

Neighbors in Christ,

Good February to you, my beloved friends and family in the parish. I write to you this month as the temperatures are below average, but the 30s are on the horizon. Sun and warmer temperatures are indeed around the corner and we look forward to that. The Southwestern Minnesota Synod's Equipping Congregations Day is also around the corner. I would like to highlight this very important get together this month and see how many folks in our three-point parish will join me in Willmar on Saturday, February 29th from 8:30-3:30 pm.

Each year, the synod schedules this event for all congregations and their members to come together and learn more about what is going on throughout the synod. But we also join in prayer, fellowship, and education for some items that you may not be aware of. It also allows church congregations to take advantage of ideas that other people are using and bring them back to their own communities. Each year that I have attended has offered me new insight into worship, new financial practices, and enhanced opportunities for my own personal ministries that I share with you on a weekly basis. This event is geared toward council members, treasures, Christian education leaders, and those looking to learn more about what is going on. However, all are welcome regardless of your church role.

This year, a former professor of mine, the Rev. David Lose of Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, is the keynote speaker. That in itself is a reason I want to attend. Rev. Lose is a dynamic speaker and he has always given me something new to learn and discern about in my own calling. His lecture topic is involving entering the Bible with Heart, Mind, and Soul. He is going to delve into what Lutherans really believe in and how far does scripture go in our faith lives. He will also discuss useful guides as a norm for our faith and daily lives. Lose believes that answering these questions is crucial if we are to allow our lives to be shaped by God's Word and inviting others into our faith communities that are anchored in preaching and teaching the Scriptures. I really look forward to that.

Other topics for Equipping Congregations include: Updating Church Constitutions; using stories and imagination to strengthen congregations from their history; addressing farm and rural stress; and how to minister to an aging population as we continue to get older in our congregations; and the ever popular church treasurer workshops for updates in new tax laws and how to adapt to them.

If you would like to attend this great event, please let me know and I'll add you to the registration. Please consider this time with so many others and the opportunities you may take away. My hope is to always strengthen and enhance our learning and abilities to use what others find successful in their congregational communities. Bless you all, and I'll see you in worship.

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish