

102nd Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 27, 2008

Minister: Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

***Introit** Surely the Presence of the Lord Is in This Place (Lanny Wolfe)

Greetings & Announcements: Dave Thomas

A Moment of Remembrance and Thanksgiving: Patricia A. Mitchell, 1935-2007
Dorothy Purfield, 1911-2007
Lenore Kingston Brieger, 1906-2008

Hymn: Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

A Time with Children/Youth

***Anthem:** The Lord Is My Shepherd (John Rutter)

Responsive Reading: Psalms 98 and 100

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

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 12:2-6; John 15:9-17

Special Music: This Little Light/This Joy I Have (Spiritual)
Donna Koskiniemi, Valerie Koskiniemi, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

Pastoral Prayer

Offering and *Offertory Anthem: Psalm 150 (Cesar Franck)

Doxology

Sermon: **Come to the Party!** (Abridged)

Alfred Nichols—a longtime resident of Central, a miner, an educator, a writer and teller of Copper Country and Central tales, and a founder of these Central Mine Reunions—never missed a Reunion Service. In his autobiography, he writes, “The people came in throngs. A chorus choir is an important part of the service. The singing is soulful and inspiring On such occasions, we take our places in the choir, and *the joy it gives us cannot be expressed in words.*”

I have a calligraphy on my study wall: “Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.” I try to open myself to joy each day, because it is at the heart of the human experience well lived. Today, I want to reflect on the joy that is at the heart of our faith, the early Central community and our communities today, wherever we are, and in our lives.

There is a wonderful old camp song we used to sing: “I’ve got a joy, joy, joy, joy / Down in my heart / Where? / Down in my heart today.” I loved that song then and still do. Music has a way of conveying many feelings, including joy. Our hymns today, songs of our faith, give us the joy of two central stories of our faith, Christmas and Easter, part of the cycle of the church year.

For 20 years at the Brookmeade Congregational Church UCC, where I was pastor, annually we celebrated all the seasons of the church year in a single service. It is a powerful service allowing us to experience the full story and joy of our faith. That's what our faith story should call us to, what our worship should be about—celebration. Its definition is “to observe (a day or event) with ceremonies of respect, festivity, and rejoicing”; synonyms are “to consecrate, hallow sanctify, dedicated, memorialize.” Our Brookmeade church organist/pianist would tell friends she was going to a party on Sunday mornings.

Ann Weems, one of my favorite writers about faith, says in “Come to the Easter Party”:

I think on Easter morning we should throw confetti in church!

No?

What about a little fanfare?

A deafening drum roll?

A three-minute standing ovation?

What? Have we had the drums beaten out of us

That we in the celebrative community can't really

Get excited

About God's aliveness?

.....

So come to the Easter party!

Let's celebrate that amazing grace

That in Christ's resurrection

We are still loved even at our most outrageous.

The Lord has given us the music;

All we need do is dance it!

Come to the Easter party!

Some of you may be saying, wait a minute, all life isn't a party; in fact, sometimes it's hard and painful. I agree, but my argument is that even in the midst of suffering or difficult times, there is joy we can experience and that can sustain us, but we need to be more open to joy every day—to fill ourselves up, to let it be a part of our whole being.

The Joy of Our Faith (Come to the Party). Our scripture readings put us in touch with two seasons of the church year and open us to the joy of the story. We need to carry that joy with us. *Advent.* From Isaiah: “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for God is my strength and my song, and has become my salvation.’ *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation . . . Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.*” The scripture emphasizes the future and the hope for divine intervention in human events. There will be a time when the people of God will experience salvation and will sing—and the present can be a time of joy. It is a message of hope for all the earth.

Easter. From John, Jesus commands: “As [God] has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept God's commandments and abide in God's love. *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*” Abide in my love. Love one another. That your joy may be full.

The Joy of Church and Community. Ann Weems writes about “the mystery of what goes on in God's church”: “We believe this spirit of love exists because / God's spirit lives within this Church, / this unity of persons trying / to be the Good News.” Come to the party!

Central. The early settlers here in the Copper Country and at Central centered their lives around the church, this community, because, at least in part, God's spirit lived here within their hearts, within this structure, within all their work and activities. They created a life here in this rugged wilderness, taking pride in their mining and sensing the importance of faith and community. They felt the "unity of persons trying / to be the Good News"—the Good News of God's abiding presence, of the joy of the promises for hope and a new age; for the joy of friendship; for the joy of creating community; for the joy of loving and caring for one another!

