

LOUISE "WEEZIE" WENTZEL

Member since 1966

Background

Birthdate:

June 22, 1936

Place of Birth:

Marion, PA

Did You Know?

As a young girl, Weezie worked for her neighbor Mary Gibble, who was just starting her snack business. Weezie helped to dip home-made candies and assisted with making some of the first Gibbles potato chips, which they originally sold at the local market.

Weezie never had indoor plumbing growing up and always teased Charlie that she married him in order to get away from having to use an outhouse.



Weezie Wentzel was born in her grandparents' home on the family farm in Marion, PA. Her birth was followed about fifteen minutes later with the unexpected arrival of her twin sister, Sybil. Weezie was the oldest of six children in her family, and she remembers her mom working so hard to care for them all. She was fastidious about cleanliness, managing to wash the floors and bed linens every week. And Weezie remembers Saturday evenings, when her mother would heat water for baths in a galvanized tub placed in front of the wood stove in the kitchen.

At around age 3, Weezie's family moved into their own home on a one-acre property a couple of miles from her grandparents' farm. Weezie remembers having a huge garden and raising beef cows, pigs, and chickens. Her mother canned and preserved all of their food, made home-made ketchup and soap, and Weezie even remembers her dad hunting for rabbits, bringing home piles of them which Weezie would have to help him skin. And Weezie continues to carry on a long-standing family tradition, preparing one of her great-grandmother's special meals, which they called pastries in gravy.

Favorite Hymns:

Amazing Grace

Because He Lives

Weezie remembers her dad as being larger than life, a big man, who was able to do anything he put his mind to. She remembers him being very affectionate with his children. Weezie says, "He just radiated. Everybody loved him."

Weezie's earliest memories of church were of attending Marion Reformed with her mother and aunts. In the summers, Ray Gibble would come past to collect her and the other neighborhood kids on a school bus to take them to Bible School at Antrim Brethren in Christ. And although Weezie's Dad didn't attend church with them, she remembers him going to the Bible School's closing program each year. And about a year before his death, Weezie found out that her dad had finally accepted Christ, after asking a visiting pastor to "tell him about this man, Jesus, that my kids are always talking about."

After Charlie and Weezie were married in 1958, and their first baby was born, Weezie started listening to Reverend Bob Reasey's preaching on the radio. She found out that her Avon lady, Betty Stouffer, happened to be a member of the church that Rev. Reasey pastored. Betty was able to introduce the Wentzel family to others at FUMC, and it became their new church home.

Charlie and Weezie would soon need to lean heavily on the support of the church, when their older daughter, Laurie, suddenly sickened and died of leukemia at the age of six. Weezie says that she could hardly keep going during those early days. The heartache was overwhelming.

And in the midst of her own grief, Weezie had to help two-year-old Jenny grieve her sister. She remembers watching Jenny searching peoples' faces at stores, as if expecting to see Laurie appear among them. No matter how much it hurt, Weezie said she couldn't give up, "I had to try to keep life going for Jenny. We had to have a home for her."

During that terrible time, Weezie remembers the kindness and strength of Rev. Reasey, "That man practically lived with us. I don't know what I would have done without him. He spent days with me." And Weezie remembers Dianne Salter crawling into the pew to hold her hand through the service the first Sunday after Laurie's death.

The family soon moved out of their home on Brandon Drive, because it held too many painful memories. Charlie couldn't handle coming home from work each day without his little Laurie running through the door to greet him.

But in her most recent loss, of Charlie, Weezie says she finds comfort in the knowledge that Laurie was there to meet him at the gates of heaven.

When asked about what she has felt most purposeful doing in her life, Weezie's answer is no surprise —loving children. It is what she has done all her life, even when it cost her terribly to do so. She loved Laurie for six short and precious years and every excruciating moment since. She loved Jenny, pushing aside her own agony in order to put Jenny's needs above her own. And she loved Chip, the son that they adopted after Laurie's death.

Although Weezie's babies have long since grown out of their childhood, they will always be her fiercely loved children. And Weezie proudly recalls how much they have loved each other. She remembers how Jenny used to pick out Chip's clothes and pack his lunches, watching over him like a second mother. Later, when Chip went through some rough times as a young adult, Charlie, Weezie, and Jenny all stayed firmly by his side. Their family's love never faltered, "The more he struggled, the more we loved him. We loved him through it."

Weezie's story provides a glimpse of the Father's unconditional love for us—fierce and true regardless of our success or failure. A love that remains strong even through the greatest pain and loss.