

104th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 25, 2010

Minister: Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

***Introit** The Central Introit (Glenna Slatterley Irwin)

Greetings & Announcements: Jim and Jeff Curto

A Moment of Remembrance and Thanksgiving: Donald M. Ross, 1917-2009

Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

A Time with Children/Youth [Cornish cooking and songs; cookies and copper]

***Anthem:** When a Man Is Singing (Hassidic saying) (Glenna Irwin)

Responsive Reading: 45th Sunday – First Reading "Spiritual Service"

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

Scripture Readings: Psalm 133; John 15:12-17; Acts 2:42-47

Special Music: Sweet, Sweet Spirit
Donna Koskiniemi, Deanna Martin, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

Pastoral Prayer

Offering and *Offertory Anthem: In This Very Room (Ron and Carol Harris)

Doxology

Sermon: **People Who Need People** (Abridged)

It is so good to be here on this hillside on the last Sunday of July each year—to be a part of this unique congregation—this community of the spirit. We welcome you in the spirit of love and community. I recall the lines adapted from T. S. Eliot's "The Rock": "What life have we, if we have not life together? There is no life not lived in community, and no community not lived in celebration and praise!" We all come this morning to share in celebration and praise of this Reunion tradition that taps into the deep meaning of lives fully lived in relationships that form community, that produce stories and remembrances that carry on for generations into the future. Attending this service are many descendants of the miners and families who lived and worked here in the 1800s, carrying on family traditions over time and generations.

We live in a time when these kinds of relationships are often frayed, perhaps even nonexistent. Our society is rushed, with widespread social mobility resulting in a loss of deep, lasting relationships (unless we really work at it). We often don't really know one another. We tend to value individualism, take pride in independence, and prioritize taking care of self. Often, we don't know our neighbors. We lose the important reality that, deep down, we need other people. Sometimes, in my reflecting on this topic, I began humming Barbara Streisand's "People Who Need People":

People, people who need people
Are the luckiest people in the world.

We're children, needing other children
And yet letting a grown-up pride
Hide all the need inside,
Acting more like children than children.

These lyrics carry universal meaning, which speaks to us over time of the human need for relationships and community. Think back to your own communities over the course of your lives—family, neighborhoods, workplaces, towns, cities, churches, congregations, social groups. Remember what they meant to you, the ways they gave meaning to your life.

Parker Palmer [*The Promise of Paradox*] writes that the idea of community is at the heart of every great religious faith. The Hebrew Bible is primarily the narrative of a community making and breaking the covenant with God. The New Testament reveals how Jesus broke down barriers to create universal community. It affirms the capacity to join with others in a life of prayer and service.

Sacred Writings. Psalm 133 is part of a collection of songs of Ascent (on the way up to Jerusalem) with the theme of reunification not just of families but of Zion, a gathering place for God's larger family, the whole people of God. When God's people gather in Jerusalem (God's place), they experience their true family and home, for they are in touch with the true source of their life—God's presence.

John 15:9-17. "As God has loved me, so I have loved you—abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in God's love. This is my commandment, that you love one another." To abide is to be in relationships of trust, knowledge, love, unity. To love is to be for another, to act for another. To live in the world with constancy of love is to know joy. The commandment to love one another fulfills all others. Together we are blessed in the knowledge and love of God. The image of community that emerges is one of interrelationship and mutuality. This is a strong challenge to contemporary models of individualism, self-expression, and privatism.

Acts 2:42-27. "And they devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to community life, to the breaking of bread and to prayers." A broad sketch of the Church at its beginning includes being faithful in teaching; active in sharing; devoted to eating, praying, and worshipping together. Commenting on this passage from Acts, Parker Palmer writes, "God is constantly moving within and among us, calling us back to that unity, that community, in which we were created. If we will respond to that call, we can make a critical witness to the possibility of a future both human and divine."

Central. The early church was a fellowship of believers who displayed a profound regard for one another's spiritual and physical well-being as a community of friends. The stories of Central's settlers indicate that they tried to embody this kind of community centered in their faith and this church.

Teaching. Residents here continued to try to live and learn about their faith through worship, prayer meetings, Sunday School. Sermons were debated in boarding houses and in conversations in the mine.

Fellowship. In *More Copper Country Tales*, Alfred Nichols shares stories of parties, weddings, tournaments, Coronet Band, choir, miners' lunches and breaks, boarding house conversations.

