

In Celebration of the Life of Dr. William Montgomery Gabard

Aug. 17, 1922 - Aug. 18, 2006

August 21, 2006

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The second pew on the left – my left – the aisle seat: that's Dr. William Gabard's seat. It is a temptation to look down on that seat and be sad, to mourn the thought that he is sitting there no longer. We can't do that; Bill would not approve!

What we should do is celebrate his life, the life of a truly remarkable man.

Perhaps, with me, you read his obituary with a sense of awe; so many accomplishments, so many degrees and fellowships, membership in so many societies. What a contribution he made as a scholar, a professor, a historian!

Reading all those things, we see a man who lived on a vast and grand scale indeed – a scale that encompassed the past and the present – the past and present of the world, his family, his church. A global scale of interests that spanned time and distances.

Is that the man you know? Here's the man I know.

The door of our nursery – the door of our pre-school opens and a man enters, a man whose presence radiates absolute delight,

absolute love for the children. They are his “babies.” He is their “Grandpa.”

How many days have been brightened, how many lives have been touched by “Grandpa” Bill Gabard? How many teens and even young adults remember his words and his kindness? How many memories fill this room this evening?

Those memories should give us great joy. And here is another thing about which we can be joyful. We have the promise of Our Lord Jesus Christ that in death life is changed, not ended. We have the promise that in faith we have eternal life with the Father. We have the promise that Bill has gone before us to take his place there and that we, in our time, will be with him there again. We may find him in the company of great historians solving the mysteries of time. We may find him earnestly questioning the movers of shakers of this world. But, be assured, find him there we will.

We can never replace Bill Gabard here – there simply is no other like him. We can give thanks to God for those memories that brighten our lives still.

And, in time, we might actually sit in that seat, second row on the left, by the aisle.

In His Holy Name.