

108th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 27, 2014

Minister: Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

Organ Prelude Father Corbin Eddy

Greetings & Announcements: Lawrence J. Molloy

***Introit** Psalm 150 (John Harper)

Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

A Time with Children/Youth

***Anthem:** Sing to the Lord a New Song (F. J. Haydn & Hal H. Hopson)

Responsive Reading: 18th Sunday First Reading – Christian Unity

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

Scripture Readings: Psalm 133 The Blessedness of Unity
John 15:9-11 The Commandment on Love
Colossians 3:12-19 Put On Love

Special Music: What a Fellowship (Hoffman/Showalter)
Carolyn Meyer, Deanna Martin, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

Pastoral Prayer and Moment of Remembrance: William Howard Hosking, 1920-2014
Donald W. Rogers, 1925-2013

Offering and *Offertory Anthem: Canticle of Fellowship (Craig Courtney)

Doxology

Sermon: **Life Together** (Abridged)

We gather this morning for the 108th Central Mine Reunion—what a great tradition! We gather not only to remember Central but to remember and pay tribute to all the miners and families who lived and worked here and elsewhere in the Copper Country, men and women of all faiths. The Keweenaw Heritage Center's educational materials list the diverse populations drawn to this area: Cornish, Scots, Italians, Finns, Swedes, Croatians, Slovenians, French Canadians, and more. These folks of different nationalities and histories came and formed community, bringing their own cultures and traditions. It is a wonderful mosaic of "life together." We remember all these settlers but also are mindful of the increasing ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial diversity in our country and world. How are we—our nation and world—doing in getting along and creating just and peaceful communities?

Our life together as people, as communities, as a nation and world, is a mixed record. On one hand, we are often divided, in conflict, and find it difficult to get along. On the other hand, we see wonderful and moving examples of people reaching out to one another, living in harmony and building communities and peaceful relations. I often bounce between discouragement about the human condition and

encouragement by the many people and organizations striving to bring about mutual respect and inclusive communities. It's sometimes difficult to keep the balance.

Lessons—Themes of Faith. In the midst of life, I'm drawn back to the lessons of our faith that ground me in the great commandment: to love God and to love one another—a universal theme of all faiths. Our scripture readings this morning speak to this theme.

Psalm 133: The Blessedness of Unity. “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell in unity.” This is one of the “Psalms of Ascent” probably sung by pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem to worship, praising the fellowship enjoyed there during festivals. It was necessary for people to co-exist in peace. Unity is described metaphorically: “precious oil poured on the head of Aaron”—an extravagant act of joy; “dew of Hermon”—Mt. Hermon, source of much of the headwaters of the Jordan River; “dew that falls in late summer to *nourish* late crops.”

John 15:9-17: Commandment on Love. “As God has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love . . . This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” The key words—*abide, love, commandment*—characterize a relationship of trust, knowledge, love, and unity. *To love is to be for another and to act for another* even at cost to one's self. The primary canon by which love for one another is measured is God's love for the world.

Colossians 3:12-17: Put on Love. “Put on them, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, *compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another, forgiving each other . . . And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*” A celebration in which the entire church participates calls for a quality of life together that mutually edifies and enriches fellowship with one another, as we are called to be a community of “faith living.”

Central Stories. The settlers here formed community, often from necessity. Community—yearning for community—is at the heart of what calls us back here year after year. *Church.* This church was a place of worship, religious education, prayer meetings, and support. It was here that the scriptures were read, sermons preached, anthems sung by the choir, and hymns of faith shared by the congregation. The settlers felt at home because they were connected. God was here, within each of them, binding them all in love. The church also became the community center where 4th of July and Christmas and other celebrations were held. It was a place to meet friends, neighbors; a place to share sorrows and joys; a place to be nurtured, sustained—to experience God.

Central: Friends, Neighbors, and Community. In “Community of Faith,” poet Roberta Porter writes, “Here, in Christ's love and compassion, / we belong to each other, / here the stranger is welcomed, / and called / friend.” This sense of unity flows over from the church into the community beyond. Alfred Nichols [*More Copper Country Tales*] shares wonderful stories of Central—life in the mines and the relationships of partners, boarding houses, the school, concerts, Cornet Band, wrestling and hammer and drill competitions, the Grand Tournament. In *Beyond the Boundaries*, Larry Lankton writes, “[The settlers] felt the urge to form and join organizations, fraternal organizations, creating their own social safety nets—mutual aid and benefit societies that provided moral and financial support to members and their families who were in harm's way due to illness, injury, or death . . . They performed individual and group acts of charity.”

