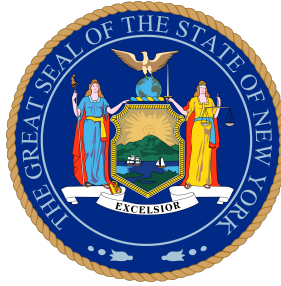


*New York State seal*



Tom Rainwater  
126 Jay St.  
Chittenango, NY 13037  
(315) 706-3489  
[wtrainwater@gmail.com](mailto:wtrainwater@gmail.com)  
December 5, 2020

Dear brethren in Christ,

A warm "Hello" to you from upstate New York! I hope you all are doing well. The weather is getting colder here, but we've only had a dusting of snow so far. In this last report of the year, I want to recap 2020 and then look ahead to the new year.

The pandemic has challenged us in many ways. In spite of differing opinions, brethren have had to come to agreement on what forms of social distancing are best for the congregation and how to comply with rules imposed by local and state government regarding worship. At the beginning of the year, who would've thought we'd be dealing with such things? Hopefully, we've learned patience and been humbled by the experience. Unfortunately, the elderly and those who are most vulnerable to the virus suffer from isolation. Those who've lost loved ones are told they can only have small funerals or none at all. **Finding ways to connect with people and encourage them is crucial.** The "old fashion" means of communication (telephone, writing letters and cards, sending small gifts) are even more essential. Zoom and FaceTime have been great tools of encouragement and teaching for congregations and families. I pray this virus soon passes especially since people in the world are fearful of exposure from in-person Bible studies. As it appears, the virus will continue for much of 2021. May we be up to the challenge and show the world by our example that we have an enduring hope through Jesus Christ beyond this life of uncertainty and turmoil.

Looking back on this year, the merger of the congregation at Canastota with the brethren at the Indian River congregation in Philadelphia, NY, has been a great blessing. We are all stronger because of it. We average close to 50 in Sunday morning attendance. The Thursday Midweek Bible study is slightly less in number. It is a joy to work with these brethren. Currently, Lanna and I still commute the distance, but we hope to move closer in the new year once the house is prepped and sold.

2021 has a lot of potential for growth in the work up here. In addition to the locals, the congregation is composed of a mixture of military families and those who have Amish backgrounds or have family connections to the Mennonite community. We've had many visitors from both backgrounds. It's an interesting mix. The two cultures remind me how the early church was a mix of both Jews and Gentiles. We are hopeful that more Bible studies will occur from these area contacts.

Presently my monthly financial support is able to provide for our regular monthly needs here. Expenses I will have to budget for the new year are: (1) money toward Sam and Josh's college tuition, and (2) rising New York family health insurance premiums for 2021. Again, we appreciate very much your prayers and support! Once the pandemic is over, I'd very much like to visit you and give an update in person. I'm looking forward to our fellowship in the new year. May God bless you in all you do for Him!

Your brother in Christ,