

Empowered by the Holy Spirit



A few years ago ELCA pastor Cora Aguilar and her husband decided to buy a house in Maricopa, Arizona, and retire.

But, Cora soon discovered, God had other plans.

In April 2010, Cora was named as the mission developer for an ELCA new start congregation in her new community. Maricopa Lutheran Chapel hopes to be a recognized ELCA congregation by 2013.

“I knew it was a divine call,” says Cora. “I knew I was called here to Arizona because of this church.”

ELCA members in Maricopa had previously driven long distances—sometimes over 100 miles roundtrip—to attend church on Sundays. Out

of their desire to worship closer to home, and under Cora’s guidance, Maricopa Lutheran Chapel was born.

Ruben Duran directs the ELCA churchwide program for new congregations. He says, “Cora has a deep passion for people and an expertise in mission. ... Nothing will detract her from doing her best and giving her all to help grow [Maricopa].”

Sue Fletcher, who has been with the congregation since the beginning, says Cora plays a big role in making people feel welcome. “Cora doesn’t miss a beat. She knows everyone who’s there and if you’re new she always welcomes you before the service. It’s a warm and loving congregation.”

Cora says when she’s doing worship her prayer is, “God, fill me with your Spirit, your passion, your energy, and let that come out and touch all of the people you have sent on this day to worship with us.”

That energy flows from everyone in the congregation. Carol Van Batavia says that because most people are transplants from all over the country, “we’re not just set in our ways. We’re flexible. We listen to (each other) and that’s important.”

What’s wonderful about Maricopa Lutheran, Sue Fletcher says, is that it is “one that grew from within. The people wanted a church and we were determined that we wanted to do it and so we did. And we know the Holy Spirit was working here with us the whole time.”

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