

Memories

On the **Memories** Retreat, we had a chance to explore how we remember and are remembered. It was a day spending quality time with our Lord, looking deeply into our past memories, examining who we are and have been, and where we are going in our lives. The majority of us were of pensionable age with many years to reflect upon.

There are many verses in Scripture contemplating on memory and identity. We focus on two here.

Psalm 139:1-4 :

*¹You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.*

*²You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*³You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*⁴Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.*

Consider how deeply you are known by God, who understands your every thought and action, and how does this impact on how you connect with others?

Philippians 1:3-5 :

*³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy
⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,*

Think about the joy that comes from remembering loved ones, and the connections formed by shared experiences. Who do you remember with gratitude? How can you express that gratitude in your relationships?

We were invited during our Meditation time to take a smooth stone pebble, polished in the running waters of a stream. Holding the stone in our hands assisted us in focussing on the many memories we all have throughout our lives. Many of these were happy memories of the good times in our lives, such as family life in our formative years both of ourselves and our children. Other memories were sad and in some cases painful as we visited difficult periods in our lives.



I had selected a flat circular stone, and also saw in it the perfect circle of our mortal life's existence here on earth (see left in picture). The edge was smooth with the occasional managed changes of direction in a well ordered life with no unforeseen difficulties. As my fingers moved over the smooth flat surfaces of the stone I sensed the eternal presence of God in this perfect life, loving, supporting and guiding us. Then I looked at my own life and could see that it had been far from this perfect image!

I then took a walk in the Retreat garden searching for a stone that represented my life. At the well in the garden I found a collection of broken stones. I took one typical of myself and of many others I am sure! (see right in picture). This stone had rough and broken edges showing the many difficult, unforeseen events in my early life, there were times when the stone had been broken showing

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dramatic changes of direction in my life. Fortunately there was the time that I came to know our Lord and the edge became smoother. As my fingers moved over the smooth flat surfaces of the stone I sensed the eternal presence of God throughout all of my life from the very beginning. He had always been with me, loving and supporting me, waiting for me to open the door of my life to him!

When we look at these two images of Life's Journey we are challenged to ask ourselves, "Where am I now?", and "Where am I going?" We should all be actively using our life experiences, and the wisdom learned from them in our walk with Christ, and in our personal Christian outreach ministry to those around us.



I now keep my two stones in a cactus pot in my study as a reminder that we are all part of our Lord's Creation and that the person we are, like the natural beauty of the cacti, is fully visible throughout all seasons of the year. The cacti prickles remind me that we are protected by our Lord's Grace and Mercy, growing in His Love throughout our life's journey in this challenging world, the Great Adventure of Life.

(taken from a church newsletter article written by one of the retreatants, with agreement)