

Devotion, Week of December 10, 2023

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Remembrance

This past week was a time of remembering two events. First, we remembered Pearl Harbor Day on December 7, when over 2,403 service members and civilians died, and 1,178 others were injured in the surprise Japanese attack. Jim and I will be visiting the USS Arizona memorial in January. Only one crew member from that ship still survives. It is a sacred, watery tomb for many young men, as well as the resting place of the USS Arizona, the USS Utah, and 188 aircraft. It is hard to believe that 82 years have passed since that horrific event, which started America's entry into WWII.

There was another remembrance last week. As Ed and Cindy Adair and Jim and I pulled into the church parking lot after our church breakfast at Eggs' Up on Tuesday, a red pick up truck was sitting there. As I got out of my car, he introduced himself. His name is Matt McCord and he told me that he was in a car accident at our church on December 4, 1978, that killed a little girl. He said he comes by every year to remember and pay respects to his childhood friend, who died. I knew something about this event, but not the names of any of the children involved. I invited him to come into the church. He had not been inside in 42 years. Jim and I guided him through the entire building complex. He pointed out his preschool and kindergarten rooms (Ruthy Gettys was one of his teachers), the counter in the fellowship hall kitchen where they got their kool aid every day, the playground outside which now has the old swing set taken apart and piled in a corner, and the sanctuary where they would wander around the back of the chancel. When he saw Rev. Hines' picture, he said they were all afraid of him, because if you had to go see Rev. Hines, it meant you'd been bad. But Mrs. Hines (Kathie Pierce's mother) took the children to the hospital after the accident that day to be checked out – he remembered how kind she and the other teachers were.

Matt usually sat on the outside in the back seat of the car pool, but on this day, for some reason, he decided to sit in the middle. There were two little girls to his left and Tanya, the child who died, to his right. The car pool mother's child was in the front seat. That child had injuries from hitting the windshield. He was the only child not hurt in the accident. Betty Foster remembers taking glass out of one little girl's hair. He has kept up with one of the girls, and they finally found Tanya's grave in Alabama, went to visit, and also found her elderly mother and were able to visit with her.

He comes every year – to remember. He is now a very successful attorney in McDonough, but he still has the need to come to the place where this life-changing event happened - to remember. He will continue to come back on or around each December 4, and I hope to see him on those visits. So that we can remember – not only a death, but the kindness of the PPC staff who took care of him on that day.

Jeanne