

The Reverend Marjo Anderson

**Memorial Service for Pastor Bud Myers
John 10.7-10, Ecclesiastes 3.1-15, 2 Timothy 4.6-8**

**8 October 2021
Tabor, Branford**

“Whirlwind of Grace”

Normally when helping a family plan a memorial service I first ask them what they want included, and then, if they need my input I’m happy to fill in the gaps, but the moment that Judy and I began talking, this verse flew into my mind –
“Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly” –
because if there was anyone who got that, it was Bud.

Later Judy said that the one text Bud had said he liked was the one from Ecclesiastes,
“¹ For everything there is a season & a time for every matter under heaven:² a time to be born & a time to die...”

I must admit I was a little disappointed.

I mean it’s a standard text for funerals, but Bud wasn’t “standard”,
so there was something that didn’t seem quite right, but if that’s what he wanted, ok.

Then, when I looked up the text, I happened to continue reading, and when I got to these words, I grinned –
“It is God’s gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.”

Yes! Now that was BUD!

Those two readings summed up what daughter Amanda said about him,
“Bud approached life as if it were an all-you-can-eat buffet!”

You agree????!!

I met Bud way back

when I was finishing up my internship equivalency at Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church in Bridgeport, CT,
and he was just beginning his call as Associate Pastor at Salem Lutheran Church in Bridgeport
(the church I just happen to have been serving for the past 10 years!).

Our time didn’t overlap for many months there,

but for the next 8 years we were aware of each other as we were both very involved in youth ministry.

We were aware of each other, but we didn’t have much to do with each other,
mainly because we were so different.

Bud, you see, was the kind of person that I had been taught to avoid – he was messy, and loud, and rebellious –
and to top it all off he smoked!

I remember seeing him at Hammonasset once sitting there smoking, with his youth group kids gathered around,
and thinking, “what a terrible role model! What’s wrong with that man?!”

Oh, how wrong our unexamined impressions can be!

Oh, how our prejudices can keep us from getting to know those who are different from us!

Oh, how our biases can hold God’s gifts at bay!

Fast forward to 1992.

I had just had our second child, Conner, and had finished up my call in New Britain
when Bud called me to say that he had recently been called to Tabor
and was wondering if I might be interested in working with him.

Having worked on 7 church staffs by that time, I knew that team ministries were either heaven or hell –
and it was really hard to know which one would be since first impressions could be entirely wrong.

So as soon as I got off the phone I called Dagmar Rosenberg, the pastor he had worked with in his last call.
I told her Bud had invited me to work with him, and asked her what he was like to work with.

There was silence for a few moments and then she asked,

“Have you ever been in a hurricane? a tornado? a tsunami?”

“Uhhhh...what do you mean?” I asked in return.

“Bud is a genius”, she said, “but all around him there is chaos”.

“If you can live with the chaos”, you’ll have the time of your life.

I don’t know what I was thinking, but I thought “Sure, I can live with the chaos!” and I told Bud yes.
Dagmar wasn’t kidding.

Welcome the Whirlwind!

When I first came to Tabor, David Connell was the church musician and Judy Agli was the church secretary and our staff meetings were chaotic, like being in a whirlwind,
but if you could get through the wind to the middle, you'd find calm and peace and treasure.

Bud would begin with something like, "We need to come up with an advent program".

And we'd begin tossing out ideas – all speaking at once –

until suddenly one of those ideas would grab our attention and we'd all realize that was it!

"Light the Way!" would be our theme!

And then we'd start talking about how to publicize it, and again we'd be throwing out ideas and pretty soon we'd hear the word "billboard"

and the next thing we knew we'd have decided to rent space on a billboard in town.

And then Bud would say, "You know, we have this huge roof that can be seen from miles around.

What if we used rope lighting to draw 4 candles on the roof, and we lit one each week?

And so that year the town was treated to a huge advent wreath.

I think that spring we may have had some leaks in the roof, but it was totally worth it!

I remember us deciding that we'd send everyone an Advent offering box shaped like a candle,

so we bought metal tubes, wrapped sticky paper around them announcing the theme

and added gold cellophane to be the flame.

Of course after all the candles were ready we realized we hadn't figured out how to mail them to people, but that was a problem for another day!

Our staff meetings were indeed chaotic.

I remember years later we had a new musician, Helen Cha-Pyo, and at our first meeting she sat pretty quietly.

The next week she confessed that she had gone home that day with a migraine

because she had never experienced anything quite like the chaos in that room.

But she, like the rest of us, came to understand that it was the way Bud understood Pentecost,

all of us speaking at once in our own language, creating a whirlwind, a tornado, a hurricane of ideas,

and through the chaos the Spirit worked to bring creation out of the chaos.

And indeed, it was the most fun I've ever had working in a team,

because there was no ego involvement,

no need for anyone to take control,

no need for anyone to be in charge.

It was about putting aside our egos, letting go of our need for control, and allowing God to work.

Bud understood that it's exactly when we stop trying to control things and are willing to live in the chaos,

that the Spirit shows up to create something new.

Dare to Dream!

A second thing Bud understood is that God created each one of us

with huge potential to accomplish great things.

Most of us are socialized by the adults who love us not to think too big so that we won't be disappointed.

But somehow Bud managed to not learn that lesson and so Bud always thought big.

He was always looking for a way to make something bigger and better.

When Anne West, whose Teddy Bear Rhythms program rented space from us, told Bud she'd be leaving

because she needed to go back to school so she could get a job with benefits,

Bud's reply was to say, "Well, why don't we figure out how we can get you a job with benefits right here?"

Why don't we start an Arts Center?

And before you knew it, we had a community arts center offering classes in music, art, dance and drama with probably 50 faculty members and 500 students.

We grew so big so fast we had to open satellite locations in Guilford and Madison

and we were seen as a threat by the famous Neighborhood Music School in New Haven.

Grow in Grace!

A third thing Bud understood is that God is a God whose grace never ends.

He lived his life in the space of that grace.

He really believed that God loved him for who he was and so he didn't have to pretend to be anybody else.

He never had to impress anyone.

I was really tempted to show up today in a T-shirt stained with paint and sweat pants with holes in them,
just to remember how he so often dressed.

And even when he tried to dress up? One of his shirt tails would be out, or his tie would be crooked,
or there would be a remnant of his lunch on his shirt.

Bud wasn't out to impress, and he didn't have to prove himself.

He really believed that God would love him even if he failed and so failing was okay.

He failed lots of times, but with Bud it was never a big deal because he would just get up and try again.

And because he was willing to fail himself, he made it clear that it was okay for others to fail, too.

And paradoxically, because he made it okay for us to fail, he made it easier for us to succeed,
because we could concentrate on the task and not worry about the risk of failure.

Believe the best!

A fourth thing Bud understood is that you must live with faith

because when you believe the best, you get the best

That was the thing that stands out above everything else for my son, Hans.

He said Bud always had faith that, no matter how big the plan, no matter how risky the venture,
things would work out.

And his was not a namby-pamby faith – it was high risk faith.

And he encouraged the rest of us to trust God enough

to step out in faith, to go beyond our comfort zones, to take risks.

I was never a big risk taker, but working with Bud I was always being pushed to risk, to change, to grow.

You see that cross?

Well for those of you who aren't members of Tabor, it hangs by fishing wire that goes over a pulley.

In Lent, the metal cross is lowered down and a wooden one is raised in its place.

It's lowered again to be decorated with palms for Palm Sunday and with lilies for Easter.

Well, one day, it seems the fishing wire slipped off of the little pulley.

Someone would have to get up there and slip it back on.

Bud and Steve Tybus decided they needed my help – they wanted me to climb the ladder.

Why couldn't they climb the ladder?

Well, it seems there was nowhere to rest the ladder,

so Bud said they would hold the 30 foot ladder vertically between them while I climbed.

I guess Bud's risk-taking had rubbed off, because I climbed!

Lift with love!

A fifth thing Bud understood was that God has created us to live in community and work together.

He understood that he could never carry out a big dream by himself.

He depended on others. And because he depended on others they learned to be dependable.

Often he would ask you to do things you'd never done before,

and with his encouragement, with his faith in you,

and with the knowledge that failure would not be the end of things, you'd figure it out.

Bud had this way of believing in you, and you didn't want to let him down, so you grew.

He'd ask my son Hans to fix something on his car and through the process Hans learned how to fix cars.

He'd ask my son Conner to fix something with a laptop and through the process Conner learned how to do IT.

When the teenagers came back from Workcamp and proposed to the council that Tabor sponsor of Workcamp,
it was a grand vision! I could only imagine all the details that would be involved.

And since Bud was not the "detail pastor", I knew it would fall to me –

and I had never even been to a workcamp!

And so we pulled together and Tabor not only hosted a Workcamp, I think we hosted the best Workcamp ever!

Enjoy the journey!

I could go on and on, but I'll let this sixth thing be the final one before I give it a rest.
Life is a journey and that means we must keep moving if we're to enjoy it.
Bud understood that God is always calling us forward, never allowing us to rest for long.
That was evident in everything he did.

When Judy Agli would try to get him to answer some questions,
he'd be inching his way toward the door ready to get on with the next thing.
He'd sit still for only a bit of a synod assembly session before he'd be out the door.
I'm sure that sitting still for my sermons must have been pure torture for him!
But maybe he snuck out and I never noticed and you all never told me.
He wasn't a maintenance kind of pastor –
he was always looking for new things to do, or at the very least new ways to do old things.
He was never content with the way things were,
he was always looking for how to make things bigger and better.

...which brings us to our last lesson for today,

⁶*As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come.*

⁷*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

Bud has fought the good fight. Bud has finished the race. Bud has kept the faith.

But the race he ran he never saw as a solo race – he ran it with others.

If he fell, he'd laugh and joke, and then get right back up.

If one of us fell, he'd give us a hand and pull us back up.

And when the rest of us would be content to stay where we were,

Bud would be there urging us on to that next thing.

I used to wonder how he could keep going, despite all the obstacles and challenges in the way,

but I came to understand that it was because he was always looking a bit beyond where I was looking,
always seeing something off there in the future, in the distance.

Maybe it was that sign for the all you can eat buffet.

Or maybe it was something far more glorious.

Yes, it seems to us that Bud died far too young, far too soon.

But any of us who knew Bud, shouldn't be surprised.

Bud was always, always, looking for the next new thing on the buffet table,

for the next project, for the next adventure.

Let's face it. Bud was impatient and easily bored and he was always looking for more.

I am sure that Bud did what he always did –

he saw something more, something beyond what the rest of us see – and he just couldn't wait anymore.

And so he is off on the biggest adventure of all.

And I am sure that what he is experiencing is even greater than his amazing imagination ever expected.

We give God thanks and praise for taking Bud on that new adventure.

And we give God thanks and praise for all that Bud taught us.

The best way I know we can show our thanks to God for Bud is to do what he taught us:

Welcome the whirlwind!

Dare to dream!

Grow in grace!

Believe the best!

Lift with love!

And enjoy the journey!

May your memories of Bud bring you joy, make you laugh, and bring you closer to the God he loved. **Amen**