

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for July 27, 2022

There will be no Wednesday Evening Zoom for the next 4 Wednesdays. It will resume on August 24th.

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

It's never too early to sign up for our Harvest Festival. There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. 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.

"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."

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 (An oldie but a goody from two years ago.)

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. " - *Ephesians 6: 10 – 11*

Or as the British would say "put on your kit". In the British vernacular "kit" refers to the appropriate clothing or equipment for a particular kind of sport or activity. In American usage it refers to a set of articles of equipment required for a specific purpose. Either way it's the necessary equipment to carry out a task.

I have a pretty well-equipped kit for mountain bike riding because I used to do a lot of that. I have the bike of course, complete with 21 gears and rapid-fire shifters. I have a frame pump and repair kit, the helmet, the gloves, a spare inner tube, the spandex shorts with the padded crotch (can pastors say crotch?), the croakies for keeping my glasses on, the shoes, and of course several bike racks (that don't fit any of the vehicles I have right now). The only thing I don't have any more is a body that can actually sustain the punishment. I found that out Saturday when I suffered a lapse of sanity and tried to do a five-mile single track loop in Crownsville with my eldest son. Let's just say it was a miracle that I was still around to lead the worship on Sunday. I felt pretty sure I was gonna die.

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul is talking about another type of kit. He's talking about the kit that we will need as we do battle against what he calls the spiritual forces of wickedness in this world. The kit, the appropriate equipment needed for this task, is fairly extensive. As I look over his list, I realize that perhaps my kit is a little light. The bright side is that it's a little heavier, in a bit better shape, than it was three months ago. Over the past twelve or so weeks I've had to work on polishing that breastplate of righteousness, add a couple more notches in the belt of truth, wrestle with the gospel of peace, fortify my shield of faith, polish the sword of truth, and grind out a few nicks I discovered there, and adjust my helmet of salvation (nothing wrong with the helmet it's just my heads swelled a bit). You've all been working on your kit as well.

Now this particular kit won't help us in our battle against the Corona Virus – that's not a spiritual battle – it's a technological battle that we will win as we heed the advice of the experts and cooperate with each other in doing some fairly simple but important things like social distancing, wearing masks, and washing our hands.

The spiritual battle is engaged as we battle against the invasion of fear, anger, frustration, pride, falsehood, and general incivility into our lives. This invasion has resulted, in part, as our response to the virus, and in part as our response to the social unrest we are experiencing and the underlying evil at its root. The virus and unrest awakens fear, anger, and all the other negative spiritual stuff that

hides in the dark corners of our souls. It's in our everyday battle with these invaders where our spiritual kit needs to be employed.

Until about the middle of March I thought my spiritual warfare kit was in pretty good shape. Was I ever wrong! Yet in the struggle that has taken place since then I've been putting that kit in shape. We've all been doing this, through prayer, engaging in the scripture and wrestling to understand it, and through staying connected with each other in various ways and celebrating fellowship even as the situation with the virus discourages that. The silver lining in all that has transpired since this crisis began is that we've had occasion to supplement, enhance, and strengthen our kit. We have a ways to go to be sure and our spiritual warfare kit will always need attention, but we are much stronger spiritually now than we were a few months ago and that is an encouraging word! Keep up the good work!

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