

Sermon- January 26th 2019- Our Saviors Lutheran Church
Ordination of Dara Clifford
Text- Luke 4:14-21

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What a day. As the official announcement states, Dara Quinn Clifford will be ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in Christ's one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Or, as some of us would say, Dara will be a Pastor in the ELCA. For you Dara, it's been a wonderful journey empowered by the Holy Spirit. Here at Our Saviors, Crossways Camping Ministry, Wartburg Seminary, and a myriad of other stops on this journey.

You and I intersected on one part of this journey. Bishop Gerry asked me to be the Interim Pastor at Peace Lutheran Church in Oshkosh. I knew the history of Peace Lutheran and of 1st English a few blocks away, and thought that might be interesting. However, Bishop Gerry threw in a caveat. I would also need to be an Intern Supervisor for a gal named Dara. Whoa! That gave me moments of pause. Something about endless forms to the Seminary, bureaucratic meetings and then there is that concept of chewing gum and walking at the same time. But everyone I spoke with said this Dara is tremendous. She really knows what she is doing and has vast experience. I said something like we'll see - at least to myself.

We met and started working together the second week in September. You as an Intern, me as your Supervisor. During the next 9 months I was in for a re-evaluation of Interns.

Very early on, some things stood out. You asked if you could preach twice a month. You had a desire to be the best homilist possible. That was a little unusual for an Intern, and I remember saying - works for me. We met multiple times a week. Our sessions were always focused on "best practices", whether it was pastoral care, staff function or dysfunction, council meetings, sermons, or the business of assisting a church live out its mission. Always, and I can say always, these sessions focused on best practices. Early on, I knew that the ELCA would have a good one, someone who would be a bright light.

Of course, we had some normal Intern to Supervisor encounters as well. One had to do with how you were always thinking outside of the box. You had this idea

that Peace Lutheran should offer Drive-Up ashes on Ash Wednesday. You would be outside and cars would drive up and through the window of the car you would offer the sign of the cross with Ashes, say a prayer and give the driver the love of Christ. The church being in the world especially to those who never ventured into the doors of a church. The day came and the weather was terrible. Cold, windy and the rain was coming down sideways. But there you were, offering the ashes and your care and helping people see the love of Christ. And many cars drove up. There you were, wet, cold and undoubtedly miserable. Where was I? I was the supervisor watching you from the warm confines of the office. Ha! Intern to supervisor.

Yes, your journey is at an end, and a new one will be beginning. God works in wonderful ways. Pondering how wonderful the other day. A name you might recognize is Harry Chapin. Singer, songwriter, and humanitarian. His most famous tune is "Cats in the Cradle."

But the one that has to do with you and me is "All My Life's a Circle." That's where God comes in working in marvelous ways. You and I working together at Peace Lutheran. Your days off going back to Our Savior's in Neenah - your home church for you and your family. My coming to Our Savior's as Interim Pastor to you and your family. Your husband Adam serving on the church council. And now you are a Pastor at Christ the King in Kimberly and you will be a pastor to my son and grandchildren. Next year I will be at Christ the King in the pews as my granddaughter reaffirms her Baptismal Covenant. Yes, 'All my Life's a Circle' with God's help.

In preparation for this day, you asked me to choose the Gospel and I chose the appointed Gospel for tomorrow. Jesus, returning to his hometown and reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

I chose it because it serves as your job description, and a job description for all of us gathered. I also chose it for you, Dara, because of the one sentence sermon that Jesus preached. Even shorter than my sermons. Today, this is being fulfilled

in your presence. Today Dara. Today. You see Dara, you are a Today person. Today you will release, restore, reach and redeem. Like prophets before you Dara, you understand the concept of today, that to wait often means never.

So you are called today - to minister to the good folks of Christ the King, today you will share the words of forgiveness to families struggling with tension - today you will share your love. Today you will bring release to those bound up in prison with addiction issues- today you will help free them.

Today you will bring good news to those with broken hearts over a death or results of a biopsy or maybe someone suffering loneliness. Today. Today you will assist those looking for a new direction- metanoia.

Through it all, you will be their Pastor doing the stuff that Pastors do. There will always be another widow holding your hand at the graveside, another confirmation class of bored teenagers, or a Committee meeting that seems endless. There will always be another wedding for a couple who has no idea what they are vowing to do, another hospital visit with someone who tears up during the prayer, another argument with the church treasurer about the need to buy a new copier that isn't in the budget, and of course another sermon that tries to make Holy sense of it all.

You will be a Pastor and all of us gathered here today know that you will be the best that you can be - with God's Help.

It's exciting for Christ the King, for you and for this place we call the ELCA. We soon welcome you as a friend, colleague and as Pastor Dara Clifford. Thanks Be To God.

Amen.

