

110th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 31, 2016

Minister: Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

Organ Prelude Father Corbin Eddy

Greetings & Announcements: John W. Markee

***Introit** Lord of All Power and Might (Stowell & Meredith)

Call to Worship

Hymn: From All That Dwell Below the Skies

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

A Time with Children/Youth

***Anthem:** Echo Anthem (Gordon Young)

Responsive Reading: 45th Sunday First Reading – Spiritual Service

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

Scripture Readings: Psalm 63:1-8 God's Assurance and Comfort
Matthew 11:28-30 My Yoke Is Easy
Galatians 5:22-23, 25-26; 6:1-2 The Fruit of the Spirit

Special Music: Will There Be Any Stars? (Hewitt & Sweeney)
Carolyn Meyer, Connie Martin, Pete Manderfield, Dan Rosemergy

Pastoral Prayer and Moment of Remembrance: Jay Brooks Martin, 1946-2015
Curtis C. Menard, 1917-2015

Offering and *Offertory Anthem: Consecration (Havergal & Beck)

Doxology

Sermon: **Sharing Life's Burdens** (Abridged)

The theme for this service grew out of a conversation I had with some of you at last year's Reunion as you shared things happening in your lives that were challenging. Many commented on how they needed the "spiritual lift" they expected from this service. I realized how common it is for those around us in our daily lives to be dealing with difficult life circumstances even as they need to get through daily work, family, and community routines. Usually, we don't know what others are dealing with because they don't feel they want to or can share it, or we don't take the time to open ourselves to such sharing. I invite us to think about this now, first about ourselves: What are we dealing with, often alone? Are there those who could help you and make the burden lighter? Second, think about those in your family, neighborhood, work place, congregation, who are dealing with some difficult situation alone. Might you be able to help in some way? Finally, think about how we might create communities that people can turn to for assistance and support.

I realize some do not want others to know of whatever difficult situation they're dealing with, and we need to respect that. More often, as I reflect on my 30+ years of ministry, people often are alone and would welcome someone "to walk with them." It has to be a two-way sharing: being sensitive to others and taking the time and making the effort to get to know them and offering help; and being willing to tell others you need some help.

In his *Peanuts* cartoons, Charles Schulz talks about caring for one another in his own unique way. Lucy and Charlie Brown are talking. Lucy asks, "Why do you think we're put here on earth, Charlie Brown?" He answers, "To make others happy." Lucy ponders and says, "I don't think I'm making anyone very happy . . ." She continues, "Of course nobody's making ME very happy either . . ." and then she yells so loudly, she knocks Charlie Brown over, "SOMEBODYS NOT DOING HIS JOB!" With Lucy, I ask: Are we each doing our jobs?

Faith/Sacred Writings. When I first began thinking about this, the verse from Galatians came to mind: "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the love of Christ." Then I examined the meanings of "burden" in the Bible and asked myself, "What have I done?" Burdens in the Bible refer to a load of any kind, a severe task, a difficult duty requiring effort, or prophecy of a disastrous nature, and more. We can narrow the definition to the New Testament Greek word denoting "troubles in life."

One way to approach Biblical study is "Read, Respond, Reflect": read the passage aloud three times; after the first reading, share one word that has meaning to you; on the second reading, share a phrase that has meaning to you; after the third meaning, share your reflections and discuss. From our scripture readings this morning, words and phrases that stand out for me are the following. *Galatians* (5:22-23, 25-26; 6:1-2)—spirit; bear one another's burdens. *Psalms* 63: love; you are my God. *Matthew* 11:28-30: gentle; rest for your souls.

My reflection on these passages center on sharing life's burdens. *Galatians*. We are called to a life of loving service to each other. We are reminded that this is the essence of the law. We are urged to live by and be guided by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This is what we strive for, and what we yearn to be in relationship to one another.

Psalms 63 is a lament but one that expresses great trust and confidence in God, a longing for God, a compassionate communion and fellowship with God. It affirms the mutuality of the divine-human relationship.

In *Matthew* 11, I love these words: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." This is a promise of rest and a light burden for all whose lives are pressed down.

The conversation between Lucy and Charlie Brown continues. Lucy says, "I'm intrigued by this view you have of the purpose of life, Charlie Brown. You say we're put here on earth to make others happy?" "That's right," Charlie replies. They both ponder this. Then Lucy asks, "What are the others put here for?" The answer is that we are all put here to care for one another. That is the central message of the scriptures and the law. We are all called to fulfill the law of our faith by bearing one another's burdens, guided by the Spirit, with the assured rest found in Jesus and the presence and strength of God.

Nevertheless, it can be so difficult. We're unsure, hesitant, afraid to get involved. Ann Weems captures this in her verse "Touch in Church" [*Reaching for Rainbows*, pp. 35-36], which reflects on "passing the

peace.” Some lines include: “Lord, I’m not big enough to touch and be touched! . . . / What if I disappoint somebody? / What if I’m too pushy? / What if I cling too much? / What if somebody ignores me?” The narrator admits, “I find I do care about that person next to me! / I find I *am* involved! / And I’m scared. / O Lord, be here beside me. / You touch me, Lord, so that I can touch and be touched! / So that I can care and be cared for!”

