

## **Encouraging Word and Announcements for July 5, 2023**

**Jennifer will be out of the office the week of July 10<sup>th</sup>.** If you have an emergency, please call the office and leave a voicemail or send an email. Both will be checked throughout the week.

**Please note that the next Communion Service will be held a week earlier than scheduled in order for Pastor Mike to administer it. That date is Sunday, July 30<sup>th</sup>.**

**From the Outreach Committee:** "The Outreach Committee is alive and well. After the last meeting our feeling was that we were asking the congregation for too much last winter and spring. So, we have been donating to some organizations on your behalf and making plans for the upcoming months. We hope you have enjoyed your Outreach vacation. Now it's time to get back to business.

We are currently waiting for the names of 10 children from the county for the Backpack- Back to School program. We will be rolling out that program in the next few weeks. Get ready and line up.

In October and November, we will have a food drive for the local soup kitchen - food pantry. Supplies are low and demand is greater than ever. Not much help is coming from the food bank. More on that later.

We will be helping 10 families at Christmas through the Holiday Sharing program. Watch this space as time goes on.

We hope you have enjoyed your Outreach vacation and feel refreshed and ready to dig into both local and global projects in the coming months. We are gearing up."

**From Pam Mertz:** During April, May and June, \$66 was raised for the general fund from the sale of rabbits, hearts, quilted trivets and even an apron, hand made by Nobie Asaki. Her spirit lives on here at Mt. Carmel. Thanks to all for your continued support, with a special thanks to Penny Pelligrini.

**Mt. Carmel Child Development Center is looking for a fun and energetic person to teach in our two year old class, and someone to teach in our school-age class for the fall. If you know of anyone that might be interested, please have them contact Dawn at [mtcarmelcdc2@gmail.com](mailto:mtcarmelcdc2@gmail.com).**

**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 from Pastor Mike**

*"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

- Matthew 16: 18 - 19

I spent Friday morning, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, cleaning up the play area and basketball court at Furman L. Templeton Preparatory Academy in inner city Baltimore. Furman Academy is a Charter School for Grades 1 – 5 in a somewhat desolate area of Baltimore. Burned out and crumbling buildings are visible from the school property. Violence and the drug trade also occur nearby. Your lay member to Annual Conference, Jennifer Harris, spent the morning organizing teacher supplies closet at Westport Academy, another charter school. We were there because on that Friday morning members of the Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church went out into the streets of Baltimore armed with rakes, brooms, trowels, mulch, trash bags, gloves, dustpans and the like to try to give the city a little hope and love; to be signs of God's Kingdom.

My group even included Bishop Easterling who spent the morning spreading mulch. We were greeted on the steps of the school by the administrator and assistant administrator who welcomed us and thanked us for bringing some light and joy into a somewhat dismal part of the city.

The children at Furman Academy were having a field day the next week and needed the play area and basketball court to be clean and safe. When we arrived, the outside basketball court and play area was covered with broken glass, trash, razor blades, and spent hypodermic needles and syringes. We were instructed to be careful with the sharps, use gloves, and deposit them in safe containers. So I carefully swept the dangerous items into the dustpan, and deposited them while saying a prayer for whoever the people were who had used those needles, who were struggling with addiction, who were looking for hope and needing some love. We all said lots of prayers that Friday morning.

All the time we could hear the children inside the gym laughing and playing and we knew that they would have a safe place to have their field day. Yes, it cost a little sweat, a little sunburn, and some stiffness at the end of the day, but we were the presence of the Kingdom in a place that needed reminding of the presence of the Kingdom.

The scripture sighted at the beginning of the Encouraging Word, affirms the church's relationship with the Kingdom of God. Being the presence of the Kingdom of God in those places and situations where the presence of the Kingdom is needed is what the church is all about. We knew that the people who really needed to see evidence of God's Kingdom would not make their way into the ballroom of the Baltimore Hilton where the business of the Conference was being conducted. If we

wanted to be God's presence in Baltimore, we would need to make our way to those places where hope and a reminder of God's love was needed.

As I was sweeping the detritus of human despair off that basketball court, I considered the ways that Mount Carmel UMC has provided, and is called to provide, signs of hope and reminders of God's Kingdom to not only the immediate community that surrounds us but to the wider world as well. To be sure, signs of despair and hopelessness are more apparent on the streets of Baltimore than they are in Pasadena, but that doesn't mean they don't exist. How are we being signs of God's Kingdom in our community? How are we engaged in being signs of hope and of God's love? There are opportunities for us to be the presence of God's Kingdom all around us, we just need to pay attention.

My encouragement to you today is to simply pay attention to the people and situations you encounter each day. Consider the ways that you can be a sign of hope and the presence of God's kingdom in that situation or for that person. My encouragement for us as a congregation is that we look for the opportunities that are all around us to be the presence of God's Kingdom in the wider community and to be in conversation as to how we might meet that challenge.

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