

December 2020 – Pastoral Message

*“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” – Isaiah 9:6*

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

Welcome to the Advent and Christmastide seasons! I write to you this month in the hope of a glorious December as we await the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Advent calls us to look inside ourselves and prepare for the return of Jesus during the last days, also known as the Day of Judgment. And then we turn and prepare ourselves for Jesus being born again. We celebrate God with us, or Emmanuel, in the form of an innocent baby, given to us.

December is the month of putting up the tree, decorating our homes with lights and curios, reassembling the creche scene, and making cookies and goodies...lots of cookies and goodies. Unfortunately, this year is going to be different, and I lament that. This Covid virus has changed our lives and made us turn inward: inward in our homes, in our relationships, and maybe even in our spiritual lives. I write this to you a week after our governor has again ‘dialed back’ how we are going about living from day to day. Hospitals are overcrowded, friends and family members have tested positive, and quarantining has become part of the new normal. But the tree still goes up, the decorations come out, and baking resumes.

My lament comes in the form of anxiety and concern for you, my beloved. Each day I hear of more and more positive Covid results and folks having to seclude themselves, sometimes even away from their families and homes. My lament also comes in not being able to see and visit with you on a regular basis, either in worship or in your homes. But that does not stop me from raising you up in prayer or including you in my daily devotions. Though I lament, I still look to Christ as my rock and my foundation. I chose this verse from Isaiah as a reminder to myself, and hopefully for you, that Christ will come again and that this child gives us the means to live a godly life.

God gave us a part of God’s self, in the human form of Jesus, who taught us how to be a better people. This is done in our own personal selves, in our relationships, and in our communities. Jesus also taught us how to be present with our God and give honor and glory to the Almighty. In my opinion, there is no greater time to do this than there is now, especially during this often difficult and restless moment in time. Do not lose your hope; trust in it. Do not give up on your God; give away your worries and fears to God. Let the joy of the season come into your heart and raise you up, just as you will be raised up on the last day. Let the light of Christ enter into your heart and push away the darkness that may be there. And without sounding too cliché, let Christ be the reason for the season. Embrace our Lord and keep ahold of that.

I continue to lift you up in meditation and look forward to seeing you again soon. From my family to yours, Merry Christmas, and may our loving God continue to bless you all.

Rev. Erik Karlson  
Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish