

Encouraging Word and Announcements for July 26, 2023

There will be no Zoom next Sunday, August 6th.

From the Outreach Committee: Our Backpack School Supply project for the county is underway. Thank you to our volunteers who took the 10 backpacks home to fill with the required school supplies requested by Pasadena Elementary School. The filled packs can be returned on July 30th but must be returned to us by August 6th. If you were not lucky enough to get a backpack to fill and still would like to help with this project, we will accept a monetary donation to help us purchase backpacks for next year. Just make a check out to the church and put "backpacks" in the memo line. We thank everyone for their support for this project for many years."

We received a very nice hand-written thank you note from Engineers without Borders that I was going to put up on the bulletin board. But at the Ad Council meeting last night Mike requested that I include it in the Encouraging Word. So here goes:

We often receive thank you notes from organizations when Outreach makes a donation on your behalf. Recently, we received a hand-written note that we thought we would share with you...

"To our supporters at Mt. Carmel United Methodist Church:

Thank you for your recent contribution to Engineers Without Borders USA! Your contributions over the years help us power humanitarian engineering around the world and enable us to realize our vision of a world where every leader is equipped to build and every community is built to thrive. We wouldn't be able to accomplish this work without your generosity. Kellianne McClain, Development Officer, Engineers Without Borders, USA."

Thank you to everyone that contributed to the No Show Fundraiser! We raise \$2630.00. A special thanks goes out to Pat and Earnie Johnson for the fun idea and stuffing and sending out the flyer!

We Need Your Help!! *Our Harvest Festival is scheduled for Saturday, October 14! (it'll be here before you know it!!)* To make this event a success, we need your help! We are requesting donations of the following

- Old, used children's clothing we can use for scarecrow stuffing
- Volunteers to help prep Thursday and Friday before the event
- Volunteers for the day of the event
- Baked Goods
- Monetary contributions to the event
- Attendance!! – Please come and have fun!

Mt. Carmel United Methodist Church and the Child Development Center are working hand in hand to make this a fun, successful, family fundraising event! We hope you can join us! If you are interested in helping, please contact Jennifer Harris 410-255-8887 or mtcarmel21122@gmail.com

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.

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

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. " - *Ephesians 6: 10 – 11*

Or as the British would say "put on your kit". In the British vernacular "kit" refers to the appropriate clothing or equipment for a particular kind of sport or activity. In American usage it refers to a set of articles of equipment required for a specific purpose. Either way it's the necessary equipment to carry out a task.

I have a pretty well equipped kit for mountain bike riding because I used to do a lot of that. I have the bike of course, complete with 21 gears and rapid-fire shifters. I have a frame pump and repair kit, the helmet, the gloves, a spare inner tube, the spandex shorts with the padded crotch (can pastors say crotch?), the croakies for keeping my glasses on, the shoes, and of course several bike racks (that don't fit any of the vehicles I have right now). The only thing I don't have any more is a body that can actually sustain the punishment. I found that out a while ago when I suffered a lapse of sanity and tried to do a five mile single track loop in Crownsville with my eldest son. Let's just say it was a miracle that I was still around to lead the worship on Sunday. I felt pretty sure I was gonna die.

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul is talking about another type of kit. He's talking about the kit that we will need as we do battle against what he calls the spiritual forces of wickedness in this world. The kit, the appropriate equipment needed for this task, is fairly extensive. As I look over his list, I realize that perhaps my kit is a little light. The bright side is that it's a little heavier, in a bit better shape, than it was several years ago. Over the past couple of years I've had to work on polishing that breastplate of righteousness, add a couple more notches in the belt of truth, wrestle with the gospel of peace,

fortify my shield of faith, polish the sword of truth and grind out a few nicks I discovered there, and adjust my helmet of salvation (nothing wrong with the helmet it's just my heads swelled a bit). You've all been working on your kit as well as we've faced a rapidly changing world.

The spiritual battle is engaged as we battle against the invasion of fear, anger, frustration, pride, falsehood, and general incivility into our lives. This invasion has resulted, in part, as our response to the virus, and in part as our response to the social and political unrest we are experiencing and the underlying evil at its root. All that we have been facing awakens fear, anger, and all the other negative spiritual stuff that hides in the dark corners of our souls. It's in our everyday battle with these invaders where our spiritual kit needs to be employed.

Until a little over three years ago I thought my spiritual warfare kit was in pretty good shape. Was I ever wrong! Yet in the struggle that has taken place since then I've been putting that kit in shape. We've all been doing this, through prayer, engaging in the scripture and wrestling to understand it, and through staying connected with each other in various ways and celebrating fellowship even as, early on, the situation with the virus discourages that. The silver lining in all that has transpired is that we've had occasion to supplement, enhance, and strengthen our kit. We have a ways to go to be sure and our spiritual warfare kit will always need attention, but we are much stronger spiritually now than we were a few months ago and that is an encouraging word! Keep up the good work!

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