

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for October 8th, 2021

Hello Everyone – You will see that my encouraging word this time is about constancy. You've probably realized by now that these encouraging words are constant in that they come out weekly, they're not necessarily consistent in that their release day depends a lot on what's going on in my schedule and in the church office for any given week.

Most of the information in this first section is a repeat of last weeks save this first very important one from Debbi McMurtrey who chairs our outreach committee:

"The Outreach Committee met last week to finalize opportunities for the upcoming holiday season. On October 17th we will start collecting certain canned goods for the Thanksgiving bags for our friends at the Soup Kitchen. Each bag should contain: a box of instant mashed potatoes, a can of cranberries, a box of stuffing mix, a can of sweet potatoes or yams, a can or jar of turkey gravy and a can of vegetables of your choice. If you want to help with this project, please bring some or all of the above items to the narthex starting October 17th. We will be handing out the "Fixing Bags" up until the Monday before Thanksgiving. Our church has been helping with this local project for many years. Last year we helped supply Thanksgiving dinner to 63 families

Watch this space for additional opportunities to help others throughout the holidays.

Thanks, Outreach Committee"

Laity Sunday takes place on October 17th. The focus for Laity Sunday is the ministry of the Laity. This means the focus is on you, the people in the pews. If you have a brief testimony you would like to share or a story of how God has been blessing you or leading you through life, Laity Sunday is your opportunity to share it. We really want to hear from you! Please let us know if you would like to participate in the service that Sunday in sharing your story. Call the church office or let us know via email.

We are preparing for our celebration of **All Saints Sunday on November 7th**. If you have lost someone dear to you over the past year and would like them remembered during the worship service that day please contact the church office with details. We would also like to share a picture which you can forward to the church as well. Then please plan to be present when that person is remembered.

Signing On For Zoom Worship Services. As most of you who Zoom our worship services know, I greet Zoom attendees as they sign on, take Zoom attendance, and assign names to phone numbers as phone callers sign on. I open the Zoom meeting at 9 a.m. in order to give people time to sign on. If you are Zooming, I encourage you to sign on early to avoid the crush of people signing on at the last minute. At 9:30 I have to make a mad dash from the office to the sanctuary to lead the service. The earlier you sign on the easier it is for me to attend to the greeting responsibilities. It also gives us a chance to chat, and share prayer requests

The Announcements and Bulletin for Sunday's service are included as attachments to this encouraging word. Please feel free to print them out and either bring them with you to the service or to use them as your guide as you Zoom the service. For those attending in person the worship order is provided on the monitors.

In person worship is open to everyone. We are not requiring the wearing of masks in the sanctuary but asking that you space yourselves appropriately. If you are not vaccinated, are otherwise at risk, or simply uncomfortable going maskless we strongly suggest that you wear your mask. It goes without saying that if you are sick stay home! You can always enjoy our worship service via Zoom. We do have a fellowship time in the breezeway following our worship service.

Thank you to everyone who has been diligently supporting our ministry with your tithes and offerings. Your contributions have kept us open and in ministry through a very difficult period. Your faithfulness in supporting our church with your prayers, presence, gifts, and service has made all the difference!

An Encouraging Word

Last Sunday morning, as I was getting ready for worship and moving back and forth between my office and the sanctuary, I heard this tremendous racket coming from the trees behind the parking lot. Birds! An army of birds had taken up temporary residence and were making their presence known. Later that day as I sat on my back porch meditating and minding my smoker, I noticed clouds of birds circling and sweeping over the trees. It was a sure sign that my favorite season of the year is here – Autumn.

Hearing and watching the birds flock is a comforting thing for me. It is a sign of Fall and the ever constant, never-failing progression of seasons. The natural world continues to operate as God designed it. It is comforting to know that even with all the confusion we face in the world these days that some things, like the change of seasons, remains constant. Constancy is something we all need especially in the chaotic world we face each day. Without constancy in our lives, the knowledge of things we can depend on – like the consistent change of seasons, life for many would be intolerable.

Many of you know I'm a sailor. I've been sailing boats since I was eight years old. One thing that I've learned is that it's no fun sailing when there is little or no wind. The best sailing comes when there is a stiff breeze. So, I've done a lot of sailing when I've had to shorten sail and simply hang on. I've also been known to break some rigging. The thing with sailing in a stiff breeze is that there is also a lot of wave action. Wind and waves go together. You can't have one without the other. So, another thing I've learned from sad experience is to limit my time below decks when the seas are getting heavy. This is because during these times I can't see the horizon or any stationary objects on land from the cabin. After a few minutes below in the cabin, even in moderate seas, I'll start to turn as green as a shamrock and inevitably endure the indignity of what comes next. I need the constancy of a never shifting horizon or object on land on which I can focus to prevent the vestibular chaos that is seasickness.

Likewise, we need constants in our lives if we are to endure the ever-shifting chaos that living in this world sometimes presents. We can find those constants in different places. We can find constancy in our families, and among loyal and constant friends. Some of us can find constancy in our work and in comforting habits. My brother and I find constancy in our yearly summer trips to the family cottage on Lake Ontario – a place where we have each spent joy-filled summers since we were born. We've managed to keep that place like a kind of time capsule with many of the same furnishings that were there when we were children. The world may change as time goes by but that place rarely does, and that brings us a measure of sanity. We all need that kind of constancy.

The greatest constant we have available to us is God. In Isaiah 40 the prophet Isaiah laments the inconstancy of worldly things. He cries out in verse 6, "All people are grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows upon them (a reference to the inconstancy of life itself)." But then he continues with the comforting reminder that God is the constant that we can depend on when all else fails. "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." He returns to this affirmation of God's constancy in verse 28, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases power to the weak. Even youths will grow tired and weary, and

young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They shall run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

The one constant we can depend upon, above anything else, is God. The key is keeping our attention fixed on God, depending on God as the constant in our lives. We do that by being consistent in our relationship with God. We do this by consistently attending to regular worship and daily prayer, in the regular and consistent study of scripture, and in service to God. In all this we keep God in our sight as a steady point of reference in an often-chaotic world.

Yes, I find comfort in the constancy of the cycle of seasons. The greatest comfort I have however is found as I daily encounter God, a constant companion in whatever seas I face – be they heavy or light. I pray that you may be able to do the same.

That’s all for today. I’ll see you on Sunday either in the Zoom virtual worship room, or in person at our worship service. Until then be well, stay safe, make good decisions in this Coronavirus environment, and in please stay connected to each other and to God. Blessings & Peace, Mike