

## Our Pastor



### **Pastor Rebecca Aardahl's Annual Report to the Congregation Jan. 22, 2017**

The year has included much transition for all of us. In late spring, Bishop Jim Gonia and I had an interview, with the aid of FaceTime, that introduced me to the possibility of serving as your pastor. Many had prepared for that conversation. Christ Lutheran, led by Congregation Council President Nancy Heller and Interim Pastor Paul Everett and the rest of the congregation's leaders poured themselves into frank conversations at Cottage Meetings, as well as in other settings. After another interview by telephone, this time with the congregation's Call Committee, my husband, Wes, and I eventually drove from Bismarck to Cheyenne, where he began as pastor at Ascension Lutheran on May 8, and Christ Lutheran and I began to wonder what we thought of each other. We first met for a potluck meal in May, where Nancy introduced me as the Call Committee's recommended candidate to serve as your pastor.

That calling came into being. You and I are the "beings" of this call. I count that as my privilege.

A festive Service of Installation on Sunday, August 21, marked our beginning. Where have we come? Our time together began "at table" at a congregational potluck; we continue to meet "at table" each Sunday. By God's gracious hand, we are fed "at table". This calling matters. As Christ's Body we strive to live lives that proclaim God's radical work of renewal and persistent hope.

Church records indicate that on June 21, 1956, Pastor Harold and Mrs. Skinner (her first name?) and one-year-old daughter, Beth, arrived in Cheyenne to begin organizing a congregation. That work was preceded by the careful work of the Board of American Missions of the old United Lutheran Church in America. The board's 1955 survey of the east side of Cheyenne discovered "no unchurched Lutherans, but many unchurched people in that area." Thus the decision was made to enter this field.

Christ Lutheran continues to be rooted in resurrection hope. What are signs of this good life? To what and to whom does your pastor give her time?

Preaching, Teaching and Administering the Sacraments

These essential marks of the pastoral office require the greatest amount of my time.

Scriptural study and theological reflection are among the greatest delights of my vocation. My husband and I share this pleasure. As newcomers to Cheyenne, Wes and I enjoy getting to know area clergy (as well as other people!). We especially appreciate the collegiality among our three ELCA congregations in Cheyenne. A weekly text study group has begun; Pastor Alison George, who serves St. Paul's Lutheran, and my husband and I are committed to the growth and expansion of this group of friends and study partners from other faith traditions, as well as our own.

#### Two Sacraments in our Lutheran Tradition

It is my good pleasure to officiate at communion each Sunday. In addition, I seek to bring communion to any who desire to receive but are unable to attend our worship services. Perhaps one day soon, Christ Lutheran will again welcome a newly baptized member into the fold. I look forward to inviting and baptizing those new to the Christian faith here.

#### Household Visits

I have sought to be in conversation with each household of the congregation "on their turf". Again, it is my privilege to be afforded time with you. Together, we have needs and hopes and challenges. We are part, one of another. Our individual needs, opinions and experiences matter. I look to further growth in the relationships that have been forged among the 32 or so households of Christ Lutheran.

#### Mutual Ministry Committee

To sustain a healthy pastorate, the Congregation Council appointed, as advised by ELCA norms and at my recommendation, a Mutual Ministry Committee. These four willing and able members of the congregation have agreed to meet with me three or four times each year and, as a group, provide helpful feedback and support for this pastor. Members are Judy Adams, Lyle Keto, Michelle Crochet and Dan Prickett.

#### Preschool and Congregation

I deeply value all who are part of the AKIDemy Preschool. Staff, children and families are lively participants in our ministry here. Staff includes Preschool Director Michele McCoy and Assistant Director Liz Schissler, along with these teachers: Karen Hart, Melinda Weber, Melissa Weber, Rebekah Sparks, Chelsea Dabbs and Ashley Small.

We are in the process of activating the base of support for the congregation and preschool's work together. Our congregation's Constitution states that the Executive Committee is to serve as the preschool board. We are working to make that happen more directly.

Staff and more

Church office secretary Lois Hansen and Pianist Paula Egan Wright make my life as pastor easy. Their skill and finesse are a delight. I very much appreciate working with them both. Because of the small size of the congregation, I feel as though so many able volunteers are extensions of the staff. Special thanks to all of the congregation's volunteers who give of themselves year-round.

A Little Child Shall Lead Them

In Isaiah 11, the peaceable kingdom is described; wolf and lamb live together peacefully; calf and lion eat beside each other. That verse concludes with "and a little child shall lead them". With our Christian lens, we see that child as the Baby Jesus. Might we expand our vision to realize the clear calling that we have as congregation to care for the vulnerable among us, as we offer our mission support through the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? Might we also consider the children in our facility each weekday who receive care at AKIDemy as those who help us to raise our gaze outside of ourselves to ministries beyond us?

The kings of ancient Israel were deemed righteous if the most vulnerable in their charge knew well-being. Might that also be our measure.

Together, you and I embarked upon a one-year term call in mid-August. We will work together and, I hope and expect, will continue together as pastor and people, past 12 months, into new months and years of life together in this particular household of faith.

I close with this good word from The Office of the Bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

***The word "synod" comes from a Greek word meaning "to travel a common road--to walk together." This is Christ's church. There is a place for you here. We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person--questions, complexities and all. Join us as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world.***

With gratitude for our ministry together as "church" here and now,

Pastor Rebecca Johnson Aardahl