**Re:** History of ordained women

 My story regarding this, starts out in 1997 when the Montana Synod began a pilot program, Lay Pastoral Associate program (LPA) continuing education for lay people who may be interested in serving their congregations during the times that an ordained pastor could not be there.

 In 1999 I finished the program and began serving congregations all around NE Montana. In 2005 my pastor left our congregation to accept a call in a different congregation. I was then given the privilege of becoming a Syndocially Authorized Minster. I began serving my congregation regularly.

 In 2007 I was approached by a fellow LPA classmate about a non-traditional track to ordained ministry in the TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) Program. At the age of 47 I decided to go on a very scary adventure; returning to school to work toward the certificate that would allow me to become an ordained minister.

 Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would get nudged by my pastor, and called by the Holy Spirit, to become an ordained pastor. The TEEM program is a very intense program that really tests your study and reading skills, especially if you happen to have a full-time job, two part-time jobs, and be married to a farmer/rancher where your help is sometimes needed in the day-to-day operations of the farm.

 An additional stumbling block was the winter weather in NE Montana that prevented me in making it to the January classes in Berkley; not once but twice! Thankfully, the professors were empathetic and helped me make up the classes so that I wouldn’t fall behind in meeting my goal of completing the TEEM program. I was ordained on September 11, 2010 .

 Fast forward ten years later to 2020 and I am serving in my third call. I have two congregations that I serve each Sunday. I also consider myself to be a “Pastor of the community” as I serve many who are unchurched or who have left their church. But given the chance, I will go just about anywhere to share God’s word with his people.

 I never imagined I would be a pastor, but I am profoundly grateful that I heard God’s call and said “yes.”

Blessings, Pastor Bonnie Novak