**A Journey of Nearly Forty Years**

In 1977, when I heard Susan Granata say that she would attend seminary in the fall to become a Lutheran pastor, it sparked me to tell a co-worker “I think God may be calling me to be a pastor too!”

Several months earlier, Pastor Jack Kintner gave me a seminary catalogue, and I was excited at the thought of learning and serving in the church. Worried I wasn’t worthy of such a calling, hearing the voice of another woman freed me.

I did not grow up in the church but I grew up in a family where women were encouraged to follow their dreams and not be limited by traditional roles. However, I had never known a woman who was a pastor. A newcomer to the church, baptized at age 19, I didn’t share the lifelong Lutheranism of most of the people in my church. And mired in shame from the scars of growing up, I struggled to see myself as a pastor. I was also attracted by a calling that would be challenging, use my gifts and make a difference in the world. As an act of faith, I entered seminary.

In 1978 there were enough women attending seminary that we could gather around a table and talk. When I was ordained in 1982, the dozen women serving in the ALC and LCA in the Pacific Northwest met for vital support- half of them named “Susan”! And despite the hurt, the rejection, and pain we all shared a vision of “being the change” and of doing it together.

I knew the world was changing in the 1990’s when I went to a clergywomen’s gathering where no one was named Susan and the women were diverse in age, background, and theological and political views. I knew the world was changing when the Montana Synod clergywomen’s breakfast at Chico outgrew first the wine cellar, then the conference room, and then would have needed a large meeting room if it had continued. I knew the world was changing when I could hear other women’s voices singing hymns at clergy gatherings and when women were seminary professors and conference speakers and were almost half the people in the room.

Despite all this progress, I am once again in a call where I am the first woman pastor, still asked to prove my competence, win over skeptics, and deal with those who oppose my very existence. To this day I hear stories of women waiting years for a call. Disparities in salary and opportunity still exist, especially for women of color and LGBTQ women.

In the midst of the joys and sorrows, struggles and successes, I am grateful to be serving this church. Ministry has brought me wondrous joy and dreadful sorrow. The love of God, the compassion of Jesus and the presence of the Spirit and the companionship of family and friends have sustained me. I thank God for this call and for all who have walked with me on the way.