

September 2022 – Pastoral Message

*“These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.” – 1 Timothy 4:11-12*

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace be with you all as we begin the month of September. Today, I write to you as a father whose twins begin Kindergarten, a baseball and football fan who enjoys watching a great game, and as your pastor who is gearing up for a return to a “normal” schedule. A new programming year is about to begin. We leave behind a summer full of excitement and relaxation and move forward to firm dates on the calendar and planning around weekends and activities that invite us into family and community.

These last weeks I have been inviting support for Christian Education throughout our parish community, especially on Wednesday evenings and what we call NICWoW. NICWoW is where the members of our three-point church parish come together to break bread, join in conversation, share in practical learning, offer up prayers and thanksgiving, all in a relaxed atmosphere among one another. The younger youth break off to classrooms to learn about a biblical story or hero and maybe assemble a craft. And the confirmation aged students do the same, but with a greater in depth study of the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions, and learn more about their own faith. And the older “kids” have a Bible study or specific conversation to share as well. Then we’ll regroup and have a light worship as we gather around the candle reminding us that Christ is present.

Last year, we began the experiment of NICWoW and received so much success with it. Not only did it bring us together as a combined parish community, but it also brought in folks from outside of our churches too. I am so proud of all that was accomplished...and I look forward to having the same momentum and energy again as we enter into a new year. However, we do need your help. There are the crux members of NICWoW that have told me they will assist again, but we still need more church members to help continue meal preparations, assisting with teaching and curriculum, and being present if in the event something should come up.

The Epistle to Timothy was written with three themes in mind: instructions on how to guide in church life, a warning of false teachers and teachings, and offering direction and advice for church leaders. Followers of Christ in the latter first century of the common era began to grow and so were the congregations; they were emerging and required instructions on what was to be done. This instruction also spilled over into a new generation of believers which included their children. I chose this passage from 1 Timothy as a reminder of what we as faithful Christians are called to do in the eyes of God and in the eyes of one another.

As followers of the living God called Jesus, it is indeed necessary to model our faith and belief systems by sharing in this example through specific youth programs and instruction. This may be

achieved *"in love, in faith, and in purity"* as the writer has told us. We have also done this corporately in thought, word, and deed in witness to Holy Baptism. That is, we took an oath (or promise) to God and one another, and to the one being baptized, to help nurture them in their faith and guide them along in their continued earthly journey as beloved children of God.

So I ask you now...will you please assist us with your time and interest on Wednesday evenings for the new NICWoW programming year? I encourage you to pray on this. Meditate on this. To look into yourselves and consider your own theological understandings and see where they are reflected with your own family or friends. Do you believe that Christ belongs and should be included in the faithful upbringing of a child in your own personal life? If yes...please help us. If you can offer up your time and talents, I know so many folks will be greatly appreciative of you doing so. And if you have more questions, please call me at (507) 766-5870 and we can further discuss it.

Like you, I have so much to be thankful for in my life and in the vocation I share with you. Thank you all for being you! God loves you and so do I. See you in worship or around the parish community.

In Christ,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish