What Would Grandpa Think

My cousin recently gave me a file folder of papers that had belonged to my grandfather and was related to the Hinsdale Lutheran Church thinking that much of its contents should go into the history archives for the church. A newsletter pulled from that file was the Daily News Bulletin from the fifth General Convention of the American Lutheran Church from San Antonio, Texas dated November 2, 1970. The headline read “Delegates Vote to Ordain Women; Authorize Fifth-Grade Communion.” What a coincidence that I should be holding that newsletter in the same year that the ELCA is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women.

Oh how, I wish I could visit with my grandfather about this decision of the ALC. What did he think about the ordination of women? Did he support this decision, or did he think that it was not a wise choice? But mostly, I would like to ask him what he would have thought of his granddaughter being ordained and serving in the church he so strongly supported. Would he approve or not?

By 1970 I was halfway to obtaining my bachelor’s degree in elementary education which I completed and spent 30 years in fulfilling career. When I retired from education, I was taking classes through the Montana Synod to become an LPA, so I had felt the call to ministry. Not even halfway through the LPA course, I was asked to go through the TEEM program hopefully leading to ordination and serving as a pastor in the Hinsdale and Saco churches. With the TEEM model to theological education, I didn’t have to pack up my things and move in order to attend seminary, since I only had to be on campus three weeks out of the year. I went to school and stayed home, a win-win situation.

To my delight I was ordained in 2017, and it has been the biggest blessing in so many ways. I have a purpose in life, and I have a challenge in life. It’s not easy being a pastor and being a woman pastor brings its own challenges. I thank God for the women pastors who have gone before me and paved the way so that traversing this journey of serving God is smoother. I know that there will be roadblocks ahead as I serve God’s people in the Hinsdale and Saco congregations, but I am assured of the love and support of those who have gone before me and the ones who journey with me.

While I can’t ask my grandfather what he thinks of the changes made since 1970 nor ask him what he thinks of me serving as the pastor in the church he worked so hard to establish and maintain, I know that I am surrounded by a great cloud of witness, and one of those witness is my grandfather. I will run the race with perseverance and fix my eyes on Jesus, serving and obeying God the best I know how.