Memories…

We all have them and they can come in many different shades: good, bad, funny, simple, complex, sad, happy and many more. What kind of memory will we make today? In the coming weeks at Gerrardstown Presbyterian Church we will discover what memory has to do with our faith and especially our relationship with God and each other.

Can you think of a memory, maybe your first memory of God or church, a holiday – such as Christmas or Easter? Can you picture it? Were you at home or someone else’s home? Were you young or much older? What kind of memory is it?

George Edwards suggests ‘memory is not simply concerned with remembering events, or people, or words; it is much more than that. He offers this quote from psychologist Julia Shaw (2016, p. xi) who argues that memory is where the root of an individual’s identity lies – what she calls your “you-ness”. “Memory,” she says, “shape[s] what we think we have experienced and, as such, what we believe we are capable of in the future”. Memory, then, has power to affect an individual’s understanding of the present and their perception of the future, enabling identities to be constructed in the context of their whole lives or the life of their community, their perception of history and the claiming and re-claiming of that history.’

We, then have memories as individuals and memories as a group as a whole. Whether you have experienced GPC through our Community Dinner, worship, VBS, a funeral, Bible study, online video of the sermon or just picking your child up in the parking lot as the bus drops off the preschoolers, or another memory I haven’t named, you have memories of what you have experienced related to Gerrardstown Presbyterian Church.

Maybe your experience is all in the past, maybe you have attended here since birth. Maybe you have just come back to GPC or you are brand new. Whatever your experience, the collection of these memories is a vital part of who we are at Gerrardstown Presbyterian and as each of us shares our memories this will help all of us as we move into the future.

Graham continues: ‘In the life of the church, memory does something. Tuula Sakaranaho (2011) suggests that “memory is collective in its nature because memories are constructed in and through relationship” . The way the past is understood and held, is therefore, as Jan Assmann notes, “the decisive resource for the consciousness of … identity. Anyone who wants to belong to the group must share the memory” (2006, p. 87). Within a church, memories are claimed and treasured by the community, because those memories reveal things that might otherwise remain hidden. Memory is not disinterested recollection; memory creates and sustains the identity of individuals and communities. The way memories are used can allow new life, new ideas, and new practice to be developed within those communities.’ Graham concludes: ‘My questions are, I suppose, what are the things that need to be forgotten, and what forgotten things need to be remembered as the church seeks to be the community of Christ in the world? The answers are, however, harder than the questions.’

These are vital questions for us as a community to answer. Everyone has a part to play as we piece together the memories – including ‘which memories do we need to forget and which do we need to remember?’ as GPC seeks to be the community of Christ in the world today and in the future.

To begin this discussion the Sermon series for the month of September is called Making Memories. We will discover how remembering is vital to our faith life and our community life. We will explore how in remembering God’s Word and message to us we can make memories today and into the future.

One very lovely and touching song from years ago keeps going through my mind as I study this subject of memories. Its title may be familiar to you -Memory from the musical CATS first debuted in 1981.

I remember years ago, Tom, my husband and I saw this musical at the Kennedy Center. In the play, Grizabella, an old a formerly beautiful cat, sings this song. (You can hear it if you click on this link. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-L6rEm0rnY ) One line from the song is: ‘I remember the time I knew what happiness was. Let the memory live again.’ Thankfully following Jesus means more than just memory lives again. Through Christ we are redeemed, along with our memories, and we will live for eternity with him.

Do we know what happiness is today? Or is that just a memory of the past? Is happiness possible today? If not, why not? What is keeping happiness or blessedness away? I hope you will join us we discover how to live again, make new memories and relinquish others with Jesus and the Holy Spirit’s help.

If you have a memory having to do with GPC please come to worship one week in September and place it on the Memory Board, adding to our joy of remembering and making new memories together in Christ.