From the Pastor's Desk

We welcome…you!

One of our council members went to visit family in Superior, Wisconsin recently. She worshipped with the community of faith at Zion Lutheran Church and brought back the bulletin. On the back cover was this statement:

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, treehuggers, 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!***

I've read similar statements in the past, and 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.

Blessings and joy! *Pastor Karen*