleagues at the synod office as

we pass in the hallway. I miss pot-luck dinners and organ music that shakes the rafters and passing the peace with a handshake and a sincere, "The peace of God be with you."

Someone told me that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I know that is true, but I also believe that the light will shine on a different world. And I pray that next year, when I write my report to the 2022 Synod Assembly, we all will have made it through the pandemic safely and in good health; and that we will be able to gather together in Champaign to worship the God who holds us close, in all of our highs and lows, from now until forever.