

Memories

I suspect that many people are seeing the importance of remembering a bit differently these days. Our ability to call upon and participate in remembering has been seriously affected by the current COVID pandemic. We have been unable to create some of the traditional memories – like birthday parties, weddings; school days and graduations; even work days – that are important to us. We also have not been able to collectively share and celebrate memories that will bring comfort and sustain us – family gatherings, spending last hours with a loved one, or gathering for a funeral to remember and celebrate a life. Part of the frustration this year has caused is due to this disruption in our relationship to our memories and how we create new ones.

The recent political climate has exaggerated the fact that there has always been a divide between those who value remembering and those who do not. Actually, most of us do both depending on the day, our mood, or the nature of our memories. Many who do not appreciate remembering have memories they wish to forget – from embarrassing things they have done to terrible things that have happened. Others try to pick and choose what they ‘remember’, often with some particular purpose in mind – from innocent fun like looking up what happened on the day you were born, to searching for past ‘events’ that appear to support a point of view you espouse. Creating such event lists reveal more about their compilers than about the history being remembered. Do not forget, that every event has a context and, without knowing that context, one cannot understand the event or its connection to the present. The role of personal attitudes, and bias are a big factor.

That brings up another point about memory. Even when several people are present for the same event, their memories of it will not be exactly the same. Everyone brings their own perspective, history, experience, and world view to the situation. All fans may enjoy a baseball game, but how ‘good’ the game was may depend on if your team won. For something more important and complicated like seeing an event as a protest or a riot. . . the role of your opinions about the issues involved, or the people participating can be critical in shaping your response to the event. To get the whole picture, we need to combine our memories with those of other witnesses so we can all fill in the gaps for each other.

Lord help us look for opportunities to make, remember, and renew meaningful memories even in these frustrating times. Remind us that we can do great damage when we see things – past, present, or future through only our own eyes. We are called to community where mutual sharing and different perspectives can teach us all.

This week, remember in prayer:

- **Hate crimes victims.** Hate crimes against Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (AAPI), are increasing in number. “Since mid-March 2020, 3,795 reported incidents of hate, such as vandalism, verbal attacks, and physical assaults, against AAPI have been recorded by Stop AAPI Hate,” (said an Action Alert from the Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding & Policy). “According to PBS, ‘Even as overall hate crimes fell in 2020, hate crimes against Asian Americans in major US cities grew nearly 150 percent.’”
- **People dealing with COVID-19.** Remember all whose lives have been touched by COVID, here & around the world. I understand 12 Northern Ohio pastors have had it, & many congregations have had other families who have been affected as well. The Brethren in Venezuela have lost many pastors to the virus; many members have also gotten sick & many have died. The situation there is “getting tough”. Brazil is now an epicenter of the pandemic. Remember the Brethren in Brazil who are affected as well.
- **Refugees & those displaced by violence** – especially during this pandemic, & especially the children. Remember that people do not flee their homes unless forced or because conditions where they live, are far worse than those, they know they will face when fleeing.
- **People who live with the ugliness of racism,** bigotry, or prejudice. That we have not learned the lessons Jesus taught about how to treat each other, or the lessons from our past about the dehumanizing nature of fear & the all-consuming & destructive power of hate, is demonstrated every day.



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