

January 2022 – Pastoral Message

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” – 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NRSV)

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Hello and Happy 2022!!! Where did 2021 go? Wow that was a fast year, and so much happened. I pray you and your families had a wonderful Christmas season and had a chance to get some long deserved rest over the last days of the year. Some days it feels like we all need a day to relax from the days we take off; that is, gimme a day to sleep in from running around so much and trying to get everything done.

I chose this passage from the Apostle Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians as a reminder of our lives in Christ, and that whatever is behind us, stays behind us. Theologically, as Lutherans, we are called to each and everyday remember our baptismal promises given to us when we had the waters of the font dripped over our heads, and the Word of God spoken to us regarding forgiveness. Each day we are called to wash away all that we have done in our sinful selves and begin anew – fresh – with a clean slate. As we repent and give away the things that have turned us from God, our neighbors, and ourselves, we begin again as a new creation in Christ. “It signifies that the old person is us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily sorrow for sin and through repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” (Luther, 2016) Paul reminded the Corinthians of this freedom from sin and renewal that the old things have indeed, passed away.

As a result of giving away this sin and being made new, it also causes us to be brought into a loved life in Christ and made complete with creation. Creation is all about us, made perfectly by our loving God. However, our past sinfulness as a humanity and thoughts of personal gain have made this perfection imperfect. It is up to us each day to make all that is around us, including ourselves, to be the best it can possible be. This is where all things become new again. Yes, we may not be able to individually change the world, but we can at least change it to be better for ourselves and the ones we care of and love that share in it with us. This is how we can individually have influence in the world we live in.

This new creation and making all things new may certainly be a lofty goal, but we can make a difference when we give it a try. Consider this process as a devotional as you begin the year ahead and look to grow your faith, your spirituality, and your connection with the Divine. And if you need help, or have questions, please give me a ring, shoot me an email, or ask me on a Sunday morning: I have plenty of ideas to help you consider this.

I look forward to a healthy and prosperous new year for all of us, beloved Neighbors in Christ. I continue to pray for all of you and hope you are healthy and well. Though we cannot completely close ourselves off from the realities that constantly bombard us from the outside of our lives, we can certainly open our hearts and minds to the Holy Trinity and God calling out to us in love and being with us.

Stay well and I'll see you again soon.

In Christ,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish

Luther, M. (2016). The Sacrament of Holy Baptism. In *Luther's Small Catechism: 500 Years of Reformation Study Edition* (p. 44). Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.