

## **WDC Associate Conference Minister (KS-based)**

### **Kathy Neufeld Dunn**

Our WDC congregations and pastors are dealing with unprecedented challenges. (You may have heard this an unprecedented number of times by now.) I am so grateful that many of our congregational leaders, including pastors, have benefitted from the Kansas Leadership Center trainings on responding to adaptive challenges and modeling wise leadership in such times. Between how to listen carefully to the needs of their people, as well as listening to the wisest immunology specialists and our own medical people, we are also called to listen to the cries of our black brothers and sisters who have been silenced for too long. All of this in a relatively short amount of time. This is complex, heavy stuff. That's why it's called one huge adaptive challenge for any WDC congregation. This year I'm also grateful for the work and resourcing of Vibrant Faith, an ecumenical nonprofit whose goal is helping congregations develop and nurture faith formation through every generation. Their focus of late has been wisely utilizing the internet as a part of our faith formation ministries. Attending one of their gatherings was an incredible gift to receive last fall before the pandemic Safer At Home order. Shana Peachey Boshart, our MC USA Minister of Faith Formation, was at the same resourcing event that I attended. It's wonderful to be on the same path when it comes to offering ideas and resources to our conferences and congregations, especially in this specific time of need.

#### **1. Resourcing Healthy, Missional Church**

As noted above, I have shared how to work at faith formation online with specific pastors, as well as put numerous links to really solid resources for the same on our WDC Facebook page during the Safer At Home time. I would be delighted to continue to share the best of what I have learned.

I continue to offer Safe Sanctuaries trainings, with two of them over Zoom and including an enhanced section on online safety practices. In addition to these introductions to safety and prevention of abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults, I spent significant time this year resourcing and supporting congregations and their pastors who were responding to reports of misconduct by congregational leaders, lay and credentialed.

#### **2. Sustaining Transformational Pastors**

**Chaplaincy Support:** I hosted a spring and a fall chaplains' gathering for a meal, sharing, support, and prayer. I also connect one-on-one with chaplains as they have need.

**New Pastor Support:** In addition to the support of our more experienced ministers, there are a number of ministers just out of seminary who have joined congregations in our conference. With the great challenges already noted, I have spent significant time encouraging and guiding these gifted young leaders.

**Healthy Boundaries 101 (basic) and 201 (advanced) trainings:** I offered both on-site and Zoom-supported Healthy Boundaries trainings (one of each). Several participants on the Zoom-based training were from other conferences. This remote teaching model seems to be drawing the attention of some other conferences who do not wish to use their time planning these trainings. Heidi and I have been in conversation with how WDC staff might support them as they have need.

#### **3. Connect pastors and congregations with WDC and MC USA resources and mission**

I already mentioned the God-send of the "just in time" resources of developing online faith formation resources through the expertise of Vibrant Faith, as well as Springs Forth!, our WDC Resource Library online and our own denominational resources.

**Congregational Transitions –** I have walked with three congregations in the midst of pastoral transitions. One is in an extended time of intentional interim ministry which continues to serve them well. Another

had a successful search process that concluded this year with calling co-pastors. A third is just beginning their Pastoral Search process. I regularly connect congregational leaders to MC USA resources and best practices during this vital, transitional time.

4. Coordinate Assembly Planning – I am again in the midst of Assembly planning and coordination for August 1-2, 2020. What a joy to have such a gifted, willing group of volunteers to help shape this conference gathering, this year of necessity as a virtual Assembly. We hope to learn what kinds of blessings and losses come from this experience. What is a one-time experiment? What do we miss desperately and wish to return to? What might we try again in the future? This is another adaptive challenge among many this year.

We ask for your continued support through your prayers and generosity of time and funds. God is with us. That is our hope and the good news we share.