

101st Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 28, 2007

Minister: Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

Introit Holman-Climax Choir [Guests from Cornwall, England]

Greetings & Announcements: Dave Thomas

A Moment of Remembrance and Thanksgiving: Althea Heikkinen (1931-2006)
Thirza Maud Milford Pruner (1917-2007)

Hymn: Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

Anthem: Holman-Climax Choir

Responsive Reading: Micah 4:1-4 and Isaiah 65:17-19, 21-25

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

Scripture Readings: Joshua 1:1-6; Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Special Music: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
(Jesus, the Light of the World)
Donna Koskiniemi, Valerie Koskiniemi, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

Pastoral Prayer

Offering and *Offertory Anthem: Holman-Climax Choir

Doxology

Sermon: Cornwall to Central: The Long Journey Home (Abridged)

I was raised here, left after high school, and have not lived here since—but it has been, is, and always will be “home.” This week we are celebrating the 14th Gathering of the International Cornish Society—all of us coming home. Pliny the Elder wrote, “Home is where the heart is”—and my heart is here, as it is for many of you. In the midst of this Gathering, I want to reflect on the journey from Cornwall to Central for the early settlers and the many ways they made this home, even as Cornwall remained their home, as well.

As the economic situation in Cornwall became dire, the tin and copper mines closing, many came here where copper had been found and mines were opening. Mining companies recruited them for their skills. Alfred Nichols [*More Copper Country Tales*] refers to these Cornish miners as “the artists and mining masters” of their time, and often said, “In every land and clime where a ladder appeared through a hole in the ground, a Cousin Jack was there.”

Their stories are moving—the long, difficult journey to get here, separation from families, a vast wilderness filled with hardship, and long, cold winters they were unaccustomed to. But they came finding and creating a new home, bringing with them their traditions, customs, faith, and commitment to building community. Nichols wrote, “They were honest, hard working men, with high and noble purposes of life.”

The settlers' stories have much to say to us today, as we are on our own journeys. In *Our Journey Home*, Jean Vanier writes, "Going home' is a journey to the heart of who we are, a place where we can be ourselves and welcome the reality of our beauty and our pain. From this acceptance of ourselves, we can accept others as they are and we can see our common humanity."

In the novel *The Long Winter Ends*, Newton G. Thomas captures the heart of the Cornish immigrant experience: the failure of the mines in Cornwall, their hope for the preservation of Cornish traditions in America, and finally accepting that their future is in America. It has been a journey home.

As I reflect on this journey, I am drawn to reflect on my own life and spiritual journey and invite each of you to do the same in this time of remembering and re-visioning "our long journey home."

Biblical Narratives: Journey. In many ways, the entire Bible is a story (stories) of journey over time, over many generations. These stories of journeys connect and reveal meaning for us on our journeys today. One way to reflect on scripture is to read a passage three times; after the first, lift up one word; after the second, lift up one phrase; after the third, state simply its meaning for you that day. In the reading from Joshua, we hear God command Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan into their new land. What stands out: "proceed" – "I will be with you" – God is with us on the journey all the days of our lives.

In the reading from Matthew, we hear the story of an angel of God appearing to Joseph in a dream, telling him to take "the child and his mother" to Egypt so that Herod cannot destroy the child; and later, again in a dream, the angel directs Joseph to return to the land of Israel, to Nazareth. What stands out: "Rise" – "Out of Egypt have I called my child" – God both calls and accompanies us on our journey.

Both these readings speak of journey, relocation, and the presence of God in creating home. "The land I am giving you as a promise" (Joshua) – for the Cornish, the Keweenaw. "No one will stand against you, I will not forsake you." Be strong, courageous.

Coming Home to Central. Those who made the journey from Cornwall to Central brought with them confidence in their skills as miners, their faith, their love of singing and chapel services, and their confidence that God would be with them. Many were followers of John (and Charles) Wesley. In *The Wesleys in Cornwall*, John Pearce writes:

The Wesleys . . . restored *heart religion* to Cornwall. Wayside chapels again became a feature of the Cornish landscape and the people were gathered once more into intimate devotional groups The dynamic energy of a rugged and imaginative people was directed into well-defined channels. . . . All were instructed in what the Wesleys believed to be the essentials of the Christian faith and were able to give a reason for the hope that was in them. . . . Here was an infusion which to this day has given Cornish life its spiritual content, its colour and its zeal. (pp. 24-25)

So the miners and their families made the long journey to a new home in America, here in the Keweenaw. They brought their traditions like the Christmas Celebration Open House—trees, gifts, carols, recitations, Santa Claus—what a joyous time. The Fourth of July Celebration. The Calumet Grand Tournament with its 300-yard dash, sack races, hop-step-and-jump, climbing a greased pole, hammer and drill contests, band contest, singing contest, and Cornish wrestling. Lollypops for children, ginger beer and popcorn, parasols for the ladies. Parties and weddings. All done to connect families, to form community, to carry on their Cornish traditions and customs in Central.

And, of course, this church, the choir, the Sunday School and prayer meetings (Wed. and Sat.), the Ladies (Tues.) Prayer Meeting. Nichols writes, "the opinion prevailed Central could get along without any help

from outside . . . the sentiment that Central had the best choir, the best minister, the best school, . . . the best everything was unquestionable.” Well, that’s a definition of home! Nichols says, “Truly Central Mine was a small mining community, the inhabitants deprived of luxuries and modern conveniences. However, what does it matter if love abounds? (p. 92) “Withal it was home and it embodied all the endearing memories that word implies” (p. 95).

Our Own Journeys. I invite each of you to consider “Where is home for you?” Is it a place or a feeling in your heart? In “Carrying Others’ Hearts With Us,” Patricia Beaumont references the opening of a poem by e. e. cummings: “i carry your heart with me.” I love that thought. She relates ways in which we can carry others’ hearts with us, e.g., sharing special experiences, sharing prayers in separate locations knowing the other is also praying them: “Through these prayers, we are doing more than a simple act of remembrance: we are carrying our hearts’ concerns for our loved one to the One who carries all of our hearts in the Divine heart. . . . the rituals we have developed to carry one another’s hearts with us and to God serve as a witness that God watches over each of us when we cannot be together.” By carrying the hearts of others, our home is where we are at any time.

We may find that “our journeys lead us to unexpected places that will become home for us, if we are open to the leading of the Spirit and the call of our own hearts” [*Alive Now*, M/A 2000]. I think that was the case for those who came to Central (or many of them). They were open to the leading of the Spirit and the call of their own hearts.

I hope that your coming home to this place and to our shared faith has also brought you home to yourself, to this very question of what’s most important to you. I hope this coming home has been an act of seeking God. Perhaps, by coming here, you have found a moment to stand before God, to look at yourself and your life, for in doing that, you find your real home—a place that gives your life meaning; a place that in love takes you in, sustains you, encourages you, inspires you, gives you strength and gives you vision; a place where you belong and share in faith and community; a place where in covenant with God, you love and care for one another.

Hymn: Ye Servants of God

Benediction

Organist: Susan Rokicki

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