

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This past Friday, I traveled to southeastern Wisconsin to attend a 30th anniversary surprise party for my cousin and her husband. We were all told to arrive 30-minutes early, so that we could be "in place" when they arrived. My brother, sister-in-law, and I parked next door, along with many other attendees. Everyone was in place on time, and when my cousin and her husband arrived, they were truly surprised!

Family members prepared potluck dishes for the party, and we enjoyed the wonderful variety. As my sister-in-law and I started eating, we both commented on how good the pickled green beans tasted! They were crunchy, with what seemed to us to be just the right amount of pickling. I asked our hostess, "Who made the pickled beans?" She replied, "My mother made them." So, my sister-in-law and I both called out to her mother to say how much we enjoyed them!

At the end of the evening, as we were getting ready to leave, the hostess came up to me with a small container. Inside, were some of the pickled green beans! I thanked her for giving them to us, and said, "We need to thank the person who made them!" This led my sister-in-law and I to look for her mother. When we found her, she was a bit uneasy about accepting our accolades (since she is a very humble person). But, she said she was happy that we enjoyed them, that she gives some every year to her son and daughter-in-law (the 30th anniversary couple) and that when she prepares another batch, she will make sure we get some!

While we know that God is the creator of all plants, we also know that the care and tending of the plants makes a difference. The green beans were cared for, and tended by, this woman and her husband on their farm. They enjoyed the beans while they were fresh, but the beans' usefulness was extended, because of their special care and tending. The beans were pickled and canned, which helped them to retain their freshness, snap, and wonderful flavor, for all of us to enjoy.

While God creates and supplies the soil, seeds, and rain, it is up to us to do much of the tending and caring. This happens during the growing process, the pickling process, the canning process, and the sharing process. For when we share with others what God has given us, many people benefit. They benefit from God's provision, but also, from our caring, tending, and sharing. Thanks be to God.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy

