

Bonnie's Pudding

In the olden days, ministers were often paid in provisions -- potatoes and beef, soap, candles, and linens. One could say that the tradition lives on in magical and delicious ways. It surely did in a New England congregation I served, where I received a bonus in the form of Bonnie's weekly pudding for the preacher.

I tasted this concoction for the first time at a lunch Bonnie prepared for me in her home one winter day. Don't let the name fool you --"Body Ecology Diet Vanilla Pudding." This stuff is ambrosia in a bowl! How to describe it? Well, it's made from arcane ingredients like agar-agar flakes, lecithin granules, stevia, butter, and arrowroot -- it's cool, fresh, incredibly pure, naturally sweet -- the absolute epitome of comfort food. I fairly swooned when I tasted it and wolfed down three servings. Bonnie generously shared the recipe with me, but I couldn't seem to find the time to track down the ingredients and whip up a batch for myself.

But, oh, how I craved that pudding...the taste, the comfort, and the simple pleasure of it! You can imagine, then, how what evolved since that lunch became a near sacrament for me some Sundays at church. You see, it's not just the pudding that was worth its weight in gold, but also the touching personal and spiritual connection it had unintentionally fostered. I'm not sure when this began, but some Sundays, as Bonnie entered the Sanctuary, her eyes would light up. She'd smile at me and point to her satchel. I knew she had pudding for me and I'd smile back.

Conscientiously, I had washed and brought back her Tupperware container and knew that after the service we'd swap containers and I'd once again be in the possession of this luscious, simple, healthy, freely-given offering. Bonnie confessed that she delighted in the glee and enthusiasm I felt for her creation. This is the gift I returned to her along with the Tupperware.

It may not be Bonnie's pudding, but we cook it forward by sharing our own delicious gifts (edible, monetary, and otherwise) with one another in community as nourishing sacraments that brings nourishment to body, heart, and soul. Cook it forward so that when folks ask if your congregation is a caring and generous community, you can rightly tell them: "Yes, the proof is in the pudding!"