

**90th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 28, 1996**

**Minister:** Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

**Organ Preludes:** Donald M. Ross

**\*Introit:** Morning Has Broken (Arr. Randall DeBruyn)  
Flute Obbligato, Patti Dauser

**Greetings:** Dr. Fred W. Bryant

**Hymn:** Come, Christians, Join to Sing

**Invocation and Lord's Prayer**

**Time with Children/Youth**

**\*Anthem:** Come, Holy Ghost (Eric H. Thiman)

**Responsive Reading:** Psalms 130 & 136: 1-9, 23-26

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

**Scripture Readings:** Leviticus 23:4-14, John 12:1-3, 13:3-5, 12-17

**Vocal Quartet:** Great Is Your Faithfulness (Thomas Chisolm)  
Pat Mitchell, Donna Koskiniemi, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

**Call to Prayer** Sweet Hour of Prayer

**Pastoral Prayer & In Remembrance:** Mildred Vine (1899-1995)

**Announcements and Remarks:** Charles Stetter

**Offering and \*Offertory Anthem:** In Thee, O Lord (F. J. Haydn)

**Doxology**

**Sermon:** **Celebrations, Rituals, and the Sacred** (Abridged)

It has become a ritual for me, this return to my home, my heritage. This time together in this place never fails to renew my spirit, putting me in touch not just with family and friends but with my God who binds us together over the generations, calling us into the future even as we remember our past.

We visited the Rosemergy Farm in Cornwall this Spring. Hiking the Cornish coastal trails, you can understand why the Cornish Cousin Jacks and Jennys felt at home here in the Keweenaw with our equally beautiful and rugged coastal shores. Of course, I went for a swim in the ocean. The Cornish say that you should take a swim in the ocean during May—it will make the rest of the season seem warm. It was also good training for our sunrise swim on Reunion Sundays.

Reading Alfred Nichols' *More Copper Country Tales*, I am struck by the rhythms of the settlers' lives, their life rituals: ◇ the hard, long work days until the Sabbath, ◇ evenings reserved for Bible Study, Prayer Meetings, ◇ strenuous practice preparing for the Calumet Grand Tournament, ◇ planning the Christmas Concert, ◇ morning and evening rituals of the boarding houses, ◇ the monthly negotiating of contracts

on Sarvey Day [Survey Day]. All these rituals gave their lives meaning, carried them from day to day, season to season, across the years--simple, ordinary, but profoundly grounded in a sense of who they were; pride in their work, family, community; and devotion to their church and God.

Today, meaningful expressions of our individual lives and the importance of community beyond ourselves are all too scarce. We need to recapture a way of moving through our days that sustains us, gives us joy in our living, and makes us look toward the future with hope. So we're reflecting this morning on celebrations, rituals, and the sacred—then and now.

*An invitation.* At the heart of celebration and ritual is a connection to the sacred, an awareness of the spiritual in all that we do. Several years ago, I led a Lenten series "Discovering Everyday Spirituality" based on a video series of the same name led by Thomas Moore [author of *Care of the Soul*]. The series posits that we are hungering for a life that is more substantive, that has deep value and is spiritual, related to daily life. As we tell our stories, consecrate our places, and express ourselves creatively through our activities, we glimpse the ways in which our daily and seasonal rituals help give meaning to our lives and connect us with the sacred. We all live by rituals, even when we don't recognize them as such. I invite you to think of such rituals in your lives that give meaning, that tie you to the past, and give you hope for the future.

*Biblical Rituals.* The scriptures, our faith stories, are filled with celebrations and rituals, with God in the midst of it all. In Leviticus, the people of Israel are reminded to recall their histories and to be confident that God continues to lead them. (*We need to be reminded, as well.*) It was important to be intentional about the remembering, to establish a celebration or ritual. The verses we heard this morning introduced the festival of Passover and unleavened bread and the Feast of Weeks. The people of Israel are commanded to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egypt by the mighty hand of God. These and other rituals were "holy oases of refreshment, celebration, and commemoration—sabbaths, festivals, and special days of awe and grace. They . . . disclose what was true of all time, that it belongs to God. The purpose of the Sabbath . . . was not to be the one and only holy day in the week. Instead the Sabbath brought to visibility the holiness of all days . . . . The religious life depicted here, as elsewhere in the Bible, is not one of gloom and doom but of joy." [*New Interpreters Bible*]

These great festivals were occasions of covenantal renewal. That process, that covenant, continues through time and is in constant need of renewal, in hope that the bonds that hold us together as people of God will be reknit. I believe that such "reknitting" happened here at Central, in celebrations of the church and community.

*Rituals for our day.* How do we begin reknitting the bonds that hold us together as people of God? We start by creating and celebrating rituals that put us in touch with the sacred. The authors of *Ritual in a New Day* ask, "How can we create with others rituals that will help to carry us through both our common days and the seasons of crisis in our lives?" They summarize that authentic rituals grow out of the depth of human experience, both in terms of the present situation that is being ritualized and the participants' personal and corporate pasts. "A ritual is an agreed upon, repeatable interplay in which two or more persons participate so as to deepen or enhance the meaning of a moment or an event. In a faith context, such a ritual includes an intentional reference to God and seeks not only deeper understanding, a new perspective, or a release of emotion, energy, or strength, but also a renewed disclosure of the divine" (p. 14). What are the significant transitions that persons are experiencing that are powerfully shaping persons' lives?

*Then and now.* Remember our idea that the purposes of rituals are to keep us in touch with one another, to explore aspects of the past, to cope with changes in our lives, to deal with loss and grief. Ways that this happened in Central include letters, stories and scripture, welcoming of newcomers, support of miners' families in times of injury and grief, and more. Now this may happen through emails, gatherings, homecomings and reunions, farewell litanies, memorial services. We need celebrations, rituals that put us in touch with ourselves, our communities, and our God. Jesus gave us the model.

*Foot Washing: Hospitality and Service.* In the reading we heard from the Gospel of John, there are two stories, closely connected: the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary, and Jesus washing the feet of his disciples in the same week as Passover. What Jesus will do for his disciples and will ask them to do for one another, Mary has already done. Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet is an expression of love, a way of drawing them into his life with God, and he asks them to repeat the service to others. Jesus calls us to give as he gave.

The Central Mine community served one another in so many ways in celebrations and rituals—with awareness of the sacred. May it be so with us.

**Hymn:** How Firm a Foundation

**Benediction, Response, Postlude**

**Organist:** Donald M. Ross

**\*Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Carol Bard, Mary Henderson, Grace Kikuchi, Betty Martin, Pat Mitchell, Sharon Streeter

*Altos:* Deanna Martin, Carolyn Meyer, Hilary Meyer, Connie Plymat, Carolyn Martin

*Tenors:* Peter Manderfield, Stanley Martin, Mark Spreitzer

*Basses:* Dr. Fred Bryant, Richard Hutchison, Graham Meyer, Jack Porritt

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