The Church. The Central Sunday schedule was 9 a.m. class meetings, 10:30 a.m. Morning Service, 2:30 Sunday School, 6 p.m. Evening Service. Prayer meetings were held on Wed. and Sat. evenings. Tuesday held Prayer Meetings for the ladies. Nichols gives us a glimpse of the Sunday Evening service: "Long before the appointed hour every seat was occupied. Even chairs had to be placed in the aisles to accommodate the worshippers. Almost everybody went to church and in many cases, it was their only vacation or recreation from life's daily routine. Whether the local preacher or the pastor occupied the pulpit, there was full attendance." They wanted to be here, to feel the unity of those who gathered, the joy of their strong religious faith, to hear again and again the Bible stories, to hear and think about the scripture passages of the hour (to be continued in conversations in the mines), to hear the music, to sing—to feel the joy.

Remember the lines from Isaiah: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation . . . Shout, and sing for joy." Do you feel that joy when you leave your church? John Mogabgab writes, "The spiritual life is a journey into the fullness of joy." I believe that and try to live that. But we have to be open to it, and that's often difficult in our rushed and fragmented lives. And it's very difficult if our faith communities don't let the joy in.

In a *Peanuts* cartoon, Linus and Snoopy are walking together. Snoopy is wearing a bowler hat and carrying a briefcase. Linus asks Snoopy, "When your clients come in for an interview, do you do anything special to put them at ease?" Snoopy turns to Linus and replies, "I give them a balloon."

Ann Weems has a wonderful poem, "Balloons Belong in Church," based on a story about a happy 4-year old who takes his orange balloon with pink stripes to Sunday School only to have his teacher tell him that balloons are not allowed in church." The child says, "I thought God would like balloons." Weems writes in her poem, "I celebrate balloons, parades, and chocolate chip cookies. / I celebrate seashells and elephants and lions that roar." The celebratory list is long and includes: "I celebrate the green of the world, the life-giving green, the hope-giving green." The poem concludes:

Life is a celebration, an affirmation of God's love.
Life is distributing more balloons.
For God so loved the world . . .
Surely that's a cause for joy.
Surely we should celebrate!
Good news! That God should love us that much.
Where did we ever get the idea that balloons don't belong in church?

So come to the party, and remember: It's a universal party.

There is a YouTube video of Matt Harding, a Seattle resident, doing a little dance for a few seconds in each of 70 or more places around the world where he is often joined by locals. Ray Waddle, the *Tennessean* Religion Editor, describes it as a "catalog of global humanity"—"Every frantic headline makes

it obvious that daily routine and human soul are drifting apart. Defiantly unexpected dancing might be a way to reunite them.”

The Joy of Life. Are you leaving room for joy? George Graham writes about his experiencing joy in a worship service while attending the Academy for Spiritual Foundation. He had come into worship distracted by the responsibilities he had left behind, somewhat numbed by life’s busyness: “Underneath the mix of feelings [that] I experienced, I was surprised to find joy—something I had not felt for a while.” He goes on to acknowledge, “It is still a struggle to find room for joy in my life When I remind myself to slow my pace and be attentive, I find that I can discover a sense of joy in most anything.” That’s our challenge—making room for joy in our own lives.

We are going to be singing “Joy to the World,” a Christmas carol written by Isaac Watts and Lowell Mason. The scripture-based words offer a message of joy and love replacing sin and sorrow

That’s the invitation—Come to the party! Come to the celebration of life! Let’s keep the joy of song going for all the seasons of our lives!

Hymn: Joy to the World

Benediction

Response: God Be With You Til We Meet Again

Organist: Father Corbin Eddy

Choir Director: Glenna Slatterly Irwin

***Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Carole Bard, Joanne Bollinger, Donna Koskiniemi, Valerie Koskiniemi

Altos: Connie Martin, Deanna Martin, Marcia Mason, Carolyn Meyer, Lani Poynter

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

Basses: Gary Koskiniemi, Jay Martin, Graham Meyer, Jack Porritt, Tom Westlake

Page Turner: Debbie Manderfield

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