

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”
Psalm 32:8

As we enter the New Year it is often a time to look forward and make resolutions. I find it is also a time to reflect on the past and praise God for His blessings. I enjoy looking back at the people God has placed in my life to watch over me and mold me through the years. I would like to share thoughts on two teachers God placed in my life at an early age.

As I approached the room I noticed her. She had long dark hair that flowed over her shoulders reflecting the light from above. Her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm and exuded warmth, making me feel welcome. When I walked in the room I knew I belonged. She was much taller than I was, but it didn't matter. I was now in first grade and it was my first day of school. She was my first grade teacher, Miss Leuth.

You never forget those first impressions as a young child. Miss Leuth immediately alleviated all of the fears I had on the first day of school. It did not take me long to get up enough courage to propose to Miss Leuth. Of course, in a very kind and loving manner she let me know she was already engaged and would be moving at the end of the year. It didn't matter. I had her all day, five days a week, for an entire school year. As the year ended, I was left to wonder how I would move on without her for the next three years. The Lutheran School I went to had two rooms: grades 1-4 and grades 5-8.

As the next school year approached I was again apprehensive as the first day of school came. What would life be like without Miss Leuth? I approached the room oh so slowly with my mother. There was again a head full of dark hair, but it was short hair and was on the body of a man standing so tall. He was dressed in a black suit and tie. His eyes were a piercing dark brown, but were still welcoming as he smiled when we entered the room. His voice was deep and commanding. He was wearing black leather shoes. I remember feeling that I would need to do what he said immediately, not knowing what the consequence might be from such a commanding figure. I don't remember much about that year, but there was always one puzzling memory that struck me as funny about Mr. Ludeke. I remember how the toes of his leather shoes were always curled up. I had a good year and I learned to make sure I behaved and did my work.

God blessed me with many different teachers after second grade. The pastor, teachers, and church family at Zion Lutheran helped guide me to serve in Lutheran School ministry. Many years after I had Mr. Ludeke, I took my call to teach third grade in Ann Arbor, MI. It was then when I discovered why his toes were always curled. The leather from which shoes were made in the late 1950's and early 1960's was stiff, hard leather. It wasn't as soft and pliable as today's leather. Mr. Ludeke's toes were curled up because he was always squatting so he could be at eye level with his second grade students. This tall commanding man with a deep voice, who demanded respect in every way, cared enough to bring himself to the level of his students.

As I stood before a class of thirty-three third grade students in Ann Arbor I remembered Mr. Ludeke's shoes. The preservation of a childhood memory made a huge impact as I began my teaching career. Always be at the level of your students. Miss Leuth and Mr. Ludeke were two very different teachers,

but both of them exemplified the words of the Psalmist, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you."

We have an amazing God. Our God places his servants, teachers, in our lives. Our God provides the loving eyes of teachers to guide and protect. He is a God who stores lasting memories in the miraculous brain he has given us. He gives us memories that bring meaning to our life as He uses us in his ministry. Our God sent us the greatest teacher, His Son, Jesus Christ, who came down and to our level as a man. I wonder... I wonder if Jesus sandals were curled at the tip?