



Fennimore  
Stitzer  
United  
Methodist  
Church

1450 Second Street  
Fennimore, WI 53809

# Aug-tember 2020

(August/September)

## NEWSLETTER

*“The Devil Went Down to Georgia ...”*

“The devil went down to Georgia (Wisconsin, North Carolina, wherever you are), he was looking for a soul to steal...” A line from one of my favorite Charlie Daniels songs and one of my top songs ever. In addition, a couple of my favorite Charlie Daniels quotes are: “I’m not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ... if I can’t take him with me, I don’t want to go” and “I don’t want to go anywhere where Jesus can’t go.”

Some 14 years ago, I stood watching my university students file into the classroom for the opening session in my ‘Theology of Faith’ class. That was the first day I saw Tommy. He was combing his long flaxen hair, which hung six inches below his shoulders. I know what’s in your head, not on it, that counts; but at that time, I was unprepared for Tommy and wrote him off as strange – very strange. Tommy turned out to be the atheist in residence in my course. He constantly objected to or smirked at the possibility of an unconditionally loving God. We lived in relative peace for one semester, although at times he was a pain in the back pew. At the end of the course when he turned in his final exam, he asked in a slightly cynical tone, ‘Do you ever think I’ll find God?’ I decided on a little shock therapy. ‘No’ I said emphatically. ‘Oh,’ he responded. ‘I thought that was the product you were pushing.’ I let him get five steps from the door, then called out, ‘Tommy! I don’t think you’ll ever find him, but I am certain that

he will find you!’ Tommy just shrugged and left. I felt slightly disappointed that he had missed my clever line.

Later I heard that Tom had graduated, and I was duly grateful. Then came a sad report: Tommy had terminal cancer. Before I could search him out, he came to me. When he walked into my office, his body was badly wasted, and his long hair had fallen out because of chemotherapy. But his eyes were bright, and his voice was firm for the first time in a long time. ‘Tommy, I’ve thought about you so often. I hear you are sick,’ I blurted out. ‘Oh yes, very sick. I have cancer. It’s a matter of weeks.’ ‘Can you talk about it?’ ‘Sure, what would you like to know?’ ‘What’s it like to be 24 and know you are dying?’ ‘Well, it could be worse!’ ‘Like what?’ ‘Well, like being 50 and having no values or ideals. Like being 50 and thinking that booze, seducing women and making money are the real biggies in life. But what I really came to see you about is something you said to me on the last day of class. I asked if you ever thought I would find God and you said no, which surprised me. Then you said, ‘But he will find you.’ I thought about that a lot, even though my search was hardly intense at that time. But when the doctors removed a lump from my groin and told me it was malignant, I got serious about locating God. And when the malignancy spread to my vital organs, I really began banging against the doors of heaven. But nothing happened. Well, one day I woke up, and instead of throwing a few more futile appeals to a God who may or may not exist, I just quit. I decided I didn’t care about God and the afterlife – or anything else for that matter.

‘I decided to spend what time I had left doing something more profitable. I thought about you and something you had said in one of your lectures: ‘The essential sadness is to go through life without loving.’ But it would be equally sad to leave this world without telling those you love that you have loved them. So, I begin with the hardest one: my dad. ‘He was

reading the paper when I approached him. 'Dad, I would like to talk to you.' 'Well, talk,' he replied. 'I mean, it's really important, Dad.' The newspaper came down three slow inches. 'What is it?' he asked. 'Dad, I love you. I just wanted you to know that.' Tom smiled at me and said with obvious satisfaction, as though he felt a warm and secret joy flowing inside him, 'The newspaper fluttered to the floor. Then my father did two things I couldn't remember him doing before. He cried and he hugged me. And we talked all night even though he had to go to work the next day.

'It was easier with my mom and little brother. They cried with me, too, and we hugged each other and shared things we had been keeping secret for so many years. I was only sorry that I had waited so long. Here I was, in the shadow of death, and I was just beginning to open up to all people I had actually been close to. 'Then one day I turned around and God was there. He didn't come to me when I pleaded with him. Apparently, God does things his own way at his own hour. The important thing is you were right. He found me even after I stopped looking for him.' 'Tommy,' I gasped, 'I think you're saying something much more universal than you realize. You are saying that the surest way of finding God is not to make him a private possession or an instant consolation in time of need, but rather by opening up to love. 'Tom, could I ask you a favor? Would you come to my Theology of Faith class and tell my students what you just told me?' Though we scheduled a date, he never made it. Of course, his life was not really ended by his death, it was only changed. He made the great step from faith into vision. He found a life far more beautiful than the eye of man has ever seen or the mind of man has ever imagined. Before Tom died, we talked one last time. 'I'm not going to make it to your class,' he said. 'I know, Tom.' "Will you tell them for me? Will you tell... the whole world for me?' 'I will, Tom. I will tell them.'" (John Powell, *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul*)

