My name is Sarah Schilcher, I am the Pastor at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Butte, Montana.

Though my dad is a pastor in the ELCA, I spent the majority of my formative years in the Wisconsin Synod Church, and was led to believe that women couldn’t be pastors.

But midway through my freshman year of college I had a traumatic experience happen to me.  After which, I was singing in the praise band during worship at an ELCA church and thought to myself that I should probably talk to someone about what had happened.  I decided that if I were to talk to one of the 3 pastors at that church, I would talk to pastor Heather.  So, I made a deal with God (never a great idea, but it worked out well in this case!).  I prayed, God, if you want me to talk to Pastor Heather, you make it abundantly clear that you want me to talk to her.

When the song ended, Pastor Heather, who wasn’t even presiding that Sunday, went to the front of the congregation and said, if anyone needs to talk about anything, I’ll be in the fireside room after the service.

I talked to Pastor Heather.

She helped me through what was probably the most difficult time of my life.

One day, months later, I was typing an email to her in my dorm room, asking her if she would consider being a mentor in my life.  Dan, my boyfriend at the time, now husband, was reading over my shoulder and said, Sarah, she’s going to think that you want to be a pastor or something.  I turned around and said, yeah, she just might.

Until that point, I had never even considered the possibility of being a pastor, but at that moment, everything clicked, and it became clear to me that through my whole life up until that point, God had been shaping me into the pastor that I would one day be, but I wasn’t ready to hear my call until just then.

The church that my family had been attending for the last 8 or so years prior to my call (the one which doesn’t believe in female pastors) believes that all members should be in complete doctrinal agreement, and so I felt it was appropriate to inform the pastor who had confirmed me that I was called to be a pastor, out of respect for his beliefs and in hopes that he would, in turn, respect my beliefs.  During that conversation, I heard some very hurtful things from a man who I had a lot of respect for, a man who had taught me a lot about faith and life.  It was a very difficult conversation and in the end I was excommunicated from that church.  However, I grew from that experience and because of it, I find that I am better able to empathize with others who have been condemned by the church for being who they are.

My father always told me that if you do something that you love, you’ll never work a day in your life.  There are many challenges in this calling, but this work is so rewarding, and so life-giving at its best.  I can’t honestly see myself doing anything else.  This is where I am called to be.

Peace,

Pastor Sarah