Central. I realize it was a different time. Central in the late 1800s was a small, somewhat closed community here in the wilderness. Folks were dependent on one another and really cared for one another—mining partners, boarding house residents, church members, community members. They cared for one another in many ways. From *The Cornish in Michigan* (Russell M. Magnaghi): “The Methodist Episcopal Church was both a religious *and* a cultural center for the community.” From *Beyond the Boundaries* (Larry Lankton):

They felt the urge to form and join organizations. With the aid of the mining companies and the Catholic and Methodist missionaries, they established churches. In several early villages they launched fraternal organizations and joined the likes of temperance societies, the Odd Fellows, and the Masons. They created their own safety nets—mutual aid and benefit societies that provided moral and financial support to members and their families who were in harm’s way due to illness, injury, or death. They performed group acts of charity, from reading to an unfortunate [boy who was blind] to feeding [persons in poverty] on holidays.

In *More Copper Country Tales*, Alfred Nichols tells of members of such a society “organized especially for the spiritual and religious welfare of its members,” which met weekly “to offer words of helpfulness and comfort to the weak and spiritually distressed.” Sharing one’s burdens can be an act of friendship over time or a short encounter with another person who is caring, wise, and speaking to your heart. You may recall the story of Nichols’ mining injury, which resulted in a useless left arm. When medical treatment failed, he was deeply discouraged. On a trip, he encountered a fellow passenger who was blind, one armed, and had a limp. In conversation, he told Nichols, “Well, my son, I can’t know you, have never seen you, but if I were as well off as you physically, I would ask for nothing more. My joys would be complete.” Nichols recounts that the conversation opened his eyes “to a new and greater vision.” He went on to get an education; he became a teacher, principal, and school superintendent. Part of this is attitude, part is being open to the wisdom and help of others, and part is living the spirit of a faithful community and feeling the presence of God in one’s life.

Our Contemporary Lives. Let’s move to our own lives and communities. How well do you really know the people around you? How willing are you to really care and become involved? How often do you reach out for help from others when you are in need? We have taken giant strides to structure “safety nets” in society for people in need, but it is not nearly enough. Many faith organizations and congregations have set up support networks and outreach ministries, but these are often inadequate. Most people do care and reach out to others in times of tragedy, illness, or death, but largely to people we know well—family, neighbors, friends, church members. In spite of these efforts, many folks have to walk through life alone, facing hardship without support or the means to get help. The challenge remains for each of us: Are we consciously there, wherever we’re at and in whatever ways we can, to help others, to be aware of them and willing to assist?

As a minister, my model of care starts with the congregation but extends out into the world, from those we know well to the stranger. “I love the gathered church but even more the scattered church.” How is it we’re living our faith in the world? How are you doing in your congregation and community? What is happening that you might become part of? Let me share a few thoughts.

◇ Be thoughtful of and kind to others. By your actions and words, let those around you know you care and are open to sharing and “walking with them.”

◇ Take the time to write cards or notes, or call those you know are going through difficult times, and offer assistance, if appropriate.

◇ Be sure your congregation offers ministries and programs of care, and encourage folks to use them.

◇ Volunteer in your congregation or community in programs that offer support services.

◇ Know your own limitations. Use referral services to assist those with complex needs beyond your abilities, training, time, and resources.

◇ Always let the person tell you ways you can help rather than deciding that yourself.

In “This Church” [*Searching for Shalom*, p. 54], Ann Weems writes, “Each person in this dancing circle [of God’s Church] / is facing outward . . . reaching into God’s world.” The poem ends:

Sometimes they need the water;
sometimes you need the water;
sometimes I need the water.
Being a part of the Church
means knowing that
the cup is always filled
in [Christ’s] name.

May we go as a faithful people renewed in our commitment to practice kindness, to do justice, and to walk humbly with our God.

Hymn: Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Benediction

Response: God Be With You Til We Meet Again

Organist: Father Corbin Eddy

Choir Director: Carolyn Martin Meyer

***Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Carole Bard, Tacy Flint, Connie Martin, Nancy Molloy

Altos: Joanne Bollinger, Mary Kay Feely, Deanna Martin, Marge Meyers

Tenors: Glenna Irwin, Peter Manderfield, Ramsey Meyer, Larry Molloy, Gerald Rowe

Basses: Jim Irwin, Chuck Meyer, Graham Meyer, Jack Porritt

Board of Directors: James R. Brooks, Gary A. Bryant (*Vice Pres.*), John T. Bryant, Lynn C. Bryant (*Sec.*), James K. Curto, Jeffrey Nicholls Curto, Pete Manderfield, John W. Markee, Carolyn Martin Meyer, Lawrence J. Molloy (*Treas.*), David H. Thomas, Dr. Brian D. Wake (*Pres.*), Dr. Joan P. Wake, Laura Wake Wiesner