The closeness that many at Central felt with family, mine partners, neighbors, friends, community, and church was a gift—and one we are all called to create. That was true then. It is true now. It's what our faith lessons are all about—unity, love, community. Parker Palmer, a wonderful religious writer, comments, “We need to help one another build community where we are. We need to foster the diverse

forms of community which are needed if our urban, technological society is to recover its human roots" (*Alive Now* M/J 1990, p. 47). That is our challenge.

Connectedness. In many ways, we are more "connected" than any generation before us—e.g., internet, social networking, Twitter, blogs, chat rooms, romantic match sites, 24-hour news cycle. The question is: *Has it brought us closer together? Has it created community? Is it bringing about a just, peaceful world?* I often don't think that it has. The deeper question is how we use such technology. What is driving our personal lives, our communities, our nation, and the world? All too often it is extreme ideologies, political polarization, vitriol and personal attacks, nationalistic and religious conflicts, and a sense of "everyone for themselves."

What has happened to the conviction of working for the common good? All too often we feel alone. A recent general social survey revealed that only 32% of Americans think that most people can be trusted. Worried political and social scientists say that what's known as "social trust" brings "good things—a society where it's easier to compromise or make a deal; where people are willing to work with those who are different from them for the common good." This distrust of others comes along with a growing distrust of institutions and government. We all know it's not working, and we yearn for human connectedness, trust, and inclusive communities.

Call to Renewal. The question and challenge for people of faith is: Can we make a difference? Absolutely! I am in awe of the difference one person can make, let alone a group or community, in changing and creating the world we yearn for. Parker Palmer writes, "God wants to bring us together as a gathered people: we must listen to each other in the words and in the silences between them, testing our own truth against the truth received by others. We must trust that God will work a greater truth in all of us than can be worked in any one of us standing alone . . . Community comes from faithful living, if we [all people of faith] can lead such lives." I'm deeply committed to building communities based on mutual respect, justice, and peace. I have worked throughout my professional careers to bring people together across ethnic, racial, gender, and religious lines." That is my passion and I invite you to join me. I offer three affirmations or challenges.

(a) *Reaffirm Our Faith.* I find that in the middle of this complex and often conflicted world, I need to be grounded in my faith, to go deep within myself to find the inner peace or calm that comes in a relationship with God, to hear again and again that I am—and you are—God's chosen, holy and beloved, to truly believe that. I begin my day with affirmations and contemplation. I attended an immersion weekend in Atlanta sponsored by the Atlanta Interfaith Initiatives, "Building Interfaith Communities Through Contemplation." I was moved by how universal this practice is across faith traditions. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, writes, "To put it boldly, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems, and our advertising culture, and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deep revolutionary matter."

(b) *Commit to Living Love.* Our call as Christians (as well as in other faiths) is to love God and one another, to care for and act for the other. Learning to love those different than ourselves or those who have in some way offended us is tough. Rebecca Parker, author of *Blessing the World: What Can Save Us Now*, writes, "What we need is a revolution that turns our attention more reverently and responsibly to the interdependent, relational character of life. What we need is a spiritual and practical revolution that embodies love for neighbor and for the world through sustaining structures of care and responsibility Loving our neighbor implicates us in loving the whole network of life. " There is a wonderful old camp song, "They will know we are Christians by our love." I'm sad to say that often Christians and the

Christian community don't practice that love. (That's true of all faiths.) The institutional church has often failed to be the kind of community God calls us to be; often it is divided and exclusive, rather than being a community reflecting God's love and vision of the inclusive community.

(c) *Build Inclusive Communities*. That is our challenge—to be a part of the “love movement”—to create and sustain a peaceful, just world right where we live. We need to recapture a spirit of respect and caring for others, to restore civility to our discourse, to work together for the common good. I have been involved in a movement around the Charter for Compassion, “a document that transcends religious, ideological, and national difference. Supported by leading thinkers from many traditions, the Charter activates the Golden Rule around the world.” This is a cooperative effort to restore not only compassionate thinking but, more important, compassionate action to the center of religious, moral, and political life.

The poet Joy Harjo writes in “Remember,” “Remember that you are all people and that all people are you. / Remember that you are this universe and that this universe is you.” Let us build communities wherever we live and reach out to others with caring and love.

Hymn: In Christ There Is No East or West

Benediction

Response: God Be With You Til We Meet Again

Organist: Father Corbin Eddy

Choir Director: Carolyn Martin Meyer

***Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Carol Bard, Tacy Flint, Charlene Marculis, Nancy Molloy

Altos: Joanne Bollinger, Connie Martin, Deanna Martin, Lani Poynter

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

Basses: Graham Meyer, Jack Porritt, Rodney Westlake

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