

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...and whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of our Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father, through him.” – Colossians 3:12, 17

Neighbors in Christ,

Happy New Year and may the Lord’s blessings continue in your busy and faithful lives!

This month, I want to share with you a theme of beginning again, and not in the cliché “it’s a new year so we can start over” type. Rather a proposition to continue the great ministries that your parish is doing, but take it to the next level. If you are reading this fresh out of your mailboxes, or have been given them to you in your respective cubbies at church, then you are aware that we are still inside the Season of Christmas with the Season of Epiphany soon upon us. Yes, my beloved friends, Christmas is just not a day we celebrate, but a season of remembering the anticipation and fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament.

December 25th may be about celebrating the birth of Christ, our newborn king, but the days after are still about the meaning and significance of His birth. I chose this Pauline verse from third chapter of Colossians as a reminder that we are still called to be compassionate, act with kindness to all we know, walk humbly with your heads held high and no matter what we do, do everything in your days for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. And yes, this also includes forgiving those who have done something to you and also receiving forgiveness when need be. Raise up to God those things that weigh on your hearts and give them away to the cross. That is a great way to begin a new year and begin again.

Another great way of beginning again is to consider where you are in your church. And I am not talking where you sit or what time you get there; I am talking about considering taking on more of an active role in the committee you (may) serve on, how your volunteering may be strengthened, and your opportunity to serve on your church or parish councils. We know that this is the time of the year when names begin to pop up and questions arise if congregants would consider being on councils. Now typically we hear that we are too busy, I’m really not interested, I’m too old, or sometimes the phones are not even answered because you know who is calling. And sure, the Nominating Committees have a tough time getting names, but I ask you to seriously consider taking on these roles.

Your opinions may be voices of fresh air, and if you would like to see something happen...then help make it happen. I hear this too often: “But pastor, if only...” Well my friends, this is your chance. The ELCA’s Vision Statement tells us that this is Christ’s Church and there is a place for you...here. We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God’s grace and we are liberated by our faith as we do work and service in Christ’s name for the life of the world. This includes your parish congregational faith communities that you live in, serve in, and share in. This is another way to begin again and lend a voice to help lead your churches and Neighbors in Christ Parish into a future of strengthened and absolute vitality.

Please consider this opportunity to serve your church, share your gifts, and help make your thoughts and ideas a reality in where you want to see your congregation grow. Bless you all, Happy New Year, and I look forward to seeing you in worship.

In His sake,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish