

## An Encouraging Word for February 8, 2023

**LAST CHANCE!! Email me today!! Love is in the air again and we are gathering Valentine wishes to share at the February 12<sup>th</sup> Worship Service.** [mtcarmel21122@gmail.com](mailto:mtcarmel21122@gmail.com) **Deadline is TODAY 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!)

**Please share this with everyone!!! Mt. Carmel Child Development Center has an immediate opening for a full-time, energetic and creative teacher to work with their 2's, 3's, and 4's combined class.** The hours are 7:00 am - 4:00 pm, Monday - Friday (1 hour lunch break). A 90 hour Child Care Certification and a minimum of 1 year related work experience are required. If you want to work in a supportive, fun environment, this is the job for you! Please send a resume to Dawn Rey at [mtcarmelcdc2@gmail.com](mailto:mtcarmelcdc2@gmail.com).

**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 contact the center for more information and sign up. 410-255-2429

**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**

I begin today with what at first seems to be old news, the beating death of Tyre Nichols. Some of you may be of the opinion that we need to move on. Some of you may feel you're sick and tired of hearing the name of Tyre Nichols. But before I allow the occasion of his death in Memphis at the hands of police to get sucked into the vortex of historical relativity, there is an opportunity here to address an elephant in the room that really needs to be acknowledged. The elephant is named complacency.

My fear is that we are becoming inured or desensitized to the sad reality of violence, injustice, and inhumane acts in the world. There is a part of us that is no longer surprised, shocked, or even angered when another human being's life is ended through violent and unjust acts. The idea that this sort of thing is simply "the way of the world", and business as usual is dangerous and can lead us to gradually accept increasingly heinous behavior or acts as the norm.

The truth is that none of this should be normal. None of this is God's intention for our world or our communities. None of this is God's desire for our lives lived together in this world. This is sin! This is brokenness! Every life is precious in God's eyes and that people could do these things to other people breaks God's heart. The very idea that one human being could devalue the worth of another human being to such an extent as to allow any injustice upon them is abhorrent in God's eyes, and should be in ours.

This continuing tragedy was first portrayed in the fourth chapter of Genesis where, out of jealousy, Cain murdered Abel and then responded to God's query concerning Abel's wellbeing with the words, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Such indifference to the plight of others, the needs of others, and the rights of others has long marked human relationships. It is the fertile soil out of which man's inhumanity to man, and our complacency in the face of it, emerges. From the very beginning God has not been OK with any of it.

So, how should we respond when we come face to face with such injustice? Complacency only adds to the problem. What positive action can we take in the face of such pervasive injustice and evil? One obvious action we can take is to pray. We can pray for the victims, we can pray for the perpetrators, we can pray for healing and the restoration of the communities that have been affected. Such prayer aligns our hearts with God.

Can we go further? Absolutely! The seeds of injustice can be found in attitudes, speech, and actions that devalue a person, a race, a religion, or a culture. When we encounter attitudes and behaviors which devalue another we can gently, and graciously counter them with words and actions of love. To simply excuse demeaning and devaluing attitudes and allow the actions and speech that result from them slide by legitimizes them and allows them to thrive. We cannot remain complacent in the face of attitudes that promote injustice!

Most importantly God has given us guidance as we confront the attitudes and language of injustice. We have guidance in the example and ministry of Jesus who confronted injustice every day, not with violence but with healing, with humility, with words of love and messages of hope, and even with a bit of humor. He played no favorites in his ministry but treated everyone he met, of different races and cultures, with the same love and respect. He also courageously confronted the attitudes that demeaned and devalued the outcast, the foreigner, and the stranger. He was never complacent about it. We can seek to follow his example as we encounter the same destructive attitudes that are at the core of injustice in our present day.

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