

Angelica DeVos, Acting Chief Executive Officer

It's a unique experience to be in my last full year with Karis Disability Services before I retire at the end of December 2025. This organization and our good work together have been part of my journey for over twenty years. When I finish working with Karis Disability Services, it will continue to be a part of my story – but in a new way. Even endings become part of our journey.

As acting CEO for six months, it's my honour to introduce our organizational theme for 2025: *Celebrate Every Journey*. I'm learning to celebrate every journey in my life, even as some aspects of it come to an end. These annual themes are a “rallying cry” for us, a way to come together wherever the next twelve months take us. I pray that, as an organization, we will celebrate everybody's journeys – rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn (Rom 12:15).

We will also celebrate our journey together as an organization in 2025, especially as Karis celebrates its 60th anniversary. With our current strategic plan wrapping up in March, we will reflect and celebrate all we have accomplished and engage everybody in developing our next strategic plan. The collaborative process that led to our theme was a good example of this priority. “Celebrate Every Journey” arose in conversation with the Organizational Leadership Team, Our Voices Matter Council, and the Onward Communications Champions. Leaders helped discern the guiding Bible verse for the year. Our Voices Matter and the Communications Champions helped us figure out a fitting emphasis.

Early in the discernment process, it became clear that we weren't done celebrating! Our 2024 theme was “Celebrate Grace and Gifts,” and we have only *just begun* celebrating all the grace and gifts connected with our communities. At the same time, when we brought these questions to Our Voices Matter, we were reminded that *every* journey is worth celebrating – including those accompanied by grief and challenges. Dean remembered his friend's celebration of life, “A bunch of us got together and talked about what our friend has done, how we all met him, and his life and death.” Liz was grateful for overcoming health difficulties: “I could have been gone last year. I overcame something hard and challenging. I prayed a lot, powered through a lot, I stuck to God a lot.”

Planning is crucial here at Karis Disability Services. We put a lot of work into our strategic plans. We are committed to doing good work and to serving people well. As in our personal lives, though, even our best-laid plans can be disrupted. So – as Liz reminds us – our theme verse helps us to “stick to God” no matter where the coming months take us.

“But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations” (Psalm 33:11, NIV).

We are deeply grateful for the history of Karis Disability Services and the generational legacy of Rev. Jim, Adrienne, and Steven Reese. We can see God’s hand at work through their faithfulness and dedication. No one knew where we would be, now 60 years after Karis Disability Services began. Similarly, I couldn’t have foreseen all the ways God would be at work in my life over the past 20 years of serving here.

Together, though, we can celebrate every journey: Past, present, and future, and we can anticipate with hope the journey ahead – wherever it takes us.

Making the Connection

Take time to discuss our new theme, “Celebrate Every Journey”?
What journeys will we spend more time celebrating?

What were some ways you celebrated *grace* and *gifts* over the past year?
How might we build on this good work in the year ahead?