

**99th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 31, 2005**

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

**\*Introit**                    The Central Introit (Dedicated to Charles Stetter)

**Greetings & Announcements:** Dave Thomas

**A Moment of Remembrance and Thanksgiving:** Esther Rosemergy, 1913-2004  
Saxton (Sax) Voelker, 1908-2005  
Reuben Charles Stetter, 1919-2005  
John Wilson, 1916-2005

**Hymn:**                    Praise Ye the Lord

**Invocation and Lord's Prayer**

**Time with Children/Youth** [What makes you laugh?]

**\*Anthem:**                God So Loved the World (Stainer)

**Responsive Reading:** Psalm 147: 1-9, 11-20

**Scripture Readings:** Genesis 21:1-6; Luke 6:17-21; Romans 12:1-13

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

**Special Music:**        This Little Light of Mine  
Pat Mitchell, Donna Koskiniemi, Valerie Koskiniemi, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

Voice Still and Small [Call to Prayer]

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Offering and \*Offertory Anthem:**        Amazing Grace – Come and Find (Irwin)  
Jim Irwin, Recorder

**Doxology**

**Sermon:**                **Cornish Humor: Laughter, Healing, and Renewal** (Abridged)

In his preface to Alfred Nichols' *More Copper Country Tales*, E. M. Laitala asks, "What kind of people were they, and where did they come from? How in the world could they live in this wilderness? What did they do for excitement?" Part of his answer: "Life was earnest, but there were times of gaiety and excitement." The settlers included "the boisterous and carefree . . . characters all." As I recalled the stories of these people, I was struck with the many examples of humor in almost every circumstance. I am amazed that they were able to laugh, have fun, and enjoy life in the middle of hardship. I think it was their ability to laugh that got them through tough times. Their humor added to the daily web of their lives and community, creating bonds of friendship and community, renewing their spirits. Today, we often don't make room for humor in our busy and serious lives, and we pay a cost for that in our health and well-being.

A few weeks ago in a waiting room, I picked up the magazine *Real Simple* and saw an article on humor, which started with a quiz. Ready? True or false? (a) Cheery people are annoying; (b) When you hear a joke, you groan or punch holes in the logic (why would a horse go into a bar?). If you answered true to either, you may have Humor Deficiency Syndrome. Larry Wilde, founder of National Humor Month—April (Fools), asks: Do you enjoy a good cartoon? Do you watch sit-coms? Do you read humorous books? Do you go to comedy clubs? If not, the article continues, maybe you should because Humor Deficiency can be hazardous to your health. A recent study from the University of Maryland Medical Center found that people with heart disease were 40% less likely to recognize humor. Now, I don't want to take this article too serious, but there's a grain of truth here, and many other reputable studies have found significant correlations between laughter and health.

For over twenty years, I have been committed to wholistic pastoral care—body, mind, spirit. All too frequently, religion has separated body/spirit and we have lost the sacredness of our embodied selves. Religion often is far too serious and misses the *joy* available to us in life and faith. I saw a sign at a Nashville Methodist Church: God has a sense of humor. I've seen people stop and look at that, looking puzzled, surprised. Really? God has a sense of humor? Yes!

We've lost a sense of God's humor. We overlook the many references to fun and laughter in the scriptures: *Expressions of rejoicing*: In Psalm 126:1-3 "When the Lord restored the futures of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy." *Religious celebration*: Samuel 18:7 (following David's victory over the Philistines) "The women came out of all the towns of Israel singing and dancing . . . songs of joy . . . as they made merry." *Laughter* in the play of children in Genesis 21:9. Later I'll be talking about Jesus' humor. So, we need to get the humor back!

*Cornish Humor: Laughter*. The Cornish have many forms of humor, e.g., jokes, pranks, retorts, and conversation. I went to a Cornish Joke Book website (many I couldn't use). An example: An old couple were sitting by the kitchen fire one dark evening when the wife said to her husband, 'Open the door an' see if it be rainin' outside.' The husband replied, 'Why don't 'ee call the dog in an' see if 'e be wet?'" Another: A shopkeeper talking about this assistant—"Ee down't know 'nuff to know thet 'ee down't knaw nawthen."

*Cornish Witty Conversations. Pasties*—"Billy was eaten es pasty, but he didden seem to relish en a' toal. From where I saw, it seemed as ef it was not baked sufficiently . . . Billy had eaten but a small portion of his pasty supper and was in the act of tying it up in a bag when he said he would take it home and give it to Emily, his wife, and ask her ef she forgot to put en in the oven. . . . " The storyteller continues, "Billy may have loved her as much as tes possible for one to love another, but all the love Billy could get inside of him cud not digest that pasty. . . . I do really believe if you shud put two hammers on that pasty or thrown en in No. 2 shaft over there, it would still retain the form of a pasty."

Another miner told of his partner who suffered from indigestion. "The doctor told him he was eatin' too much pasty and he ought to eat more animal food. After awhile he saw the doctor again who asked 'How are ee? Ded you eat the animal food I told 'ee to?' Well, my pardner said, 'I could eat the turnips and potatoes, but when it came to oats and hay, I couldn't swallow it.'"

*Pranks*. A group of miners were discussing "Why es et some men can sweat easier than others?" Numerous explanations were offered when one of the group "with whom Nature had been most sparing in fatty tissue wa' heard to remark, 'Talkin' about sweatin', I can't remember the time when I had a good sweat, no matter how hard I work, nuther.'" Later the group decided "we'll make 'em sweat all right."

