My name is Jessie Obrecht, and I am a product of and a Pastor in the Montana Synod. I was born and raised in Havre, Montana at First Lutheran Church. While growing up I attended the Catholic School a block away from First Lutheran and was often known as the kid with all the questions about church and religion. I was often confused about the differences between Lutherans and Catholics, but was never confused about where I wanted to be in the midst of it all. I wanted to be involved! I wanted to be an altar girl and an acolyte and a reader and whatever else they would let me be at whatever church I was at. I was the first non-Catholic altar girl at St. Jude’s Catholic Church, and was present and ready any time a new role needed filled at First Lutheran. I learned this eagerness from the women I saw around me at First Lutheran. They never waited to be given permission to be involved, but simply took initiative and ran the church. I remember that strong female leadership while growing up, and the way it shaped how I viewed my role in the church and the world. It was empowering! Not only did I see this leadership in the lay women I encountered, but in the clergywomen that surrounded my town and denomination as well. They were blazing the path for clergywomen in Montana and in the country, and doing so boldly with integrity and a deep love for Christ.

There were also bumps along the way though. An older woman who stood up after we hired a male Pastor at First Lutheran and said, “I am just glad we didn’t hire another woman”. A group of evangelical young men during college who told me that as a woman I had no right to be co-leading campus ministry, and I was bringing all involved into the fire-y pits of hell. A male seminary professor who sexually harassed me and did his best to gaslight me and threaten me to keep my mouth shut. Plenty of older men and women who have suggested that maybe I should wear a dress and heels to church, and that I am in no way old enough or fitted enough for the position in which I now stand (Pastor).

No matter the bumps that I run into though, I am always lifted up when I am reminded of the shoulders on which I stand. The shoulders of the giants who have gone before me, who have paved the way, and who have cared for me as I journeyed to this place. They are the women who surrounded me on my ordination day as I was called into this life of service to Word and Sacrament. They are the people whom I now serve that greet me simply with “Hello Pastor”. I pray that I may be one of those giants for the Montana Synod someday, just as so many were before me.