

**94th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 30, 2000**

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

**\*Introit** O Sing to the Lord (Daley)

**Greetings & Announcements:** Gary A. Bryant

**Hymn:** Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

**Invocation and Lord's Prayer**

**Order of Baptism for David Lloyd Wake** (9 a.m. service)

**Time with Children/Youth** (11 a.m. service)

**\*Anthem:** A Time for All Things (Wagner)

**Responsive Reading:** Psalms 148 & 150

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

**Scripture Readings:** 1 Chronicles 15: 16, 25, 27-28; Colossians 3:12-17

**Special Music:** How Can I Keep From Singing  
Pat Mitchell, Donna Koskiniemi, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

Let It Breathe on Me [Call to Prayer]

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Offering and \*Offertory Anthem:** Sing O' Heavens (Martin)

**Doxology**

**Sermon:** **Song of Life** (Abridged)

During this past year, I have been thinking about the importance of music in the lives of the early settlers. I have been amazed at the many references to song and music in the accounts of their daily lives. While this is true of many different nationalities, it's particularly true of the Cornish. While they were known world-wide for their mining skills, they were also known for their love of music.

In *The Wesleys in Cornwall*, John Pearce wrote that the Cornish are "a people born in song." "Day by day thousands of Cornish men [and women], generation by generation, have sung or prayed 'A Charge to Keep I Have' as a reminder of their duty to their God and to their neighbors." In *Boom Copper*, Angus Murdoch writes, "Next to talking, the Cousin Jack loved to sing. Few had formal training, but volume was considered compensative to lack of polish. The Cornishmen sang on their way to work and blended their song into a chorus as the man car took them down the shaft. It must have been quite an experience to hear the strains of 'Rock of Ages' gradually fade as the singers were lowered underground. And the singing at a Central Mine funeral could move a man with a heart of stone."

Hymn singing at Cornish mine locations wasn't reserved for Sundays and funerals. It was a competitive sport. The community took as much pride in its choir as it did in its wrestlers or skillful hammer and drill teams. Choirs traveled from one location to another to hold singing meets, and at least once a year all

the choirs on the range met at the First Methodist Church of Calumet to carol for the championship (p. 203). Alfred Nichols (*More Copper Country Tales*) writes, “Central Mine was noted far and wide for its excellent musical accomplishments. It became the standard of comparison for similar choruses, soloists, and musical organizations throughout the country (p. 117).

The settlers’ entire lives were filled with music. They loved it. But more—music expressed and gave meaning to their lives—faith, work, family, fun. Music was an essential part of who they were—and who we are.

The Cornish love of hymns (Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000) goes back generations, and ultimately comes out of the rich musical tradition of our faith, as told in the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament. The story we heard in Chronicles was an account of David’s bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, making it the center of worship as well as the capital. The procession was “loud and joyous.” There were singers and musical instruments--harps, lyres, trumpets, cymbals to raise sounds of joy. Music was the only way to fully express the significance of the occasion. In the account in II Samuel, David was moved to dance with joy. (I move/dance a lot in the pulpit.) Music, song, dance, chants, and instruments were a central part not just of worship but of their lives.

Music of the Christian Church. The use of psalms, singing, and instruments in Jewish life and worship is clear, and we assume that similar music practices continued in the early Christian church. This morning we heard the lines from Colossians urging that community “to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16). The early Christian community shared responsibility for the spiritual welfare of each member. The way they lived reflected God’s love and continuing presence, and their music reflected that life and love. It is a rich part of our faith tradition, with each generation and century adding to our songs for the ages. Much choral music is based on psalms, scriptures, and hymns written particularly for worship.

The Central Musical Heritage. One commentator writing on the musical history of our faith asserts, “The Christian Church has come singing down the ages” [*Interpreters Bible* Col. 3:17, p. 222]. That has certainly been true of the church here at Central. In his writing about Central, Alfred Nichols makes many references to the choir—rehearsals, Sunday services, concerts. In one account he tells of taking a stroll after supper, walking up toward the church: “Out upon the stillness of that delightful evening came this song: ‘A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify.’” The voices joined in another hymn: “Abide with me. Fast Fall the eventide, the darkness deepens. Lord, abide with me.” These songs of faith stirred the heart, renewed the miners’ faith, and gave them courage.

The legend of Dick Buller grew out of singing competitions. Dick had a status in the copper range comparable to that of Paul Bunyan in the timber country, save that Dick’s incredible feats had to do largely with his mighty basso voice. He was a Central Miner, and it is said that the volume of his deep bass was so great it could penetrate ten levels underground and travel 10 to 15 miles along the surface (*Boom Cooper*, p. 204). Then there was the Central Band: “The reputation this grand old musical organization had attained in the community was of the highest standard . . . known far and wide and second to none—not even the Fifth Regiment Band of Calumet” (Nichols, p. 124).

What a rich musical heritage—and it continues as part of this Reunion Service. It begins to tell a story about us and our continuing faith, as we continue the song. In *The Long Winter Ends*, Newton Thomas tells of a hymn sing led by a Mr. Noble: “‘We’ll sing unto the Lord a new song,’ said Noble, “‘today! We’ll

make old songs new by the way we sing them.” We are called to sing, to make old songs new by the way we sing them.

*Song of Faith*

Down years and centuries  
those who love god  
sing together  
an anthem of faith.  
Countless people gone before us  
leave a melody of love and grace—  
a heritage of hope.

The invitation comes to us to listen,  
to hear this song soaring over all  
and then  
to add our voices to this melody  
to join in the harmony  
for ourselves and for those  
who cannot sing  
to keep on singing  
beyond our earthly days and prayers.

—*Roberta Porter*

Porter’s verse echoes Walt Whitman’s lines of years before: “Sing to my soul, renew its faith and hope. / Give me some vision of the future.” Music has a way of doing all that, touching us down deep, expressing our beliefs and dreams, encouraging us to remain open to the possibilities of tomorrow because of our memories of the past. An actor in the production of *Sinatra—My Way* recounted her father saying “Sinatra is the sound track of my life.” What are the musical sound tracks of your life? I have such wonderful memories and experiences associated with music—Dad playing the violin and piano, our Laurium church choir, singing around campfires, playing instruments in band, singing with the University of Michigan Choral Union, joining the annual Messiah Sing-In, John Denver’s music in our wedding, and, of course, music in this Reunion Service, particularly “The Diadem.”

Music is all around us. Music inspires, consoles, moves, celebrates. Music is central to our religious history and experience because music is central to our living. Since the beginning of recorded history, we have been drawn to rhythm, beat, chant, incantation, melody, harmony, words that help us to touch God. Even *Peanuts* Snoopy has musical memories. Snoopy is lying atop his doghouse when Lucy asks him, “How can you write about theology? You’ve never even been in a church!” Snoopy thinks, “Au contraire! When I was at the Daisy Hill Puppy Farm, we went to chapel every morning! I was part of a 40-beagle choir. You’ve never heard ‘Rock of Ages’ until you’ve heard it sung by 40 beagles!”

We are all called to listen and to sing. In our music, individually and together, we express who we are, what we believe, and how we intend to pursue God’s mission. Our music should convey the full range of the human spirit: being with God—“I Come to the Garden Alone”; solidarity—“We Shall Overcome”; awe—“O How Glorious, Full of Wonder”; confession—“Amazing Grace”; acceptance—“Just As I Am”; response—“Christians, Rise and Act Your Creed”; depths—“O God, We Look to Thee in All our Sorrow”; heights—“Joy to the World.” All this expresses our living. Our songs can comfort, sustain, move, and change us. A wonderful story is told of George Frederick Handel. An audience member came up to him after a performance of the “Messiah” to tell him how much he had enjoyed the music. Handel

responded, "I'm sorry. I had wished to make you a better person through my music." Music has that capacity if we let it.

God calls us to sing. Song expresses our love of God and of life. Each of us has a song to sing. We need to sing it, and listen to others sing their songs. We need to let our lives be a song. It is more than music alone. It's the way we become God's instruments in the world, to let God continue the music through us. We are called to be instruments through which the melody of God takes shape. Through our lives, God's love seeks to dance and make music for this world. We simply have to trust in God's melody and believe that we are capable instruments of God's goodness.

God's breath of love working through us can do amazing things. It has done amazing things over the generations. It is now our turn to make and to share the music. Our faith, our songs, our music offer us the chance everyday of singing a new song—singing for the joy of being alive; humming a tune when we're alone with ourselves and God; sharing a song of comfort with a friend; listening to the beauty of a symphony or chorus; making our acts of kindness and caring a song for others; singing courageously even when we're afraid; joining the oppressed by "lifting our voices and singing, 'til earth and heaven ring, ring with the harmonies of liberty"; letting our lives "flow on in endless song."

**Hymn:** Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

**Benediction, Response, Postlude**

**Organist:** Mark Spreitzer

**\*Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Susan Adams, Donna Koskiniemi, Pat Mitchell, Sharon Strieter, Ann Jarvis Tomlinson

*Altos:* Carol Bard, Connie Martin, Deanna Martin, Grace Kiluchi, Theresa Rekawek

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

*Basses:* Fred Bryant, Richard Hutchison, Gary Koskiniemi, Jay Martin

**Board of Directors:** Susan H. Adams, James R. Brooks, Dr. Fred W. Bryant (*V. Pres.*), Gary A. Bryant, James K. Curto, Jeffrey Nicholls Curto, David C. Heikka, Donald M. Ross, Mark Spreitzer, R. Charles Stetter (*Pres.*), David H. Thomas (*Sec./Treas.*), Harry J. Vine, Dr. Brian D. Wake, \*John E. Wilson \**Emeritus Status*