They arrived early for shift, unhung the blue flannel underwear of the old “Never Sweat” and carefully distributed an ample application of dry mustard on its inside woolen surface. Work began. Eventually this dialogue is heard. Never Sweat says, “Pardner, I’m feelin’ some funny.” Answer, ‘Ah, well, never mind. I suppose it will pass away.’ Later: ‘Why pardner, I’m all of a boil and itchy like. Seems as if I’m burnin’ up.’ Response: ‘That’s sure strange. Whatever did ye have for supper? Maybe somethin’ you et didn’t agree with ‘ee.’ Answer: ‘It can’t be that, for if I had eatin nothin’ but fire and brimstone it cudden be no worse than t’es.’ He was admonished to cheer up, it would pass. For a third time, work was attempted but he couldn’t continue, threw the mining tool he used down, and started for the surface. “Pardner, I’m like a man on a fire, ‘t’es like as if I am in a fiery furnace.’ At a short distance away were a few fellow miners who knew of the joke and who laughed themselves into hysterics. [Nichols, *More Copper Country Tales*]

Most of the humor was situational and warm. The Central Coronet Brass Band always added luster to any occasion. (Full band was 3 rows, 4 per row.) If one member left, someone of “musical promise” was recruited and tutored. Until he was able to play his part correctly, he was instructed to “blow easy, but be sure to keep the fingers moving.” One “easy blower” member gained confidence “and felt constrained to assert himself . . . . Discordant notes followed, and afterward the conductor asked, ‘What are ‘ee plaen ‘are, Timmy?’” He replied “Why playen’ Rally Round the Flag.’ ‘Aw, es that so,” the leader replied, ‘The rest of us was plaen’ Marching Through Georgia.’ Timmy was silent for a moment, then said, ‘Don’t ee say nothen ‘bout it—the rest of them won’t know the difference.’” Their humor was witty yet warm and gave depth and meaning to the occasion, to relationships, gave a sense of belonging. It was humor that brought joy.

*Genesis.* It’s that kind of humor—the warmth and joy of the human experience—that I found in the story of Sarah’s laughing so hard she fell down at the prophecy that she would have a child. This was part of God’s action in their lives, “that all the nations would be blessed in him.” There is the laughter of watching Isaac as a child. Sarah says, “God has brought laughter for me, everyone who hears will laugh with me.” This is joy in the new life made possible with God, who has brought an end to cynicism and despair of the future; joyful hope fills the scene. I think that much of the laughter at Central overcame despair and opened hearts to joyful hope. Nichols writes, about one evening’s gathering, “Their joys were complete, . . . which seems to verify the thought that supreme good, happiness, contentment do not necessarily consist in possessing much but by being content with what we have” (p. 103).

*Healing.* Jesus often spoke to those who had little but he brought a message of joyful hope and healing. In the reading from Luke, we heard this version of the “Sermon on the Plain.” All the crowd sought to touch Jesus, for power came forth from him and healed them all. Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the realm of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for *you shall laugh.*” These words are foremost a blessing. The election of Israel began with God’s promise to bless Abraham and his descendants, making them a blessing to *all* the peoples of the earth. Jesus has reached out to all, including the poor, the dispossessed, and he did it with compassion, love, caring, and humor.

Jesus loved life—a good time, a party. All too often we lose his humor, his sense of laughter and fun, his use of parables to draw vivid images that surprise. Jesus healed in part by making people feel affirmed, blessed. He enjoyed life and community. Laughter was healing. In *The Humor of Christ*, Elton Trueblood cites 30 examples from the Bible to show that Jesus was a person of wit and humor who laughed and expected others to laugh. He first used his special powers at a marriage party. At the last meal with his disciples, he said “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11).

The healing grace of Christ, in appreciation of life, enjoying it fully, finding moments of laughter—brings healing, and leads to renewal and transformation. In the well-known passage from Romans we heard of renewal. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” This moves beyond the body/spirit split to presenting our own selves to God. We are called to be renewed, transformed, reflecting the images of God in all we do. Remember the sign: God has a sense of humor. That is part of our health and well-being, our renewal.

What are you doing to renew yourself, to find wholeness? A Brother Jeremiah said, “If I had my life to live over, I’d try to make more mistakes next time. I would relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have this trip . . . I would take more trips. I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers, and watch more sunsets. I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones.”

An article on laughter has some practical suggestions for us. (a) Cut out funny cartoons, sayings, or jokes. (You know I cut out *Peanuts* cartoons.) (b) Do things you did as a kid. This year Jan and I have gone to the circus, blown bubbles, and jumped rope—double dutch! (c) Make your work environment humorous, e.g., toys, slinkies, silly putty. (d) Rent or see a funny movie. (d) Invite friends for an overnight, eating junk food and having a pillow fight.

The closing verses from Romans dealt with unity, love, and community. Listen again: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; be affectionately devoted to one another. Never flag in zeal, be aglow in the spirit. Rejoice in your hope. Be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.” I think that describes life here at Central—and could describe our lives in our communities.

Let us go into the world open to humor, sprinkling joy with our laughter.

**Hymn:** Lord Dismiss Us

**Benediction, Response** (God Be with You Until We Meet Again), **Postlude**

**Organist:** Susan Rokicki

**Choir Director:** Glenna Slatterly Irwin

**\*Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Joanne Bollinger, Tacy Flint, Donna Koskiniemi, Valerie Koskiniemi, Pat Mitchell

*Altos:* Connie Martin, Deanna Martin, Marcia Mason, Carolyn Meyer, Lani Poynter

*Tenors:* Jim Irwin, Peter Manderfield, Stanley Martin, Ramsey Meyer

*Basses:* Fred Bryant, Gary Koskiniemi, Jay Martin, Graham Meyer, Jack Porritt, Tom Westlake

*Page Turner:* Debbie Manderfield

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