

**Zeisset Reunion Memorial Service at Leonardville United Methodist Cemetery  
August 4, 2019**

Joshua 4:1a, 4-7 (NRSV)

When the entire nation had finished crossing over the Jordan, ... Joshua summoned the twelve men from the Israelites, whom he had appointed, one from each tribe. Joshua said to them, "...Each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, one for each of the tribes of the Israelites, so that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then ... these stones shall be to the Israelites a memorial forever."

Memorial. A reminder to remember.

Memories—both the good and the painful ones—connect us to the heritage of our past and can show the way for the future. Zeisset family heritage includes painful stories of religious wars, of emigration to flee persecution, of debt and fires and imprisonment, of devastation of prosperous farm estates in World War II Allied bombings. Our Zeisset heritage also includes good stories of lives of faith, of immigration toward new opportunities, of family relationships kept strong, of a community where they set down new roots.

For thousands of years people have set up stones as reminders to remember. The stones were meant to prompt the question, "What do these stones mean?" They were meant to prompt the telling of family stories about grandparents and great-grandparents, and the many generations before that. The stones were meant to connect the present generation to their heritage, and to remind people to pass on that heritage to future generations.

Today we remember family memories that are one part of memories of an entire community. The Zeisset immigrant brothers and sisters became part of Leonardville as the community welcomed them, and they contributed to its life.

Three years ago, attendees at the Zeisset reunion saw that the sign for the Leonardville cemetery was deteriorated, sending out a greater sense of forgetting than of remembering. A call went out for contributions to erect a new stone marker. Today we, as a family, dedicate this stone to the memory of those who have gone before us in our family and to all who made Leonardville more than just a place, but a community.

This weekend of the Zeisset reunion is a reminder to remember. One memory is that the first Zeisset reunion in 1969 included the singing of the hymn "How Great Thou Art." The hymn is a reminder that faith and gratitude for blessings are also a part of our heritage. Henry Zeisset's great-great grandsons, Alex and Conrad Hoffman, will play the hymn for us. Many of you know the words and can sing along as they play.