

***“Look! The virgin will conceive a child!
She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,
which means ‘God with us.’”*** (Matthew 1:23)

Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace to you, from the newborn King, who comes to us as a gentle babe destined to save the world. Amen. Here we are in December as another year has once again flown by. We begin the season of Advent where we await the return of the Christ. Advent lets us prepare ourselves for the Christmas season and give us a foretaste of the feast to come.

Each Sunday in Advent, we will light a new candle on the wreaths in our churches and in our homes while hearing God’s inspired Word through prophecy and promise. The first week surrounds a message of hope; the second makes way for Christ’s birth in a manger; the third stirs up in our hearts a message from John the Baptist pointing to another greater than he; and the final week announces the annunciation of Christ’s birth. Each week builds with excitement and joy as we then come to the arrival and celebration of our Lord and Savior, our Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The importance of the birth of Jesus is where God comes to us and meets us where we are in this world today. We are filled with sin, suffering, and death. But God comes to us in this weakness: as a baby and as a crucified man. God’s Son takes on all that we are and shares with us all that He is. God was made man and was fully human. God’s promise was fulfilled, and in his birth, we enter a new era of possibility through the example of Jesus to love and serve our neighbor, just as God loves us. God and God’s purpose for the world is the source of Jesus and everything He does...and continues to do in you.

I leave you with my Christmas wish – this is for all of my friends and family of the Neighbors in Christ Parish on the dawn of our Savior’s birth: I offer you my best wishes for a joyful and Merry Christmastide and a Prosperous New Year. May we all

rejoice and enjoy the reason for the season as the Lord was born to save us from ourselves and our sins. May this Christmas season be colorful, magnificent, shimmering, and joyful as the magic of Jesus' birth spreads upon you. Nations may rise and fall, and kings may rule and fade, but Christmas stays forever.

Season's greetings to you all!

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish