

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for November 13th, 2021

Hello Everyone – I always try to launch these encouraging words with an attention grabber. Here's a good one. **THERE ARE ONLY 40 MORE SHOPPING DAYS TILL CHRISTMAS!** There are only 17 days until the beginning of Advent and 12 days to Turkey Day. (Do you have yours yet?) How's that for an attention grabber. I feel like I'm sledding down a hill with an exponentially increasing slope and that sometime soon I'll be sledding off a cliff into Christmas. Time does fly when you're having fun. Well there's a lot to say so I better get to it.

An important reminder to members and friends who enter the building – through either entrance – **while the Child Development Center is open and operating: Please be sure you are masked** – even if you are just going to the office or sanctuary. This is critically important for keeping our unvaccinated children safe and for setting a tone of caution for those using our facility.

If you have prayer requests, even if you plan to share them at Sunday worship, you may forward them ahead of time to Jen at the church office and she will compile a list to be used on Sunday morning. This will be a great help to this hearing-impaired pastor who can't always hear the prayer request correctly when shared during worship.

The Outreach Committee would like to spread the word about upcoming opportunities to help others during this holiday season:

- We are pleased to report that volunteers have come forward to help the 5 families we are taking for Thanksgiving and Christmas for the Holiday Sharing program. We are providing food for a Thanksgiving meal and food for a Christmas meal plus providing gifts for the children of those families. Thank you to everyone who volunteered for this project. We have been participating in the Holiday Sharing program for many years, even through last year's pandemic.

- We want to thank everyone who participated in the Thanksgiving Fixing Bag program for our friends at the Pasadena Soup Kitchen. The Maryland Food Bank is providing the turkeys and our church members and friends provided the remainder of the groceries needed for the meal. As of this date we have given out over 35 Thanksgiving bags and there are two more weeks to go.

- We are about to start our annual Sock and Mitten Tree project for the children in our local homeless camps for Christmas. We partner with the Child Development Center every year to hang new socks, mittens, gloves, scarves and hats on the Christmas tree located in the church hall. We are adding adult socks to the list this year. We have been told that the adults in the homeless camps really need socks in the winter. The tree is not up yet, but we need to gather all our donated items by December 12th. Please keep this need in mind while you are doing your shopping.

- Our annual Cookie Bake/bring for the homeless has been moved to Valentine's Day. It seems many churches and organizations are donating cookies this year. The organizers have asked us to provide cookies for that mid-winter holiday. Well, is it ever a bad time for a cookie?

Thanks again for all of the support our church gives for these holiday programs. It is much appreciated every year.

Thanks,

The Outreach Committee

Here are some announcements worthy of repeating.

There are several upcoming bible studies that I would like to announce. The first is an Advent Study which will begin NEXT WEDNESDAY November 17th. This study will last 4 to 5 weeks and will conclude mid-December. It's entitled "Faithful: Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph by Adam Hamilton. The student book is available as paperback, hardcover, or Kindle through Amazon or Cokesbury.

The next bible study will begin in January, also by Adam Hamilton it is entitled Words of Life and is a ten week long study on the Ten Commandments. It is also available from Amazon and Cokesbury. Both will be Zoom classes since that format seems to work very well for most of us. I have sent the Zoom invitations to the list compiled from past bible study participants. If you would like to be included on this list please let me know or notify the Church Office.

Since the retailers around us seem to be putting out Christmas items, even before Halloween, let me include this promotion for a possible Christmas gift. We have lots of cookbooks for sale! **THE AMAZING PUBLICATION – LOAVES & FISHES & UNITED METHODIST DISHES – Is once again on sale in our church office for the AMAZING PRICE OF \$20.00.** This classic publication includes the tasty and mouthwatering recipes of some of your favorite Mount Carmel cooks. It even includes my own Chili recipe which was previously marketed as Pastor Mikes Hotter Than Hell Chili but renamed for proprieties sake. These make wonderful Christmas gifts for family, friends, co-workers, and even random strangers if you're so inclined. Buy a few of these timeless classics to save away for future generations! Hurry while supplies last! Proceeds will go to our general expense fund. There will also be a few on hand for sale on Sunday mornings.

