

Bulletin Letter 8-27 & 28, 2022

Dear Parishioners of NW8 Family of Parishes,

I begin with words of gratitude to my fellow priests, deacons and all of you who have been so supportive and understanding of my taking time away from ministry in July to be refreshed and renewed. It was still a busy month with weddings, vacation and moving to New Bremen, but also quiet time to pray, reflect and relax.

I moved into the Holy Redeemer rectory the end of July and am grateful for all the help updating the rectory and helping me move in. While I have a room at the rectory for office work, emails and homily preparation, I will use offices at Holy Redeemer, St. Augustine and St. Rose to meet with folks and for administration. Email at frkencpps@gmail.com is the best way to contact me.

As I make my way through the monthly rotation of celebrating Mass at each of the parishes, I have been sharing a common message. "I have no doubt that God was here long before I came and God will be here long after I leave. The same is true for each of us. My role or mission, similar to yours as members of the NW8 family of parishes, is to be attuned to the presence of God in our midst, to give thanks and praise to God for all the blessings in our lives and to share those blessings with others."

Striving to be attuned to the presence of God in our family of parishes, I am using these days of August to meet with staff and volunteers, attend various meetings and events already underway and listening. Listening for that presence of God already here and working in our midst is critical before any significant strides are made.

But that does not mean nothing else is happening. Our NW8 Mass schedule was approved and implemented after consultation with representatives of all parishes in the family. There have been sacrifices made by each parish and their parishioners, but also with blessings. It is good to witness the welcome many have felt visiting other parishes in our NW8 family. Our finance personnel are working together on shared expenses and finding savings along the way. Our marriage and baptismal preparation folks are reviewing materials and how they can provide meaningful and enriching preparation that will deepen the significance of the sacraments being celebrated. Staff and volunteers throughout the family of parishes are helping to coordinate ministry and anointing of the sick as well as funeral preparation and the many requests that come through each of the parish offices. It is a work in progress, but be assured work and ministry are already underway.

The Archdiocesan Beacons of Light team has created a pastoral planning pathway with milestones that lay ahead of us. These include forming a leadership team to assist the pastor in six guiding principles: 1) the centrality of the Eucharist, 2) building a faith community through common prayer and social time, 3) unifying leadership rooted in prayer and supported by teamwork, 4) growing in gratitude through stewardship, 5) promoting the gift of faith through evangelization and 6) putting that faith and love in action through outreach. Elements of each of these principles are already present in our family of parishes, but we need to turn to God and one another to help them grow.

One concrete expression of our coming together is an **Evening Prayer Service and Installation of pastor and clergy scheduled for Sunday, September 25th at 7 PM at St. Augustine Church.** While the pastor formally needs to be installed, it can be private or public, but having a public event is a way of bringing folks together. The parochial vicars and deacons have also been invited to participate in the context of evening prayer. Along with the pastor making the oath of faith, the parochial vicars, deacons and people of God will be invited to make a commitment to ministry and service. The musicians in the family of parishes are working together and inviting all the choirs throughout the family of parishes to participate. St. Augustine's in Minster is the site chosen because there could be over 100 choir members from all the parishes and they would fit in the Minster choir loft. There will be light refreshments made by each of the parishes and socializing afterwards. My hope is that you will join us, that it will be a wonderful celebration of the gifts and blessings in our family of parishes and an opportunity to encourage and build relationships.

While Northwest 8 Family of parishes is a functional name for the time being, we are beginning to develop a process that will help us discern a new name for our family of parishes. The plan is to keep references to parish names that have been with us for generations, but under the umbrella of a common name that can be shared by all the parishes in our family of parishes.

Prayer is essential for any and all our efforts with NW8. I humbly ask your prayers for each of us and all that we are about, that it may truly reflect the presence of God in our midst.

Fr. Jim Willig was an Archdiocesan priest who died of cancer at the age of 50. He was an inspiration to many by his witness of faith and his trust. He often said, "we may not know what our future holds, but we know who holds our future." While the Beacons of Light pastoral planning pathway is a large undertaking for all of us and there are many unknowns, there are also many signs of God's presence is already working in our midst and that God holds our future.

Blessings and prayers, Fr. Ken Schnipke, C.P.P.S., Pastor