

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to watch Wisconsin Public Television's production of, "Nancy Zieman: Extraordinary Grace." I will confess that I am not a person who sews or quilts (although I greatly appreciate our Quilting group and other persons with sewing skills). Nor do I remember ever watching more than a few minutes of her television series. However, I knew a little about Nancy Zieman, and that was enough to encourage me to want to know more about her. So, I watched the television special about her life. (Note: Nancy Zieman passed away from cancer in 2017, but reruns of her show, "Sewing with Nancy" are still being broadcast on PBS.)

There are aspects of her life to which most of us can relate, and other aspects that give us food for thought--she grew up on a farm in Wisconsin and learned about sewing through her 4-H club; she developed Bell's Palsy as a child, which caused one side of her face to be disfigured; she was a Christian and her faith was very important to her; she graduated from UW-Stout, married, had children and grandchildren; she owned a store in Beaver Dam called "Nancy's Notions;" she created her own sewing/quilting supply company that was very successful; she authored more than 40-books, and she continued to do her T.V show up until a few months before her death.

In watching the PBS special, I could not help but to reflect on the many connections that one could make between her life and a variety of sermon topics. While many persons with facial disfiguration would not even think of being on television, or in the public eye, she did not let that stop her. She did not let societies' prejudicial judgments hold her back. In fact, she used her challenges as opportunities to educate others! She created a show that was broadcast first on a small scale, and then, nationally.

I believe that her faith, and the support of her family, gave her the requisite courage to take on a role that others would have avoided. I believe her faith and the support of her family, helped her to approach her challenges and not let them control her. I believe that her faith and the support of her family, helped her, so that she could become a leader for others, persevere through two cancer diagnoses, and face her terminal illness.

Last week, I asked Barb Ornes if she had seen the special. I thought of Barb as I watched the program, because of her sewing shop and her volunteer work with the 4-H, Brookwood schools, and other community groups. Barb said that she had seen the special before. Barb also mentioned that Nancy Zieman had maintained her connection with the 4-H Club, and even gave discounts through her sewing business to 4-H members. Nancy Zieman was also very generous in supporting several charities.

The title of the special, "Nancy Zieman: Extraordinary Grace," speaks to me too, of her offering grace, God's grace, as a disciple of God, to others. A quote from the show is, "The gift is in the giving." How appropriate for us to hear these words, for we know that God's grace is an extraordinary gift worth giving. Hearing these words reminds us once again, that God gives grace to us, and we in turn are to offer grace to others. May we remember and take to heart these

words, "The gift is in the giving."

Peace,

Pastor Cathy