We love, because God first loved us. (1 John 4:19) As Charlie Daniels would say: You just leave this long-haired country boy." Satan leave me alone because you are not going to steal this soul because I have opened up to God's love and have experienced God's love and that is where I want to go. God bless and God's got this!

## *Our Gifts to God*

I remember my friend Robby had a birthday party at a local bowling hall and invited me. I was excited and when I told my mom it was an American tradition to buy a gift for the birthday person my mom and I went to local department store to look for one. Back then Transformers were very popular and I wanted to buy Robby the best one. He was after all a good friend of mine and I'd known him for many years. I picked up a box and showed it to my mom. She looked at it and after spotting the price tag told me to put it back. She instead picked out a smaller Transformer. It was small and wasn't even in a box! It was one of the cheap ones hanging on metal pegs. I told her that Robby would want the larger one in a box but she said no. I finally relented and we both walked out of the store with the small Transformer.

Later that week I met my friends at the birthday party. I noticed that the rest of the other parents had decided to stay to celebrate but my parents dropped me off, which made things a bit odd. We lined up and watched Robby blow out the candles – one by one Robby opened the gifts. Some were small and some were big but they all seemed to have a cool factor to them. I remember he even received a couple of nice boxed Transformers. Then he picked my present. The gift looked so small and simple in Robby's hands. As he ripped the wrapping open it became obvious what it was and he read who gave it to him. I prayed that he wouldn't thank me out loud but suddenly he said – "Thanks Tou!". He smiled but I didn't. I felt as though I

had given a wooden stick to a king and now was going to be hounded and made fun for it.

No one said anything but the embarrassment continued throughout the night. Somewhere in the night I had found an open table and sat there by myself and cried. I was embarrassed about my gift, embarrassed my parents were not with me like the other kids, and mad at my mom for not understanding how important birthdays and gifts were in the American tradition.

I'm pretty sure someone saw me crying and probably told Robby to come up to me to ask me what was wrong. Robby sat beside me as I sniffled and snorted as I tried to wipe my tears away. He asked me what was wrong and after a few mins, I told him nearly everything. I think I even apologized for giving him such an unworthy gift. Robby seemed stunned, smiled and told me – "No Tou, I don't care about the gift. I think it's cool. I'm just glad you came."

Often times when we face the Lord we might feel small and unimportant in how little we can actually give God in return for all that God has done for us. In reality, God does not expect us to give him anything. All God wants is our love. What we could give God would never be enough to repay God for what he has done for us. That doesn't mean God does not care for us or see us as being less. We are God's creation – not perfect but saved by Jesus' resurrection and victory over death. That is how much we mean to God. He was willing to risk Jesus' life for us. To be the ultimate sacrifice for those whom God loves.

So do not cry because you are not enough but instead rejoice because God has made us worthy. Amen.

## UMW

*Hello August!* The final month of summer.

The name "August" was given by the Roman emperor August, in 8BC. It is the sixth month of their calendar. August had claimed this month his own because most of his victories occurred during August. Many other versions of the name designate this month as Harvest Month.

August in the Northern Hemisphere is similar to February in the Southern Hemisphere.

The UMW ladies are hoping to meet in September (23<sup>rd</sup>) for our quarterly meeting. Stay tuned and watch for a final decision the first week in September!

Also, UMW Sunday is in September (20<sup>th</sup>) as well and we hope to see you there!

