



Rev. Jennifer Bannerman

Jennifer grew up in Frankenmuth, Michigan, land of tourists, chicken dinners, and year round Christmas shopping. She was actively involved in the local Missouri Synod Lutheran Church throughout her childhood and teen years.

*Growing up, I wanted to be a dancer, a nurse, or a missionary. It wasn't until I was in college that I discovered that women could be ordained. That information shifted my field of study. In many ways I feel that I have achieved all three of my childhood ambitions. I studied liturgical dance in seminary. While living in Washington I studied and taught in an alternative medicine program, and continue to use those therapies for our health. And now I have woven all that I've learned together into a ministry focused on creatively and holistically living out God's mission in the world.*

She graduated from the University of Washington, Seattle, WA, with a BA in creative writing (1981), from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS) Berkeley, CA, with her Master of Divinity (1990), and from the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) Berkeley, CA, with her Master of Arts in *Spirituality, Creativity, and the Arts* (1992).

*Seminary was a faith journey for me. I discovered that I wasn't very Lutheran in my view of theology, but really belonged in the UCC. I also took the time to explore spiritual practices from many traditions and found the richness of creative spirituality offered to us by our own Christian mystics.*

Jennifer has served one Presbyterian and five UCC congregations in Iowa, Michigan, Washington, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. In addition to church work, Jennifer enjoys gardening, weaving, creative home repairs, reading and making wine and beer.

While at PLTS, she met and married Gordon Hills.

*It was one of God's practical jokes. I never wanted to be married to another clergy. Having just left the Lutheran Church I thought it would be "safe" to date a Lutheran guy. When we announced our wedding plans to our classmates, they all shook their heads and gave it a year. Twenty-one years later, we are still laughing with God.*

Gordon is ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). While he is still Lutheran, he is very comfortable in the UCC setting. Gordon has served two ELCA and four UCC congregations. They currently have four furry feline children: Shadow, Gus, Mia and Maddy.

Jennifer brings to her ministry a passion for the Renewal of God's church. She is in the final year of a Doctor of Ministry program in *Congregational Mission and Leadership* offered through Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN. Her thesis is focused on developing a study process that uses the Exodus story as a framework for churches that want to go through renewal. She completed the research for her thesis with two churches in Pittsburgh and is excited about the energy and ideas it generated for them. She looks forward to leading us through the same process.