

To the people of Christ Lutheran Church -

Greetings from Pittsburgh! My name is Sara Miller, and I am delighted and honored to have been invited to become your next Minister of Music.

Right now, I am busily packing and planning for my big move home to West Michigan, and I am so excited to become part of your community of faith and to help support and strengthen your worship and your many artistic gifts. In the meantime, I'd like to invite you to peek into my moving boxes and maybe learn a little about me before I arrive. Here's what I'm packing:

A couple dozen houseplants. I don't have any kids or pets, but I do have a husband, Mike, who is staying in Pittsburgh for a while to work with the actuarial team at Gateway Health - and I have a lot of plants, which will be coming with me right away.

A mountain dulcimer (which I don't play) and guitar (which I do). I

started learning guitar because you just can't take a pipe organ to the beach. I can play your four-chord pop song in a couple of different keys so far. I am excited to work with some really excellent guitarists in the praise band at CLC, and maybe they'll even let me play with them sometimes! The last time I was in a worship band, I was a singer and a brand-new baby keyboardist, so I'm really looking forward to being back in that space, but with a lot more knowledge and new skills.



Also a violin, soprano and alto recorders, and my grandmother's piano. And I will probably be acquiring more instruments after the move. At least, that seems to be the way of things!

My pie plate. It is cobalt blue (my favorite color) and a birthday gift from my pretend-sister, who has been my best friend since we were three. I love baking: mostly pies, also bread. Lately, I've been watching The Great British Baking Show. What I like about it - besides all the baking - is how the bakers and even the judges are really supportive and kind. Often, even under time pressure, the bakers will help each other finish up, and I love watching people help each other to learn and be more successful.

A drawing of the sanctuary at Kalamazoo First United Methodist Church.

FUMC was my church home for the seven years I lived in Michigan the last time. It was singing in the choir there, when our director shared the words of Alec Wyton - "a church musician is a pastor, teacher, and performer - in exactly that order" - that I determined to live out my call to empower the ministry of all the faithful through music and the arts.

The most recent (and time-consuming) diploma. For my bachelor's, I took a double-major in Latin and English from a very small Episcopal college in Tennessee. I taught Latin (plus a little bit of English, history, and Greek) in high school for a while, and then at the college level while working on a master's in medieval studies, focusing on medieval and renaissance music. That was at the Medieval Institute at Western. Then, in the middle of the medieval program, I decided I could combine it with a master's in musicology (a research degree in music). I wasn't wrong – but it meant that now I had to write a thesis! So, I spent a really long time researching the historical significance and cultural context for Johann Joseph Fux's writing on acoustics and music theory, and an even longer time trying to sit down and write it. I am happy and proud that it's done!

Lots and lots of pictures. Many of them are of my family, and I am definitely making some kind of weird face in every one of those, so they can just stay hidden. But there's a very sweet photo of part of the children's choir from the church I trained at. Two of the kids that I taught to ring are ringing handbells with two older children. They all look very determined, and one of the big girls is pointing at where they are in the music, so no one gets lost. (We're going back to that theme of seeing people help each other learn and succeed!)

A little ceramic figure of St. Joseph. I think he was originally part of a Nativity set, but he came to me by himself, as a sweet gift from my organ teacher, the first time I played in church. She wrote the date on the bottom – apparently, it was December 6, 2015, which I find a little hard to believe; it seems like a million years ago. Joseph has been sitting on the organ console at Trinity Lutheran, Northside, since I started there in the winter of 2016, and he's excited – just like me – to start a new adventure in Wyoming.

My first Sunday at CLC will be November 11. Until then, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sara". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.