

Spreading the love of Jesus through the “Neighbor 2 Neighbor” program at Lutheran Haven



As believers in Jesus, most of us have asked ourselves how we might serve others as Jesus modeled for us to do. Lutheran Haven’s “Neighbor 2 Neighbor” program truly exemplifies what Christ has asked of all of us, and that is to be His hands and feet to carry out His work, His love, and His compassion and grace to others. Simply put, He calls us to serve and that is foundational to the “Neighbor to Neighbor” program. Led by Rev. Paul Wiegert, along with his army of volunteers, they meet practical needs by asking simple but important questions:

- Do you need a prescription picked up?
- Are you feeling lonely?
- Do you need a ride to the store?
- Can I go to the grocery store for you?

These are just a few of the many ways the program offers support from one neighbor to another. Pastor Paul and his group willingly step into many roles that not only meet needs but also help others to attend worship services, attend activities on campus, etc. They check-in by phone and regularly visit their neighbors. They are even called upon for technical assistance with phones, computers and TV’s.

Pastor Paul states, “We are Jesus’ representatives... As an extension of our Pastoral Care Ministry, the volunteers of “Neighbor 2 Neighbor” perform what may seem like small acts of kindness but these can echo with eternal significance. Having a conversation while driving

someone to the store or sitting at a person's bedside can be such an act of comfort and healing, and a practical way of loving our neighbor who Christ entrusted us to care for."

All you have to do is sit with Pastor Paul for a moment to see his heart for this ministry. Just as he was called to become a pastor, it is obvious he has been called to "Neighbor 2 Neighbor." This is a relatively new program at the Haven, but it has flourished under his leadership. He admittedly loves small churches because his heart is to get to know every person – their needs, struggles, challenges and triumphs. "It's all about relationship." He says he is "just a humble tool of the Lord." He loves to share devotions and is such a comfort to our sweet residents who have lost their spouses. He lost his beloved wife, Linda not long ago so he knows how to share Christian love while sitting with another in their grief.

"More than anything, it's the ministry of the 'one-on-one' and that's what 'Neighbor 2 Neighbor' is all about. It can be ministering over a cup of coffee or picking up stamps at the post office. ALL of it is the Lord's business!"

Pastor Paul says, "This is the purpose of the church and we *are* the church. We are not just receivers of the Gospel but participants in it. By being the hands and feet of our living Christ, one small act of service can lead to Him. We may not know in this life how these things can reverberate in eternity."

Rev. Paul Wiegert is a graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis and has served churches in Wisconsin, Iowa, Tennessee and Florida. As you can imagine, we at the Haven are so incredibly blessed by Pastor Paul. He has served so many of our residents and staff since he and Linda moved to the Haven in 2018. His love for people just oozes out of him. All you have to do is sit with him for a moment or two and you can feel God's love. Thank you, Pastor Paul. You are such a gift to us and not just for your leadership through "Neighbor 2 Neighbor" but for your love for the Lord and all of us. It is evident every day.

Then the righteous shall answer him, saying, 'Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and gave you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothed you? And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25: 37-40