

## **An Encouraging Word for February 1, 2023**

**Love is in the air again and we are gathering Valentine wishes to share at the February 12<sup>th</sup> Worship Service.** There are 3 ways to communicate your wishes to the office. 1. Fill out the form attached to this email and return it to the office either electronically or physically, 2. Email me directly, without the form, [mtcarmel21122@gmail.com](mailto:mtcarmel21122@gmail.com) , or 3. Call the office directly at 410-255-8887.

**Deadline is February 8<sup>th</sup>.** Limit 3 per person please (and, just like last year, in the spirit of the holiday – they can be anonymous!)

**We are looking for more liturgists.** If you are interested in being a reader on Sunday Mornings, please contact Jen in the office.

**From the Outreach Committee** - "Baby It's cold outside! It makes us think of all the people who have to decide if they are going to heat their homes or buy food this winter. That is why we are continuing our food collection for the Pasadena Food Pantry. As the cost of food continues to rise, we see more people stop by on Mondays for whatever the pantry can supply. If you see a box of rice on sale, or instant mashed potatoes, or a jar of peanut butter, a can of tuna, or any product that will stretch a budget, please purchase it, and place it in the box in the narthex. Just remember that the pantry is located in the 7th Day Adventist Church and they do not eat or distribute any pork products. Thank you for helping with this vital local outreach program. The Outreach Committee"

**The Child Development Center is having a ZUMBA class on Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup> 12-1pm.** Tickets are \$10 and the first 5 to sign up receive a special gift!! Please see the attached flyer for more details!

**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 church email is [mtcarmel21122@gmail.com](mailto:mtcarmel21122@gmail.com) and our phone number is 410-255-8887.

**Prayer Cards are also available in the Narthex on Sunday morning.** If you have a prayer or concern, we encourage you to fill out a card and it will be collected and read that morning.

**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.**

**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 from Pastor Mike**

"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." - Colossians 3: 12

"It's times like these you learn to live again.  
It's times like these you give and give again.  
It's times like these you learn to love again.  
It's times like these time and time again."

These lyrics are the chorus to a song entitled "Times Like These" written and composed by Dave Grohl the front man for the Foo Fighters, one of my favorite bands. He wrote them in 2002 during a time of personal difficulty. Grohl is no stranger to personal difficulty. He was the drummer for the band Nirvana when that band's front man Curt Cobain, a close friend, committed suicide. Another close friend and Foo Fighters drummer Tyler Hawkins died unexpectedly last year while on tour. Dave Grohl knows pain and difficulty. I think the words of this song reflect a wisdom borne of struggle and difficulty which continues to cycle around in all of our lives "time and time again".

As I reflect on the lyrics, I consider what we all have had to endure over these last several years and what we may have yet to endure – difficult times. We've endured times of isolation and some of us continue in that isolation. We continue to endure a time of being polarized and driven apart by political and religious ideologies. We each must deal with personal tragedies and challenges. These times are a test of our bonds of fellowship, our compassion, and our ability to rise above the adversities and confusion that are so much a part of our modern world.

Whatever the struggles we face, through it all we have an invitation to rise above them as we follow Paul's advice first addressed to the Colossians, "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." We have a choice to make with each hurdle we face. We can use it as an opportunity to give of ourselves as we lessen the burden of others, or retreat into ourselves. We can use it as an opportunity to love others and embrace others to lift their pain or leave them abandoned to their pain. We are challenged in these times to live not only for ourselves but for others. These tests of love and compassion will arise again and again.

In times like these we are invited to grow into lives of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. As we accept the challenge to continue loving others through it all, give of ourselves for the sake of others through it all, and live with compassion and patience through it all, we will be more like Jesus each day, and bring Christ's light into the dark and difficult times.

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