

The Springfield Redeemer



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Through Abraham, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 12:3

Pastor Cooley Does Family in a Big Way by Roberta D'Amico

They gathered together at the new Hilton Hotel in Chicopee to celebrate the 40 years of Family Reunions. Nearly 100 family members from 15 different states in the country came together to celebrate *family* at the 2018 Cooley - Ferguson Family Reunion, Ferguson being the maiden name of the matriarch side of the family. The whole weekend of July 20th - 22nd was spent gathering together, renewing and celebrating their family ties. Pastor Cooley, the President of the family, exemplifies the meaning of *family*.

It began Friday with a 'Meet and Greet' at the Hilton where Pastor C.S. Cooley opened the event with prayer and introduced the theme of the year, "The Family the Prays Together, Stays Together." Pastor Cooley did not organize this event alone, but with the help of many others, including coordinators in each state and, with the intention of involving younger folks to carry it on, his niece,



Sheril and Pastor Cooley



Sheril, and younger sister, Mary. This first get-together was a joyful, sometimes emotional, occasion for many in the family who hadn't

seen each other for a while! Others were new to the reunion, as was Linda, who said, "I just heard about it and came!"

Breakfast was served Saturday morning at the Hilton where the out-of-towners stayed, followed by a cookout at the beautiful Stanley Park in Westfield. The children surely enjoyed the park and were able to renew acquaintances. Late in the afternoon, the group gathered for the main event, dinner at La Quinta's 12th floor Banquet Hall. The tables were beautifully decorated, with a special "family" touch. To bring inspiration and encouragement to the guests, on each table was a framed poem, definition, or saying about family, each one different. My favorite was this one: "Like branches on a tree, we all grow in different directions, but our roots keep us all together!"

It was a lovely time, dinner was delicious, but the best part was the program. Pastor Cooley and Mary Cooley were Masters of Ceremonies, and they had Deacon Arthur Kemp open in prayer, and then greetings by those who organized the event.

After dinner and door prizes they did a very touching Memorial Service to remember those who were no longer with the family here in this life. They said, "We build on what they did. We

stand on their shoulders.” It included a reading of the poem, *God’s Garden*, singing the well-known song, *In the Garden*, and a prayer to thank God for them.

Then, following that, there was a request for talent, open to any family member present who wished to share their talent with the family. There was some talented singing and dancing. The oldest family members were recognized, Bishop Mary Francis Kemp at 87 from Raeford NC and Mother Lewis of Delaware at 86 years old, and the youngest, a 4 month-old! Finally, all graduates were recognized and a big family picture was taken.

The weekend event was concluded on Sunday with Family Prayer at the hotel and a Sunday Service at United Temple Church of God in Christ, Pastor Cooley’s home church, where the speaker was Author D. Kemp, Ph.D, M.S.

The Cooley and Ferguson family started reunions 40 years ago, as a thought that came to Pastor Cooley and his cousin Dan Ferguson Jr. following an uncle’s funeral. Realizing that many of those attending the funeral did not know each other, the idea was born for a reunion. What a

blessing it has become! As the family grew, people were able to stay in touch and learn much about each other. They discovered that they were a multicultural family consisting of American Indian, Spanish, European, Haitian, and Jamaican as well as African.

The Reunion is held every two years, and before they parted this year, the planning was underway for the next one. Family members take turns hosting it and having it in different locations around the country. They find it so important that Bessie Jones, the oldest sibling of Pastor Cooley, who travels a lot, plans her trips so as not to conflict with the Reunion. She says, “Family is more important than our differences!”

“Family is our first ministry,” Pastor Cooley says. “It’s important that those of us in ministry don’t neglect to minister to family also.” Psalm 103:17 says, “but for those who honor the Lord, His love lasts forever, and His goodness endures for all generations.”

To remember this wonderful event, as each guest left the banquet hall they were given a token souvenir, a lovely key with the message, “Family is the Key.”

Coming Soon! August 18, The Best-ever Family Day!

August 18 is just around the corner, so please get the word out. We will have lots to do and see at Family Day, so don’t miss it.. Music, lunch, speakers, water fun, face painting, Gospel bracelets to make, and many other activities. Volunteers and donations are needed.

So bring your family and enjoy a day together. Tell your friends and neighbors. To volunteer, call Pastor Cooley at (413) 626-6807 or Roberta at (413) 330-4658.

Ongoing Events

SUNDAY SERVICES: 10 a.m.- Motivated by Faith with Pastors Bobby & Kim. 1 p.m.- Redemption Gate Church with Pastor Brian Greene. 4 p.m.- Transformation Centered Healing Ministries with Pastors Eric & Susan Thomas.

MONDAY -- FRIDAY: Morning Bible Study at 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

WED – Overcomers (Recovery and Beyond) at 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY: Women’s Bible Study 1:00 p.m.; FIAT on 2nd and 4th Thursday 7 p.m.

SATURDAY: NOTE: No lunch in August! See you in September. **1ST SATURDAY:** August 4, “Marriage with God” 4 to 6 p.m.

SATURDAY NIGHT: August 25, 7 p.m. Open Mic with Cathy Marvici.