

PASTOR CARRIE BENTON

Throughout my life the creative mystery of the Triune God has never ceased to amaze me. I was born and raised in Havre, MT. I grew up helping out on the family wheat farm 30 miles west of town. I was raised in the church and first experienced the call to ministry on the day of my Confirmation at age 14. At the time I was not sure what to think – a little like Mary “pondering these things” in my heart – especially since women were not permitted ordained ministry in my denomination.

I continued to explore what this sense of call might mean and turned my passion for people to the field of social work. I graduated from the University of Montana-Missoula in May 2002 with a Bachelor’s in Social Work and shortly thereafter began working as a Community Social Worker for the State Child & Family Services Division in Miles City. Throughout college and working as a social worker, God continued to tug at my heart. I became Presbyterian in 2003 in a small church in Miles City. The pastor and I conversed many times about what my sense of call was. After marrying my marvelous husband in the spring of 2005, I applied and was accepted to attend Pittsburgh Theological Seminary later that fall.

While in seminary I completed two field education experiences: one year in jail ministry and one year with a parish. I graduated in 2008 with the Master of Divinity degree and began volunteering at the jail until I was hired to be the Program Developer and Manager of the Women’s H.O.P.E. Pod (Helping Open People’s Eyes), a faith-based housing unit in the jail working with incarcerated women with drug & alcohol addictions. My daughter was born in the summer of 2009 and I resigned from the jail in order to be a full-time mom. I continued to participate in the life and ministry of my church as a lay person, primarily with the Adult Discipleship Ministry Team.

After two years God tapped me on the shoulder and turned my attention to the Community of Reconciliation Church. This church began in 1968, following the shooting of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when two Caucasian Presbyterian Churches and one African American Presbyterian Church

came together to live out the ministry of racial reconciliation. I began as the part-time Student Associate Pastor in November 2011 as a way to ease back into ministry. I was ordained as the Associate Pastor this past September. Both the church and I approached this position with the attitude “we’ll figure it out as we go along.” The blessing of this approach is that I have grown more comfortable with ambiguities – that is, I do not need to know how everything is going to turn out. Accordingly, my trust in God’s providence and grace has grown. This position ended at the end of January, coinciding with my call as part-time Designated Pastor of Mountain Lakes Presbyterian Church and Pulpit Supply for the Blackfoot Church of Potomac.

As I look back, it is clear that God’s grace and mercy have been my constant companions. I am excited to be back in Montana, especially in the mountains. I look forward to how God will work through us, partnering with Christ in ministry in the unpredictable power of the Holy Spirit, all for God’s glory.