

Soaring Together

Sermon notes for the sermon
Given by Rev. Dr. Gregory B. Young
On Sunday, May 22, 2011

In a book of collected sermons Frederick Buechner shares a dream he had that had left him feeling happy and at peace. During the dream he discovered that he was in a room that was named "Remember" and it was his memories that had brought on this feeling of contentment and tranquility. Today we gather in this great room as generations of our forebears have done. This sanctuary is for us the room called remember.

In March of 1953, at the hand of the 79th pastor of this church, I was baptized into the Christian faith. With my parents profession of faith and the promise of this congregation to love me into God's kingdom, Rev. Harold P. Wayman passed on to me the touch of Christ. That is one of the thousands of memories that fill this sanctuary each and every time we enter. Whenever we celebrate a baptism we are called to remember the mighty acts of God's saving grace. Whenever we celebrate Holy Communion we hear the words of Jesus, "Do this in remembrance of me." The collective memories of those who have worshipped in this place, in this city, for 200 years are contained in this room. This has become for us a place of happiness and peace; a sanctuary of tranquility and grace.

Today we celebrate our bicentennial as a Methodist congregation.

The roots of our churches family tree reach all the way back to Britain and the brothers Wesley who sought to reform the Anglican Church of the 19th century. Our local history reminds us that Francis Asbury visited and preached in New Brunswick as early as 1797. Those who received the Gospel of salvation from the traveling preachers of that era formed themselves into the Methodist Episcopal Church, Shiloh on May 27th 1811. The rest of our 200 year history you can find in our Bicentennial Program booklets and you will hear stories from our past at our afternoon picnic gathering at the Shiloh Community Gardens.

With the expertise of Russ Condon I would like to share with you today a power point slide show that captures my vision for the local church. It is based on the habits and behaviors of geese. I certainly understand that many of us have about had with geese in this area. They fowl up our lawns, dirty our parks, run after us when we get too close, slow down traffic as they waddle across the streets and highways and generally make a nuisance of themselves. Soren Kierkegaard, 19th century existentialist and theologian, had some very unflattering analogies between the bad and lazy behavior of geese and good church people. That being said, there is something of value that I believe we can learn from geese and I would like to share that with you now.

GEESE

I think that the message is clear, as long as we are soaring together, encouraging one another, helping one another, following our savior and truly embodying the presence of Christ to the fallen and lost, we will continue to journey into the bright future of God's kingdom. Our collective memory and even the long forgotten memories of past generations fill this room not for nostalgia's sake but to offer encourage us to seek to move forward into the future. If we simply enter this room and remember without using the memories to help shape our future then we have abandoned our God and become idolaters of the past. The celebration of 200 years is a nice party but for it to have meaning for those yet to come and yet to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ today must be for us a celebration of 200 years and counting... God calls us to soar together and journey together as we seek to be faithful to the Gospel we have received and as we seek to pass the same Gospel to generations yet to come.