

The Reverend Lara Forbes

Personal Ministry Statement: *As a Christian I am called to love God and my neighbor. As I live this out as a pastor, I have come to understand that no congregation exists solely for itself. Rather, it's an integral part of its surrounding community and the relationship between church and community is living, breathing, and dynamic.*



Pastor Lara Forbes is a native of Washington State, born in Edmonds and growing up in the Lynnwood area. Many of her family members now live in the Everett area and in Skagit County. She is currently Pastor at Faith/La Fe Lutheran Church, a bilingual (English/Spanish) congregation in Phoenix, Arizona, where she lives with her two cats.

Pastor Lara received Bachelor of Arts degrees in Spanish and Political Science from Central Washington University in 1991, and in 1995 she obtained a Master's Degree in Education from Northern Arizona University. She worked as a manufacturing engineer for the Boeing Company for seven years and then for two years as a missionary in Costa Rica for the ELCA.

It was during her missionary service in Costa Rica that Pastor Lara came to know that God was calling her to word and sacrament ministry, specifically to be a parish pastor. For Pastor Lara, this means she is called to care for whomever God sends her way, wherever she happens to be. She attended the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago where she received her Master of Divinity degree in 2009. She gained teaching experience in a Chicago bilingual congregation much like Faith and served as a Vicar/Intern with the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rahway, New Jersey. In October 2010, Pastor Lara was ordained at her home church, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, in Lynnwood.

Pastor Lara's first call was to Faith Lutheran Church in Phoenix where she has served since 2010. Faith/La Fe is an urban congregation, serving a diverse multicultural and multilingual population with a preschool and two worship services each week, one in English and one in Spanish. A foundation of Pastor Lara's ministry has been to build relationships among people of different generations, socio-economic classes, gender identities and sexual orientations, and to navigate expectations and differences between ethnic and language communities.

Pastor Lara's strong relationships with the youth at Faith/La Fe are due to her listening and respecting their different personal situations. She has led groups to ELCA national youth gatherings and mentored two youth who participated in a trip to Senegal, the companion synod of the Grand Canyon Synod. Because there are not many middle and high schoolers at Faith, Pastor Lara and other Lutheran pastors have established joint confirmation classes that meet at

(continued on next page)

The Reverend Lara Forbes

different churches and have begun a collaborative high school group that gathers for social and service activities.

Preaching, for Pastor Lara, is a primary way to connect with the congregation. Beginning with the texts for the day, she asks “In what way is that good news for us?” To answer that question, she participates in text studies with other pastors and considers current events in the news, events in the congregation, and who will hear the sermon. Looking at events from the perspective of the gospel helps form an idea of the way(s) that God calls us to respond in our daily lives.

Pastoral care and visitation are exceptionally meaningful experiences for Pastor Lara as she is invited to share those sacred moments. She encourages and trains congregational members to help with pastoral care visits when appropriate to do so.

Pastor Lara provides administrative leadership and guidance while supporting and developing lay leaders to meet the needs of the congregation and the broader church in the community. She encourages and works with those who want to begin a new outreach program, book study, or other ministry.

She encourages people at Faith/La Fe to minister to others in their daily lives by listening, helping, comforting, and praying as a reflection of God’s grace and love.

Pastor Lara serves as dean of the conference of Lutheran pastors in Phoenix who meet for Bible study, support each other in their ministries, and join in service and youth activities.

To be an effective pastor, Pastor Lara makes “self-care” a priority, including a regular Sabbath day each week, exercise, healthy eating and, especially, time for spiritual renewal, devotional readings and prayer. She encourages and helps others who wish to develop a practice of self-care. Hiking and vegetable gardening are important elements of her self-care discipline.