

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for May 21, 2022

This Sunday, May 22nd, will be our last regular Sunday School session. We will take the next Sunday, May 29th off due to Memorial Day weekend. I hope you are all planning a nice holiday weekend. We will start Summer Sunday School on June 5th. This means you can come to Sunday School in your play clothes and enjoy some crafts, maybe outside activities, and some videos. So if you are between the age of 3 and 10 or 11 (just finishing the 5th grade), come join us for a fun time during our church service at 9:30 am starting June 5th. Hope to see you there! Deb McMurtrey and Mt. Carmel Sunday School

The United Methodist church has two locations for summer camp opportunities for children and youth. Manidokan is in the Maryland mountains near West Virginia and West River Camp is on the water south of Annapolis. Both locations have week-long camps for children from grades 3-5, middle high students from grades 6-8 and high school students. Our church will provide up to \$500 total in campership aid for children or youth from our church interested in attending this year. For more information about the camps please contact the Camp Office directly at 800-922-6795 or check out the schedule at bwccampsandretreats.com.

We need to train, and have available, several individuals to operate the technological aspects of our Sunday Worship services on those days when Shannon and Joe are unable to. Please let us know if you are interested in helping in the ministry of our church in this way. You can contact either myself or Shannon Shanefelter.

Is someone in your house graduating high school or college? If so, please let us know so that we can celebrate them. Please contact the office to let Jen know who it is and their future plans.

The early planning stages for our October Harvestfest have begun! Pat Mulkey has a good start on the event but is looking for some eager volunteers. If you are interested in helping make this event a success, please let us know. Contact the office and Jen will point you in the right direction.

If anyone is interested in volunteering to staff our nursery on Sunday mornings please let me know. We may not be able to staff every Sunday morning, but we can let our young families know those Sundays when nursery will be available.

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.

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. I encourage you to sign on early to avoid the crush of people signing on at the last minute. 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.

An Encouraging Word

"Lord give me strength!" That seems to be the mantra that I'm uttering more and more these days. I fill up with gas, just half a tank, watching the price ticker on the pump race at ever increasing speeds.

Lord, give me strength! The government says that we need to be ready for another Coronavirus surge this fall. *Lord, give me strength!* A police officer's car is carjacked, right across from the police station. *Lord, give me strength!* Another racially targeted mass shooting in Buffalo. *Lord give me strength!* More innocents are killed in Ukraine. *Lord, give me strength!* My 401K is disappearing! *Lord, give me strength!* Well, I think you get the picture. In fact, you are probably in the same boat I'm in, inundated with the never ceasing parade of reminders that things aren't heading in the preferred direction, and asking the Lord for the strength we need to carry us through. Do you want to know what the Lord told me in response to my mantra, "Lord, give me strength!"? He said, "I already have!"

Isaiah 40:31 assures us that, "They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Philippians 4:13 declares, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Both of these verses, as well as a host of others, attest to the Lord being a source of strength as we encounter trials and worries in our life. The key is developing a relationship or trust in God, that's what "waiting on the Lord" means. One who waits for or on the Lord is someone who has developed trust in God. Waiting on the Lord is trusting in God. Our trust in God is developed through observing spiritual disciplines like prayer, the study of scripture, meditating on God's word, attending to public worship and fellowship. It means simply spending time with God. The more time we spend with God the more we will find we trust in God, and the strength we need to face difficulties and trials will come through that trusting relationship.

The people I trust are the people I know well enough to trust. They are the people I work with, the people I spend time with, they are the people who have embraced and comforted me in my worst moments. The people I trust are the people I've come to know and develop a relationship with. The same can be said of our relationship with God, and his son Jesus. My relationship with the Lord has strengthened through the conversations I've had with the Lord in prayer and meditation. My relationship has strengthened as I've wrestled with God's word. Most importantly that relationship has strengthened as I've experienced God's presence in my life comforting, guiding, and blessing me, even in my worst moments.

There is a wonderful old hymn that sings beautifully of finding our strength to face whatever trials or worries come our way. "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" sings about finding our strength in Jesus. But, it is perhaps the second verse that best gets to the heart of the matter in what we face these days.

Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged,

Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful

Who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness.

Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Of course, prayer in this case is not simply presenting Jesus with a laundry list of complaints or concerns. True prayer is talking it out with Jesus in the same way that you would talk your struggles with a trusted friend who is willing to listen. As we talk out our problems and worries with good friends, we usually gain helpful insights, find encouragement, gain understanding from a different perspective, and find comfort. But it need's to be a friend we have learned to trust. This is what we do when we take our worries and concerns to the Lord in our times of prayer and meditation.

If you are finding these days that you are uttering the phrase "Lord, give me strength" far too often then consider your friendship with Jesus. The strength you need is available in him; it always has been. We just need to refocus on that relationship, that friendship, to discover the strength we need. Consider the ways in which Jesus, your friend, has been there with you in the past. Consider the blessings that you have enjoyed that have come from his hand. Consider the forgiveness, love and grace, he has poured out for all of us. Spend time with Jesus. Talk out your fears and worries with him in prayer. In that find the strength you need to face any situation.

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