

Interest in arts emphasized at Lutheran Student Chapel

By Rebecca Brito

The pastor of the Lutheran Student Chapel calls his ministry an apostolate, or assignment.

"We are called by the church at large to fill this assignment on the University campus," the Rev. Alvin Peterson said.

"But, in a sense," he added, "the church is already here. A community of believers is already here. Our ministry is our presence—it's just being here."

The Lutheran Student Chapel is centered, he said, around a worship ministry. Services are held at the chapel on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. The center also sponsors Sunday evening fellowship groups and a chapel choir.

Both Peterson and his associate, The Rev. Don Wendt, said the center's study groups, social activities and involvement in the arts also play a large part in their ministry. The staff is involved in interpersonal counseling as well.

Interest in the arts, Peterson said, always has been emphasized at the Lutheran Student Chapel. A Festival of the Arts is held each year, and sculpture, graphics and the performing arts are brought into the center "to become part of our lives," he said.

Peterson's wife—called "Mom Pete" by both students and staff—does volunteer staff work at the chapel. She said she especially is interested in the performing arts and in film. Film festivals often are held at the center, she said.

The Petersons have been at the chapel for 28 years. Wendt said their commitment, more than anything else, has "provided the center with strength, and created an ongoing complex of relationships."

Peterson said he thinks the Lutheran Student Chapel has maintained "a supportive ministry that definitely is not short range."

"The impact of our work can be seen in the community—in our alumni. Many of the people on our governing board were once our students, and many of their children now come to the chapel.

"I know, too, that we have helped keep some kids in college who might have left had we not been here."

"But the real payoff," Mom Pete said, "is in watching people mature over a four or five year period, and knowing you've had a hand in it."

Both Peterson and Wendt said general religious interest is not rising.

"There have always been groups on campus that are into spiritual things," Peterson said. "The difference now is in a turning from activism to a search for personal meaning."

Wendt said the campus is reflecting "a search by the whole society for alternatives."

"Also, there is now more freedom for people to admit their involvements in religious movements," he said.

Wendt expressed satisfaction with the religious diversity which he said can be found on the campus.

"Each campus ministry reaches a different faction on campus," he said. "We complement each other, and we share a common concern for the University community."

The Lutheran Student Chapel is funded through the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America (ALC-LCA).

Correction . . .

Transcendental Meditation is not a religion or a philosophy, as implied in Monday's article in the *Daily Nebraskan*.

Instead, it is a mental technique, according to Doug Bowen, president of the UNL Students International Meditation Society.

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