



Deborah Vitt

You can't imagine how many times over the past 7 years, I have mentally composed this bio sketch. Some of my imaginings were witty and darn right hilarious and others were contemplative and full of sage wisdom and insight. And so you would think, when it was time to put ink to paper (or keyboard to computer), this task would be a no-brainer. I am thinking now, that I should have actually written down some of my thoughts and not stored them in my ever-shrinking cloud memory.

"Retiring? I thought you had retired years ago." Nope – on June 30, 2017, I just felt called to take a giant leap back from the daily rigors of ministry a little earlier than the prescribed age of 65. And I am forever grateful for the circumstances in my life that enabled me to actively listen to that early call of the retiring spirit.

I guess finding one's path or direction in life is very much about "call". Of course, that word has significant understanding in the world of ministry. I never felt however, that I could respond with both feet fully committed to the not so gentle nudgings or call, until I learned of the gift of diaconal ministry.

Many thanks to friends from the Western Field Based Program, who first listened to my wonderings and strongly suggested I enter the discernment process through Selkirk Presbytery. I had been an active lay person for many years in the church - serving on committees at the local, Presbytery, Conference, and National levels which introduced me to some amazing life/spirit-changing faith experiences. Those early formative years laid the groundwork of my faith.

- The Committee of Women's Ministries
- Free to be Friends
- O Creator
- The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women in Church and Society
- Re-Imagining, Minneapolis

- Roots and Wings and all the women's gatherings too many to mention
- Affirm United

I believe it is so very important to name these early life events that helped shape my faith, my understanding of what it means to be an ally, a feminist, and my ongoing awareness of the need to make space for all to be welcome at the table. I am forever grateful.

After 5 years of ministry studies at the Centre for Christian Studies, which included field placements at Immanuel United (Sharon, Ian) and North End Stella Community Ministry, I was commissioned in May of 2000 in Portage la Prairie and settled into ministry with the fine folks at Stony Mountain and Lilyfield. What a wonderful experience that was to spend time in rural ministry with such dedicated people. Then it was back to work as volunteer support coordinator at North End Stella Community Ministry, where Karen, Verna, and Edna shared their wisdom and teachings.

In 2004, I was diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer. Yeah – that pretty much sucked. Many thanks to the steady support from Linda Murray during that time and of course all my friends and colleagues who found creative ways to walk with me on that journey. To Melody McKellar, your love in action provided spiritual grounding to our family during those early days.

In 2005, I accepted a call to Cloverdale and Selkirk United Churches (my home congregation) where I shared in team ministry with Ken Delisle (2005-2008) and Chris Yuzdepski. Over time, Cloverdale and Selkirk dissolved their pastoral relationship and I stayed on in fulltime ministry with Selkirk folks til 2017. Together we were able to re-imagine and literally build a welcoming worship space and accessible community/fellowship hall that continues to serve the needs of our community.

Never would I have imagined my life to include so many years of service and ministry in the church. I am grateful for all the connections I have made in this United Church of ours - to the congregations I served and the people I have privileged to know - this lapsed Menno kid from Austin, Manitoba has much to be thankful for.

To Randy, Adam, Camalee, Clare, Kathleen, and some pretty amazing grandkids Isaac, Felix, Benjamin, and Jude.....your support, love, laughter, and fun times are such a gift.

To my friends and colleagues.....your love in action has left an indelible imprint on my heart and I am forever grateful. Life has a way of moving on and I believe in my heart of hearts, God's love is constant.

"Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land: for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Genesis 28:15