

Dear Congregations of Neighbors in Christ:

For as in one body, we have many members and not all the members have the same function. <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup> We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.  
Romans 12:4-5

On Sunday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, I preached on the Scripture above and, in doing so, reflected on how you, the Congregations of Neighbors in Christ, are both many (three) members and one body. As many members and one body, you are blessed and challenged to be Christ to one another. You are also blessed and challenged to take the love for the world by God through Christ to the world.

Not only are you, Congregations of Neighbors in Christ, both many members and one body, you, together, also are members of several larger bodies. Those bodies are The Minnesota River Valley Conference of the Southwestern Synod, the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Lutheran World Federation. Because you are connected to these bodies, I shall, from time to time in my messages to you, share messages from these bodies that are addressed to all their members—including you, the congregations of Neighborhood in Christ.

Below is one such message to you from one of the bodies of which you are a member.

At the conclusion of our Synod Assembly this year, Bishop Dee Pederson addressed all Synod congregations including Augustana Lutheran Church, First Lutheran Church, and Saint John the Baptist Lutheran Church with these words:

We are church together! This summer I have been reminded of this beautiful verse from Isaiah:

*“But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31.*

Today there is new energy to re-shape many of our ministries for this new time. In keeping with these particular words from our Bishop “To re-shape many of our ministries for this new time,” I included in my August 27<sup>th</sup> sermon the following words of Saint Paul speak to the ministries and congregations on Neighbors in Christ:

So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a ***new creation***: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! II Corinthians 5:17

I also noted how a new creation already has come about in the ministry of Neighbors in Christ with the creation of lay communion ministers at all its congregations.

In other words, ministry is changing—both in the call to who will do ministry and how that ministry will be done. In forthcoming newsletters, I shall share with you more about

changing forms of ministry in the body of Christ and suggest what they might mean for the members of Christ in Neighbors in Christ.

And in forthcoming newsletters, I shall share with you more about the blessing and challenge entrusted to me as your part-time interim pastor to envision the future of ministry for all the congregations of Neighbors in Christ.

Peace be with you.

Pastor Leonard Hummel