

2020 FALL AGM Minister's Report

This has been an extraordinary year and our common life has been turned upside down in so many ways! From October of 2019 to March of 2020 we followed the patterns of the last few years. There was Sunday worship every week in the FW Gilbert School and services at the Ironwood and Nursing Homes each month. Our office and meeting space was bustling with Bible Study and after school Good News Club, knitting group, meetings, and coffee time. Then it all stopped! Schools were closed and user groups were locked out. As we came to understand that this global pandemic will be changing things for a long time we began to find new ways to meet and worship. On March 25 I posted my first YouTube video service (it took me days to prepare and edit and upload!!) Since then I have posted 25 videos and we are now resuming a limited form of in-person worship at the Pinawa Lutheran Church. I have spent (what feels like) endless hours in ZOOM meetings and we are holding together by God's Grace. Thank you for your encouragement and support!

It is my responsibility to keep the record of Burials, Baptisms, Wedding and Confirmations. Since our last AGM I have presided at Memorial or Committal services for Evelina Baumgartner, Solomon Sawchuk, Jane Petkau, June Hughes, Fay Sochaski, and Paul Westdal. There have been no baptisms or confirmations in the past year. In August I presided at a lovely blessing of Josephine Hall and Tony Weiwel's civil union on a rock by the water on the English River.

I continue to serve on the Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and as Interim Moderator of First Presbyterian Church in Kenora. I have just completed a term as Keeper of the Vision at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre and have agreed to serve for one more year. All these meetings are online now.

Last year I announced that I would be retiring sometime within the next two years. I have now determined that my last day will April 1st, 2022. That's not an April Fool joke - just the day when age and years of service add up to "95" and I can receive a pension without penalty. It was my hope that, by giving lots of notice, there would be time to plan for an orderly transition after what will be, God willing, more than 25 years in ministry here. The COVID shut down has diverted attention from that preparation, but I am praying that will resume quite soon. If past experience is any indication, the next year and a half will pass by quickly and anything can happen!

I feel very fortunate to have been called to this extraordinary community of faith in such an amazing place. During the lockdown phase of the COVID response I often thought that I was extremely glad that, if I needed to be "locked down", it was here, with you folks. Thank you for being such good neighbours and encouraging brothers and sisters in Christ!

Peace and Blessings,

Rob Murray