

October 24, 2020

**Synod Commissioner Report**  
**Teaching Elder – Bruce McQueen**  
**Ruling Elder – Mark Kennig**

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The annual Synod Assembly gathered via Zoom on September 21, 2020. As a reminder, the Assembly is comprised of two commissioners from each of the eight Presbyteries – Denver, Glacier, Plains and Peaks, Pueblo, Utah, Western Colorado, Wyoming, and Yellowstone. Our Synod is a “Reduced Functioning” body fulfilling the basic constitutional responsibilities.

Our Synod is served by three part-time staff, Stated Clerk Lynn Smit, Treasurer Brad Culp, and Administrative Support, Bobbi Hoffman. For their excellent service a 2.5% cost of living and merit increase was approved for 2021.

The SRM’s balance sheet as of August 2020 is \$612,366.16. Of that are two investments at Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program and New Covenant Funds of \$450,275.74. The Geller Center for Leadership Development is the largest designated fund at \$153,964.46.

Per-capita remains at \$3.00. NOTE: In response to the financial restrictions facing presbyteries, the Synod is offering a rebate of \$.25/member if the Presbyteries pay their per capita by December 1, 2021.

Of course, the pandemic has resulted in a considerable disruption in the affairs of and the valued communities of the presbyteries across the rural and urban regions of the Synod. As with Plains and Peaks, Matthew 25 has caught the attention of several presbyteries and been adopted as their focus:

- Building Congregational Vitality
- Dismantling Structural Racism
- Eradicating Systemic Poverty

**Noted Comments**

- a. *The lives that matter* in Dismantling Structural Racism in our Synod, involve the American Indian and Latinos.
- b. In regard to legal matters, if a church requires masks at church functions as mandated by the county or state, the church is liable and must enforce wearing the masks.
- c. Pastors have reported working longer hours and finding difficulty in taking time off.

**Presbytery News**

The pandemic has stirred creativity. *Necessity is the birth of creativity.* With the closing of in-person worship, congregations and presbyteries have created new things and ways to worship, connect, serve, and minister.

Church communications have been upgraded. Through streaming, Zoom, and YouTube, churches are effectively connecting people, offering online worship, daily meditations/prayer, fellowship, book clubs, outreach, visitation, weekly pastor gatherings, spiritual direction, and support for the retired. Outdoor and indoor small group worship services have been created with the necessary safeguards. A couple of churches are holding joint Zoom worship services. Church members are providing food from their gardens and churches are offering wi-fi for families/children in their parking lots.

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Presbytery Developments:

Denver - 47 Congregations

After completing a lengthy mission study, the new vision of *Journey with God Together* has transitioned into calling two new staff, a church developer and a mission strategist with an emphasis on ethnic ministry. "Faithful Thursday" is a mission to bring a Reformed Christian voice to the Colorado State Legislature.

Glacier – 19 Congregations

One third or eight pulpits are vacant.

The Flathead Camp lawsuit continues to work through the courts.

Pueblo- 15 Congregations, 4 New Worshiping Communities

A new Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk and four new pastors installed. Zoom has increased participation for those in outlining areas. Four new worshiping communities have been formed and four more are being considered.

Utah – 20 Congregations

A new Executive Presbyter has been called.

A combined 12 inquirers and candidates are in the process of seeking ordained ministry.

Western Colorado – 15 Congregations

Close to half the pulpits are vacant.

A new Stated Clerk

One church successfully holding two morning indoor worship services in a large multipurpose room.

Wyoming – 29 Congregations

Questions continue on how to best do worship, sing, and how pastors can pace themselves.

Weekly pastor Zoom gatherings.

More people in need requiring longer hours for pastors.

Yellowstone – 23 Congregations

Eight pulpits are vacant.

Grant offered to train churches in the new technologies.

Kathy Goodrich, teaching elder on staff, is encouraging the right questions be asked. Examples: How do we listen to each other in these times? How do we be kind to each other in this divided country? Where do we see the Holy Spirit at work? Are we looking like citizens of heaven? How do we look with new eyes at our circumstances?

She recommends churches check in at the "Pod-Church" website.

Submitted by,  
The Rev. W. Bruce McQueen  
Teaching Elder Commissioner