

Announcements and Encouraging Word for April 12, 2023

We want to send out a thank you to Joanne Shelton for sharing her beautiful waterfront view with us for our Easter Sunrise Service. Also, thank you to Pastor Mike and Tom Frantz for the special music played that morning. Stephanie Donaldson captured some wonderful photos of the morning that have been shared on our Facebook page. Thanks Steph!

There will be an Administrative Council Meeting this coming Monday, April 17th at 7pm. It is an in person meeting here at the church. Every effort will be made to keep it to an hour. 😊

From Pam Mertz: During January, February and March \$90.00 was raised for the general fund from the sale of rabbits, hearts and quilted items. Thanks for your continued support and a special thank you to Penny Pellegrini for her beautiful quilted items.

"Outreach News: The Outreach Committee met recently to disburse funds to some local and global projects on your behalf. We have made donations to the following local charities: Arundel House of Hope, Bello Machre, Hospice of the Chesapeake, Meals on Wheels, and Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake. Global donations were made to the following: Doctors Without Borders, Engineers Without Borders, United Methodist Global Missionaries Nan McCurdy and Miguel Mairena, UMCOR special collections for U.S. Earthquake response, UMCOR special collection for Ukraine, and a United Methodist camper scholarship for one child to attend a week of church camp. We can only help these and other organizations because of your donations to Outreach or Missions. Our budget is separate from the church budget. We thank you for your generous ongoing support."

Are you following the church on social media? If not, you should! Our Facebook account is <https://www.facebook.com/mtcarmelumconnection/> And our Instagram account is <https://www.instagram.com/mcumc21122/>

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 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

The tree line on the other side of our neighbors' paddocks, visible from my back porch, has become very familiar to me over the years. Its silhouette has become engraved on my memory, dark green against blue skies, bright green against darkening storm skies. Each Fall I watch as the leaves of its individual trees turn and then abandon their branches. In the Spring I watch them blossom and green up, some more slowly than others. Then in the Summertime, sometimes during the violence of a storm, sometimes on a still morning or afternoon I'll hear a crash and that tree line is different, never to be the same, missing a familiar face that has surrendered to the earth. I know eventually something will grow to take its place with its own hue and character. But I'll miss that familiar face and someplace deep inside I'll mourn its passing.

It's the same for me as I pastor this congregation. I've had the privilege of becoming familiar with all of you over the last twelve years, and will continue to do so for at least a thirteenth year. That's a long time for a United Methodist pastor to be serving a congregation. It's a blessing that not that many United Methodist Pastors have. I've baptized babies, watched children become teenagers, and watched teenagers become amazing adults. I've watched everyone mature and gracefully age through various seasons of life, some challenging and some joyous. I've performed far too many funerals.

To use the phrase of Henry Higgins in "My Fair Lady", I've grown accustomed to Mount Carmel's face. Some new faces have appeared over time. But, like the trees of the forest I so enjoy watching, eventually faces will disappear, some to other gatherings, but some to a higher place. Some succumb in the midst of storms, others fade away quietly, but their absence creates a space that can never be filled in the same way again. The landscape of the congregation changes, never to be the same, missing familiar faces that have grown beyond the confines of this earth. We mourn their passing.

The wonder and joy of the Easter message is that the passing of those familiar faces is not the end of the story. There is so much more. Certainly, the congregation will continue in constantly renewed and transformed ways, having been nourished by the efforts, wisdom, and prayers of those who are now absent. Just as a forest continues on in renewed and transformed ways nourished by the life that has gone before. But with the faces we no longer see we are also assured of their continued life and energy on a higher and everlasting plane. We are assured of resurrection and everlasting life. We need not mourn.

The tree line across the paddock changes with the seasons reflecting the seasons of human life; new birth, growth, maturity, decline and death. What we can't see, even with that apparent death, is the life that is hidden underground. I've noticed that the roots of some trees that have come down produce new shoots which may one day become trees in their own right. The life of the absent tree continues on in another form. It is the same in what we see as human death. What we can't see is the life that continues on, a life that is even more vibrant and potent that has taken another form, one that is everlasting and protected in the heart of God. A new face has appeared in the great congregation of the Kingdom of God adding their unique beauty to its ever growing, ever living aspect. This is an occasion for joy! We need not mourn. Happy Easter!

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, and please stay connected to each other and to God.

Blessings & Peace, Mike

