



I didn't really set out to become a pastor, and sometimes it still surprises me that this is where my life journey has led. During my growing up years, I wanted to be an archaeologist. Later on I thought seriously about becoming a physical therapist. But I have been captivated by the message of Jesus and over the years have been drawn deeper and deeper into Jesus' challenging and hopeful way.

It is Jesus' message of the wideness and faithfulness of God's love that gives me hope and a sense of purpose. In Jesus' message, I hear good news that God loves the world so much, that God will not give up on us – regardless of our failure, regardless of how preoccupied with ourselves we are. The darkness will not win. God intends to draw the human family into a new future – without war or violence, without poverty or suffering. The whole of creation is precious to God, and should be precious to us as well. The challenge for me is to learn how to live into that future when the culture around me seems to be following a different set of values.

I love the work I do as a pastor. I treasure the chance to share with people significant events in their life's journey – times of birth and baptism, learning the faith, marriage, exploring one's life purpose, and the end of the journey, death. I value the opportunity to delve deeply into the Bible and consider how Jesus' way of forgiveness and generosity speaks to me and the community I serve. I also find great joy in the church's worship, setting time aside on a regular basis to experience awe and wonder in the presence of God.

Among the many things I love about the congregation I serve, I prize the compassion and concern the people of First Immanuel show for neighbors in need. By partnering with Loaves and Fishes and with Northwest Portland Ministries, members of First Immanuel are able to host a daily lunch program for seniors and a twice-weekly food box program. Together we seek to embody Jesus' care for the hungry.

I grew up in Southern California, but since then have lived all over the country – in the Pacific Northwest, the upper Midwest, and the desert Southwest. I studied at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, and at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. I served congregations in California and New Mexico before coming to Portland.

I give thanks for the opportunity to serve with my wife, Melinda Wagner, and am energized by the challenges that are part of ministry in Northwest Portland. This is a vibrant, interesting part of the city. I also love getting out of the city, to go walking or hiking. I enjoy biking with my kids, or playing catch in the yard. I also enjoy writing, and appreciate the opportunity to contribute to publications like *Currents in Theology and Mission* and *Homily Service*.