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

We have a cat that craves attention. As I am sitting or reclining on the couch in our living room she walks back and forth across the back of the couch looking for acknowledgement. Often, she will reach out with her paw to tentatively pat my cheek asking for a pat in return; as if seeking some sign from the human that she is important and that she matters. She is the lone feline in a house full of humans that I'm afraid sometimes take her for granted. Hers is a solitary life yet she wants to be noticed, she wants acknowledgement (in the form of a pat), and I suppose she wants to know that she matters to the humans that loom around her. Yes, I know I may be reading too much into this and it may be that she is simply being a cat. But I can't help thinking that acknowledgment is important to her. I cannot help but feel that all living creatures on some level need or want acknowledgement. Perhaps not needing in the ways that humans do, yet in some way seeking an affirming relationship to someone or something other than themselves.

There is a wonderful narrative in Genesis chapter 2 of the human (from the Hebrew *ha-'adam* – meaning "earth creature") acknowledging or naming each other creature that God created and brought before him. After all, naming is a form of acknowledging, the recognition of the existence of another, and the defining of that other. That was what

the human (*ha-'adam*) was doing. In the naming, the creature named became something that mattered. To be nameless is to not matter; to be invisible.

“So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.” *Genesis 2:19*

I think I was in the fifth grade when I was introduced to the wonderful story entitled “Charlotte’s Web” by E.B. White. For the few who may not be familiar with it, it’s the story about a pig named Wilbur and a spider named Charlotte. It’s a story about friendship and sacrifice. Wilbur, like most livestock pigs, is essentially nameless. Adopted as a runt and raised as a pet he is important to a little girl named Fern and named by her. But Wilbur’s status as a pet changes when he is sold to a neighboring farm to be raised for slaughter. In his new home he is essentially nameless. He is shunned by the other animals but befriended by the barn spider named Charlotte. To the humans he is just another pig to be fattened for slaughter. That is until Charlotte writes her acknowledgment of him in her web. She writes the words (and her acknowledgement of him) affirming him as “SOME PIG”, “TERRIFIC”, “RADIANT”, and “HUMBLE”. The farmer notices these descriptive acknowledgements of Wilbur written in Charlotte’s web spun over the entrance to Wilbur’s enclosure. Due to Charlotte’s efforts he recognizes Wilbur’s uniqueness and Wilbur becomes famous – saved from the slaughterhouse because he was acknowledged by another and in that acknowledging recognized as important – a pig that mattered. Naming is acknowledging and acknowledgement is important.

In prayer we seek to be acknowledged by God. We pour our hopes and dreams, our fears and our desires, our heartbreak and our thanksgiving into our prayers seeking acknowledgement and recognition from God. In prayers we are like my cat patting God’s cheek seeking to know that we matter, that we are important to God.

And God has answered! God has responded acknowledging us through the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! In Jesus God has declared our importance! In Christ God has written on the lintels of the doors of our lives the names “Beloved”, “Forgiven”, and “Redeemed”. In return Jesus seeks our acknowledgement through our acknowledgement of the nameless, forgotten, ignored, and discounted among us; as well as those our culture would despise or scorn. Through our recognizing, acknowledging, and caring for them we acknowledge Jesus.

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' " Matthew 25:

We acknowledge "see" Jesus when we acknowledge those that others would rather remain faceless and unseen. When we - through sacrificial and loving acts - call attention to those who have, through cultural bias, poverty, or other forms of discrimination, been placed in the margins of life, we acknowledge Jesus. When we act, speak, and serve in ways that place over their lives the descriptive words, "beloved of God" then we not only name them out of obscurity and make them matter, we also acknowledge Jesus who first acknowledged us.

We all matter! Every human being matters and stands in need of acknowledgement. No one should be made to feel unimportant or that they don't matter. We all matter to God and because we all matter to God, we all matter to each other. That's the encouraging word - you matter! I matter! Every human matters. God says so in Jesus. We need to acknowledge and cherish every person in the same way we have been acknowledged - through loving and caring acts that demonstrate to others that they matter - that we all matter.

That's all for today. I'll see you on Sunday either in person or on Zoom. 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