



# Pastor Ethan Fearing Leads North Immanuel

By: Karen Carpenter

North Immanuel Lutheran in rural Pelican Rapids welcomed a new pastor on May 25, 2016. The congregation had been served by an interim pastor for the previous 19 months.

Pastor Ethan Fearing began his service as full-time pastor with the church.

His arrival was just on the heels of the untimely and sudden death of Interim Pastor Peter Martinson.

Martinson had served the congregation since September 2014 and was just ending his time with the congregation at the time of his death.

Pastor Fearing began his ministerial career as an intern youth and family minister at American Lutheran in Long Prairie, MN, and later Trinity Lutheran Church in Sauk Rapids, MN.

"More recently, I completed vicarage while serving as the youth pastor of First St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Hastings, Nebraska," said Fearing.

A vicar is a candidate for ordained pastoral ministry, serving in a vicariate or internship, usually in the third year of seminary training.

A Minnesota native, Fearing was born and raised mostly in Long Prairie.

"My family did move to New Mexico for two years, but we actually found ourselves missing Minnesota winters and returned," Fearing said.

After high school, Fearing attended the University of Mary in Bismarck, ND for two years. He finished his bachelor's degree at Bethel University in St. Paul.

Fearing went on and took his master's education from online study through the Institute of Lutheran Theology in Brookings, SD.

Fearing and his wife, Alyssa, met at a Bible camp where they were serving on staff. The couple dated for five years and have now been



Pastor Ethan Fearing and his wife, Alyssa, have been ministering at North Immanuel Lutheran Church, located between Pelican Rapids and Barnesville, for three years. The rural church setting is just what the couple has been looking for. Both grew up in rural Minnesota and are glad to be closer to family as well as serve in a rural congregation.

married for six years.

"When we were serving in Nebraska, we prayed for a chance to move closer to our families in Minnesota. Now that we have been settled for a few years at North Immanuel, we hope to also be blessed with some children," said Fearing.

Alyssa grew up in Alexandria,

MN. She teaches all music and fifth and sixth grade English at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in Fergus Falls.

Pastoring a rural church brings its own set of challenges as well as joys. The fact that Fearing grew up in a small rural Minnesota community serves to help him understand the congregation's needs. It also give

him a perspective on the unique joys of serving a rural congregation.

"Sometimes, our strengths are also our weaknesses. It has been a trend across the nation over the last decade for 20- to 40-year-olds to walk away from organized religion.

"As a historically family congregation, this trend is especially detrimental to us when one generation is suddenly and seemingly missing. Our situation of being 10 miles from town also makes it difficult to draw new people to attend worship.

"Having been raised in a small town, I have always enjoyed connected community. My years living in cities were wonderful, but nothing compares to 'everybody knowing everybody,' especially in a congregational family. I am biased to think that God's love is more evident in rural churches," continued Fearing.

The congregation opened their doors and hearts to the young pastor and his wife.

"From the start, the people of North Immanuel have been nothing but welcoming, said Fearing. "When

my wife and I first moved to the area, the house we were buying was unavailable for a month. She went to live with her parents, but I stayed in the church building. There was no shower, but the congregation opened their homes and offered their hospitality to me."

In his spare time, Pastor Fearing enjoys playing board games with his wife and friends.

He also started a unique ministry. "I have started a ministry that offers me an opportunity to write and be artistic, with skits and biblically themed role-playing mysteries."

Pastor Ethan and his friend Michael provide two types of mysteries, single-evening or three-

day retreat.

"Our stories come from a variety of genres, and can even be created per your request, but the morals are always faith-based and scripturally grounded," said Fearing.

WatchWord Ministries has several dates already booked in 2019. They provide interactive mystery games for any type of church gathering, youth groups, youth camps even bachelorette parties.

WatchWord can be found on Facebook and online.

Pastor Ethan Fearing brings a great deal of enthusiasm and energy to North Immanuel Lutheran Church. The community welcomes him.

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Pastor Ethan Fearing brings enthusiasm to each event held at North Immanuel Lutheran Church. These boys were getting ready for confirmation recently. From left, Cody Nord, Pastor Fearing, and Nick Haugrud are getting in the spirit on Confirmation Sunday.



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