

December, 2021
Pastor Trudy Franzen
Job 39:26-27

²⁶ “Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars,
and spreads its wings toward the south?

²⁷ Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up
and makes its nest on high?

In the late summer of 2021, I found myself in the second year of a pandemic and overwhelmed by family issues, burn-out, and severe menopause symptoms. I was very blessed when I asked my congregation, St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church in El Dorado Hills, for a Wellness Leave. They kindly granted it and furthermore, we were able to secure the help of Retired Bishop David Mullen for three vital months.

This past Fall has been one of the most important turning points in my life. The first eight weeks, I focused on rest, reflection, prayer, and outdoor activities. Then, I created two mosaics, one for myself and one for Pastor David Mullen as a remembrance and celebration of this time in my life.

The central figure is a red-tailed hawk. Such birds grace our campus at St. Stephen’s frequently. The scene is of the elements of air, water, earth and fire, with the hawk soaring above the beauty. If you look very closely, you will see that the hawk was created by using the outline of a “clergy collar.”

As my dear mother, also a pastor, used to say, “Clergy collars are a sign that the pastor is at work and available to you. Indeed, a clergyperson with a collar on is ‘on duty.’”

Over time, the collar has become a sobering reminder of responsibility, an honorable sign of the trust and endorsement of my faith community, and on occasion a burden I am not sure I can carry any longer. With this Wellness Leave, I was able not only to turn my focus back to God who sustains me, but to allow myself to soar and to once again consider ministry as a joy and a celebration.

The verses from Job seem apt. We are all like Job when we think that everything depends on us and on our own ability to succeed rather than the God who created us to fulfill great expectations.

Once again, I can co-create and commune with my Beloved, who never leaves my side or expects more from me than is healthy and good for the community. Indeed, "A bruised reed God will not break and a smoldering wick God will not extinguish; God will faithfully bring forth justice." (Isaiah 42:3)

Thank you, to St. Stephen's Lutheran Church and to Pastor David Mullen for this time of rest, renewal and rejuvenation!

