

January 2017

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

Well, as I write this, the regular rhythms of ministry continue, deep in the heart of the Advent season. Soon we will celebrate Christmas and the greatest gift ever given to us and to this world – the gift of Christ, who came for us all.

As you read this, a new calendar year will have turned over. We leave behind a year of political turmoil, a time of transition in the parish from one pastor leaving and another taking over, and the little things in our lives that we choose to forget; we also look forward to a new year for change and personal growth. And my wife and I will also bring home two little ones from the maternity ward which will interrupt the household rhythm that we are accustomed to. Amy and I are so happy and thankful for the gift we have been given with the twin boy and girl that God has blessed us with. And I am so particularly grateful for the Neighbors in Christ congregations that welcome our newborns as well.

I will be taking some time off in the beginning of January, along with my wife, as we acclimate ourselves to a new schedule with two infants in our household. We are collectively looking forward to learning the 'in's and out's' of parenthood, and late night (and morning) feeding schedules. I will be away for two Sundays and you will see colleagues of mine leading you in worship, and being available to you if the need arises. Please welcome them as you have welcomed me over the last year.

In the meantime, God's work and the Neighbors in Christ Parish mission and ministry does not stop. In planning for this time, I am so very grateful at how each congregation runs, through the dedication and hard work and joy and passions of so many. The Church IS the people. Because of this, Confirmation classes, committee meetings, and other gatherings will continue as regularly scheduled. I will be available during the day on Wednesdays for visitation and meetings, and to continue being with our confirmation youth in the afternoons. NIC Bible studies will be on hiatus through January though because of the possibility of inclement weather, during the day and evening scheduled times. We will review that again in February. But for everything else, the show will continue to go on.

As a reminder, for emergency pastoral coverage, my colleague Pastor Mahlon Bekedam will be on call in case of emergency during this time. He can be reached at (712) 308-1982. Pastor Mahlon and I will also be in contact by phone or email in the case of prayer requests, unexpected hospitalization, moving someone into Hospice, or death and funeral planning. We will also coordinate visitation, bringing Holy Communion, and meeting with families as needed.

God's continued blessings to you and Happy New Year!!!

Rev. Erik R. Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish