

Announcements and an Encouraging Word for October 25, 2023

We will be having a Harvest Festival Follow Up Meeting after this Sunday's service. This will be a quick meeting just to go over what went well, what didn't, ideas for next year, etc. Hope to see you there.

Faith Hope Circle will be meeting in the church hall on Thursday, November 2nd 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! Also, just a reminder that the pre-school class dismisses at 12:15, so there may be a line of cars just prior to that time to pick up children. Thanks for your patience.

We are preparing for our celebration of All Saints Sunday on November 5th. If you have lost someone dear to you over the past year and would like them remembered during the worship service that day, please contact the church office with details. Our email address is mtcarmel21122@gmail.com or you can call Mon – Wed 9-2pm. We would also like to share a picture which you can forward to the church as well. Then please plan to be present when that person is remembered. **Our deadline is Monday, October 30th.**

From the Outreach Committee - Thanks to everyone helping supply food for the Pasadena Food Pantry. For the month of November Outreach is collecting boxed stuffing mix and instant mashed potatoes. The food pantry is experiencing a record number of families this month and feel the numbers will stay large though the holidays. Thanks again for your continuing support.

From Pam Mertz - During July, August and September, 17 rabbits and 2 dog collars were sold during coffee hour. Today, October 14, another 25 rabbits and hearts were sold during the Harvest Festival. The combined sales earned \$41 for the general fund. I will be selling Christmas items much earlier than usual this year since I will most likely not be at coffee hour during December. If anyone has any special orders for rabbits or hearts, please let me know before Thanksgiving. Thanks to all for your continued support!

Order your APPLE PIE TODAY! Chocked full of delicious fresh apples and made by volunteers at MCUMC. (*Speaking of volunteers, if you want to help make these delectable pies, please contact Jennifer in the office.*) All pies will be unbaked and can be picked up on November 21st from 9-2pm.

SAVE THE DATE ALERT!! MCUMC and MCCDC will be presenting a Nativity Play Dinner Theater on Wednesday, December 20!!! Keep an eye out for additional information in the future.

Are you following the church on social media? If not, you should! Our Facebook account is <https://www.facebook.com/mtcarmelumcconnection/> 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

As I write this, three holidays are steadily approaching, all of them connected. Of these "Holy Days" only one is celebrated regularly by Protestants. Another we don't really observe at all though it is on our liturgical calendars. The third is one that we've forgotten as a holy day. They are all part of the three-day triduum that remembers and celebrates those that have lived and died in the faith and now reside with God. Any guesses as to what these Holy Days are? They are in order; Halloween (All Hallows Eve), All Saints Day, and All Souls Day. Of the three Halloween is the one that gets the bad rap. Maybe this will clear that up.

Halloween is Christian in Origin and is also known as All Saints Eve or All Hallows Eve (from which we get the contraction "Halloween"). It marks the beginning of the observance of Allhallowtide – a season for remembering and venerating the saints of the church. Back in the time when Christianity was moving into Europe and the British Isles (on the coattails of Roman occupation) a common practice was to Christianize pagan festivals like the Gaelic festival Samhain which marked the end of harvest season and the entrance into the "dark half" of the year. Samhain was marked by great gatherings and feasts and was when the ancient burial mounds were open, which were seen as portals to the Otherworld. Some believe that the Christian Church Christianized Samhain into a time for remembering the saints.

Feast days for remembering the saints had, up to the 7th century, occupied various dates throughout the year. In A.D. 800 the celebration of All Saints Day was located on the calendar by the Anglo-Saxon educator and poet Alcuin as taking place on November 1st which also happened to be about the same time as the Gaelic festival Samhain. In 837 A.D. Pope Gregory IV ordered the general celebration of All the Saints take place on November 1st coincident with the pagan festival of Samhain.

The practice of Trick or Treating may have evolved from the practice, originating sometime in the 15th century, of baking and sharing soul cakes for all "Christianed" souls. This was a practice associated with Allhallowtide. Children and groups of poor people would go door to door collecting Soulcakes in exchange for praying for the dead.

The traditional though un-official belief was that all souls wandered the earth until All Saints Day at which time they were freed to go to their heavenly reward. All Hallows Eve provided one final chance for the dead to wage vengeance on their enemies before moving to the next world. So, the practice evolved of wearing masks and costumes in order to avoid being recognized by a departing soul which might be seeking revenge.

Many other various traditions, some legitimate and some not so much, have evolved in the observance of All Hallows Eve. At its heart the holiday (a contraction of the words Holy Day) is a part of the three day Allhallowtide - All Hallows Eve (October 31st), All Saints Day (November 1), and All Souls Day (November 2). Halloween or All Hallows Eve is uniquely connected to All Saints Day. It is all part of the same observance, in much the same way that Mardi Gras (which is French for Fat Tuesday) prepares for the celebration of Lent and a season of penitence.

All Hallows Eve or Halloween is not a celebration of the Devil though in our modern celebrations some "devilry" has slipped into the mix. Yet, because of Halloween's connection with those that have passed on, the spirits of the departed, and life beyond death, other less wholesome customs, beliefs, and myths concerning the afterlife also became connected with it. This happened in the same way that Christmas became connected with commercialism. Murdering ghouls, evil hauntings, and satanic rites (all popular fodder for Hollywood) have nothing to do with Halloween as it was historically observed. Neither is it necessary that these sorts of things be part of Halloween observances in our present day. Halloween can be observed without acknowledging these sorts of things, we just have to use some common sense.

All that I've said so far presents a historical and theological understanding of Halloween (yawn).. But beyond that Halloween for me is fun. There's nothing wrong with having fun – I just try not to get carried away with the ghoulish stuff. I enjoy celebrating Halloween. When I was a child, dressed like an astronaut and carrying my trick or treat bag around the small developments near my home, my mind was opened to the possibility of "mystery" and the idea that things might exist beyond the realm of my understanding. Being open to possibilities beyond our understanding is an essential attitude that prepares us for faith in God who is beyond our comprehending. I'm comfortable with the mystery of God. One of the reasons for this is because I was introduced to the "mysterious" through things like celebrating Halloween when mysterious things could happen. Halloween also stirred and exercised my imagination which I believe is something that always should be encouraged. I know none of this was the original intention of All Hallows Eve, but I see nothing wrong with making room for mystery in our lives and expanding our imaginations. Halloween makes room for that. So happy Halloween! Raise prayers of thanksgiving for the lives of those who have passed from this life to the next. Give thanks for the change of seasons. Leave space for mystery in your life for such space may make room for God. 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