

87th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 25, 1993

Minister: Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

Organ Preludes Donald M. Ross

***Introit:** D. Middleton [title not listed]

Greetings: Charles Stetter

Hymn: Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

***Anthem:** In Thee, O Lord (F. J. Haydn)

Responsive Reading: Psalm 61 & 62: 1-2, 5-12

Hymn: All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name (Diadem)

Scripture Readings: Exodus 35:30, 36:1, 1 Corinthians 3:5-11, John 6:25-29, 35

Vocal Quartet: Work, For the Night Is Coming (Walker/Mason)
Pat Mitchell, Donna Koskiniemi, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

Pastoral Prayer & In Remembrance: Elizabeth Rosemergy Rogers (1901-1993)
Silas Charles Rosemergy (1908-1993)
Louise E. Ross (1902-1993)

Flute Duet: No. 1 and No. 3 of "Six Little Duets" (G. Gariboldi)
Helen Dauser and Patti Dauser

Announcements and Remarks: Charles Stetter

Offering and *Offertory Anthem: Go Not Far From Me, O God

Doxology

Sermon: **To Work and To Love: Re-Visioning Work** (Abridged)

The settlers who came to this beautiful peninsula were drawn to the mines as a place where they could gain work, bring and raise their families, and form community. This church was central to their lives and to the life of this town. The work was difficult and dangerous. In the long winters, those on the day shift went to work before sunrise and it was dark before they returned home. They would be dirty and exhausted, making the long walk home or to a boarding house before going to bed again to get up early—six days a week. Their physical labor to gain a livelihood occupied much of their waking hours.

The women here also worked hard. Alfred Nichols (*More Copper Country Tales*) refers to home-made furniture, the cook stove, and "it was generally understood that the rocking chair was not intended for daily or common use and that if a good wife was known to indulge in that luxury, it was regarded as an unquestionable sign of neglected household duties. The daughter in the house knew how to wash, knit, scrub, and iron. Reading or 'fancy work' was discouraged, both being regarded as a waste of time, and better fit if she was mending stockings" (pp. 62-63). Mrs. Uren at the boarding house in Allouez "cooked

[for all the men living there], made beds, fetched wood and water,” cleaned, shopped, cared for the sick, “and what more one can’t even imagine.”

This essential work of men and women was in support of family and community. For the most part, they somehow maintained an attitude that put work in a balance with family, some good times, and worship. God was central to their total experience. Yet work was a part of who they were and their way of life, and they were proud of it.

What is your sense of work? What part does it play in your life? For most of us, a job with wages is necessary, but often it doesn’t meet all our needs for a sense of who and what we are. One white-collar worker recently said, “Most of us have jobs that are too small for our spirits.” That’s why it’s essential that our faith helps us redefine work and broaden it to include our personal well-being—that which fills our spirits. I’m persuaded that many of the miners here found a sense of their work in that broader understanding that we have lost.

Let us pray: Help us, O God, to know that our work is more than the jobs we have over the course of our lives. It is instead the sum of all that we are, of all the ways in which we participate and share in your work, the work of creation. Amen.

In an interview about her book *Shifting Gears*, sociologist Carol Hyatt said that with extended life expectancy, people in subsequent generations will have a working life of 55-60 years or more, and will have an average of 7 career changes and many different jobs. She spoke of the different ways people respond to the question, “What do you do?” She said there are regional differences: a New Yorker might respond vocationally, “I am a stockbroker,” while a Californian might reply avocationally, “surfer.” Men will almost always reply with their job title/position, while women will respond with a larger list of all that they do—raising children, organizations, gardening—and will include a job. Hyatt said that in France, the question should not even be asked. A young American woman traveling in France ventured the question of an older French gentleman who, after a long pause, responded, “When, darling?”

All of this points to the importance of re-visioning the ways in which we understand work. Our identity—our sense of our personhood—should not be centered on or limited by a particular job at a point in time. Rather, our work is the way in which we respond totally, and over time, to life. It encompasses all the ways in which we use our time, energies, talents, skills, intelligence, and caring in this wonderful adventure of living, of working as a part of God’s creation.

The early miners had reverence for the world around them. They respected one another, especially a good partner, and had a deep sense that they were using God-given skills. They were a part of this creation—of settling this area, of mining its ore to be used throughout the world, and a belief that no one could do it better than themselves. Their awareness of God’s activities in the world was all-encompassing—in the stillness of the dark mine drift being worked; in the crisp wintry air as the horse-drawn cart pulled them through the snow surrounded by the beauty of trees, streams; in the chapel listening to the Word preached or singing the old-time hymns. Theirs was a wholistic sense of their living and of work. Do you experience that? I hope so, for work gives meaning to our lives and moves us outside ourselves to others, to community, and to God.

