

2020 Pastor's Report
Rev. K. Anna Shin
Bolingbrook: Friendship UMC

Pastor's Report to the Church Conference
Friendship United Methodist Church
October 9, 2020

Rev. KyungHae Anna Shin

"¹⁵ Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, this is the reason that I don't stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God's call" (Ephesians 1:15-18)

We've heard and talked a lot that we live in an unprecedented time. Yes, the year 2020 is unique. Many will talk about it even after most of us will be gone. What did we do? Why? How would it be remembered? That has been my question as I brood over the meaning of our life together, our sense of call as the Body of Christ.

As many of us still grieve over the loss of life or job, and struggle in isolation due to the pandemic, we have become aware of the importance of the essential workers and those on the margin in our community. I recall the words of Bishop Schnase, who wrote *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregation*: "The church fulfills its mission at the edge, where those who belong to the community engage and interweave their lives with those outside the community. **There, at the margin, we fulfill our mission** through service and justice ministries—helping, serving, relieving suffering; and through our sharing the good news of Christ—seeking, inviting, welcoming, and nurturing faith."

Friendship has been living out its **missional goals** that came out of CAT (congregational assessment tool) (**1. getting connected to the community, 2. spiritual growth, 3. leadership development**) as fervently as possible, even during the pandemic. I have been deeply touched and inspired by the compassion and care that our members have shown not just for one another but also for our community. That is a great witness of 'the love in action' that the followers of Christ are called to be. I am reminded of a saying, 'a true character is often revealed in times of crisis,' as I reflected on the ministries at Friendship UMC this year.

United Methodist Women of Friendship has been a leader for all of us in this endeavor: Making facial masks, creating Micro Pantry, encouraging voter registration, having small group conversations over racial relations are just a few among many.

While our gatherings have switched to a virtual platform, including Sunday worship services—(my special thanks to Larry Hilb and staff: without any interruption, we could worship via Zoom platform from March 22 as the whole world moved to 'sheltered in place.'), our leaders have shown their creativity, their adaptability in ministries. Mostly I don't have enough words to express my appreciation to Michelle Braxton, who has organized worship music and offered her gifts since Pam Stephan, a long-time music director, resigned from August.

I can only confess that our surprising God has helped us get equipped for times of crisis like this by sharpening our sense of call. While living through an unprecedented situation, I have witnessed our leadership's spiritual maturity, adaptability, and sacrificial giving. I am reminded of a saying that a person's true character is often revealed in times of crisis.

Here are my limited understandings of God's guidance in the year 2020:

1. **Strategic Planning:** Following CAT (Congregational Assessment Tool), the leadership came up with three goals for 2020. 1. To get connected with the community, 2. To enhance and implement Disciple Making System, 3. Leadership Development. Team Quest had presented an action plan in February so that each ministry team would do buy-in and implement it for the coming year. However, the leadership event was on hold when we moved into 'shelter in place' due to the pandemic in March.
2. **Becoming Reconciling Congregation,** March 8: as a response to 2019 General Conference of our denomination, the full inclusion task force was formed in 2019. On March 8, the congregation voted to join the Reconciling Ministry Network to continue to support LGBTQ people and its community.
3. **JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion)**—after much discussion among the Full Inclusion Task Force, a new ministry team was born to continue to work for social justice. As the Black Lives Matter movement has risen from every corner of our nation, this team has focused on helping the congregation know the real issue of racial relations.
4. **Worship:** from July 26, we would be able to have in-person worship as we continue to use the zoom platform and live streaming via FaceBook of our worship service.
5. **Call Shepherd Ministry:** From the first week of April, to be sure to keep connected to one another, 15 people volunteered to call each household in our congregation. We began with weekly contact and now bi-weekly.
6. **Spiritual Growth:** We celebrated seven people who graduated from **Disciple I** (34 weeks) bible study in June. **Disciple II** has begun in October with 6 participants. **Leading a Prayer in Public** could start with 9 participants. Patricia Michalik, a member of Hope UMC (Joliet), graciously accepts our invitation to lead this class.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful to all our members who have faithfully and generously supported and engaged at Friendship Church. We are not perfect but we have been faithful to the call that God has planted in us. May God continue to bless us and lead us as we navigate this challenging time, "encouraging one another and building up each other as indeed you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11).