

## From the Pastor's Desk



From the Pastor: **We welcome...you!**

Perhaps you've read it before ... this profound statement of welcome. It's found its way into church newsletters and bulletins around the country and definitely worth reviewing: WELCOME!

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, partnered, LGBT, filthy rich, dirt poor, yo no habla Ingles. We extend a special welcome to those who are crying newborns, skinny as a rail, or could afford to lose a few pounds.

We welcome you if you can sing like Andrea Bocelli or if you can't carry a tune in a wheelbarrow. You're welcome here if you're 'just browsing,' just woke up or just got out of jail. We don't care if you're more Lutheran than the beloved Martin himself, or haven't been in church since little Joey's baptism or Uncle Fred's funeral.

We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, and to teenagers who are growing up far too fast. We welcome soccer moms and NASCAR dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegetarians and junk food eaters. We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted. We welcome you if you're having problems, you're down in the dumps, or are suffering in body, mind or spirit. We extend an especially warm welcome to those who don't like 'organized religion' (we've been there too!).

If you blew all your money at the race track, you are welcome here. We offer a special welcome to those who believe the earth is flat, work too hard, don't work or can't work, can't spell, or because grandma is in town and wanted to go to church.

We welcome those who are inked, pierced or both. We extend a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down their throat as a kid, or got lost in the traffic and wound up here by accident. We welcome tourists and locals, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts and hardened ones ... and YOU! You are WELCOME!!

Every time I read a similar statement I always end with a resounding AMEN! This is the church at its best, a place where everyone, yes, everyone is welcomed and appreciated. Where everyone has a story to share, and we're interested in hearing it. That's the good news of the gospel. There was not one single individual that Jesus rejected; he met everyone, absolutely everyone, with dignity, love, compassion and grace. That's the church I want to belong to. Amen.

We all need that sense of welcome and care, where we can be ourselves and experience God's incredible love. May it be so here. May United be a truly welcoming community of faith. With that in mind: Look around on Sunday morning for someone to welcome. Walk up and say something like, "I'm not sure I've met you..." or be more vulnerable, "I know I've seen you but I don't remember your name." Then you might want to say something like, "Welcome, I just love/appreciate this community of faith because ...."

"I hope to see you again" or "Please consider joining us on Friday Night for the Coffee House" (or any up-coming activity).

One more thing: Name tags are an important form of hospitality. They both assume (correctly) that we may not know/remember every one's name, and that there will be new people.

Blessings and joy! *Pastor Karen*