



THE SANCTUARY IS CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

December 2013

It all began with a resounding NO. Twenty seven years ago I applied for a church position as head of staff. Few, if any women were heads of staff anywhere in those years. Still I held out hope, even though I was warned. The clerk of the Presbytery told his wife (who told me), “She doesn’t have a snowball’s chance in hell of getting that job. And besides, it would kill her creativity.”



When the phone call came and the caller broke the bad news, I wept and stomped my foot. My daughters, who were outside playing, began pounding on the door. Dashing inside, breathless and red-cheeked, they shouted, “Mom. Mom! The wind is blowing. It’s blowing hard. Blowing all over the place. We need something to catch the wind with!”

Laughing in spite of my tears, I reached under the sink and pulled out a couple of big black trash bags. The girls ran back outside. I stood at the door, watching them race up and down the yard with the bags billowing behind them, catching the wind. Their wild exuberance and thrill in the blustery Kansas day, swept away my tears and anger. I felt rinsed clean and surprisingly reoriented.

It would be a while before I fully understood what God was up to in that heartbreaking no. Slowly I began to dare what seemed impossible: to pursue a ministry, which focused on the spiritual lives of people and prayer. As I began to say yes to this deep desire, door after door swung open. At some points I almost wished someone would say no, for I had little idea how to actually accomplish it. A ministry of prayer, which included a lifestyle of prayerful solitude, as well as organizational structure, as I envisioned it, was so removed from my denomination’s understanding of what pastors do. There were no models within my tradition. There was no provision for salary, pension, or manuals on how to do this “decently and in order.” I had only something I sensed was missing from many churches – something I and others hungered for – and the will to somehow supply some of these missing pieces.

The work has been challenging. I made mistakes. The Spirit has refined my motives and fine-tuned my sense of what I am to do, and is still challenging me to grow.

I have been immensely blessed. After twenty five years of listening to people’s stories of their faith, it is still miraculous and thrilling to watch the wind of the Spirit of God at work in an individual soul. I see how personal transformation radiates out into the world, initiating family and community change.

Through the years God has been faithful. Needs are provided for and inspiration given. You have been faithful too. Once when I was about to give up, one of you who had come for a visit to the hermitage said,

"I have faith in you. I believe you can do this." I have never forgotten those words of encouragement.

You are *why* The Sanctuary exists. Your desire to deepen your faith, willingness to struggle with difficult issues, to pray and nurture yourself for service to your church, community, and the world has summoned this little "Roadside Fruit Stand," as one of our board members called it.

You are also the *how* of The Sanctuary, for we are nothing without you – a far-flung community of varied faith expressions, people of compassion, wisdom, and love. You provide accountability for this ministry, a community, and a covering of prayer, as you teach us what you need and how to better serve you. You spread the news of this Fruit Stand out here in Kansas through your friends and contacts. Your subscriptions and generous gifts make this possible. Thank you so very much!

As we celebrate 25 years in the coming year, we have some surprises and good things to share with you. Watch for a new website coming soon. Meet some new board members. Get the inside news on the progress of Loretta's new book, *Account for the Hope*. Keep up with us on Facebook and our blog, The Praying Life, Pinterest, and Twitter.

We remind you to renew your subscription as it comes due. The date of your subscription expiration is on your address label in the upper right hand corner. If you find no date on your address label, you are receiving a complimentary copy. Please let us know if you want to continue to receive Holy Ground. By subscribing you help insure that all who want Holy Ground can receive it, regardless of their means. And please donate to The Sanctuary Fund. Your subscription fee allows us to break even on publishing costs. Additional gifts to The Sanctuary Fund enable us to maintain our web presence, offer spiritual direction at reduced rates for those of limited means, pay for business operations, and keep this Roadside Fruit Stand open.

If you have a question about your donation or subscription, let us know. And please keep sharing your feedback, ideas, and comments on how we can best serve you. You can phone us at 785-354-7122 or email at lross@fromholyground.org. We always love to chat with those we serve.

The wind is blowing here in Kansas today. Dried leaves rattle as they tumble down my street. The maple shakes out her falling locks, shedding what is no longer useful, and waves her dark branches to approaching winter. To begin this celebration I am going to reach under the sink, pull out some trash bags, and go catch some wind. Will you join me?

Yours, chasing after the Holy Spirit, with love and gratitude,

Loretta F. Ross

