

PACEM in TERRIS

P E A C E O N E A R T H

Taught to Trust

Founder Shirley Wanchena reflects on lessons learned from Pacem's beginning.

Widowed at age 49 with 6 children, I prayed, "Lord, what do you want me to do with the rest of my life?" God began to reveal an expanded understanding of my vocation as a mother.

As I reflected on the individual time I wanted with each of my children, I felt that God wanted the same heart-to-heart, alone time with each of his children. Over the next years, God prepared my maternal heart to hear his call: "Create an environment where my people can come and be alone with me."

My ready response was, "Yes, Lord! . . . but I have no money, no degree, no blueprint, no how-to book." In my heart, I heard God saying that he would provide everything if only I would trust him.

Still, I thought it was up to me to raise the money to build the hermitages, which I attempted to do for a full year. I didn't raise a cent! I asked God if I needed to go to fund-raising school or if my timing was off.

I went on retreat, praying and fasting, but I heard nothing.



Early sketch of a Pacem hermitage

I simply trusted that God had heard my prayer, even though I had no answers.

Then driving home on I-94 from the retreat, I saw an image of a cupboard full of groceries, and I heard God saying, "You don't pray for what you already have." God revealed to me that my cupboard full of groceries was my paid-up family home and that I needed to sell our home before I asked anyone for funds.

Our home sold for three times the building price and the proceeds became part of the down payment on the land that was to become Pacem in Terris. God was working his will!

Now more than 25 years later, we continue to experience the ongoing miracles of Pacem in Terris as we witness people of all faiths responding to God's invitation to come and spend time alone with him in the hermitage. Many hermits share with us their delight in their

"honeymoon" with the Lord, and we believe that God is equally delighted in spending time with each of his children.

Please join me in giving God praise, honor, and glory as we come before him with grateful hearts for the wonders of his everlasting love. I pray that we will continue to listen to God's voice and hear his personal call as he entrusts each of us to help bring about his kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven." Glory to God!

"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9 (ESV)

Seasons of the Heart

Pacem's invited guests



A hermit walks to a hallowed spot—the cross at the edge of the prairie.

“During the first year Pacem was open, one day a hermit asked, ‘How are you going to market this place?’” recalls founder Shirley Wanchena. “I said that we hadn’t decided yet. With no knowledge of marketing, I asked God, ‘How do you want to market Pacem?’ He responded clearly, ‘I will do the inviting.’” And he has.

Here’s a glimpse of those God has invited to Pacem over the past 25 years:

15,000 hermit guests
50 percent Catholic
50 percent other
Christian faith traditions
1/3 lay persons,
1/3 in ministry,
1/3 mostly college and
seminary students
42 states
10 countries



Simple hermit fare: a basket of bread, fruit, cheese, and a date-nut muffin (Shirley’s special recipe) nourish our hermits and can be replenished daily.



Window to the world: a rocking chair placed in front of a picture window is a favorite spot in every hermitage.

Hermit Notes

We are blessed by each hermit guest who comes to Pacem, and we receive many notes that guests write from their hearts in gratitude for their time here.

We often refer to these notes, which are read anonymously at staff and board meetings, as our “paychecks.” Here is a sample:

♥ “This place must be a taste of what heaven will look like! Thank you to all of you for maintaining this haven so we hermits can meet with God to find rest for our souls . . .”

♥ “I was free . . . free to sleep (13 hours a night!), free to walk, free to read, free to sit and be still. The greatest freedom however was the freedom not to think, or problem solve, or plan, or serve someone else. I was there to be cared for by God and, boy, did he care for me! My soul was at peace in this quiet, sacred space.”

♥ “You and your work are such a blessing to the Body of Christ! You provide a refuge in a busy world and have allowed me to meet intimately with my Lord.”

“A hermitage exists to remind the world that there is eternal life beyond the changing seasons of this earthly one.”

