

Intern brings feminine dimension to Faith

By Judy Calmer
staff writer

In a world where leadership roles have been assumed by men for the past 1,900 years, Cheryl Purdy is making her mark.

Purdy, articulate, soft-spoken and quick to laugh, was installed Sunday as intern on the ministerial staff of Livonia's Faith Lutheran Church. Her appointment is for a full year, and she will be ministering, teaching and working toward a master of divinity degree. Eventually, she hopes to be called to a ministry in a Lutheran church, and that would lead to ordination.

But she realizes her sex could get in the way.

"Women have always been teachers, deaconesses," she said, "but as for leadership roles, it's still a new concept and people are still struggling with whether women belong in the role of pastor and whether scripture allows it."

AT 35, PURDY has gone through plenty of soul-searching and has decided the ministry, even though discouraging for women, is what she wants.

"I've struggled with the reasons behind why I am in the ministry and why women should become involved," she said, punctuating her conversation with gestures and frequent smiles.

"I believe women have sharing, loving gifts, and that we can bring other dimensions into the ministry, and that we can minister together, both male and female."

"It also struck me there can be models of male and females working together. And working together, we can do a lot better job."

As intern, Purdy will divide her time between getting a new preschool program off the ground and presiding at

church services. A master's degree in early childhood education and a bachelor of science in education, Purdy feels, helped her in being asked to come to Faith Lutheran.

"The fact that they called me in (as intern) makes me feel very good about being here," she said.

BEING ELECTED an elder by a Lutheran congregation three years ago was one factor behind her decision to become a minister, she said. But her career choice was inspired by several events.

"My dad is a pastor and I am the oldest of seven, so I was able to learn a lot from him," she said. She added that while teaching at Greenfield Peace Lutheran School in Detroit, she was offered a teaching position with Head Start, but turned it down.

"That helped me to sort through and forced me to consider what I wanted to do with my life," Purdy said. "It helped me make the decision about staying in the church and wanting to have women have a voice in the Lutheran church."

She began classes at Christ Seminary — Seminars in St. Louis, Mo., the summer of 1989, she expects to complete a four-year program in three.

Her husband, Ron, teaches at Detroit Urban Lutheran School. She is receiving an educational stipend for her work at Faith, but she also is paying to work there since her internship is a course for credit.

THE INVITATION extended by the Livonia church came after its senior pastor, the Rev. Roger Schiefel, was called by a New York church in January.

The Rev. Martin A. Seltz, who shares administration of Faith Lutheran with the Rev. Paul E. Jaster, noted that the congregation is entering its 30th year

and "we decided to undertake a rather extensive self-study into what we need for our lives — where the congregation stands, where its going."

"We're in kind of a transition phase," Seltz said. "Cheryl's being here is a way of helping us through our transition."

Seltz said he feels it is "a bonus to us" that Cheryl is a woman seeking a ministry.

"We feel this situation is very helpful to us to learn about the role of women in the ministry," he went on. "We're looking forward to the chance to learn about the gifts a woman brings to the ministry."

Gaining an intern helped to fill a void that losing a pastor created within the structure of the ministering organization at Faith Lutheran. As Seltz puts it:

"I feel very much we still have that team approach with ministry here, as well as Cheryl being in the teaching role."

SELTZ NOTED the Faith congregation is well aware its new intern represents a minority.

"Out of 400 pastors in the English Synod, of which we are a part, only five or six are women," he said.

Although the English Synod allows women as pastors, the synod used to be a part of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, which never ordained women as pastors, Seltz explained.

"We've only been in existence for five years as a separate body. But our people are still coming from the Missouri Synod history."

Despite the beliefs of the two synods being opposites, Seltz says Faith Lutheran's congregation has been receptive and open-minded.

"It's just amazing that we've heard

only positive things like, 'I'm not used to it, but I'm really excited to see a woman in here,'" he said. "It's exciting to hear and it's very supportive to get this."

THE FAITH STAFF considers "it's very appropriate for a woman to be in ministry," Seltz said. The only obstacles he sees are "theological and historical."

"The situation is that for 1900 years women have not been allowed in ministering," said Seltz. Because of this long history of an all-male clergy, it's going to be a difficult adjustment for many."

Purdy has known already the sting of non-acceptance.

"At times, rejection is painful," she said. "But I believe God has given us all gifts, and when people have come to me and told me I am sinning, I have to remember when Jesus came to us on earth and had theological discussions with women, and I think about those gifts we all have."

"I consider that I have been in the ministry all these years, and I consider what's happening now just enlarges my ministry."

A native Detroit and mother of two, Purdy will keep taking classes at St. John Seminary in Plymouth and correspondence courses from Semtex while she serves her internship.

Courses scheduled this fall are Prophets and Pauline Letters (the epistles of Paul) and Kerygma (learning to speak to the public about everything we've learned.)

Purdy says her hope for the future would be to do that which she feels she has been called to do.

"The best use of the gifts I have been given would be to get a call where I could teach and work as an associate minister," she said.



JOHN STANOFF/staff photographer

Cheryl Purdy is serving for a year as part of the ministerial staff at Faith Lutheran Church of Livonia.

Harrison musicians ready for Band Camp

About 95 Harrison High School musicians, all members of the school's marching band, will board school buses early Monday, Aug. 23 to being a week of intense practice at Camp Emory.

The students will be accompanied by

several parent advisors. Their studies will include formations and music to be used during the Hawks' home football game, Kent Polkinghorne will lead the band as this year's drum major.

Captain of the twirlers is Sandy

Johnson. The flag corps will be co-captained by Barb Hess and Rita Mangione.

The band camp information meeting

is set for 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 19, in Harrison's Band Room. The meeting will be led by Nancy Goulette and Johnson Green, band camp directors, and Mark Phillips, Harrison's music director.

Linda Aldrich takes storyteller's gavel

Detroit Story League ends its 1981-82 season Saturday, Aug. 21, in the home of Ruth Kroepel, when the storyteller's gavel is handed over to the new president, Linda Aldrich of Plymouth.

Bring your own luncheon begins at noon in the Kroepel home at 36529 Viscary Lane, Farmington. Beverage and desert are provided by the hosts, whose co-hostesses for the day are Beverly Racine of Redford and Rose Marie Lux of Southfield.

Storytellers for the day are Dolores Leach of Union Lake, Julie Yu-Ling Ho of Farmington Hills and Bruce Smith of Clarkston.

Aldrich will conduct her first business meeting with incoming officers Donna Teichmann of Redford, vice president; Katie Allam of Redford, sec-

retary; and Ruth Breault of Westland, treasurer.

Theme for the last meeting of the

season is "Catch the Brass Ring on a Merry-Go-Round," ending the year-long circle of themes, "Rings."

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