

## Synod Commissioner Report

The Synod of the Covenant met Tuesday, May 3rd via Zoom.

The meeting was very full with worship, information on innovative ministry in the Synod; updates on grants, trainings, and other Synod resources; and information on “back-office” progress in the Synod’s operations.

Three ministries share information on their innovations with the body.

- Rev. Li Dolly Dong of Mansfield shared of her Worshipping Community among Chinese immigrants in Mansfield. In addition to serving a congregation, she began a ministry in a restaurant after becoming friends with the owners and establishing additional connections among Chinese immigrants in the community. She emphasized listening and relationship building with people, being responsive to God’s movements, and being willing to serve. This ministry is one from her heart in response to the Gospel’s call to baptize and make disciples and by grace this Worshipping Community is growing.
- Paula Larson of Boyne City First Presbyterian Church shared that after considering whether or not the community would miss the church if it was not there any longer, that the congregation knew that they needed to change their perception in the community. Even as the congregation is without a pastor, the Session and willing members have undertaken an ambitious commitment to monthly outreach in the community. Each first Sunday of the month they do not gather for worship but go out into the community. They have taken care packages to nurses, long term care workers, snow plow drivers, postal workers, and others. They have conducted prayer walks and talked to business owners about how they can pray for them. They have provided care packages to High School seniors, support for teachers, backpacks for school children, and host an energy station at cross country meets that includes water, fruit and chocolate milk for the cross-country team. Their care and compassion to the community has been met with gratitude and thanksgiving.
- “Revbethany” (Bethany Peerbolte) is a pastor in Detroit who has become a TikTok star (you can find her @revbethany on Tik Tok). She posts daily videos on Tik Tok that get 10K – 90K views. She shared that she thinks that this kind of ministry is a new parable. She said that we all have something that is a quirk – like she is a night person and that works great for digital ministry. She encouraged people to see the gifts in the things that they might think are odd about themselves and use those gifts for ministry.

Following the Innovative Ministry sharing, the Interim Executive, Chip Hardwick shared his report. Chip shared the many opportunities that are available through the Synod: scholarships, grants and trainings. Please take a look at these resources – there is a lot that is available to congregations!

Rev. Luke Choi shared Board of Pensions information following Chip’s report.

The meeting then went to a number of things related to “back office” functions of the Synod. The Synod staff and leadership are taking this year to get the Synod operations in strong order. This included a report from the Nominating Committee and a recommendation from the Finance Committee to engage external accounting services. A position description for a community organizer for communities of color was shared and approved. Position descriptions for the Synod Executive and Clerk of Session were shared, and Chip Hardwick and Fran Lane-Lawrence were elected to fill these positions respectively, moving out of Interim status. Both have done an excellent job in their Interim ministry with the Synod. Interim Stated Clerk Fran Lane-Lawrence then shared an update on a GAPJC Decision. The meeting then was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Ziegler, Commissioner