

August 2016

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. – 2nd Corinthians 9:7

Neighbors in Christ,

Greetings to you, sisters and brothers in Christ! We are now two thirds of the way through a summer schedule that has brought worship time changes, a relaxed atmosphere, and different ways of praising God that may be new for some. We also leave behind hot and humid weather in July and rains that just seemed to keep on coming. This August we look forward to warm days of sunshine in hopes of the local crops growing and flourishing in the fields that surround us all. August also brings a time to reflect on personal and community goals which were set months ago, and have guided us to where we are now.

One of the goals generally set for members of Christian faith communities is that of personal giving and the ability to give generously to God and to the greater church. Unfortunately, sometimes our goals are often sidelined during the summer months when we choose to take trips to the lake or make plans to leave town for a couple of days. And in doing so, this also leaves us absent from our congregational communities. We each see it too – Where is so and so? Or, have you heard from them, I have not seen them around lately? Generally, when we are not present in church, our regularly scheduled giving is interrupted and our weekly offerings decline as a result.

We give our gifts – ourselves, our time, our finances, and our possessions – to God because we enter into the joy of knowing that these gifts will be used for those who require it, and that they are also being shared with the rest of the Body of Christ. We also recognize a theology of giving in that the church and our neighbors receive the best part of the bountiful crop so all may provide in the abundance that is raised up from a community. Biblically, this is expressed in giving the best ten percent of your harvest to the church community to share in; we are thankful of the grace that has been provided to us and want to share what we have with others. But sometimes in our absence, the giving slows and what is taken in becomes less and less each week.

This month, I encourage you to revisit your gifts again to the congregations you represent, and the greater Neighbors in Christ community. Pray about the amounts you weekly provide and try not to stray from that amount. However, if you cannot make those gifts, consider what you give to God and the church does not always have to be tied to your finances or your checkbook. I encourage you to look at your own personal gifts of your time and your possessions for others to share in. If you can, call on or visit a friend at a nursing home or care facility. If you able, share in a meal with another person who may not be able to make their own, or cook like they used to. And sometimes just picking up the phone and saying hello is all that God's beloved children need to hear. Your gifts are greatly received and are certainly appreciated by me, and everyone else in our beloved NIC community.

Be the cheerful giver that God calls all of us to do, and I look forward to seeing you in worship this month!

Rev. Erik R. Karlson
Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish