

# Our Pilgrim Stories

## WARMLY



“I always describe myself as a child of God, pastor’s wife and then pastor’s widow, mother, grandmother, and teacher of 25 years,” shared Leah Peery.

In 1991, when her husband, Gordon, retired as the pastor from Faith Lutheran in Newberry, they began looking for a new church. Church had always been family to them. They wanted to find that again. So, they began visiting churches.

They pulled up in front of Pilgrim one Sunday and hadn’t even gotten out of the car before people met them in the parking lot. “Welcome! We’re so glad you’re here,” they heard. “The people at Pilgrim were so warm, friendly, and welcoming that they created a feeling of home every Sunday we visited.” So, they returned again and again.

While still teaching elementary school, Leah was caring not only for her family but also for her mother. Pilgrim members quickly realized that and got her mother and aunt, who were living with them, involved in the Joy group and other activities. Gordon even served as interim pastor for a year.

Then, Leah’s mother died in 1994, and Leah got more involved herself by joining the Prayer and Share group, teaching Sunday School, becoming “Grandma Peery” to 4-year-olds, in Sunday School, and serving two terms on the church council.

Her family, too, grew increasingly involved. Her daughter, Mary Beth, became the second director of Pilgrim’s Preschool, her grandsons were baptized here and began their faith journey here, and her other daughter, Wanda, embraced and led Stephen Ministry here.

The feeling of family and the friends she’s made over her 32 years here at Pilgrim would never have happened had the greeters, ushers, and members not warmly embraced their family on Sunday mornings and invited them not only into the building but into the heart of the church and its activities and ministries.

Thank you for welcoming people like Leah and their families home. Your willingness to serve in those same roles, to warmly make visitors feel welcome every Sunday, and to continue to invite them into the activities, programs, ministries, and the heart of our church brings others to feel that they, too, are “home” here in God’s church.