

## **An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for June 25, 2022**

**For those interested in volunteering with the Harvestfest, there will be a short meeting THIS SUNDAY 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.

**From the Outreach Committee:** "The Outreach Committee always sponsored a food drive for NCEON every winter. We were all set to go in 2020 when the pandemic hit and our church found a different way to worship. Instead of having a big food drive now when we all feel the pinch of inflation, we will highlight items that NCEON needs now. As you can imagine, the need is greater than ever. So for the next few months we will ask for 3 or 4 items that NCEON requested.

For the month of June, we are requesting rice (any kind), fruit cups, cereal, and tea bags. Please feel free to donate just one item or more and place it in the box located in the Narthex marked NCEON. The committee will see that the items are delivered on a regular basis. We think we can all handle this type of food drive. We thank you in advance for your help. I wonder what will be on July's list?"

**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](http://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.

**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

'As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'" Luke 9: 57 – 60

Some of you know that I serve on the Annapolis District Committee on Ministry. One of the responsibilities of that committee is to enter into discussions with candidates and potential candidates for ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church. Through these discussions and interviews we try to ascertain an individual's gifts for ministry, their readiness to serve, the nature of God's call in their lives, and their willingness to serve in a profession – either commissioned or ordained - that is spiritually, emotionally, physically, relationally, and financially demanding (masters level seminary education isn't cheap).

One of the questions we usually keep coming back to goes something like this: What sacrifices have you made, or do you expect to make as you follow your call to ministry? You would be surprised at the number of people who respond with blank expressions and silence. We even have a few that respond that they haven't made any sacrifices and they don't expect that they will have to. Others may respond saying something like, "it's never a sacrifice to serve God!" These kinds of answers are "red flags" for the committee members who know all too well the kinds of sacrifices that need to be made.

This is a question that Jesus invites us to ask ourselves if we want to follow him. It applies to everyone, lay, commissioned, or ordained, who intends to follow Jesus. Our United Methodist Discipline states that, "The ministry of all Christians consists of privilege and obligation. The privilege is a relationship with God that is deeply spiritual. The obligation is to respond to God's call to holy living in the world." That "holy living" piece will require sacrifice of one sort or another.

We are all called to follow Jesus on a journey. It is a privilege to be in his company and enjoy his companionship and the companionship of others along the way. Yet we will also have an obligation, in answering our call, to actually follow him – even when its inconvenient, frustrating, exhausting, emotionally painful, and uncomfortable. Not that all this stuff will drop on us at once, but at one time or another we will experience all these things as we follow Jesus. To accept this is to accept the certainty of sacrifice on the path of discipleship.

In the verses of Luke sighted above Jesus is calling our attention to the fact that following him will entail some kind of sacrifice. In the first two verses Jesus tells us that on the journey he is completely dependent on the hospitality of others and asks whether we are willing to be? In other words, Jesus disciples need to be willing to expect discomfort and perhaps even that their message will not be

welcomed everywhere. In the second two verses sighted above Jesus makes clear that loyalty to him will take precedence over any other relationships, friendships, or associations one may have with others. Of course, there may be a bit of hyperbole here, sacrificing one's ability to bury the dead is a bit harsh, but Jesus is making a point. Following him takes precedence. And re-ordering our lives to reflect that may mean sacrifice.

If we want to follow Jesus it has to be on Jesus terms, not our own. That will mean sacrifice in some form. The disciples (that includes us) are told that following Jesus will require that sacrifices be made, some of them tangible and some of them not so much. Yes, the sacrifice of time, treasure, and energy are always involved. But we may also have to jettison various prejudices that we carry, belief systems that cloud our vision of Christ – or even lure us away from him, or relationships or affirmations that may trip us up along the way.

At this point you may be telling yourself that none of this seems very encouraging, and this is supposed to be an encouraging word, not a discouraging one. The encouraging word here is that in our call to follow Jesus we are privileged to be carrying words of hope, words of healing, words of comfort to a world that desperately needs it right now. As Jesus disciples we are messengers of God's grace to a world that desperately stands in need of grace. In order to effectively do that we may have to give some things up. It might not always require that we need to give up our wealth, but then it might if that wealth stands between us and those we need to serve. Our ministry won't necessarily call us to give up relationships to others that are important to us; but it might if that relationship tempts us to live in ways that contradict Jesus' call to love and forgive.

One particular crisis we face right now is a church (nationwide) divided over political loyalties. That kind of thing wouldn't happen if some who consider themselves to be Jesus' disciples had jettisoned those loyalties for the sake of following Jesus, a big sacrifice to be sure. Just remember following Jesus means he takes precedence over everything else. That was the point of Jesus teaching sighted above. Otherwise the messages of hope, love, forgiveness, and healing that we bring become eclipsed by political rhetoric and further discord.

As disciples we have a precious message to carry, we have healing to perform, hope and forgiveness to encourage. We do so alongside other disciples similarly called and courageously engaged. This is an amazing privilege. We carry the message of hope for a hurting world! That is a wonderful honor and privilege. We are each called to a journey where we are privileged to walk with Christ. Yet there are obligations involved, there is sacrifice. If someone were to ask you what sacrifices you have made or expect to make as you follow Jesus, what would your answer be?

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