

JESUS LEAD THOU ON

As a young child, I would often announce, “When I grow up I am going to be a teacher.” And Mother would say, “You’ll have a good life if you let God lead you, instead of talking like you want to lead God.”

I grew up on a farm in southern MN. My family was full of love, short of money, and ambitious. I attended a public country school and for some of my eight years I was the only girl in the school district.



As a small child, I wanted to play school all the time. At a young age I made math fact cards, color identification cards and any other teaching helps that I could make out of my narrow tablet paper. Then I would convince my two younger siblings and some of my many younger cousins to play school with me. Of course, “I am always the teacher; after all, I know just how.”

Our church, Trinity Lutheran of Dexter Township, rural Austin, MN, started having vacation Bible school when I finished fourth grade. The teacher, Evelyn Dorow, was from a school that I had never heard of, Dr. Martin Luther College. She talked about parochial schools and about the high school and college in New Ulm. I was so excited to share my new knowledge with Mom; especially the fact that teachers in some schools could teach about Jesus and also teach reading, arithmetic, and the other subjects. Mom had heard about New Ulm and the school but neither of my parents had ever been there. Mom also knew about parochial schools.

That fall I shared my new excitement with my fifth grade teacher and she told me it was foolishness and no one would go away from home in ninth grade. But I never forgot what I had learned and God kept it in the back of my mind.

In seventh grade, Pastor Norman Sauer, visited our home and suggested that I go to DMLC for high school. I had to apply in seventh grade or I wouldn’t be accepted in ninth grade. To my surprise, my parents were reluctant but supportive of this new idea.

A new girls’ dorm, Centennial Hall, was being dedicated so my family on this very rainy Sunday decided to attend this dedication event in an area of MN they had never visited. I had just finished seventh grade.

In the fall of 1952, our second visit to New Ulm, I started my high school years and even got to live in the new dorm, Centennial Hall.

I was so homesick and my parents kept reminding me that I didn't have to stay. (Little did I realize that I wasn't the only one in my family that was crying.)

At first the classes seemed difficult, but each year my grades got better. I graduated in 1956, and started college that fall. The school now was a four-year instead of a three-year college. Some went out teaching early but I wanted to stay all four years.

But God makes plans just when we **think** we are making them. The first week of my second year of college, Professor Schweppe came into our class and announced that the teacher who took the call to St. John's Lutheran Church near Boyd, MN was unable to fulfill his call and they needed someone immediately from the sophomore class who could teach all eight grades and play the organ every Sunday. I thought, "I could do that." My parents were hesitant and told me to get more information. I knocked on the faculty room door (something I had never done; to do this was daunting) and who should answer but Professor Schweppe himself. His first words, "Myrtiss, you are the one!" (I thought he sounded like God himself,)

The next evening Pastor Hahnke and his wife picked me up at Centennial Hall. I had two suitcases and a box. I owned no radio, no alarm clock, nor any other items considered necessities. The next morning I was teaching school. And it went so well! I used the schedule that I remembered my country school teachers using five years prior. The students were respectful, the parents supportive and appreciative, and I worked until ten every evening on my lessons. I was the only organist; if there was a funeral my students sat in the balcony behind the organ and then we went back to school.

I taught at Boyd, MN for three wonderful years. In 1960, I received two calls in the mail on the same day. I accepted the call to Pilgrim Lutheran School in Minneapolis and I taught there one year. Before I left Boyd I had met Elmer Weckwerth. We married in 1961 and after a wonderful thirty-eight years, he died of cancer. We have two children, Wyatt and Heidi. I am also blest with five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

When I taught at Boyd, I attended summer school at DMLC for three summers. After I married, I taught in the public school in Maynard, MN for four years. I took college classes and I got my BS in education in 1966. (This was five weeks before my first child was born.)

I was a substitute teacher until my children were in school. I taught reading for three years to the hearing impaired and then taught fifth grade for twenty years. When the children were grown, I got my Master of Education degree from the University of MN.

I was blest to have received various awards during my teaching career. I was chosen by my fellow teachers for the state of MN awards such as Honor Roll teacher, Teacher of Excellence, and I was first runner up to MN teacher of the year in 1987. I received the Care of the Soul Leadership Award from the Lutheran Home Association in 2015. I was not a better teacher than all the other teachers but I was a representative of all teachers who give their best for their students.

I taught Sunday school for many years and have played the organ for about sixty years. I have now been married to Norman Riediger for sixteen years. We are members of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Willmar, MN and I continue to play the organ, teach Sunday school, and am involved with Jesus Cares. I have written a number of Christmas programs for Jesus Cares students and help out at Jesus Cares camp in the fall.

To God be all the glory for my many blessings during these eighty-one years!
GOD IS SO GOOD!

Myrtiss Weckwerth Riediger (nee Heikes)