

Interim Ministry...

A Time for Walking Together



By The Rev. Dr. Cathi Braasch STS
Interim Pastor - Peace Lutheran Church, Deshler, NE

Welcome to interim time: The meantime, the in-between time. It's the time between one settled pastor's departure, and the call and arrival of the next pastor in the future of Peace Lutheran Church in the communities and countryside surrounding Deshler. It's a time for getting to know our Lord Jesus Christ and each other better. It's about time for looking to *God's* future and getting ready to meet that future with faith, grace, clear vision and prayerful energy.

You might be wondering, "Who is this Pastor Cathi?" and "What's interim ministry all about, anyway?"

As for who I am, please think of me as a child of God, an experienced rural pastor who, in retirement, is called to shepherd congregations through the in-between times. "Red," my husband of almost 48 years, is as committed to ministry as I am – so committed that he's been following me around in my calling since 1988, and moving our sheep and cattle ranching operations when necessary to follow the call of Christ. Because he is ready and willing to do this, I am free to be with my interim congregations when needed. We have one daughter, Sara, age 43, who lives with her husband Jim near Boise, Idaho. While we have no grandchildren, we are baptismal sponsors of an infant godchild, Raina Elizabeth, and we think of the parish's children as our spiritual grandbabies.

Interim ministry is a graced season that readies congregations for the future that the Lord is already preparing.

As we walk together into God's future, I'll be attending to regular pastoral responsibilities on every Sunday and Monday, as well as for the council meeting on the second Tuesday of every month. Together, we'll worship, pray, study God's word, prepare the young to mature in faith, care for folks in all life's ages and stages, reach out to the neighbors, practice generous stewardship and administer God's household.

At the same time, I'll be leading God's people of Peace in building upon the mission and ministry foundations you've already laid. Briefly, this involves:

- **Remembering and celebrating** who Peace Lutheran Church is as a congregation, a holy community.
- **Discovering** who and what our Lord Jesus Christ is calling Peace to be and become in the future.
- **Cultivating and encouraging** the strong lay leadership and ministry teamwork that's already in place;
- **Strengthening connections** with the larger Body of Christ, especially with partners in Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC).
- **Committing to new pastoral leadership** through the call, welcome and support of that pastor who the Lord is already preparing to shepherd you next.

Interim ministry begins as a time of holy remembering. It includes grieving the departure of Pastor Phil Nielsen, who was your shepherd for 16 years before leaving for his new call at Harlan, IA. Holy remembering includes identifying and addressing any matters at Peace that, if ignored, could become stumbling blocks in the future – not just for future pastors, but for the congregation as a whole. Above all, this holy remembering includes celebrating all that our Lord has done in your midst to this point. May this be a time of full and fruitful, truly holy remembering.

In the meantime, it's Fall and the church program year is back in full swing. Sunday school and other ministries are revving up after a summer's break. Children are receiving solid Christian formation through Peace's preschool, PACE and Sunday School. Adults continue to grow in God's Word and discipleship through Sunday and midweek Bible studies, Christian witness and service. Beyond Peace, the school year has begun. Harvest is upon us. We wonder where the time has gone. We might never seem to have enough time, but we have all the time that there is.

In fact, our Lord has blessed us with two kinds of time. Biblical Greek and the early Christians had names for each type of time. "*Chronos*" referred to measured time -- the years, months, weeks, days and minutes of life. "*Kairos*" was used to refer to seasons, or appointed times, God's own good time. Today, we might think of those times as being "when the time is right."

As your new interim pastor, I'm looking forward to all the time we'll have together. Expect me to use the full time well, I pray -- with eyes always on Christ, with an abundance of grace, and with good humor. With the Psalmist, please pray with me the words of Psalm 90:15 -- "*So teach us to number our days that we might apply our hearts to wisdom.*"

In Christ and His mission, *Pastor Cathi*