

Coincidences Do Matter

I'm not a fan of the New York Yankees, Russia's Putin, the Mediterranean Diet, birthdays, radicals on either side of the aisle, and spinach. I am a fan of my friend Ellis Felker whose upcoming book is titled, "The Importance of Fortune Cookies: My Life of Divine Coincidence", however coincidences and I are at odds.

Over our long friendship I have only been at odds with Ellis's views with "Divine Coincidences." Then on June 21st. I was hit between the eyes with the unexplainable, a coincidence. I give little or no value to coincidences. Then something happened repeatedly, and I am unable, to explain it away.

I was invited to preach four Sundays at my home church in Peru, Illinois. On the evening of June 21st. I stayed at the home of Jim Greening, a longtime member of Zion U.C.C. Jim is the organist, choir director and a sail for the ship Zion. Sherri was unable to make this nerve-wracking trip, so I was alone.

Feeling lonely I looked at a pile of books on Jim's vanity. The first book I pulled from the pile was in pristine condition; it was never opened, and it lay there for over fifteen years. The title of the book, resting in peace, was, "Bible for Vital Congregations," written by Barbara J. Essex.

The more I read the more energized I became. I kept shouting, "this is me," I was given a new Spirit.

The following day, Sunday, I held up the book I had underlined and stolen from Jim. I then apologized to Jim and gave him a twenty-dollar bill, hoping he would not have me arrested.

I held up the un-opened book and said, “this is us, we need to read and study this book.” How more symbolic could it be, an unopened book, written by a UCC pastor concerning how we read the Bible.

My heart, with my old metal valve I had placed at the age of thirty-four, was clicking rather loudly. Then came another coincidence. Of all the trillions of books published, I pulled out another unopened book titled, “The Mysteries of Soldiers Grove.” That book was about the place where I live. GO FIGURE!

During worship I promised I would get as many copies of the book, “Bible for Vital Congregations” as I possibly could and mail them out to some of the members.

Since June 29th. I have been trying unsuccessfully to buy used books. To date I have only acquired three books.

On July 1st. 6:22 P.M. I received a call from Barbara J. Essex, the author of “Bible for Vital Congregations.” Just another coincidence? We discussed how I found her book, that she went to Trinity UCC in Chicago, the same church President Obama attended. Obama was married in that church and his children were baptized there.

I shared with Barbara how at the age of twenty-five, I left Lakeland College for four weeks to deal with my racism in a settlement house on the south side of Chicago.

One Sunday the director invited me to her church for worship. The church was Trinity UCC, the same church you and Obama attended. Could it be that three of us were in attendance at the same time?

Barbara and I spoke briefly about circumstances and how her book gave me added strength to preach. I felt blessed by her book and her phone call. Circumstances have taken on deeper meaning for me, thank you Barbara Essex for your ministry.

‘Coincidence is God’s way to remain anonymous.’ Albert Einstein

Two coincidences are a clue, three are a proof.

Dennis Siebert