To the People of Bethlehem Stonepile UMC and Springvale UMC:

As we look back a year can go by so quickly. As the saying goes – it just seems like yesterday. It just seems like yesterday that I started sharing life with these congregations. Well, this is my final Wednesday note to you, and I just want to say “Thank You” to these congregations for the way you have treated my wife and I.

In an introduction to the book of Philippians these words are written. “The Christian church hasn’t had a perfect record throughout history. If you take a random survey of adjectives people have used to describe the church, the list will likely include such labels as judgmental, narrow, divided, pompous. The Church of Jesus Christ has fallen short of the ideals he entrusted to it – so far short that we may sometimes forget what the church is supposed to look like. Occasionally, however, a church came along that worked, against all odds.”

That last phrase says much about the life of these two congregations. You have endured “against all odds”. The loss of your long-term, much loved pastor, and then in the time of recovery to be hit with the Covid19 pandemic that hindered your life together. But you have still been the church - against all odds. There are many reasons for that.

One of the reasons is the leadership and work of Teresa Vitz and Alissa Stump. What a treasure this charge has in these two. I want to thank them for making my role in the charge’s life so doable. Pastor Larry Parlett has been so valuable as well. What a great person to deal with the visitation needs – Pastor Parlett seems to know everyone in York County!

And the list could go on and on: the music leadership of the congregations; the decorations for the seasons; the leadership of the Ad Council Chairs; the individuals who have worked with the technology enabling us to continue worshiping together even when we couldn’t be together – I hope you get my point. You have cared for each other and the ministry of your congregations. As congregations you have endured some difficult times, but as I said in my last letter: YOU ARE STILL STANDING!

And it is because you have been the Church! Continue to do that. Under the capable leadership of Pastor Bill Jones – continue to do that.

And I wish God’s blessing upon you and your ministry.

Joy and Peace,

Pastor Bud