

An Encouraging Word for June 11, 2022

This welcome originated out of Emmanuel United Methodist Church in White Sulphur Springs WV. We feel that this welcome reflects the atmosphere of Mt. Carmel United Methodist Church as it has served the Pasadena community through the years.

UNCONDITIONALLY WELCOME

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay or just not sure, filthy rich, dirt poor, no habla ingles; and a special welcome to those who are crying newborns, skinny as a rail, or could afford to lose a few pounds. We don't care if you're more churchy than the Pope or haven't been in church since little Joey's baptism.

We welcome you if you are over 60 but not grown up yet, or a teenager who is growing up too fast. We welcome soccer moms (and dads), NASCAR dads (and moms), starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegetarians, junk-food eaters. We welcome you if you're having problems, or if you're down in the dumps, or if you don't like "organized religion;" we've been there too.

If you blew all your offering money at the dog track, you're welcome here. We offer special welcome to those who think the earth is flat, work too hard, don't work, can't spell, or because Grandma is in town and wanted to go to church.

We welcome those that are inked, pierced, or both. We welcome those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down their throat as a kid, or got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake. We welcome tourists, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts . . . and you!

We welcome you, because if you're good enough for God (and you are!), then you are good enough for us!

Summer Sunday School is underway!! 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.

For those interested in volunteering with the Harvestfest, there will be a short meeting on June 26 after the morning service. If you are interested and cannot make the meeting, please 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

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.'" - Matthew 19:23

Several summers ago, I saw something on Amazon that I just had to have. It was a huge duffle bag, complete with compression straps so that I could cram even more stuff into it. It also had shoulder straps allowing me to carry it on my back. The best thing of all was that it was a "lightning deal"! My old duffle was kind of small so I had to be a bit selective about what I could take with me if I continued to use that bag. But this new one was a monster! With it the sky would be the limit! So, I ordered it.

The time came for me to pack for vacation, and I started filling that new duffle bag. I kept thinking of more things I just had to have on vacation. If I thought I might need it, it went into the bag; shirts, slacks, socks, underwear, toiletries, books, electronic gizmos, and the kitchen sink. Finally, the bag was full. I strapped it up, cinched in the compression straps, and tried to lift it off the bed. The bed sighed with relief, and I

grunted in pain. I could barely lift the thing! As its weight pulled me down the stairs and out the door, I had serious doubts as to whether the car could handle the load.

When packing for a trip, gravity is a factor. The more you pack, the more it weighs, the harder it is to carry, and less enjoyable the trip becomes. Our possessions can hold us back. They can be our downfall.

The scripture I sighted above ends the narrative of Jesus' encounter with a rich young man who wanted to follow him. This young man was having a problem with the gravity of things - in this case money and possessions. He was burdened by the weight of his wealth and possessions. Jesus was inviting him on a fantastic journey. Jesus was inviting him to the life of being a disciple. The young man really wanted to follow Jesus but the pull that his stuff had on his life was too great. He couldn't give it up, so he couldn't follow Jesus. Instead of him controlling his possessions, his possessions controlled him and prevented him from entering the life he yearned for.

Many of us find ourselves in the same predicament these days – overwhelmed by financial gravity or worry. Too often we are caught up in the worry about stuff including money which is translatable into stuff, stuff itself, or less tangible things – like ideologies or politics. The gravity of all this stuff can weigh us down and keep us from enjoying the kind of life God intends for us.

My grandparents lived through the great depression. Essentially the money disappeared. There was less money, and so there was less stuff. Jobs were hard to come by for many, and even for people like my grandparents who managed to stay employed there was not a lot to go around. They told us kids stories about those times. It was close to a hand to mouth kind of existence. Sometimes a meal was just bread and milk (yuk). It was evident in all that they told us that the one thing that was never lacking was love. They never let the absence of things get in the way of their relationship. Their possessions, or lack thereof, never overshadowed their relationship. No matter what was happening in the world around them they faced it with an absence of possessions but an abundance of love. That's what got them through.

These days we fuss about a lot of things. We fuss about the price of gas, we fuss about the price of meat, we fuss about taxes, we worry about there being no toilet paper, we worry about shortages of one THING or another. Sometimes our worry about things, of some people having too much and others too little, morphs into political fussing which is just another thing. Our political points of view are also jealously guarded possessions, more stuff that can get in the way of what's really important – our relationships with each other. What's more important; guarding and defending my political point of view or nurturing a relationship with my brother who has the opposing political point of view?

I think you get my point. We have many possessions, some of them more important than others, but none of them as important as our relationships with each other. None of our possessions are more important than the love with which we are to hold each other and care for each other. Whatever it is we think we possess we need to remember that the gravity of these things can pull us away from the lives that God intends for us. The more we are enslaved by whatever possesses us – the harder it will be to joyfully serve and follow Jesus who bids us love one another. Remember it is not the absence of things that will bring about our downfall, it will be the absence of love. An abundance of love in our lives will be the thing that gets us through whatever we have to face. Our possessions? Not so much.

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