

## Announcements and Encouraging Word for May 10, 2023

**There will be an Administrative Council Meeting this Monday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 at the church. If you are on the Council, please plan on attending if you can. We will revisit the One Board proposal that Pastor Mike presented last month.**

**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](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

*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." - Isaiah 43:2*

During the sermon last Sunday, I spoke about an incident involving me and a bear. I was four years old at the time but remember it vividly as if it were yesterday. I had finished watching Captain Kangaroo and my mom was still doing laundry. It was a bright warm morning, so I decided to take a walk. Apparently, I did that from time to time – took walks, unannounced to the consternation of my parents. That morning I walked out the kitchen screen door, around the back of the house, and down the tractor path to the back field. It was there on the side of the hill, next to my grandfather's garden, that I encountered the bear. I was terrified! I ran as fast as my tiny legs could carry me back down the path, around the house, and through the kitchen door. Slam! "Mom! There's a bear! It's chasing me!" I remember her smile as she said, "O.K. let's go see if we can scare this bear away".

As we retraced my path to the hillside and the hunting grounds of the bear, I remember feeling that we were in real danger. We arrived at the spot and sure enough, there was the bear, calmly munching

on some of my grandfather's vegetables. Somehow the bear didn't seem as menacing or ferocious as it had before. I remember my mom's laugh as she said, "Oh, that's not a bear, that's a woodchuck!" Still, it was a rather large woodchuck (thanks to my grandfather's vegetables) and I remember it took some convincing to make me comfortable with the situation. Eventually the bear/woodchuck took notice of us and scampered back into the brush.

I share this memory in honor of my mother who was always an island of calm in a sea that was often tossed by the chaotic events in the life of our family. That day was a case in point. It was a situation which, though tremendously frightening to me, she calmly diffused with her loving presence. What seemed to be a frightening and potentially deadly encounter when I was by myself became much less threatening and overwhelming in her presence.

Mom is no longer with us, she passed away in 1995. Yet there are many times I still feel her comforting presence and hear her calming voice. That is a part of me that will never be lost. She is also the one who set me on the path of knowing the comforting presence of God, especially in those times when things in my life just didn't seem to be going right. Perhaps the greatest gift she gave me was her sharing with me a faith and trust in God that would carry me through even the worst circumstances of my life. I know I don't have to face those circumstances alone! God is with me; my Lord standing next to me as I face every circumstance that is difficult, defeating, frightening, or emotionally overwhelming. I now realize that this is where my mom found the strength to be an island of calm in a chaotic world – it was her absolute trust in God. Her confidence gained in that trust radiated out to calm the rest of us.

It's always harder to face our challenges alone. When it's just us, the things that worry us, frighten us, or threaten us seem so overwhelming. When I was by myself that woodchuck became a bear terrifying to behold; but in my mom's presence it was just a woodchuck. Without the knowledge that God is with us this world can be a terrifying place; but with the knowledge that God is with us, that we are not alone, the world becomes much less threatening.

I take to heart these words penned by Robert Keen in the old standard hymn, "How Firm A Foundation".

*When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow,  
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.*

*When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, thy dross to consume,  
and thy gold to refine.*

That these words express a truth which guides my life, especially through trials, is something I credit to my mom. Without her calm grace, founded in her trust in the Lord, demonstrated in her living through trials, and shared with me, I would never know "the peace of Christ that passes all understanding" in which I can rest even in the toughest of times. Happy Mother's Day mom!

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 in please stay connected to each other and to God.

Blessings & Peace, Mike