

*“Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” – Joshua 1:9*

Neighbors in Christ,

What a journey we are on. What a strange time of life. Our lives have been disrupted, to say the least, in the past month and a half. And here we are, almost to May. It is somewhat hard to believe. As I chat with various people across different periods of life and lines of work, it fascinates me to see how this COVID-19 virus has affected so many different various aspects of life.

And church services are different, obviously. We have moved online for now. Phone conversations, cards mailed, in-home worship, and connections via technology are now the new norm. Have you felt like you are in a “new norm” yet? A temporary rhythm for the time being? Of course, we expect some announcements here at the beginning of May from our governor...and things may change once again. Things changing may be a mark of our new normal for some time ahead. *Adaptability and flexibility* are required—at home, with your family and friends, at work, and at church.

Some wonderful things have happened during this time are that there is so much more online worship options for people, various video devotions and home devotional and Sunday School resources that are available from home. For some, calling trees have been created or activated. People who have left church or who are curious about church are getting connected or reconnected. And people are finding many and various ways to nurture their faith day to day and grow together in faith from home.

In some sense, this quick and necessary movement for churches has had a much farther reach with the gospel than we could have ever imagined. It is fun to see who joins in or watches the prerecorded worships: our own members, those who live in other areas of the country for part of the year, my friends and family members from around the country, former church or community members, my colleagues and even neighbors. Somehow and someway the gospel is being shared with even more people than just what we see and feel on a regular Sunday morning in our respective sanctuaries. What a blessing!

Imagine with me, if you will, how the Holy Spirit might be nudging us in this time. When all that we know has been turned upside down for a time, why not take a moment to dream? So, friends...we have an opportunity in front of us to experiment with church themes, to follow God’s lead forward...and to share and spread the Good News in many and various ways. What has worked well for you in this time? How have you connected to God? How has your faith been impacted? How has it helped you in this time?

What might being and doing church look like for us in the coming months? I invite conversation...thoughts...ideas...and participation. Let us see what the Spirit has in store for the Neighbors in Christ Parish as we look to the weeks and months ahead.

We are gathered and scattered as one body of Christ...at work living our faith in the world. I am continually praying for you all. Please do reach out to let me know what you need, as we continue to be separated physically. Remember, beloved...we are all in this together.

In HIS sake,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish