

# West Central Conference Report to Synod Assembly

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*"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him" (Psalm 22:27).*

When I looked back at what I included in my report for last year's assembly (an assembly that never happened), I found that I ended last year's report with the words, "Then Covid happened . . ." Oh, how little did we know early last year just how long the pandemic would last and the dramatic impact it would have on nearly everything in our lives, including the ministries of our congregations. Like everyone across our synod, the congregations of the West Central Conference have spent the last year learning how to be Christ's church in a radically new way, including how to stay connected with one another in mission and ministry through this ongoing crisis.

How quickly meeting over Zoom became the norm! In July, the rostered ministers gathered via Zoom primarily to check in with one another, see how each other were doing, and learn how we could best support one another in this new time. We also shared conversation around the Synod Council's Statement in Response to the Killing of George Floyd and our calling as Christ's church in the face of racial injustice. The West Central Conference representative on the Synod's Anti-Racism Working Group is Doris Robinson from Faith Lutheran in Jacksonville.

Our Fall Gathering and Cookout at Pere Marquette State Park was cancelled due to both the weather and Covid. However, we had a great Winter Gathering in December via Zoom with The Rev. Dr. Anna Madsen as our presenter. Dr. Madsen led us in a most meaningful and timely Bible Study around the theme "Finding Joy in the Midst of Despair."

Our Bishop's Colloquy with Bishop Roth was held in January via Zoom at which meaningful time was spent both Dwelling in the Word and sharing our mutual joys and challenges with one another. At our Conference Assembly in February, Mark Strutrud, CEO of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, and Molly Arnoldt, LSSI's Director of Development, shared a presentation on LSSI's footprint in our conference. In addition to the election of officers took place. I was elected to a second term as Conference Dean. Pastor Cynthia Munker was elected as Clergy Vice-President. Cindy Koonce was elected as Conference Secretary and Barbara Davenport as Conference Treasurer.

Most recently, we gathered for our Spring Gathering via Zoom in April as we welcomed Kristin Wiersma, Lead Consultant with The Joshua Group, as our presenter. Kristin shared conversation with us about how to lead in the midst of a time of anxiety and change. We look forward to gathering in-person near the end of May at Pere Marquette State Park for a time of fellowship, food, and fun.

Last, but certainly not least, we welcomed two new pastors into our conference over this past year—Pastor Maria Bonine at St. Paul's, Altamont, and Pastor Tom Krieger at Grace, Springfield. We celebrate their ministry among us!