



Pastor Maureen Stein
Assistant to the Bishop / Staff Report

Report to the Assembly June 2021

Last year, with the decision to postpone the 2020 Synod Assembly, we expected to meet face to face in June of 2021. With more than a year of Zoom meetings and pre-recorded worship and livestreaming experiences behind us, this year's Assembly will incorporate what we have learned about using technology to continue the work of the church when we can't yet meet in person.

It has been a blessing to continue working as an Assistant to Bishop Roth and with the Synod staff. In 2020 we said goodbye to Pr. Jim Reents as he retired from his work on staff. Since then, like a number of our retired pastors, he has graciously agreed to work as an interim pastor with congregations in the time of transition between calling a full-time pastor. Our Synod is blessed with pastors and lay leaders who have prepared for Synodically Authorized ministry who serve in interim positions.

I continue to relate to congregations in the Northern and Northwest Conferences, attending Conference meetings, Conference Assemblies, and special meetings using Zoom technology. Our Fall Theological Conference, Interim Ministers' Gathering, First Call Theological Education, and Boundaries Workshop have all been conducted on Zoom, plus some meetings with congregation Councils. During the next year I anticipate that we will be in transition again, from remote to in-person meetings.

As I reviewed my calendar since our last Synod Assembly, I noted that George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis two weeks before our 2020 Assembly, and Derek Chauvin, the former police officer convicted in his death, will be sentenced a few weeks after our 2021 Assembly. Our national struggle with racial injustice continues, and technology has increased the transparency of that struggle.

I was introduced to a blog recently, written by “Unbreakable AF”, a woman who has been living with breast cancer for the past three years and with all the medical interventions of treatment for that diagnosis. I will share with you the end of one of her blogs:

“Normal” is such a curious word and all I can share is what I have found to be true over these past three years. No matter how fast or how far we run from change, we can’t avoid it. Even when we get what we think we want, we aren’t really ever able to go back to where or who we were. When our reality is upended and we’re grasping for a return to normalcy, letting go of what was is often the only way to remain whole and move forward into what comes next. It’s painful. It’s transformative. And it’s so much better than normal.

We are living in a world that continues to change and disrupt our sense of what is normal. We trust that God is with us and waiting for us as we move into what comes next.