

September 2016

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home, and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” – Acts 2:46-47

Fellow Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen! And I say ‘amen’ again because I just received wonderful and joyful news from our fellow members of the body of Christ at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Stewart, MN. They have overwhelmingly voted to enter into a new contracting agreement with the congregations of the Neighbors in Christ community offering to share their pastor the Rev. Mahlon Bekedam with us, beginning October 2016. Pastor Mahlon will assist me as your pastor for worship services on Sunday mornings and festivals, help with visitation to those who often cannot get to church, and provide pastoral care and guidance to those who are homebound. I will continue on as the called pastor for the NIC parish, but need some extra support making sure everything else is taken care in the parish. I am so excited for this new phase of NIC’s mission and ministry out in the greater communities we live and serve, and I hope you are as well.

This new agreement between our faith communities also returns a sense of normalcy and consistency for worship times and schedules too. There will no longer be a rotating worship schedule, as we have had for these summer months; we now resume a set schedule and revitalized Sunday School and Confirmation program for our youth on Sunday mornings and Wednesday afternoons. There will be a set worship schedule whereby St. John’s LC will hold worship services at 8:30 am and St. Paul’s will worship at 10:30 am, while Augustana LC also begins at 8:30 am and First LC worships at 10:30 am. Pastor Mahlon and I will each preside at two of the churches, and then switch the following week, and so on. In order for this arrangement to properly work, it also means that I will be leading worship and preaching at the St. Paul’s location, and I am thankful for this opportunity as well. Pastor Mahlon and I are very excited to get going on this new contracting venture.

However, this arrangement begins the first weekend of October. For three weekends in September, you will also see new faces leading worship in your respective congregations. I have asked some fellow colleagues to join us as pulpit supply pastors for the first, third, and fourth Sundays of the month. Please welcome them with open arms and open hearts as they lead you in prayer, praise, and worship of the Triune God. But I expect to see all of you at St. John’s in Bismarck on Sunday September 11th at 9:30 am as the combined Neighbors in Christ parish community worships God and celebrates Steeple Fest. I want this church packed that day, and I am please asking for your help in doing so. Let us make this the most memorable Steeple Fest occasion yet! Following the service, there will be a large meal of ham and meatballs, games, and prizes will be given away from the raffle. If you need raffle tickets...I’ve got ‘em.

I have chosen the above text from the Acts of the Apostles because I see such a similarity of the first church growing and where we are currently as a combined parish. We are each called by God in our own different ways, but are also called in the same measures to love and serve one another, as God has loved us. As we continue on in the months ahead, my prayer is that you continue in doing the great work you already do and consider exploring new ways in which you can serve others, and the Triune God that surrounds you. Let our future and the example of the first church be the example of our best days yet.

Faithfully,

Rev. Erik R. Karlson
Pastor, Neighbors in Christ