

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for July 23, 2022

We understand, summers can be busy. So, we want to remind you that we are still using Zoom for our Sunday Services. Zoom allows you to join us from wherever you may be!! (join us in your pj's with a morning cup of coffee) 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 Outreach Committee reminds everyone that the food we are collecting for NCEON in the month of July is PEANUT BUTTER and JELLY. The staff at NCEON is very appreciative of our Friday morning deliveries to them.

The committee also thanks everyone who is participating in the Back to School - Backpack program. We are sponsoring 10 students from a local elementary school by providing the backpacks and school supplies requested by that school. If you took a backpack to fill, please return it to the church by the week of August 14th. If you did not get a chance to pick up a backpack last Sunday and you would like to help out, we are accepting donations to purchase the backpacks for next year. Please mark "backpacks" in the memo section of your check. We appreciate your help with all of our projects throughout the year."

For your information, we have attached the Leadership Roster for 2022. Apologies for not getting this out sooner.

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.

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

As some of you probably know, I enjoy a good thunderstorm. Each one is like an amazing three course meal. There is the appetizer of the storm's approach with its building anticipation of the main course. There is the main course itself of lightning, thunder, wind, and rain – all enjoyed from a safe vantage point. Then there is the wonderful dessert of seeing a rainbow, a confection that reminds me that all storms pass, both the storms in nature which I enjoy and the emotional and spiritual storms which I don't.

The problem is that I haven't seen any rainbows lately. We have had plenty of rain lately and some magnificent thunderstorms. But no matter how hard I look I've yet to see a rainbow this year! I run outside, just as the rain is ending and scan the skies but no rainbow has appeared. I console myself with the knowledge that there must be one somewhere and that I'm just not in the right place to see it. Just because I'm not seeing any rainbows doesn't mean they, or the hope they represent, doesn't exist.

The rainbow as a symbol of hope is derived from its appearance in the bible as a sign of God's covenant with humans. It appears twice, in Genesis 9: 12 – 13 and in Revelation 10:1. In both places it is a symbol of God's covenant faithfulness, the initiation of the covenant and the completion of the covenant. It is meant to remind us of God's love and protection. It reminds us that no matter what happens, God's love and grace will endure and prevail. Whatever the storm we experience in life our hope in God will not prove false and the storm will pass.

The colors of the rainbow are also symbolic shifting from red to purple. Red is the color of sacrifice and reminds us of Christ's redeeming act on the cross. Orange represents deliverance and Holy fire. Yellow or gold represents the glory of God and joy. Green is the color of eternal life. Blue represents the Holy Spirit and truth. Finally, the color purple symbolizes royalty, that Jesus is King of Kings. Taken together in the form of a rainbow they remind us of all of these things. They remind us that God is in control.

Right now, in the moment you are reading this there is a rainbow visible somewhere on this world. Actually, a rainbow is visible in many somewheres. In fact, there has never been a time when a rainbow was not visible somewhere. It has been in force ever since God first put it there. What this means to me is that there has never been a time when God's love, grace, forgiveness, or intervention has not been apparent. Our hope is built on this. The rainbow reminds us of this but does not always need to be visible to verify this truth. The truth of God's faithfulness remains in all places whether a rainbow is visible or not.

Any distress I may have for not yet seeing a rainbow this year is groundless. We really don't need rainbows to know that God will bring us safely through the storms we experience in life. That includes the many storms we are facing these days.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, - Deuteronomy 7:9

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