

Column - No coincidences

There are some ‘coincidences’ that go well beyond coincidences. You can only chalk them up to the God who reigns above and orders all things after the counsel of His own will. They testify to His sovereignty and grace.

Such was the case several weeks ago when on Sunday night I had a dream that involved the Winn-Dixie where I grew up. In the summer I turned 16, I got a job at this store, a job that would continue for some years.

As with most dreams, this one contained a kaleidoscope of scenes that seemed confused and incoherent when I woke up. Nevertheless, a central figure in this dream was a former boss (and friend) by the name of Greg Sims.

The morning after this dream I did a Google search to see if I could find where Mr. Sims and his wife Faye were living. The closest I came was, they were somewhere in Louisiana. At the same time, I pulled out some old pictures of Winn-Dixie employees and store scenes with the intent of posting them on a Winn-Dixie Facebook group page. That was Monday morning, but it was not until Wednesday that I got around to doing so.

When I did, almost immediately comments began pouring in. One asked whatever became of Greg Sims. It was not long before someone posted that he died Sunday night, the very night I had had my dream in which I spoke to him.

On Thursday, based on some comments posted on this group page, I located the town where Mr. and Mrs. Sims were living and was able to call Mrs. Sims. Even though we had not spoken in coming up on 40 years, we had a lovely visit.

But the plot thickens. Before the conversation ended, she asked if I remembered giving her a box of chocolate-covered cherries every Christmas. I had to say, not really. She then said that after I left Greg – knowing she liked those cherries – continued the tradition and often would put on the package, “from Victor.” More than that, she said that from time to time they would talk about me, wondering where I was and what had become of me.

Well, as you can imagine, hearing this gave me a warm feeling, but also a sense of wonder at the ‘coincidences’ which had led to this conversation. Were they in fact coincidences? I would say not.

A word of caution, however, is in order. Experiences, no matter how ‘mystical’ or exhilarating, should be handled cautiously. They must always be interpreted in light of God’s full revelation in Jesus and the Scriptures. So seen, they further confirm that the world is a wedding – interconnected in every respect - and that God is overall. To Him be the glory!

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. (Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, the Book of Common Prayer)

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan is rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Blue Ridge.