It was my privilege and a blessing to serve in what is now the Montana Synod.

Perhaps, because it was the ALC at the time, you are not including my internship in Casper, Wyoming, at Our Saviour’s Lutheran when Steve Holm was pastor. Now retired in Az. But that internship was formative and influential in more ways than I can innumerate. That was 1978-1979. Dee Pedersen served as intern the year after, and she is not included either, but is a DEM in Mn now. We three continue to be in contact with one another and happily so. Such good friends and wonderful mentors.

By the grace of God, I was ordained in my home congregation American Lutheran in Prescott, Az on Reformation Sunday, 1980 and came to serve in the Montana Synod at American Lutheran, Baker, Montana, from October, 1980 to October, 1984.

Those were rewarding years of ministry, if challenging for me as a new pastor in a fairly large congregation. Nelson Bock, my former husband and co-pastor, and I were called together under one call. We learned to share the responsibilities equitably as a clergy couple, but always were committing more than one pastor could have ever possibly offered. Hence, we were gratified when the congregation expanded to more than one call after our departure albeit also creating a three point parish!!

I was the first woman pastor they knew and gave birth to my son Nathan in Baker. We were front page news in the Fallon County Times. I considered it to my credit that the congregations continued to call female pastors.

The good people of Baker and Fallon County were so generous to us. I learned so much about ranching and dry land farming and oil extraction, all in that location, while they loved me into being a good pastor. The youth and I bonded so well, and I thoroughly enjoyed confirmation classes and the summer camp experiences for which we planned with fund raisers and community support.

It was during this time that Search Bible Study was developed and implemented. I loved teaching (which I did for many years subsequently in my ministry as a faculty member for Wartburg College). The lay leadership was engaged and we worked so closely together. Ralph Dunneman and Rolf Tunby were instrumental leaders in the congregation and brought so many people into those classes.

I remember them as leaders in Kogudus retreats too, where I got to know many women well as we experienced those retreats together.

The congregation took on a major building project while we were there, expanding the fellowship hall and classroom space. There was a lot of work to be done to accomplish that goal, but it was done and well done with tremendous support from the members. Dori Wiseman, Mickey Tunby, Gloria Dunneman, and Ethylen Uttke, to name a few, were women who were instrumental in creating a good floor plan.

Ultimately, I was an urban rat, and made my way back to the city, but always have been grateful for cutting my teeth in ministry with the those kind and forgiving members of American Lutheran. In my years hence as a director of the Urban Servant Corps, a Lutheran based volunteer program, and as religion professor with Wartburg College, the years in the Montana Synod remained precious to me as a foundation for my ministry.

Thank you for this opportunity to share a very few of the many good memories I have of my years in the Montana Synod.

Please edit and use as you see fit.

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