**VALLEY BRIDGE – April 20, 2016**

**THE WORD FROM RICK – “It Is a Work in Progress”**

It has now been two months since our presbytery’s new Mission Design was officially launched. I would like to be able to report to you that everything is going extremely well, that we have not missed a beat, and that we are wondering why we didn’t make some of these changes years and years ago … but I can’t! What I can tell you is that this continues to be a “work in progress,” that we have missed a few beats, we have been a bit bewildered and confused, and we find ourselves wondering why we are doing this. What I can also tell you is that we have many outstanding, creative, and committed servants and risk-takers who have willingly stepped forward and steps that we need to take in order to live into the new reality that has been created.

We have been realistic. We all knew that there would be work to be done once this venture was launched. The Next Pres Team could not begin to anticipate every conceivable scenario in our presbytery’s life; and they knew that they could not plan the work of every commission and committee down to the most minute detail. What they did do was to create a solid framework upon which the people of the presbytery could build ministry and mission that would best fit what all of us needed to have going forward into God’s future. In order for the new Mission Design to become truly the Presbytery’s Mission Design, the people of this presbytery need to be involved now in massaging and shaping it … taking ownership in its continued creation!

It is not easy merging the functions of a Committee on Ministry together with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and equally as challenging is placing the functions of a Budget and Finance Committee into the same commission as the Personnel Committee, but we are doing it, figuring out the particular dynamics as we go forward. Additionally, it is quite different not having a Council. It means that we are learning to communicate more often and more intentionally in order to keep things moving in a positive and creative direction. We find that we are asking many more questions and working together to find good answers. The learning curve is strange and somewhat loopy, and the default to the previous ways of doing things is very tempting, but we are getting better at resisting that temptation.

In the last week, two of our groups have had their first face-to-face meetings since February 20. The Commission on Leadership gathered in Redwood Falls last Thursday, while the Committee on Congregational Nurture met in Willmar this past Monday. It was exciting to work with both of these groups and listen as they talked through their responsibilities and how they could best be invested in the lives of our congregations and leaders. The Commission on Leadership, besides trying to bring two previous committees together, already had a great deal on its plate. While many of the members are learning “on the fly,” they willingly took hold of new responsibilities. In contrast to the Commission on Leadership, the Committee on Congregational Nurture is brand new, and they spent their time brainstorming how best to come alongside our congregations. Many ideas swirled about … and I saw a group of people who were truly excited about how their ministry could be a most significant part of our new Mission Design. They have begun to embrace their “4 C’s” – Care, Communication, Connection, and Community. They intend to share more about who they are and what they are all about at our May 10 presbytery meeting.

Our Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys continues to be a work in progress, and each day we are living a little bit more into our Mission Design. At the same time, we await the report of the Commission on Presbytery Life as they work toward the final pieces of our staff design. We know we don’t have it all figured out -- yet, but each day, we learn something new, we discover another possibility, we see signs of hope, we see more people who are stepping up to be engaged, and we are doing better at trying new ways, rather than defaulting to the familiar. We are making some changes, and change is messy and scary work, but in the midst of the messiness and anxiety, I see us working together to create the reality that we are truly a community of faith communities. This presbytery belongs to all 6871 of us, and we know that we are better together … and so the journey continues.

May God continue to bless us all!

Grace and Peace,

**Rick**