

## Discovering Hope... Continues

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When I took it down to water it, I discovered that a little brown bird chose my hanging geranium plant for her nest. First I found the nest and four jelly-bean sized eggs. Now it's home to four baby birds. It's such an ordinary thing – a family of little brown birds – but it has been such a joy for me to watch this summer. My mother died in May, and even the littlest signs of life are especially precious to me right now.

New life. Sometimes it comes in such unexpected places and in such ordinary ways.

Throughout this year as synod rural minister, I have been privileged to hear both the joys and challenges you face in your rural congregations. We have talked and prayed together. You have been honest and gracious, courageous and hopeful.

“Discovering Hope” has turned out to be a wonderfully appropriate title for Rural Ministry in Southeastern Minnesota Synod. You have pointed to numerous signs of life that you have discovered in the rural congregations that are your homes. Signs of the Spirit at work.

These “signs of life” are not usually glitzy and grand-scale things that would bring reporters and photographers flocking to your doors. They are usually little signs of life that have taken your alertness to notice and your care to tend. And they come at a time when you are facing very large griefs indeed – the loss of “the way life used to be” in rural churches and communities, the loss of cherished lifestyles and church traditions.

God works faithfully among us, as we tend these signs of the Spirit in the ordinary bread, wine, water, Word – and little brown birds – among us. “Discovering Hope” continues – perhaps it's just beginning!



God bless you as  
summer surrounds you  
with signs of the harvest  
to come,

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