

## **An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for July 16, 2022**

**"Greetings from sunny and HOT Florida. We miss you!!!"** from Betsy. You can see the rest of her beautiful card hanging on the "Sharing Good News" bulletin board in the Narthex. We miss you too Betsy! 😊

**CONGRATULATIONS to Nikki and Nate Wells (Tom and Robin Sesney's daughter) on the birth of their daughter Zoey Jean!!** Born on 7/7/22 at 6:46am weighing 8lbs and 4 oz. Mom and baby are doing well!

**From Pam Mertz** – During March and April, craft sales and mask donations earned \$39 for the general fund. A special thanks to Penny Pellegrini for making and donating trivets. Thanks to all for your continued support.

**"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."

**We now have a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for the Harvest Festival!** Feel free to sign up at any time! If you have any questions or ideas, 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.

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### **An Encouraging Word**

Though the fig tree does not blossom  
and no fruit is on the vines;  
though the produce of the olive fails  
and the fields yield no food;  
though the flock is cut off from the fold  
and there is no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;  
I will exult in the God of my salvation.

Habakkuk 3: 17 - 18

Being unhappy is a choice that we make for ourselves. Unhappiness is not something inflicted upon us by some outside agency, we inflict it on ourselves. Granted, the occasion for our unhappiness can be caused by an outside agency and be something we have little control over, but the decision to respond by being unhappy is ours to make.

Think of the occasion to be unhappy as an unhappiness pill that someone or some situation offers you; an unhappiness pill that you can take or leave. These unhappiness pills should come with a list of warnings and disclaimers, like the ones we hear recited in those pill pusher commercials that waste our time on TV. You know the ones I mean. They warn us of the possibility of heart attack, stroke, uncontrolled bleeding, depression, purple warts, projectile sweating, and so forth if you choose to take the pill. (Which leads one to ask why anyone would even consider taking that pill in the first place.) The unhappiness pills we are invited to take should come with the same kinds of

warnings notifying us of the side effects that choosing to be unhappy will render. These would include fatigue, decreased energy, difficulty concentrating and making decisions, insomnia, irritability, loss of appetite, feelings of despair, panic disorder, alcoholism, drug dependence, not to mention a real lousy social life and deteriorating relationships. Of course, experiencing any one of these side effects would present further occasion to be unhappy. Who on earth would want to take that kind of pill!

Yet we do it all the time. Sometimes the results are tragic. A case in point would be the tragic ending to a "squeegee incident" in Baltimore the other day. A man pulled up to a stop light and while waiting there was approached by a squeegee worker who was asking for money in return for cleaning the man's windshield. A conflict ensued which involved the motorist exiting his car wielding a baseball bat. The end result was that the motorist was shot and killed. Apparently, the motorist unhappy about being panhandled allowed that unhappiness to explode into anger and then out of anger made the decision to act – with a baseball bat. The shooting that resulted may have been self-defense predicated on fear.

Granted, this was an extreme case. The motorist I imagine was already unhappy about something, perhaps about the same things that make us all unhappy. As the panhandler approached, he may have already been stewing in unhappiness over many different things preparing a caustic launching pad for the anger that would erupt. He had a decision to make in that moment, to act on his anger or just move on. He had a decision to make that morning when he woke up, to face the day with joy or nurse his unhappiness. My point is that unhappiness is a choice as are all the negative emotions that erupt from it.

Our unhappiness can have a debilitating effect. It can keep us from moving out of the situation that's causing despondency in the first place. It can become self-perpetuating and we can find ourselves in our own unending rendition of "This Is Us" (A depressing NBC drama that has mercifully played out its final season.) But, like I said, unhappiness is a choice. This doesn't have to be us.

Paul gives us a lot of great advice concerning unhappiness. He advises us to choose joy. He advises us to take the joy pill. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5: 16 – 18) Here we are encouraged to adopt a positive attitude and advised how to accomplish this through prayer and through counting our blessings. Instead of getting out of the wrong side of the bed in the morning we can begin by praying and asking God to accompany us through the day, we can ask God for help as we meet the inevitable obstacles. We can end each day remembering the blessings that came our way and give whatever trouble we encountered to the Lord. This will go a long way towards warding off unhappiness.

Paul adds to this advice in his letter to the Romans 12: 12 – 13, “Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.” He acknowledges our afflictions, our occasions for taking the unhappiness pill, but urges patience and restraint, He urges us to focus on our hopes rather than our fears. Further, he advises us to be agents of hope for others. It’s really hard to be unhappy when you are helping others. We can choose to do any of these things, or we can choose to remain unhappy, it’s up to us.

One caveat in closing. I know this seems simplistic advice, but it works for me, so it should work for you. However, I know that for some the unhappiness is far too deep and that the sadness and despair seem unassailable even through prayer and service to others. I know that for some that the veil of sadness and despair hides the blessings and makes counting them a futile exercise. In these instances, there is no simplistic answer. Depression is a very real, very common, and often a deadly illness in our world, even more-so now given our present struggles. For those who are afflicted there is no shame in seeking help from mental health professionals. I know. I’ve been where you are. If you are struggling with sadness that seems too deep you can talk to me. Know also that there are mental health professionals and medical professionals who are highly skilled and who are ready to help. All you need do is ask.

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