

February 2017

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace to you! I write this message to you as I ponder the last three busy weeks of my life. My wife, Amy, and I welcomed two new additions into our family. Emma Grace and Andrew James were born on December 31st at Hutchinson Health Hospital, and all continue to do well. Amy has healed well and the twins continue to grow each day. I love our dear children, but they are a handful. We continue to welcome your thoughts and prayers as we learn the ins and outs of parenthood.

We also continue our spiritual journey through the Season of Epiphany where we celebrate the revelation of our Lord Jesus who was visited and worshipped by the magi, and was adorned with precious gifts. In this revealing of Christ in our lives, we also learn of Christ's baptism in the Jordan River as a cornerstone of our public faith and look to Christ as the light in the world as he began his public ministry in Galilee. The time of Epiphany is all about the joy and gladness we share with one another in our lives and how we can personify the example of Christ in all the things that we do – public and private.

A great way of sharing in Christ's love and witnessing the example of serving our neighbor is to be present in our worship services and sharing in God's inspired Word with your family and friends. This month, Augustana Lutheran and First Lutheran will swap worship times through May 2017. First will begin worship at 8:30 am and Augustana will start at 10:30 am. Please make sure that you mark your calendars and set your alarm clocks accordingly. The Neighbors in Christ bible study also starts again on Wednesday mornings, beginning at 10:00 am. We will continue in our studies of the weekly gospel lessons, as well as the theme of women in the bible which we have been looking at for nearly six months. The conversation is always great and the learning never ceases.

I have also included some *Small Catechism* information in this newsletter related to the 2nd Article of the Apostle's Creed and Luther's explanation to it. This is in direct response to the observance and celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Use these monthly tidbits to increase your personal faith and hold them close to your heart. I will highlight a different piece monthly from our Lutheran tradition and add Martin Luther's take on it. Look for more parish wide Reformation presentations and learning events as the year continues; I look forward to bringing you more historical and faith based themes as the months go on.

I encourage you to look inside yourself during this Epiphany season and see how and where Christ is working in and through you. Whether it is in humble service to your congregational neighbors, through a community sponsored event, or simply by living out the 'Golden Rule,' ask yourself how you are revealing Jesus Christ to the world. How are you spreading the light of the Son of God in a world that some would consider dark and sinful? Be the light that Christ asks you to be and share it with others this February.

God's peace and blessing to you!

Rev. Erik R. Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish