In the light of the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I feel impelled to reflect upon the support circle of men who not only gave me the option of ministry of word and sacrament, but encouraged me in my years of parish word and sacrament service in the Montana Synod. Amazingly for me this includes not only several from my past, at St. Olaf College and in other synods, but also a couple of males I hold in highest esteem from during my years in the Montana Synod. My husband Paul, ordained in 1968 was enthusiastic that I could find options for service in each Synod in which we served, and was the catalyst as I first attended Luther Seminary, St. Paul Minnesota to attain my Associate in Ministry (AIM) credential. To come to Bethany Lutheran in Dutton serving in word and sacrament by authorization of the bishop was an astounding privilege and for that I give my deepest thanks to Bishop Mark Ramseth. His support and encouragement still resonate with my ongoing ministry, though I have been retired for over a decade.

Perhaps my favorite story is one that involves the church sign in front of Bethany in Dutton. My congregation added "Pastor Barbara Birkeland" after I had been in their midst for awhile. During a conference gathering, one of the attending pastors, a guy who respected his credential of ordination (as did I)  told me he objected strongly to that title on the sign. Since I was "only" an  AIM he believed it was an undeserved title.I simply smiled and said it had been the work of the congregation: they gave me, and posted, the title. About one year later, at Synod Assembly, this same pastor sought me out and with a deeply felt smile said, "I was wrong awhile back. You are a pastor in every sense of that word." It still brings tears to my eyes, and I consider that part of my credential even now. Seminary study brought me to full ordination when I was 60, so it is never too late to come to ordained ministry!