### FROM THE 1996 UMW COOKBOOK

OFF THE FLOOR PICKLES – Avis Edge  
*Audrey Doan continues to make these for our Church and we serve them at most of the funeral luncheons and other occasions. They are yummy!*

1 Gallon Jar with Screw Top Lid

2T Salt

2T Alum

¼ Cup Whole Mixed Spices

4 Cups White Vinegar

Fill jar with medium size washed cucumbers. Put in salt and alum, mixed spices and the vinegar. Fill the rest of the jar up with water and let set for 1 month, shaking occasionally. After one-month, empty jar and wash it. Wash the pickles and chunk them. Return to clean jar and add 4 Cups granulated sugar on top. Close jar. shake sugar into the pickles. Shake occasionally until sugar makes its own juice. Can be kept in basement or refrigerator. Will keep up to a year. *No Cooking, No Canning!*

From the Wisconsin Conference –  
Daily Devotions and Prayers Through the  
Days of COVID-19

### Reflection for July 31

#### Speak Up!

By Jorge Luis Mayorga

*“Speak out for those who cannot speak,  
for the rights of all the destitute.  
Speak out, judge righteously,  
defend the rights of the poor and needy.”  
(Proverbs 31: 8-9) New Revised Standard  
Version (NRSV)*

One of the blessings that members of the Wisconsin Annual Conference Cabinet had in their mission trip to El Salvador in January 2020, was to meet Father Jon Sobrino, a well know Latin American theologian.

I remember a question that he asked the group: “What have you done so far in El Salvador?” We responded that we have painted a school and have visited a poor neighborhood and provided food, to which he replied, “That it is good. It’s good to love the poor, but we need to defend them. That was what Archbishop Romero did for the poor of El Salvador, that is why he was assassinated.”

The sage in Proverbs 31 challenges us to speak out and defend the powerless, whose voice is not heard; the poor, who struggle to survive; and the destitute, who have nothing.

In the United States more than 40.6 million people live in poverty, caused mainly by wage inequality, inflation, and poor education. One of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the number of poor is increasing dramatically in the whole world.

As the Church of Jesus Christ, how are we responding to this reality?

Jesus Christ responded with love and compassion, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). Jesus defended the poor and the needy; he loves all as human beings created in the image of God. That is why he died on the cross for all, and therefore he gave victory over all evil and injustice.

Some of life's defining moments come as we are invited and challenged to speak out for the voiceless. In the midst of these difficult times that we are living, let us find the space and opportunities to speak out and defend those in need, to live out our call to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Prayer:** *Gracious and loving God, there are so many injustices and inequalities in our world. Give us the courage to speak up on behalf of the poor and needy of our communities. Open our ears to hear well your holy Word that calls us to action. In Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, Amen!*

The peace of Christ be with you,  
Pastor Jorge

### Food Pantry Needs:

Green Beans  
Mixed Vegetables  
Peanut Butter  
Mac and Cheese  
Cereal  
Canned Fruit

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Believe it or not, summer is winding down and that means we are gearing up for the start of Sunday School! Things certainly do look a bit different in the world these days and unfortunately Sunday School is no exception. Our team has spent a lot of time trying to decide the best route to take for this fall. It has been determined, for not only the safety of our students, but the teachers as well to do a Virtual Sunday School for the first semester. It is our hope that we can re-evaluate in the coming months and offer an in-person option for the second semester. Please pray hard for that! Our 2020 Spring semester was cut short and we miss all the kids!

## *First Day of Christian Education*

That being said, **Sunday School will kick off on September 13<sup>th</sup>, in a virtual format.** There will be registration to complete as well as books and materials to pick up at Church beforehand, so watch Facebook and Church Services for additional information. An e-mail will also go out to last year's parents once things are ready to go. We are very excited and hopeful that our plan will not only be exciting for the kids but will bring families together as well.

## *Backpack Blessing*

There will be a backpack blessing during the 8:00 AM Church service on Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. Join us in-person OR participate LIVE on Facebook! Don't forget your backpack!

## *Third Grade Bibles*

These will be distributed soon (date TBD ... stay tuned)! Your child will have the option to attend service in person or our team will arrange to have your bible delivered to you!

## *Movie Night*

Our first movie night in July was a such a success! SO, we are hosting another one on Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup> at Fennimore United Methodist Church. The movie will begin at 8:30 PM sharp, but plan to be there ahead of time to set settled in. We will be showing the movie Monsters University. Popcorn and water will be available while supplies last, but feel free to bring your own snacks as well. Also, please bring your own chair, blanket, bug spray and whatever else you may need. As always, please practice social distancing! ALL are invited to attend!

welcome  
**little one**

John and Lora Bierman welcome daughter –

*Elsie Bea*

June 24, 2020

6 lbs. 2 ounces, 19" long

Elsie joins big brother Eliot and sister Brynn.

Grandparents: Ginger Bishell

Dan and Lisa Bierman

Great Grandma: Bea Freymiller