

An Encouraging Word and the Announcements for September 6, 2023

THE ZOOM INVITE THAT WAS EMAILED ON 9/5 IS THE CORRECT ZOOM INFORMATION. I incorrectly typed the 9th instead of the 10th, but the information is still correct. Sorry for any confusion.

Please sign up to volunteer at the Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 14th 9-2. Sign up sheets are located in the church hall. There are so many ways to volunteer. If you can't make the event, there are several shifts that are during the week that leads up to it. Volunteer to make a sweet treat to sell at our bake table or to come in and make soup or to help set up on the day before. **We are also in need of clothing for our Scarecrow making station. We are looking for old, used children's clothing sized 5/6-9/10. Donations can be dropped off at the church.** 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 have any questions, please contact Jennifer Harris 410-255-8887 or mtcarmel21122@gmail.com

Community Shred Event at MCUMC Saturday, September 16, 11-1. Come and have your old, sensitive documents shredded for FREE! It's easy! Just pull into the parking lot, a helper will then retrieve your documents for your vehicle, then give you your boxes or bags back. That's it! Sensitive documents can include but are not limited to old checks, old bills, old receipts, old papers, old income tax forms. NO PLASTIC BAGS!! Not sure of what to shred? I found this article online that might help out...<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/personal-finance/financial-documents-what-to-save-what-to-throw-away/>

CHOIR: Attention all singers! We would like to get the choir going again if we have enough singers. Rehearsals will begin on Thursday, September 28th. (We are waiting until then because our son is getting married the week before!) If you or someone you know loves to sing, please contact me. If you have any questions, please also let me know. Joe and I look forward to making music with you! Shannon Shanefelter, 410-925-3122 scshanefelter@gmail.com

The Child Development Center has an Amazon Wish List to make this year a success!! If you would like to donate, please check out the list and order directly from this link, https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/25GDKJMQRN5EV?ref=wl_share

Faith Hope Circle will begin the fall season with a meeting in the church hall on Thursday, September 7th at 12:30 pm. All women of the church and community are cordially invited. Please bring a bag lunch and drink. We look forward to seeing you!

There is still time to join our next Zoom Bible Study. Originally slated to begin on Tuesday, September 19 will now begin Tuesday, September 26th, at 7:00 p.m. The Study is authored by Adam Hamilton and is entitled Simon Peter: Flawed But Faithful Disciple. This will be a six week study examining the life, faith, and character of Simon Peter. You can purchase the book from Amazon or Cokesbury. If you are interested in joining, please contact Jen in the office 410-255-8887 or mtcarmel21122@gmail.com

The Pasadena Business Association is hosting an All You Can Eat Crab Feast on September 25th 6-10pm at Twain's Tavern. Includes: #1 male crabs by Seaside, crab soup, pit beef, ham, turkey,

Primo baked ziti, mac & cheese, cole slaw, dessert, domestic draft beer and soda. Proceeds got to benefit the Mountain Road Memorial Flag Site. Please visit <https://pasadenabusinessassociation.com/event-5369044> for more information and to purchase tickets.

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 polarization that is the blight of our society didn't begin in the political battles experienced in this nation or others. Nor was it caused by the Coronavirus, though these things certainly didn't help. Many are in agreement that there has always been a tendency toward polarization but that it was brought to a head by social media and the use of algorithms that feed us only information we want to hear or agree with. It encourages closed-mindedness and the absolute conviction that "I am right and you are wrong". So now we have the situation mentioned in Isaiah as he describes the plight of the makers of idols. "They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand." After all that's what happens isn't it? We idolize our pet ideas, positions, political parties, and politicians. We end up knowing nothing and understanding nothing.

Paul advises in I Thessalonians 5: 19 – 22 "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil." I think that's pretty good advice, not only for "prophecies" but whatever information comes our way. Don't simply reject or accept but listen and test what is heard or written. In other words, keep an open mind. I believe that the Spirit speaks to us in many ways and that there is something to learn in everything we hear or experience. The Holy Spirit is not restricted to "anointed" experts or "approved" publications but can

be found and discerned in everything we experience. Closing our minds may very well quench the Spirit.

The cure to polarization is keeping an open mind; with one caveat. Test what you hear. Paul advises testing what we hear and experience. So how would I test the things that someone is saying to me or trying to convince me of? First is there respect for others or respect for me reflected in what they are saying and how they are saying it? All people are made in the image of God, that is a biblical truth. Being made in God's image, everyone's personhood should be respected. So, in what is being said or written are the rights of others being respected or are they being trashed? Does this quote sound familiar? "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that [all men \(and women\) are created equal](#), that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*" These words of course are right out of our Declaration of Independence. So in my test I would ask if what is being said is something that respects or disrespects anyone's rights to these basic principles.

Our Lord has also left us with a toolbox full of principles with which we can test the information being shared with us. I use these tools all the time. Simply put, they are humility, charity, and forgiveness. These principles are much more thoroughly covered in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 – 7 but I think you get my drift. So, when I'm in a discussion with someone I ask myself are they reflecting these ideals? Do I hear charity in what they say or write, do I hear humility expressed, do I hear a forgiving attitude. (By the way these ideals are not in the sole possession of Christians, they are set forth in virtually all the world's major religions.)

Of course, I can do none of this if I'm not keeping an open mind. Keeping an open mind doesn't mean that I have to agree with someone, but I still need to respect them regardless of what they say. That respect may be keeping a door open for them to hear my thoughts. If I disagree, especially if I disagree, I need to let them know they've been heard, and I need to reply with humility, charity, and a forgiving attitude. I need to respond to them with the respect due all humans made in God's image. Who knows? I may learn something and they may too! Which would be an impossibility with a closed mind.

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