

**Mark Wallace**, Executive Director of Organizational Culture and International Partners

Well, there you have it – the name of our organization is now **Karis Disability Services**! After much research, input, and prayer, we knew it was time to change our name to be even more clear about *who we are* and *what we do*. Over the next few months, we will dive into each part of the name. Let's start with Karis.

### ***What Does Karis Mean?***

"**Karis**" is a phonetic (similar sounding) variation of the Greek χάρις (*charis*), which can be translated as *grace*, *favour*, or *loving-kindness*. It is related to "charisma" or *gift*.

In the Christian faith, Karis conveys God's grace, the gift of God's radically accessible goodness in Christ. Through *charisma*, it also expresses our conviction that everybody has value and unique God-given gifts.

We are committed to valuing all people. Every person is a gracious gift to their communities. Our communities are not whole without everybody using their gifts. Often people with disabilities face barriers and need support for their gifts to be recognized and celebrated. We nurture communities by promoting opportunities where everybody can recognize, grow, and share their unique gifts.



### ***Hello, Goodbye, and Let's Eat!***

You will find most of the above information in our "FAQ" document or on our website ([karis.org](http://karis.org)) and social media. What you might not know is that "Karis" (*charis*) was also used as a greeting and a goodbye by ancient Christian writers!

In the Christian Bible, writers often start and end their letters with "grace (*charis*) be with you," or "grace and peace." These authors, and the apostle Paul in particular, wanted to make sure *everyone* they wrote to knew they were a gift to their community. They wanted everybody's first and last experience to be one of *grace*: kindness, goodness, and mutual respect.

The Greek word '*Charis*' also leads to the tradition of "saying grace" before a meal. Many traditions – Christian or otherwise – pause before eating to give thanks for the gift of the food. We then consider how we, receive strength from this "grace gift," might go on to serve and bless others in our work throughout the day.

It's true – it will take me a while to get used to saying, "Karis Disability Services" instead of "Christian Horizons." I hope that in the weeks and months to come, as we practice saying the new name, we will also *practice grace* with one another. What I mean is, let's pause every time we greet someone – whether someone who uses our services, a co-worker, or anyone else, and recognize this person as a gift. We might even express our thanks for them. This is *especially* helpful when the encounter or situation might not feel like a gift!

Let's practice *saying Karis*:

- *"This person is a gift to me and to our community."*
- *"This person has many gifts for our community to receive and celebrate."*
- *"I can use my gifts to help this person experience belonging."*
- *"I am grateful for who this person is and for the chance to (meet/support/encourage) them today."*

I expect if we all take moments to pause and reflect in this way, we will increasingly become a "Karis" (grace and gifts) filled organization.

So let me close by saying "Grace (*Karis*) be with you," wherever this day takes you.

### **Making the Connection**

- What are the ways that people make you feel like you are valuable, or that they are thankful you are there?
- The Thanksgiving holiday is this month. What are some gifts that others have that make you celebrate?

### **Digging Deeper**

- You can find more information about the name change on our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.
- For those who are interested in more of the biblical roots of the word Karis, Dr. Keith Dow consulted with a Greek Bible scholar in preparation for the selection of the name to help us understand what it means. He explains it in [this video](#).