

PASTOR HERR'S PERSPECTIVE

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father, +Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

On June 1 Cathy Elkiss will begin her service as Christ Lutheran's Cantor. On Sunday, June 4 Cathy will be installed and it will be an opportunity for us to formally welcome her. I invite the congregation to introduce yourselves to her and take the opportunity to get to know her. Last month Cathy included a letter of introduction in our newsletter which I encourage you to read. She comes to Christ Lutheran with wonderful musical gifts, a wide range of experiences as a church musician, and energy to lead the next chapter of our congregation's song.

music bells
leader cantor
congregation choir
song organ
lutheran

Martin Luther once wrote that "Next to the word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world." Music has long been an important component of Lutheran worship. Luther was a hymn writer and musician who encouraged the use of music in worship and to share the Gospel. The role of the Cantor in Lutheran congregations is to lead the congregation's song. It is helpful to note that the term Cantor is used regularly in the Jewish and Roman Catholic traditions although its use and role are different from that of Lutheranism.

For twenty-two years Christ Lutheran Gettysburg has embraced the title and role of the Cantor. At the time of its adoption the congregation prepared a flyer to explain what a cantor was and the role of the cantor at Christ Lutheran Church.

The term has its roots in historic Christian practice as early as the fourth century. *Schola Cantori* (choirs) were directed by cantors either in church and/or monasteries. During and after the Reformation the cantor was appointed by ecclesiastical authorities with city council approval. Cantors were trained at universities in music and liberal arts. The cantor of a congregation taught music to children, youth, and adults while providing organ leadership, choral leadership and instrumental accompaniment to the musical parts of the daily, Sunday, and festival liturgies. The music included elaborate polyphonic music such as a cantata; in addition, simple music for hymns, liturgy, and psalmody balanced the more elaborate music offered by the choir. The cantor often composed the necessary music for the congregation and choirs on a weekly basis.

The adoption of the title of "Cantor" for our congregation's musician is following the lead of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians <https://alcm.org/> in the hope of furthering the Lutheran understanding of the term. Responsibilities of our cantor include: overseeing a choral education program for children, youth, and adults, serving as organist, directing a handbell choir, overseeing an arts program, relating to the Worship and Music Committee, assisting the Christian education program and working with the pastor in worship planning and education. This title indicates that Christ Lutheran continues to be strongly committed to the important role music plays in the life of this congregation and underlines the role that the cantor plays in cooperation with the pastoral office. (from *The Office of Cantor* prepared by Christ Lutheran Church, 2001)

Cathy will be the fourth person in our congregation's history to hold the title and office of Cantor. She begins her music ministry with our congregation at a time when many of our traditional music groups and choirs have become inactive or semi-inactive. An important component of Cathy's work will be to reenergize our choral groups and bell choir as well as expand congregation involvement in our music program. I encourage the congregation to prayerfully consider responding energetically and

favorably to Cantor Elkiss' invitations to offer your gifts and talents to the worship and music life of the congregation.

Music continues to be an important part of our congregation's worship life and educational program. As Luther noted it is a treasure and I look forward to a renewal in our congregation's song as we praise, pray, proclaim and recount the story of God's grace and love in song. May you and yours have a blessed summertime!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Stephen Herr