

*“For just as the body is the one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” – 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:12*

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from a loving Triune God! Amen. The hot and humid month of July had certainly brought a lot to our greater Gibbon and Winthrop communities and the Neighbors in Christ Parish. We celebrated Farm City Fun Fest Days and Gibbon Fun Fest, their parades with free candy and popsicles, ecumenical fellowship with Beer & Hymns at Hahn’s, and a wonderful worship service and fundraising event at the UFC Berdan Center for Debbie Trebesch. I even pulled out some of my favorite Aloha shirts for the events as my own way of celebrating and making a personal statement.

But our area also suffered some losses too because of a strong thunderstorm causing severe wind and hail damage to the homes we live in, businesses we are employed, vehicles we drive, and church buildings we continually maintain. The morning after the storm the main streets of downtown Winthrop looked like all the leaves were in the streets, windows were shattered on the north sides of the buildings and homes, and some of the crops looked as if their tops had been mowed down from the hail and wind damage. The siding at St. John’s was peppered and marked up from the hail, and the parsonage and school house had some windows broken. And First Lutheran in Winthrop had some damage to the steeple, roof, and siding of the parsonage too. The next day, contractors and adjustors flocked to the streets drumming up business as the local folks began to question what to do next.

Thankfully no one was hurt. Life went on, and we began to help one another again. I picked the 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians verse for this message because it reminds us that if a part of the body hurts, the entire body hurts; and it is the same with the Body of Christ – when one hurts or laments, it is the same for the rest. And we are called to reach out and help our neighbors. And you, Neighbors in Christ, have done that: literally and spiritually. You swept and raked up the leaves. You boarded up the windows. You gave rides to those whose cars were totaled out from the hail damage. And you prayed for and gave extra in your offerings to those whom you know needed the extra help.

Even the leadership of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod office in Redwood Falls gave St. John’s Lutheran and First Lutheran \$500 each to help offset the insurance deductibles as the claim processes begin. My friends, giving a helping hand and wanting to assist with your neighbors is exactly what we are called to do from our Lord Jesus Christ. And I am proud to be called and serve this parish that leads by example as we go forward.

We continue to come together each day in this parish, as friends and family. But also as sisters and brothers unified in the common one baptism we each have shared as the Body of Christ. Thanks be to God for all of you as we are truly blessed from above, and by one another.

See you in worship!

Rev. Erik Karlson

Neighbors in Christ Parish