

“And I will tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.” –

Matthew 16:18a

Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace to you, my friends! Can you feel the chill in the air yet? I know I can especially when I let the dog out in the morning and prepare the twins' first feeding of the day. It is nearly sweatshirt weather and that means football season is not too far in front of us. And I even saw a couple of trees beginning to turn on the way toward Hutchinson – too soon!

September has always been a time very like January for me; we get to begin anew...again. Students return to school and start a new grade, the excitement of Sunday School and Confirmation planning arrives, goals and planning sessions are developed for the coming new program year, and sweet corn is a staple side dish on our supper plates. I love me some sweetcorn! But seriously, we begin again and agendas are set, goals are made, and we once more become church as we are called to be.

This month, I chose Jesus' declaration to his confidant and friend Peter after he confesses that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of the living God; Peter affirms Jesus is the Christ and chosen one for all humanity. (v.16) Peter's leadership, through the Holy Spirit, is essential in the infancy of the new church after Jesus ascends to God's right hand. Peter, and his fellow apostles take it upon themselves to develop a new way of living out their faith. And that is called 'church.' Remember, a church is more than a physical place. Church is a community of faith that comes together to worship, pray, sing, have fun, and spread the Word of God outside of the doors of where they meet.

In September, the Neighbors in Christ Parish will be church...together...in a few forms. First, we celebrate Steeple Fest at St. John's Lutheran Church in Bismarck Township on Sunday, September 10th at 9:30 am. I invite you all to come and fill the sanctuary as we celebrate with a Polka Worship. Dancing, stomping your feet, and clapping your hands (even for the most conservative of Lutherans) will be suspended for that day. And then following the combined parish worship, we will all head downstairs for a wonderful meal or outside for the bake sale. You can tour the church grounds or participate in the games that will be provided.

And then on Wednesday, September 20th from 4:30 – 8:30 pm, you are all invited to Winthrop for the First Lutheran Church Block Party being put on by the congregation. We'll all share in free cotton candy, snow cones, hot dogs, and sweet corn (while it lasts.) There will be a Bouncy House for the kids and young at heart and music provided by Church of Cash. Rumor has it that I'll be in a dunk tank too. Free will offerings will be accepted for local charities and benevolences in the greater community. Spread the word and bring a friend...or more!

Steeple Fest and the Block Party is our way of getting the Neighbors in Christ Parish name out into the greater community and show that we don't just show up to worship on Sunday, and then head home. We do more, as we are called. We are church...and we do it well! Who knows, we may even pick up a few new members or two – imagine that one. Please join me as we profess our faith on Sundays, but also in our neighborhoods too. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish