

Transformational General Presbyter and Stated Clerk Report to Presbytery

November 10, 2020

Transformational General Presbyter Report

Today began with a tough phone call from a tearful widow who just lost her 61-year-old husband to COVID-19. It was heartbreaking and very real. We did not talk about politics or the economy or race relations. We talked about Jesus and how her faith is keeping her strong. These are challenging times for everyone in our congregations and especially tough times for those who serve as pastors and church leaders.

I was serving First Presbyterian Church of DuPage when the pandemic started and preached from my living room for 16 weeks. I led worship staring into my iPhone using a pulpit, cross, and communion ware borrowed from the church as my wife played recorded music on a laptop. Who would have imagined church like this at the start of the year? It's now been 7 months since most of our congregations have been fully back in their sanctuaries. We've missed Easter and VBS in our buildings. We've postponed weddings and the beloved fall rally Sunday. And yet we continue to be the church of Jesus Christ - witnesses to his love and ministry in our communities – even if our connections are often online and over the phone.

In my new role as your Transformational General Presbyter, I've been blessed to visit nearly all of the congregations in Blackhawk (most virtually, a few in person) and talked with many of our pastors and leaders. I am simply amazed at two recurring themes – the perseverance of our members and the creativity of our church leaders. Many of us feared church on-line would not work, we would lose touch, and finances would force churches to close. Members have surprised us and found faith in new ways. They have adapted to Zoom Bible study, parking lot worship, prepacked communion cups, and virtual fellowship hours. Online worship for some churches is bringing in new attendees. Giving has held relatively steady. Christ's servants have showed up, with masks, to hand out food or hold physically distanced gatherings.

Our pastors have been amazing. They quickly learned more about sound recording, video editing, and social media skills than you can imagine. They have discovered new ways to share God's word, lead the Lord's Supper, and provide pastoral care with hurting and isolated members. But they are exhausted. Some are working with sessions divided about a return to in person worship. Few have used their vacation. Burnout and depression are a real concern.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have along road ahead of us, but I am still optimistic. We have weathered surges in illness, isolation, job loss, and a divided electorate. While the world swirls around us let us make our faith, our congregations, and our fellowship the lifeline that connects us to the God who loves us and to one another. We can do this because we are called to be the church of Jesus Christ whether that is in person or online.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:38-39, NIV)

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Stated Clerk Report

1. Presbytery Stated Meeting Dates 2021

At this point, due to COVID-19, we are unsure when we will be able to return to in-person presbytery assembly meetings. Our schedule of meetings is as follows. All meetings begin at 9:30am.

- February 9, 2021: Via Zoom
- April 13, 2021: Most likely via Zoom
- June 8, 2021: Possibly at Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center
- September 14, 2021: Location to be determined
- November 9, 2021: Location to be determined

2. Approval to celebrate the Lord's Supper at any presbytery assembly meeting

Motion need to approve

3. Session Minute Review

This is a reminder that we will not be doing session minute reading and review this year. We will resume this in early 2021. Please watch for details.

4. Annual Statistical Reviews

It is not too early to begin thinking about the annual statistical report. Please consider how you might report average worship attendance and any changes to membership.

5. Establishing a balance of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ruling Elder Commissioners to Presbytery for 2021 (as required by Book of Order G-3.0301)

Criteria:

- As of October 31, 2020, there are 43 active Ministers of Word and Sacrament members of Blackhawk Presbytery to be counted for balance.
- For this balance, there are 18 active Honorably Retired or Member at Large minister members.
- Ministers of Word and Sacrament not living in the bounds of Blackhawk Presbytery and retired ministers who have not been active in the last year are not included in the count.
- Every congregation is entitled to at least one Ruling Elder Commissioner. For this balancing we are counting 69 congregations.
- Commissioned Pastors are not counted as the Ruling Elder Commissioner from a congregation.
- Congregations are entitled to an equal number of commissioners as there are installed positions for Ministers of Word and Sacrament in that congregation.

Following is the proposed number of Ruling Elder Commissioners assigned to each congregation for 2021. This is a total of 72.

Apple River	1	Hanover	1	Rockford, 3 rd	1
Aurora 2 nd	1	Harvard	1	Rockford, Westmnstr	1
Belvidere	1	Henry	1	Romeoville	1

Bolingbrook	1	Joliet, 1 st	2	Sandwich	1
Braidwood	1	Joliet, Westminster	1	Savanna	1
Caledonia	1	Kankakee	1	Shannon	1
Coal City	1	Kewanee	1	Somonauk	1
Ridgefield Crystal Lake	1	LaRose	1	St. Anne	1
Dakota	1	Manteno	1	Sterling	1
DeKalb	1	Marengo	1	Streator	1
Dixon	1	McHenry	1	Waltham	1
Earlville	1	Mendota	1	Waterman	1
Elgin	1	Morris	1	Watseka	1
Elizabeth	1	Morrison	1	Wenona	1
Elmira	1	New Lenox	1	Wilmington	1
Elwood	1	Oswego	1	Winnebago, 1 st	1
Fairbury	1	Ottawa	1	Winnebago, Middle Creek	1
Franklin Grove	1	Paw Paw	1	Woodstock	1
Fulton	1	Piper City	1	Yorkville	1
Fulton, Garden Plain	1	Plainfield	1		
Galena, 1 st	1	Pontiac	1		
Galena, Westminster	1	Princeton	1		
Gardner	1	Rochelle	1		
Geneva	2	Rockford, 2 nd /1 st	1		
Gibson City	1	Rockford, Korean	1		

Enroll These Ruling Elders Serving the Presbytery:

Charles Johnson, Blackhawk Presbytery Past Moderator

Terry Mohaupt, Stronghold Committee

Enroll these 18 Commissioned Pastors:

Jack Berghorst, New Lenox

Claire Brennecka, Harvard

Jack Briggs, Franklin Grove

J.D. Buchenau, Pontiac

Barbara D'Souza, Westminster Rockford

Mike Engle, Winnebago First

Gretchen Hammeke, Westminster Rockford

Faith Herout, Morris

Del Keilman, Earlville United

Mary Lynn Keir, Ellwood

Ray Lantz, Gibson City

Kathy Linn, Apple River

Dorothy Morrizo, Schapville Zion

Tanya Muzzarelli, Marengo

Jeanne Ohms, Hanover

Dale Tolly, Braidwood

Laurie Walker, Sandwich

Karen Williams, Kankakee