Mount Carmel

Seasons of Grace

People in heaven and on earth make Pacem possible



Mary welcomes all to the community house and joins the Pacem saints in praying for our hermit guests.

Our Lady of Pacem

Greeting guests at the entry to the community house, our simple and beautiful sculpture, by artist Nancy Rieke, portrays Mary of Nazareth, the earthly mother of Jesus.

As a homemaker for Joseph and Jesus, Mary cared for the daily needs of her family. She must have collected water from the well, prepared meals, baked bread, washed clothes.

We can imagine her watching for Joseph and Jesus to return home from the carpentry shop or the temple at the end of the day.

God called Pacem in Terris to be a spiritual home for his people. We have asked the blessed mother of Jesus to be “Our Lady of Pacem” and, with us, to welcome home all who come to be alone with God.

Pacem People

Over the years, God has been faithful to provide people with just the right talents needed at the time, including (alphabetically!): accountants, arborists, architects, artists, bakers, benefactors, board members, bookkeepers, builders, cleaners, communicators, contractors, cooks, crafters, designers, donors, editors, farriers, financial advisors, gardeners, laborers, landscapers, listeners, liturgists, mechanics, movers, musicians, organizers, prairie experts, prayer partners, priests, spiritual directors, staff members, tree trimmers, volunteers, weeders, writers, and more. You all have blessed us and helped make Pacem what it is today. Thank you!



Seasons of Growth

A timeline of Pacem's history



1979

Shirley Wanchena accepts God's invitation to “Create an environment where my people can come and be alone with me.”

1982

80 acres of forest and prairie are purchased in Isanti County. A cross is placed in the prairie on Pentecost Sunday and the land is blessed by Fr. Timothy Nolan.



1983-84

Pacem in Terris is established as a Catholic hermitage retreat center in the Franciscan tradition, inviting people of all faiths to come. In 1984, Pacem is conferred a tax-exempt status and incorporated as a 501(c)(3).



1987

St. Joseph house is purchased at a silent auction and moved onto Pacem property. Shirley and her son Jeffrey, along with his wife, Susan, and their four children, move into the house, which serves as the community house until 2000.

Seasons of Gratitude

A note from the Board of Directors

Armed only with the call of the Lord to “Create an environment where my people can come and be alone with me,” Shirley Wanchena began to fulfill that call in 1982 with the purchase of the first 80 acres that were to become Pacem in Terris.

A fledgling Board of Directors was formed largely of family and friends who believed in Shirley and the call she had received. With articles of incorporation and bylaws finalized in 1984, Pacem in Terris was formally established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Minnesota. Pacem was ready to bloom and grow.

Reflecting on the many generous people who have brought their gifts

of time, talent, and treasure over these past 25 years, a fundamental truth emerges: God always provides for what he calls forth. Or, as another way of saying it—God never asks you to sweep the floor without providing a broom!

Pacem in Terris has been built on the sacrificial gifts of so many, and we are ever grateful for all the people, both past and present, who have helped pass on God’s love and peace to our hermit guests.

If the past 25 years are any indication, the future of Pacem in Terris is safely in God’s hands, as he works through the Board of Directors to preserve the vision and continue the mission of Pacem in Terris for generations to come.



Pacem’s Board of Directors (shown here in 2013). Clockwise from top left: Fr. Timothy Nolan (chair), Terry Shaughnessy, Bill Mori, Shirley Wanchena, Pastor Hank French, Helen Stordahl, and Babs Koch



Shirley and Bishop George Speltz, who approved Pacem as a Franciscan Center for Spirituality

Our Heavenly Board

Prayers—and the power of all the love and grace they contain—formed the foundation that Pacem in Terris is built upon. The daily prayers of the faithful continue to form Pacem as a spiritual home, and the power of those prayers continue to minister to our hermits, each according to his or her need. Pacem’s Heavenly Board is made up of many people who believed in and blessed Pacem while on earth, and now they cover Pacem In Terris with their holy prayers from a heavenly view!



