



Elizabeth (Beth) Rutherford

My introduction to church started as an infant, on a 3 pt pastoral charge – Stonewall-Argyle-Grassmere, north of Winnipeg. My formative years were in the Grassmere congregation- a congregation that was mainly relatives and close family friends. Those were the days when Sunday school took place during the summer months, an hour before regular worship time, and was held in the cars of the teachers. Classes were not large! Grassmere was a gift of the beloved community.

When I was 14, we transferred to Stonewall United, where I was confirmed, and later became a candidate for ordained ministry. Stonewall offered me the opportunity to take on leadership roles in worship as well as learning and participating in the work and structures of the congregation and Selkirk Presbytery.

I became a candidate in my early 20s but realized I was not ready to make such a significant commitment to either school or vocation, so I put off the final decision for quite a few years. Fortunately, those were the days when the church was prepared to wait for such decisions, and the annual interview with the Presbytery kept the call to ministry in front of me.

I knew St Andrew's College was where I would attain my theological education when the time came, and I visited many times, walking the halls and the campus. Its focus was on preparing students for rural ministry. It was the ministry I believed to be important and necessary not only for rural communities, but for the church as a whole.

I entered the college as a student in Sept of 1989, and the moment I walked through those doors for the "umpteenth" time, it felt right. My education also included an "internship year", and I was given the gift of an urban experience in Winnipeg. Immanuel United was the congregation I was matched with, and Bill Hickerson was my supervisor. Those 9

months were filled with new learnings and experiences in a congregation who were strong, committed, faithful, and fun.

I was ordained by the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario in 1993, and settled in the Austin-Sidney pastoral charge. It was a charge filled with caring folk who taught me lots about being a minister in the rural church, things that theological education could not provide. During the 6 years I served there, the pastoral charge changed as Sidney made the difficult decision to close its doors. I learned how a church community can close with grace and joy.

In my 6th year on the charge, I made the decision to seek another call. I was interviewed by Crestview United and offered the ministry position. I started there in September of 1999, and it was there that I stayed. Crestview United was, and is, a resilient, compassionate, and strong faith community. A community who sought and seeks to live their faith in meaningful ways and who know how to have fun! Although there were periods of discernment through the years, I always felt called to stay.

During all my years of ministry, I was engaged in the work of the wider church, in Presbytery, Conference/Region, be that on committees, and/or in leadership roles. I always loved being part of the wider church.

My cancer diagnosis 18 months ago has meant retirement looks very different from what was originally planned. That said, I look forward to the time ahead, sharing quality time with Sherri and our family, as well as extended family, and friends. Although I have always known it to be true, I have been constantly reminded that I am surrounded by the gift of the Spirit that accompanies, and the love of God expressed in the faces, care, and support of so many.

I cannot end without claiming the wisdom, joy, laughter, care, and support of good friends, many of whom are ministry colleagues, who have been an important part of my ministry, and continue to be in these days, such a significant gift in my life.

When I was ordained, I thought “I have 32 years until I hit retirement- I can’t imagine that long”...32 years later, I stand at this ending and new beginning and say “where did those years go?”

My heart is full, and all I can offer is thanksgiving.