We are a part of God’s work in creation. If we understand our work in a wholistic sense, all that we do is related. The residents of Central knew that.

A wonderful *Peanuts* cartoon captures this sense of our mutual responsibility for one another. Lucy and Charlie are walking along and Lucy ponders, “Why do you think we’re put here on earth, Charlie Brown?”

Charlie quickly answers, "To make others happy." Lucy stops and looks at him, saying, "I don't think I'm making anyone very happy." And in the next frame, "Of course, nobody's making me very happy either." That suddenly bothers her and she shouts, "Somebody's not doing their job!"

We all need to ask ourselves: Am I doing my job? Are we fulfilling our part in the work of God's creation? Is the work we're doing enhancing or hindering God's work in the world? We need to step back and think about our work and its part in self-expression and community-building as part of God's ongoing work in the world.

In "Reflections on a Spirituality of Work,"* Matthew Fox (Dominican priest) points out that while over one billion people worldwide are out of work, in the industrial world, a great number are overworked. Some are in jobs that are inimical to the health of our species and planet. The need is not just jobs, but "changing the way we look at work, define it, compensate for it, create it, and the way we let go of work, and learn to confuse it and fuse it with play and ritual. Today's crisis in jobs is about our relationship to work and the challenge put to our species to re-invent work. The issue is, at bottom, an issue in spirituality, which is always about 'all our relations' as the Lakota people pray" (p. 9). Fox pushes us to re-think, to re-visualize the ways in which our work relates to community, to the environment, to creation as a whole. He urges us to more clearly differentiate "job" and "work." A job might be working at a fast-food restaurant in order to pay bills, but work is something else. "Work comes from inside out; it is the expression of one's soul, one's inner being. Work is unique to the individual. Work is creative. It is an expression of the Spirit acting in the world through us. Work is that which puts us in touch with others, not so much at the level of personal interaction but at the level of service in the community.

This is what folks here at Central and in the other mining towns felt and lived. Nichols writes, "The community as a whole resembled one big family. If at any time some unfortunate circumstances made it necessary to render aid to the sick or distressed, the night was never too long or the hardship too severe to endure. Their interests were mutual . . ." (p. 74).

The Law as God in action. Today's Scripture readings speak of work in that way, as a response to God, of our participation in the Covenant—self and others, in family and community, with God. In the Bible, the Law is God in action. By predicating the Law on God, it became the instrument of a mutual relationship in which faith responds to love. As people of faith, we are called over the generations to interpret and understand God's Law and apply it to our times.

The commandment on keeping the Sabbath holy is a good example. It speaks of the importance of the rhythms of work and rest in our lives, our participation in God's action. God calls us to a wholeness in our living—in our days—not to fragmentation.

Work is God's action. The question should not be "What do you do?" or "What is your job?" but rather "What are the many ways you carry on God's work in the world?" José Hobday, a Franciscan of Seneca-Iroquois descent, says that when people ask him "Where do you work?" he answers, "Everywhere." If they then say, "I mean, what is your job?" he responds, "I have no job. My work is my life—teaching, healing, loving, decorating, playing, struggling, helping."

Jesus no doubt learned to be a carpenter from Joseph, who probably gave him many jobs to help support their family. But as Jesus came to understand his relationship with God and others, he found his work—teaching, sharing God's vision, healing—letting God's work become his life.

We need to be more open to letting our days flow in harmony with all creation. In *Work, Play, Worship*, author Gordon Dahl writes, "We worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship. We should be experiencing our work as play, seeing our play as worship, and making worship our work."

Worship is "the work of the people." If we are truly doing God's work, all that we do is a form of worship. Our work, our vocation, is a sacrament. Belief is primarily about action. "If we believe in a future, we will act like it; and included in this activity may well be a whole new way of working in our world." Amen.

**Creation Spirituality, May/June 1992; The Long Winter Ends (p. 43), Newton G. Thomas*

Hymn: O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee

Benediction, Response, and Postlude

Organist: Donald M. Ross

***Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Sue Adams, Mary Henderson, Pearl Jalkanen, Betty Martin, Deanna Martin, Pat Mitchell, Sharon Streeter

Altos: Carol Bard, Flora Graham, Carolyn Meyer, Hilary Meyer, Connie Plymat

Tenors: Richard Hutchison, Peter Manderfield, Mark Spreitzer, Jack Trudgeon,

Basses: Dr. Fred Bryant, Jay Martin, Stanley Martin, Jack Porritt

Executive Committee Members: Dr. Fred W. Bryant, Gary A. Bryant, Robert J. Bryant, James K. Curto, Jeffrey Nicholls Curto, David C. Heikka, Hollace G. Roberts, Donald M. Ross, R. Charles Stetter, David H. Thomas, Harry J. Vine, Dr. Brian D. Wake, John E. Wilson