Shirley’s son Jeffrey Wanchena was Pacem’s director from 1998 to 2005; he joined the Heavenly Board in 2013



1988

The first three hermitages (St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Anthony) are completed and the first hermit guests are welcomed on May 1. A Mass of Dedication is held in the prairie, officiated by Bishop Hanus and Bishop George Speltz from the St. Cloud Diocese.



1991

Shirley and Jeffrey Wanchena travel to Rome and receive a papal blessing from Pope John Paul II for Pacem in Terris.



1992

Four additional hermitages are completed (St. Michael, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Thérèse of Liseux, and St. Kateri Tekakwitha).



1998

Groundbreaking takes place for Our Lady of Pacem community house, which opens in 2000. Here, hermit guests may pray in the chapel, join us for community meals, or stop by to exercise or take a shower.

Through the Seasons

In every season, Pacem reflects the beauty of God's creation

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 (NIV)



Lupines cover the prairie in spring.



Maples line a wooded path in autumn.



Ferns border the path leading to the boardwalk in summer.



A hermitage nestles under a blanket of snow in winter.



2000

Our Lady of Pacem and six new hermitages open (St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Dominic, St. Clare, and St. Francis).



2002

The Prayer Partners Ministry is established and hundreds of hermit guests promise to pray for Pacem in their daily prayers.



2010

The Pacem Board of Directors establishes the Legacy Fund, an endowment fund for the future of Pacem.



2013

Pacem celebrates its 25th anniversary year: May 1, 2013– May 1, 2014.

Building a Future on God's Plan

Over the past quarter century, God's purposes for Pacem in Terris have unfolded as thousands of people have experienced the blessing of being alone with him in the silence and solitude of a hermitage retreat. Pacem's existence is a testimony to God's loving plans for his children.

"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 29:11-14, NAB).

As we give glory to God for these past 25 years, we look forward to seeing who responds to God's invitation in the future. May you reflect on your own faith journey and the power of God in your life. As you listen to what God is inviting you to do next, trust that he will give you the freedom and the means to step into the future he has planned for you.

Has it been a while since you've spent time with God in a hermitage? Would you like to become a Prayer Partner and pray for our hermit guests? Could you fund a two-night stay for a hermit guest unable to pay? Has God enabled you to be generous with your time, treasure, and talent?

If you want Pacem to play a part in your future, please contact us at 763-444-6408.

Leaving a Legacy of Peace

If Pacem in Terris has blessed you, and you would like to bless Pacem through your will, simply include in it the statement:

"I give to Pacem in Terris, 26399 Hwy 47 NW, Isanti, MN 55040, [the dollar amount or percentage of the residue of my estate] to be used at the discretion of the Board of Directors."

That's all it takes to leave a legacy of silence and solitude for future generations. Thank you for helping us bless others as we build Pacem's future together.

Dear friends,

"O Lord, you mete out peace to us, for it is you who have accomplished all we have done" (Isaiah 26:12, NAB).

After a season of preparation, Pacem in Terris became a reality on May 1, 1988. With great joy, we opened the first three hermitages and welcomed our first hermit guests. The initial part of my Pacem journey was finished and it was a new season, a new beginning.

I didn't know how to support hermit guests entering into silence and solitude, so I stormed heaven for direction. And once again, the Holy Spirit called me to step out in faith and trust that Jesus would lead the way. He did, he does, and he will!

Many of you began the journey with me, and many of you have joined me along the way. Every season brings change, new blessings, and new challenges. Thank goodness, *"We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28, NAB)—another life-giving word from the Lord!

Your prayers, love, and support are a lasting treasure for all of Pacem and for me. Thank you with all my heart. And thank you for all the times you allowed me to pour some of my mother's love into your open hearts.

With prayers, love, and the peace of Jesus,

Shirley Wanchena

