

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for November 27th, 2021

Hello Everyone – I hope you all are having a wonderful and safe Thanksgiving holiday. As we shift from the celebration of Thanksgiving to the celebration of Christmas, I ask that you take time to reach out to friends and neighbors who may not be fairing so well amidst all of our festivities. It may be that they continue to grieve the loss of a loved one whose absence is deeply felt especially now. It may be they remain isolated out of fear concerning the Coronavirus. It may also be that they are in financial difficulties exacerbated by lack of employment. Whatever the reason, they may not be in a place of celebration and Joy. Check in with the folks around you and support them in whatever way you can, and as always keep them in your prayers.

Pasadena Area Congregations are invited to attend a Community Celebration of Christmas on December 5th, 2021 at 3 p.m. at Kurtz's Beach. It will be a one-hour service followed by refreshments. This is being arranged by Milt Zahn who is a clergy member of the Pasadena Area Ministerium. If you are able please bring a non-perishable food item for those in need which will be distributed through the Caring Cupboard.

The Outreach Committee sends the following announcement.

"The Outreach Committee sends a big thank you to everyone who participated in our Holiday programs. Because of your help, we handed out 64 Thanksgiving bags to our friends at the Pasadena Soup Kitchen.

We had enough people sign up for the county's Holiday Sharing program that 5 families in our area will have great Thanksgiving and Christmas meals along with presents for the children at Christmas. Thank you for all that help.

Our last project for Christmas is the Sock and Mitten collection for children in the local homeless camps. We have also been asked to add adult socks to our list this year. Please think about this project when you are shopping. We only have a few weeks for this project. **We need to have all items collected by December 12th** so they can be handed out by Christmas.

The Outreach Committee is truly grateful for your continued help and support during this season of giving. " Thanks, Deb

ANNOUNCEMENTS THAT BEAR REPEATING

Christmas 2021 Memorials – Would you like to remember or honor a loved one this Christmas? You may do so by purchasing a poinsettia to decorate the church; or, instead, you may prefer to donate to the general fund or to the trustees' fund. To honor or remember family members or friends, please complete the form attached to this email and return it to the church. (Forms can also be picked up at the church as well) **The deadline is November 28.**

Mt. Carmel Child Development Center Fundraiser – The CDC is having a **Scentsy!** Fundraiser to raise funds for the playground. You can find the form attached to this email. Their wickless candles make wonderful, affordable Christmas gifts and 20% goes back to the CDC! **All orders must be placed by November 29.**

Here's some information the Faith – Hope Circle would like shared.

Usually, we have a Christmas luncheon and invite the congregation, but since the prices are significantly higher and places are not open for lunch, we will not be able to do that.

At our December 2nd meeting, we will be collecting items for presents for the residents at the Glen Burnie Rehab Center. The items typically include hygiene products and crossword puzzles. We also sign and present Christmas cards. We will also be preparing gifts of cookies to shut-ins of the church.

In January, we will donate \$100 to the Child Development Center.

The Circle also works to provide a funeral luncheon for members, when needed.

Membership is open to all women of the church and monthly dues are \$10.00. We welcome all women into the Circle.

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.

There are several bible studies that I would like to announce. The first is an Advent Study which began this past Wednesday. 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. You are still welcome to join us.

The next bible study will begin in January, also by Adam Hamilton it is entitled Words of Life and is a ten weeklong 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

"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit." John 3:8

In this quote from John, Jesus is explaining to Nicodemus the workings of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus explains, we really don't know how the Holy Spirit works, but we can see what it does. Those who give themselves over to the Spirit and allow themselves to become instruments of the Spirit, join in the amazing and beautiful dance through which God works to transform the world. Others may witness this beautiful dance, wonder at it, and perhaps be drawn into it themselves.

Here is an illustration that I hope makes my meaning clear. A few days ago, as I was standing out behind the parsonage, I noticed this amazing flock of birds circling and dancing through the sky. I think they were starlings. There must have been hundreds of them wheeling and winding through the sky in marvelously coordinated patterns. It was as though some unseen air traffic controller was telling each bird how to dip, turn, and climb in formation with the birds around it. It's called murmuration and scientists admit that they don't understand it. How the birds manage to do what they do remains a mystery. Of course, there are theories about how this works, but none of them are satisfactory. So, we just have to enjoy the dance and be amazed. (I've attached several videos of murmuration so that you can be amazed as well.)

I like to think that the birds are being directed by some unseen force, a shared intelligence perhaps that moves them through their intricate patterns. We can't see what directs and moves them, but we can see the beauty of what they are doing and be moved and perhaps in some way inspired. When I see murmuration, I'm inspired and amazed by the beauty and intricacy of God's creation. I am humbled.

The Holy Spirit works among the faithful in the same way, blowing wherever it pleases, directing the faithful in an intricate dance of ministry through which others are cared for and inspired. We really don't understand how it all works or how the Spirit moves, but we can see and experience what it does. We are all connected in a mysterious way with each other and with God that allows us to do wonderful and amazing things. God's work is done through us. In this others can see God's love, God's beauty, and be inspired themselves to join in this wonderful Spirit moved dance.

The encouraging word today is that when we open ourselves to the Spirit's direction through prayer, study, worship, and caring ministry for others we become part of a Spirit-directed dance that is inspiring and humbling. We can't see the Spirit, but others can see what it does through us! Together we are a beautiful creation of God, a reminder to humanity of God's love and grace moving through the world. We are part of a Spirit-choreographed dance that feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, shelters the homeless, comforts the grieving, cares for the forgotten, inspires the searching, and brings hope to all. We are part of that amazing movement in the world. In that knowledge may we each be humbled, inspired, and encouraged.

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 please stay connected to each other and to God. Blessings & Peace, Mike

<https://youtu.be/M1Q-EbX6dso>

<https://youtu.be/iRNqhi2ka9k>