

Announcements and Encouraging Word for May 3, 2023

Faith, Hope Circle will be meeting THIS Thursday, May 4th at 12:30 in the Church Hall. All women of the church and community are welcome and encouraged to join us! Please bring a bag lunch and a drink to enjoy during our gathering.

THIS Saturday, May 6th the Child Development Center will be having a Spring Vendor Event from 9-3. There will be lots of vendor tables, food, games, crafts, face painting and more!! I have attached the flyer for you to share. You won't want to miss it! If you are interested in baking for the Bake Sale, please contact Jen in the office.

****IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING THIS SUNDAY, MAY 7TH SERVICE** – There will be **NO ZOOM** for this service. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the office.

Is someone in your house graduating high school or college? If so, please let us know so that we can celebrate them. Please contact the office to let Jen know who it is and their future plans.

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

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." - [Matthew 11:28-30](#)

Back in the relatively dark ages, during my sophomore year in college, I was invited to join some other students on a hike to the top of Clingmans Dome in The Great Smoky Mountains. This was to

be a unique hike since some of the journey would be accomplished in the dark with the help of flashlights. As such it would be an illegal hike since for obvious reasons the park service frowned on nocturnal sojourns along their mountain trails. We would not do the full seven-and-a-half-mile hike entirely in the dark. Rather, we would hike much of the way the day before and camp near the beginning of the trail up the side of the mountain itself. (Yes, we could have taken the road to the top but what fun is that?)

The whole idea of this questionable journey was adventure and to see the sunrise from the summit. So, beginning at about 3 a.m. we started our ascent from where we camped. It was an exercise in physical exhaustion, some confusion, and fear (of falling or getting caught). Even though our guides had done this before and were quite familiar with the trail we still ended up stumbling around in the dark a lot. We arrived at the summit, complete with a few scrapes and bruises, just as the Sun began to appear over the eastern horizon. We also arrived into the presence of several park rangers who happened to be at the observation platform having taken the easier route by car. They were none too pleased to see us and we did get a lecture focusing on our stupidity and carelessness. But they were also pretty lenient and let it go at that. Here's a recent video of the view that awaited me at the summit. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiNvu2sIV8E>

Should I have accepted the invitation? If I had to do it over again, would I have done so? Probably. The sunrise I saw from the summit was beautiful and very much worth the journey, the bruised knees and arms, and the tongue lashing from the rangers. The vista was, I believe, even more beautiful because of the effort of the journey.

We encounter all sorts of journey invitations in our lives. Some invitations we accept because they excite or intrigue us. Some we refuse because the prospect scares us or because we don't think we have "the right stuff" to complete the journey. However, I have found that the invitations I've had to the most difficult journeys, the ones that took a lot of effort, the ones that were daunting at the onset, were the ones that were really worth accepting.

Think about the invitations to journeys you have received. It may have been an invitation to marriage, the invitation that came in the mail to attend a particular college, an invitation to try out for a sports team, or an invitation to join a fraternal organization. For some of us old enough to remember the draft it may have been the invitation from the U.S. government that began with the word "greetings!". For me it was the invitation I felt deep in my heart to enter ordained ministry. All, or at least most, of these are invitations we are free to either refuse or accept. All of them are at least a little scary or daunting. All of them will require effort. When accepted they will take us to a different place in life and are, usually in retrospect, very much worth accepting.

In the scripture cited at the beginning of this article Jesus extends one of the most important invitations we will ever receive. It's an invitation to follow Him, to take a journey with Jesus and in that journey find rest and comfort for our souls. Yet, Matthew 19: 16 – 22 (the Rich young man who couldn't give up what he already had to follow) adds a bit of a caveat to this invitation suggesting that the actual journey of following Jesus will involve some sacrifice. Accepting Jesus' invitation to follow can be scary. Like my journey up the side of Clingmans Dome in the dark it's not always easy going. We might trip and fall but with Jesus' help get up again. We might get some spiritual and emotional scrapes and abrasions along the way and even get lost for a bit. But in the end the glory of what we will see and experience along the way and at journey's end will be beyond our wildest dreams well worth accepting the invitation and the journey to follow. My encouragement today is to stay on

the path, the issuer of the invitation will not let us down and he knows the way. At the summit we will see the glorious dawning of a new and never ending 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, and please stay connected to each other and to God.

Blessings & Peace, Mike