

85th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 28, 1991

Minister: Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

Organ Preludes Donald M. Ross

***Introit:** To Thee, O Comforter Divine (Underhill)

Greetings: Charles Stetter

Hymn: Come, Thou Almighty King

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

***Anthem:** Precious Lord, Take My Hand (Allen)

Responsive Reading: Psalm 91

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

Scripture Readings: Exodus 33:12-17, Ephesians 3:14-21, Luke 6:12-16

Pastoral Prayer

Vocal Duet: Is My Name Written There? (Mary A. Kidder Frank M. Davis)
Silas and Daniel Rosemergy

Announcements and Remarks: Charles Stetter

Offering and*Offertory Anthem: May All the Hosts of Heaven (G. F. Handel)

Doxology

Sermon: **God Knows You by Name** (Abridged)

To be here [at the Central Mine Reunion Service] pushes us to remember and speak aloud the names of people who make this place what it was and continues to be. The naming of our names in neighborhoods, in churches, in the community, comes to be recognized and to stand for certain things. We come to be known by our names—what we do, where we live, what we value, the way we treat others, the kind of persons we are. Names speak to us about meanings, about faith, about community, and about continuity over the generations.

At the first Reunion on July 21, 1907, many former residents were seated on the altar platform—Edward Hall, Sr., John Rowe, Frank Nancarrow, Edward Mills, Thomas Harris, John Adams. In the choir were Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Nichols and daughter Mildred, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Frances, Mrs. Silbilsky (Susie Bryant), Mrs. Opal (Mary E. Roberts), Mrs. Hill (Eliza Derrick), Mrs. Cameron (Jessie Mitchell), Miss Kate Bennett, Samuel Brant, Arthur Kneebone, Thomas Mitchell, Edward Mitchell, and William Collins. God knows each of these people by name. Over time, the names continue: George H. Roberts, Dr. Fred W. Bryant, Sr., Henry Cox, Mrs. Girvin J. Ross, Donald Ross, Charles Stetter, and others. God knows each of these people by name. And so do we.

“The Biblical concept of name did not merely refer to a spoken or written symbol of an object or person. The Biblical understanding of a ‘name’ meant the actual, deep, vital identity and presence of the other.”*

We feel their presence today. Each of us, with our own names, are a part of the mystery, the wonder, the ongoing community of God's people in the world. God knows us all by name.

This past year I met Alex Haley at Meharry Medical College. We each arrived early and sat talking together. Then and in his talk, he recalled as a boy sitting on the porch of his grandmother's home, listening to her talk with her sisters—Aunt Plus, Aunt Liz, Aunt Till, Aunt Viney, and Cousin Georgia. “With the supper dishes washed, they would all go out on the front porch and sit in cane-bottomed rocking chairs...and talk about the same things—snatches and patches of what later I'd learn was the long, cumulative family narrative that had been passed down across the generations.” As an adult, on impulse, he went into the National Archives in Washington, D.C., to see the Census Records for Alamance County, N.C., just after the Civil War. In the rolls of microfilm, he suddenly saw—Tom Murray, Black, Blacksmith; Irene Murray, Black, Housewife—followed by the “names of Grandma's older sisters, most of whom he'd listened to countless times on Grandma's front porch. That was the beginning of 12 years of research and writing leading to *Roots*.

See the names. Speak the names, and the people become real. Today, through the Spoken Word, through our remembering together, we name our ancestors and in so doing, name our God and ourselves.

In the Hebrew scriptures, the three most important names for God are *Elohim* (one who is worshipped or adores), *El* (strength or power), and *Jehovah* or *Yahweh* (3rd person singular imperfect of the verb “to be”). *Yahweh*, the most important name of all, was first disclosed by God from the burning bush to Moses in response to his plea to know God's name so that the children of Israel would know that he was truly sent to them by God to lead them out of bondage. “I am that I am: Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, *I Am* has sent you...This is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exodus 8:13-15). The name was given not just so Moses could tell his people but as a way in which to bind the people in covenant with God. In coming to know God by name, the promise is made that God also know God's people by name. Our faith story is centered in this covenant with God.

We can't fully name God. I think of God as Creator and as Love. I also think of God as Parent, Friend, and Companion who knows me by name, who comes and goes with me. God knows each of us by name, calls us by that name, uses that name to assure us of our identity, our value as a child of God, and our purpose. If we truly understand and experience God in this way, we will know that God is present with us now and in the future.

God knew the name of each of the settlers and miners here at Central—Chynoweth, Bawden, Vivian, Uren, Dunstan. It was a hard and rugged life, but God was with them, and they turned to God in faith for that reassurance. Many died young, but with a sense of God's caring. On the tombstone of Daniel Haenni, Born June 1, 1834, Died March 28, 1859, Aged 24 Years, 10 Months—“Weep not for me, my parents dear. I am not dead but sleeping here. I am not yours but God's alone, who loves me best and took me home.”

Through the centuries, names have reflected localities, trade, personalities. In the history of Cornish surnames we have—Occupations: Smith, Baker, Taylor; Place: Penrose, Hall, Wood; Descriptive: Broad, Bone, Short—names carrying meaning from the past. What we do with them in the present is up to us, since we are the associations that will be passed on to future generations. Names are a part of us—but they do not limit who and what we are and what we are becoming. We become different people, often in and through our faith.

It has been estimated that more than half the people of the civilized world have names originating from the Bible; 3,037 men are referred to by name in the Bible, only 181 women.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus names the disciples (only a few do we hear much about later on), including changing Simon's name to Peter (the Rock), Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Batholomew; Matthew, Thomas, James, and Simon, and then there are the two Judases. They are called. They are named, as each of us is named. In the act of Baptism, each person is named as a special child of God, placing us in a special relationship with God through the love of Christ. God names each of us.

All families under heaven are named by God—that means *all* of us. In Ephesians, the Apostle is praying for the early Christian Church, appealing to the Greeks as well as the Jews. It is a universal call to find strength by being grounded in love, and that Christ might dwell in our hearts through faith. That love is offered to *all* God's children. When you accept that God names you, you must accept that God names each person on earth.

We take pride in our heritage but we live in an increasingly small world. Our own society is changing dramatically, with greater ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity. We are called to respect and celebrate others by name. We are deeply committed to our own faith, but we must, in faith and love, join hands with those of other faiths.

God goes with us but wants us to get to know others by name as well, to share in revealing God's love for each person through our actions, through our willingness to care. God knows each of you by name, and in the knowing comes life and love. Amen.

*Flora Slosson, "Gathered in That Name"

Hymn: Savior, Again, To Thy Dear Name

Benediction, Response, and Postlude

Organist: Donald M. Ross

***Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Sue Adams, Pearl Jalkanen, Betty Martin, Pat Mitchell, Esther Rosemergy

Altos: Nickie Bryant, Flora Graham, Helen Trudgeon

Tenors: Robert Bryant, Peter Manderfield, Silas Rosemergy, Mark Spreitzer

Basses: Dr. Fred Bryant, Randy Bryant, Stanley Martin, Jack Porritt, Jack Trudgeon, Harry Vine

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, Silas C. Rosemergy, Donald M. Ross, R. Charles Stetter, David H. Thomas, Henry J. Vine, Dr. Brian D. Wake, John E. Wilson

In Remembrance: Dr. Frank Raley, 1917-1990
Colonel William H. Shimonek (1907-1991)
Charles S. Sincock (1906-1990)
The Reverend Dr. Perry A. Thomas (1925-1991)