**From Pastor Mark**

Memories, write professional youth ministers and authors Doug Fields and Duffy Robbins, are the milestones by which we mark our journey with God.

On a recent January weekend, ten confirmation youth from Grace and St. John's joined two other ELCA church groups from Port Clinton and West Chester and created some memories.



Those memories include travel to and from Hopewood Pines at Lutheran Memorial Camp near Fulton, Ohio, settling into our cabins, and then participating in the many creative and engaging activities which had been planned and were led by camp staff. Those activities included group games, crafts, campfires, discovery Bible study, worship that was led by youth campers, and a winter hike through the camp woods.

I have always enjoyed this part of being a pastor -- accompanying them, and sometimes leading them in activities at sometimes far off places like a camp, a mission trip, or a national youth gathering in a major US city, activities that help them connect with God and with each other, and, most importantly, create memories. Lifelong memories.

Again, quoting Fields and Robbins from their jointly authored youth ministry resource book *Memory Makers*:

> *In his second letter to Timothy, St. Paul wrote words that he sensed would be his last to his young disciple. No doubt he chose them carefully. Yet you can't help notice when you read the apostle's words that his chis charge to his pastoral protégé Timothy was not so much a sermon, lesson, or classroom lecture as it was a plea that Timothy draw from a rich portfolio of memories. "You," Paul wrote to him, "know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings -- what kinds of things happened to me Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. (3:10-11)*

*What that means, among other things, is that we significantly impact kids by creating vivid memories through which they watch, hear, see, or are touched by God at work. In short, we need to think of ourselves as not just program directors, but as memory makers.*

Yes, we created many memories in our weekend at Hopewood Pines, memories that were made by being completely engaged in both the planned and unplanned activities. The boys in my cabin were disappointed that they couldn't stay another day, and delighted to learn that they could come back for a full week of camp in the summer.

Grace is blessed to have Heather on staff to help facilitate the making of these memories for our children and youth, both in the far off places like camp, and the activities that she plans on-site at Grace. On Saturday, February 11, she will lead a "Royal Adventure Camp," which will feature a tea party, story, craft and games and learning about how to have joy in all situations.

I'm looking forward to the next memory making event that I'll have a chance to participate in!