

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for July 3, 2022

"The Outreach Committee is conducting a food drive for NCEON for the next several months. Each month we will ask for a few items to help restock their pantry. For the month of **July** we are asking our congregation for **Peanut Butter and Jelly**. These are listed as some of their most needed food items. Please bring your jars of Peanut Butter and Jelly to church and place them in the box in the narthex. We will see that your contributions are delivered promptly."

Plans for the Harvest Festival are underway!! If you would like to help please contact the office and we will send you in the right direction. You can also donate to the event. Please just specify "Harvest Festival" in the memo line of your check.

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

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

Several weeks ago I was reminded of something we all easily forget, that we are all part of a wider community that has a lot at stake in the struggles of humankind. We may be driving the bus right now, the ones in charge, but the safety of every other living being hangs in the balance. We need to understand that it's not just about us.

I was sitting on the back porch of the parsonage. It's one of the places that I can retreat to and find inspiration for these encouraging words. This day was no different. I became aware of a growing noise beginning to intrude on my quiet meditation. It was crows, dozens of them. They were angry about something and making a huge racket. The noise continued for at least twenty minutes until finally petering out.

A while later my son Stephen asked if I'd heard the crows. I said I had and then he proceeded to tell me what that had been all about. He and Paul had been walking along the lower cemetery road and watching as a falcon killed a crow in midair. They watched the crow fall to earth and the falcon land to stand triumphantly over it. The community of crows was understandably upset and voicing their alarm. That's what the racket had been all about. It seemed that the crows, for half a mile around, had gathered to spread the alarm.

As I thought about this, I was reminded that we are surrounded by a community of which we are all too often unaware; the natural community. A community like our human one that is impacted by events in their world just as we are impacted by the events in ours. And quite often the events of one world have an effect on the other. The violent death of a crow in the avian community had a direct impact on my quiet meditation in the human one. In the same way our human activity has an effect on the natural community around us. In other words, whether we realize it or not, we are all connected – the natural community and ours. Our fates are linked together.

As I contemplated this another thought followed almost immediately. It was a word of scripture found in Genesis 1:28

"God blessed them:

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

- Eugene Peterson, The Message

I like this paraphrase since it corrects some misunderstandings promoted by a careless translation of this verse which for some excuses our abuse of the natural world. Here I'm reminded that the natural world is as dependent on us as we are on it, but we are the ones charged with responsibility toward the rest of the created order. We are the ones God entrusts to drive the bus.

These days it seems that we are all caught up in the unfortunate tribulations of the human community. War in the Ukraine and the threat of its expansion. An economy that is ailing. The related supply issues. Political posturing, polarization, and unrest. Approaching overpopulation and dwindling resources, pollution, and climate change. This list could continue for quite a while. My point is that we would be terribly naïve to think that our problems have no impact on the wider community for which we are responsible. It's not just about us! It's about every living creature on the face of the earth. They depend on us just as we depend on them. We can't afford to be cavalier in our responsibility toward the wider natural community of which we are part.

Paragraph 160 of the 2016 United Methodist Discipline states the following in the preamble of the section dealing with our relationship to the natural world. "All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. . . . Therefore, let us recognize the responsibility of the church and its members to place a high priority on changes in economic, political, social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation."

Normally I'm not one to quote chapter and verse from a rulebook, but I think this says it pretty well. What affects us humans affects the entirety of creation as it is encountered on this planet – and since the advent of space travel, beyond. I know we have a lot of stuff we are dealing with right now, my encouragement to you is that we not make things worse by neglecting the natural world that we depend on. Let's not forget to drive the bus.

A favorite movie of mine is "Sully". It's about the event and aftermath of the miraculous landing of a passenger plane on the Hudson River. The pilot of that plane was Chesley (Sully) Sullenberger. There are a number of flashbacks in the movie. In one, a teenaged Sully is getting advice from his flight instructor who advises that "no matter what happens, don't forget to fly the plane". The reason everyone survived the landing on the Hudson was that Sully never forgot to fly the plane – even though there were dozens of other things needing attention going on in the cockpit. It's pretty good advice when

engaged in any life critical operation or task; whether that be flying a plane, driving a car, driving a bus, or managing this beautiful creation that God has entrusted to us.

Many of the things that are going on right now, that have us preoccupied, have a direct effect on us. But we need the natural world for our very survival. What we do has a direct effect on it. Let's not crash the world because in all our confusion we forgot to drive the bus.

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 please stay connected to each other and to God.

Blessings & Peace, Mike