

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for December 14, 2022

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Christmas Eve Services: 6pm Children and Family Service, 6:45-8pm Music and Meditation, 8pm Candlelight and Communion Service

The Music and Meditation service will take place in the Sanctuary. For those who wish to socialize during this time the service will be streaming in the church hall, where you can join us for conversation and refreshments.

Zoom will continue to run throughout the evening services. Once the services begin at 6, the chat will be disabled.

Sunday Christmas Service will be brief and at our regular time of 9:30am. Please note, there will be NO SUNDAY SCHOOL on Sunday December 25th.

Christmas 2022 Memorials – Thank you to all that purchased a Christmas Memorial. The list is attached. **Poinsettias can be picked up after the Sunday, Christmas morning service.**

We would like to extend an extra special thank you to all of you that have donated food for the pantry, socks and mittens for the CDC, baked goods and volunteered time to the success of our Bazaar. The list goes on and on with the many ways in which our little church gives back!

2023 Giving Envelopes are now available in the Narthex.

The church has received a request from a gentleman whose great grandfather, Jefferson Monroe Cook, provided the lumber and was the architect for the original church. He is wondering if anyone has a picture of the original church. He would like to construct a model. If you do, please let Jennifer know in the office.

From the Outreach Committee – “We currently are participating in the county's **Holiday Sharing program**. Our church family is providing Christmas dinner and presents for 5 local families and 5 local seniors. We appreciate everyone who is helping with this event.

We are still collecting food for the local soup kitchen. You can bring meal-stretching items like **instant mashed potatoes, boxed mac & cheese, rice, and stuffing mix** to the church and place those items in the box in the narthex. Every item already received has been given away.

The committee appreciates all the help our congregation gives to both our local projects and global projects throughout the year. Merry Christmas to you and have a blessed New Year.”

If you are visiting the church during the week, please be careful of the children at the school. We ask that if you are driving in during drop-off or pick-up hours that you wait behind the cars as to not endanger any of the children getting in and out of the cars. These lines move rather quickly. Morning hours are typically 8:15-9:15 and then afternoon is usually 11:30-12:30. If you have any questions, please contact the office.

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. 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.

If you should have any problems logging in, please alert Jennifer in the office.

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.

An Encouraging Word

"God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him." 1 John 4: 8b - 9

In my household one of our favorite things to do during the Christmas season is watch schmaltzy sappy Christmas movies. You know the ones, the Hallmark (now Netflix) variety. Yes, I know that's a shameful confession, but it's apparently one that many other people make as well since the number of these movies multiplies every year. If they weren't popular, that wouldn't happen. Yes, they are schmaltzy, predictably formulaic, emotional pablum, but we love them just the same. So, we grab the popcorn, a box of tissues, and indulge perhaps wishing somehow that the real world worked that way.

So, what's their secret? Why are they popular? If I were to hazard a guess, I would say that they are popular because in those movies love always wins. Always! Despite all the trials and tribulations faced over the course of the narrative love always wins in the end. It's a refreshing alternative to many of our real-world situations where things don't always end up so predictably wonderful. That's why we like them.

Something that we need to remember is that while these stories about a love that always wins are fantasies, the real Christmas story is not. We celebrate the very real event of love coming down at Christmas, a love that always will have the last word, a love that always wins. No matter what very real dramas overtake us in this life we have this wonderful Christmas assurance that love always wins. Always! Through whatever trials we face we will have a happy ending as long as we participate in the narrative. That is the promise of Christmas.

Despite the cynicism, distrust, fear, and anger that is so much a part of our world, love will always have the last word. Despite fearful events that threaten our existence, in the end love has the final word. This isn't a fantasy happy ending, it's a very real one. You and I are participants in this wonderful love story, not spectators. Unlike the actors in those stories we watch unfold in those Christmas movie fantasies, we have the power to invite others into the narrative so that love may have the last word in their world as well.

All movies have a tagline, a pithy statement that teases us to watch the movie. The tagline for our non-fiction narrative in which we all have a part? Love wins – Always! Rest in that promise in this holy season. Take to heart the words of the hymn, "Love Came Down at Christmas".
*"Love shall be our token; love be yours and mine.
Love to God and neighbor, love for plea and gift and sign."*

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