Prayer. Nichols relates walking out after dinner and hearing hymn singing and praying coming from the church: "One of the number, in accents of true and genuine devotion, communed with his Maker. His plea was to be made wholly clean, to be prepared for duties of the coming day, and for the duties of life."

Breaking Bread. Opportunities to come together for the “breaking of bread” included meals in homes, boarding houses, underground in the mine. In a chapter on boarding house life, Nichols writes, “At the dinner bell there became a wild rush to the dining table and whatever the menu it all vanished as if touched by a magic wand. The table was operated on the help-yourself plan But amicable conversation followed directly after the meal.” At lunch (noon and midnight) in the mine, Cornish pasties and cans of tea were enjoyed. A miner remarked, “I thought I had a chicken pasty, or that’s what the missus said I had, but it seems to me this is the toughest old cow I ever ate.” It turns out he had mentioned it in the dry and another miner had exchanged the lunch for his own.

Life at Central held many occasions for teaching the faith. There were times of fellowship, moments of prayer, and the breaking of bread together.

Today. What about all of this for us today? We are called to enter into relationships that broaden our experiences of life, that bring deeper meaning to our existence in relationships with others. The richness of close communities can change our lives. William Cosby, former minister of the Church of the Savior in Washington, DC, often said that “true religious conversion comes when we move beyond ourselves to others.” To get to know one another, to act for the other, is at the heart of faith and at the heart of true community.

Will Campbell, who refers to himself as a renegade Baptist minister, refers to others as “kinfolk.” He has ministered to the Klan, prisoners, and the homeless, as well as to colleagues and seminaries. Every person is a part of the human family—our kinfolk.

Country singer Tracy Lawrence has a song “If the World Had a Front Room” whose chorus is:

If the world had a front porch like we did back then
We’d still have our problems but we’d all be friends
Treating your neighbor like he’s your next of kin
Wouldn’t be gone with the wind
If the world had a front porch, like we did back then.

The Nashville Flood (May 1-2) created a new sense of community as neighborhoods, churches, school groups, college students, and other volunteers came out by the thousands to help one another. We formed friendships with folks we didn’t know prior to the flood. The city seems like a friendlier, better place because of acting for others and in the process coming to know one another. Why does it take a flood to get to know our neighbor?

I encourage us to look around us, to strive to create deeper, closer relationships in our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, congregations. And a great thing about all this is that strong personal, social, and shared relationships have emotional, psychological, and physical benefits. Studies have found that social support improves mental and emotional well-being, reduces stress and stress-related illnesses, improves recovery from illness, and increases immunity to disease. Other benefits include companionship, emotional support, assistance, financial or material help, information and advice.

Starting Points. ♦ Look at the relationships you have. Express gratitude for them and strive to improve them. ♦ Think of ways you can move beyond yourself by volunteering with church or community groups. ♦ Set out to meet folks who are different than yourselves, e.g. immigrants, refugees, homeless, lonely folks in nursing homes. ♦ Reach out to folks in your neighborhoods or congregations whom you don’t know. I know you have other ideas. The important thing is to do it!

Our faith calls us to love one another. “The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done. Together, our vision widens and our strength is renewed” [Mark Morrison-Reed].

“Alone . . . together . . . connected. . . / we have each other / for the renewal of our spirits” [Phyllis Tyler-Wayman]. May it be so.

Hymn: Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Benediction

Response: God Be With You Til We Meet Again

Organist: Father Corbin Eddy

Choir Director: Glenna Slatterley Irwin

***Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Joanne Bollinger, Tacy Flint, Donna Koskiniemi, Carolyn Meyer

Altos: Connie Martin, Deanna Martin, Marcia Mason, Elsa Mugford, Lani Poynter

Tenors: Peter Manderfield, Stanley Martin, Ramsey Meyer, Larry Molloy, Gerald Rowe

Basses: James Irwin, Gary Koskiniemi, Jay Martin, Graham Meyer, Jack Porritt

Board of Directors: James R. Brooks, Gary A. Bryant (*Vice Pres.*), John T. Bryant, Lynn C. Bryant (*Sec.*), James K. Curto, Jeffrey Nicholls Curto, Glenna Slatterley Irwin, Lawrence J. Malloy (*Treas.*), David H. Thomas, Dr. Brian D. Wake (*Pres.*), Dr. Joan P. Wake, Laura Wake Wiesner