

SUDDENLY, I'M THE WIFE OF A SEMINARY STUDENT

by Joan Berquist



When life finally slowed down to a normal pace, I began to feel lost in a way that I had not previously experienced. I asked myself, "What happened?"

Here's what happened. I asked my husband to accompany me to my first-ever LWML convention in 2007 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. While we were at convention, Roy was so moved by the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the mission stories that he answered God's call to become a pastor.

After ending his thirty-five year career as an engineer, he left home the following June for summer Greek classes at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. I was left behind with the busyness of selling the house and preparing for the move while working a full-time job. At the same time, I finished my four-year term as LWML-Iowa East District treasurer and was meeting with the new treasurer to ease the transition.

We decided our son would remain in Iowa for his final year in college. The house sold quickly, but our buyer was cranky and kept making demands right up until the closing, adding to my stress. The day after I joined Roy in Fort Wayne, in mid-July, we left for our niece's wedding in Illinois, returning home to boxes and chaos, as we readied to plan for our only daughter's wedding at the end of August, a mere two weeks after Roy passed summer Greek class. Soon followed mid-September's Parents' Weekend at my son's college, so I returned to Iowa to be with him for a few days.

Around mid-October I began to experience signs of depression. I walked into the office of the seminary relocation director, Marsha Zimmerman, who asked, "So, Joan, how are you?" I replied that I was just fine. Marsha, gently persistent said, "Joan, how are you *really*?" and to my complete surprise I burst into tears. We were living my husband's dream, which I fully supported. Why was I feeling so sad?

I thank God for providing Marsha Zimmerman, the relocation director. She gently said, "You are grieving, and you need to give yourself time and permission to grieve." But nobody died! Grieving?

Yes, I was grieving. Our son was 500 miles away instead of 60 miles; our daughter, newly married, did not need me as she had in the past; my full-time job was gone; my LWML position had ended; my church friends were back in Iowa; my home of 21 years had been sold; my neighbors, who watched my kids grow up, were back in Iowa. The grocery clerks in the Fort Wayne stores weren't the same kids I had watched grow up or whom I had helped to learn to read. My only familiar comfort was my husband, and he was too wrapped up in school to have time for me.

So what happened? Too many multiple major life changes in a short period of time.

Wait! Didn't God call my husband? Didn't I agree to support him? Hadn't God opened paths previously closed to us? Didn't I know that we were where God wanted us to be? Yes, yes, yes, and yes. Once I allowed myself to go through the grieving process and accept the life changes, my happy personality slowly began to return.

I was invited to attend a fall rally by Elise Koenemann, past LWML Indiana District President. I didn't know Elise or anyone else at the rally, but when I walked in the door and saw all the women sitting at their tables, I immediately felt at home.

My church membership remained in Iowa; I lived in Indiana and worshipped in Ohio. What a blessing! I was able to attend zone and district events in Indiana and Ohio. This biennium, I was appointed to the LWML Gospel Outreach Committee, whose goal is to serve missions and create valued friendships with LWML sisters from all over the USA. I found a part-time job, attended a bi-monthly women's Bible Study group, and began to promote LWML on campus.

Change can be overwhelming, and Satan is always ready to pounce when we are weak, but our almighty God promises to be with us in all circumstances. It is important to stay focused on God's plan (and not our plan) as we receive His gifts of Word and Sacrament.

Yes, process your feelings of change or helplessness, grieve your losses, but remember our God parted the Red Sea. Our heavenly Father sacrificed His only Son so that we may have life. He loves us and blesses us with new beginnings.

I realize now that I am so blessed to be where God wants me to be.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you" (Jeremiah 29:11-12).



Above: The Berquist family together in celebration of Roy's Ordination. Right: Joan and her sisters share a hug on Ordination Day, as Roy and Joan pass one hurdle and move on to new challenges and adventures.



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In the midst of your trial,
won't you take a moment
and bow your head,
and ask the Lord to come quickly.

Not to take the trial away
so you are free of it
but for Him to help you
look beyond the now
and see what He wants to do for you.

There is no joy in walking alone.
There is no peace in not knowing "why."
There is no hope when you
can't find any strength.
There is no struggle He can't handle
or doesn't understand.
There is no pain He can't relieve
because He cares for you.
Who is it that takes your hand
and comes in the midst?

*The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.*

Zephaniah 3:17

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