

Announcements and an Encouraging Word for November 20, 2023

****The office will be closed Wednesday, November 22nd ****

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!

We are delaying our Advent Bible Study Zoom Class by a week. It will now begin next Tuesday, November 28th at 7pm. It will be based on the book *The Journey* by Adam Hamilton. You can order your copy through Amazon. If you haven't already, **please let us know if you want to participate.**

MARK Your calendars!! Christmas Bazaar will be Saturday, December 2, 9 am – 2 pm. We will be having an assortment of vendors, games and kiddo activities, Jenos Steaks FOOD TRUCK and a visit from the one and only Santa at 12:45. **Our FAMOUS BAKE TABLE will also be there. Please consider donating a baked item for the event. That's what makes it famous!! Contact Jen in the office or Cathy Jones.**

Be prepared for the holidays when you support our group Mt. Carmel United Methodist Church through this Rada Cutlery Fundraiser! Here is our Personal Store Link to share on social media. Every purchase made using this unique shopping link helps Mt. Carmel UMC reach our fundraising goal! <https://radafundraising.com?rfsn=7718469.cc0da5&subid=JenniferHarris> Catalogs are also available in the Church Hall. To be clear, **orders can be taken via catalog and delivered to the office OR online at our Personal Store Link listed above.** If you have any questions, please contact Jen in the office 410-255-8887 or mtcarmel21122@gmail.com.

A little about RADA Cutlery: "Every one of our knives is handcrafted in the heart of the USA, with materials only from America. Our strong heritage and Midwest values assure dependability you can believe in and sharp good looks you'll love.

For more than 75 years, we've been crafting knives that stand the test of time. Our blades are created with surgical-quality, T420 high-carbon stainless steel and each is meticulously hand-sharpened to a razor-sharp edge. We build each with the highest expectations ... a lifetime of use, guaranteed."

Christmas 2023 Poinsettia Memorials – Remember or honor a loved one this Christmas. By purchasing a poinsettia to decorate the church you are doing just that and making our little chapel beautiful for Christmas! You may prefer to donate to the general fund or to the trustees' fund. Or BOTH! Complete the form attached to this email and return it to the church. (Forms can also be picked up at the church) The deadline is December 13th.

The Annual Faith Hope Circle Christmas Luncheon will be held at the Pasadena Greene Turtle restaurant Thursday, December 7th at 12:30. All ladies of our church and community are cordially invited. Please contact Denise Calabrese, or the office if you plan to attend. Hope to see you there! Happy Holidays

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.

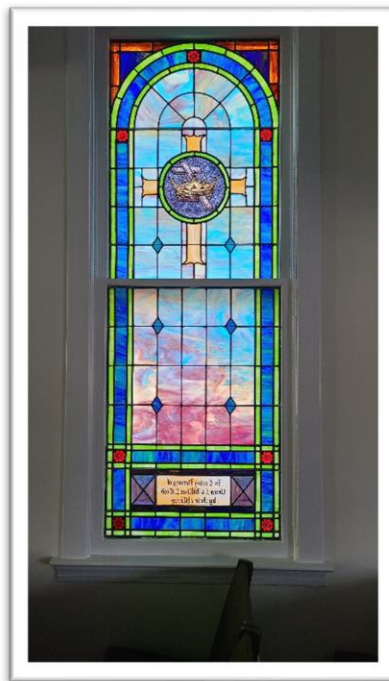
Are you following the church on social media? If not, you should! Our Facebook account is <https://www.facebook.com/mtcarmelumcconnection/> And our Instagram account is <https://www.instagram.com/mcumc21122/>

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



The next few Encouraging Words will focus on the themes presented by each of the Stained Glass windows in our Sanctuary and how they serve as comforting and encouraging reminders of what Jesus promises us even in the midst of difficulty.

The window I discuss this week is the one furthest back in the sanctuary. This window was given "In loving memory of Urma I. and William L. Cook by their children. In the center of the window are two intertwined Christian symbols, the cross and the crown. This emblem has been traditionally interpreted as symbolizing the reward in heaven (the crown) coming after the trials in this life (the cross). This symbol may have been inspired by James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who live in him." So, the cross and crown represents to some the promised reward of a faithful life. We are comforted by the promise that even though we will endure many trials heaven awaits us. To be frank, I'm not too sure about the theology of this, believing as I do in the unmerited grace of God. When I see the cross and crown symbol it reminds me that come what may Christ is my Lord (the crown) and Savior (the cross). I find this to be a helpful encouragement as I navigate through life.

I serve on District Committee on Ministry which has the responsibility of guiding, mentoring, and evaluating candidates for ministry in the United Methodist Church as well as periodically checking in with and reviewing the ministry of Licensed Local Pastors and Certified Lay Ministers. We do a lot of interviewing and a question that we ask everyone that comes before us is, "What does the statement "Jesus is Lord and Savior" mean to you?" It's not an easy question to wrestle with but in the wrestling, we are able to give some clarity to our relationship with Jesus. That's why we ask it. Every time I see the intertwined cross and crown I ask myself the same question, "What does it mean that Jesus is my Lord and my Savior?"

To say Jesus is my Lord is to say that Jesus is the one that sets the pattern and purpose for my life. Without pattern or purpose my life is a shapeless, amorphous existence. This state of being is wonderfully expressed throughout the hymn "Make Me A Captive Lord" and especially in the second verse.

My heart is weak and poor until its master find;
it has no spring of actions sure, it varies with the wind.
It cannot freely move till thou hast wrought its chain;
enslave it with thy matchless love, and deathless it shall reign.

Obviously, the language here is from a time before modern watches or time pieces. The human heart is likened to a watch or clock which must be wound. (By the way, one of my pet peeves is how we moderns sing this verse often pronouncing the word "wind" as something that blows rather than "wind" as in something you do with a watch and which rhymes with "find".) Anyway, to say that Jesus is Lord to me means that Jesus is the one that sets my life in motion giving me meaning and purpose. He governs my life.

To say that Jesus is my Savior is a little harder to explain. The theology of salvation or soteriology in seminary was the subject which gave most seminarians, including this one, headaches. There are almost as many doctrines of salvation as there are denominations it seems. It gets really confusing. What I need to ask myself amid all this confusion is "what does describing Jesus as my savior mean to me?" Well, here it goes.

The best way I can illustrate this is my relating an experience I had when I was in college. Back then I did a bit of rock climbing as part of my ROTC training. I never did any free climbing, that is climbing without a safety line. I was always harnessed to a safety line which someone who was belaying always kept taught. If I were to fall, I wouldn't fall very far. The person belaying me would apply more tension

and keep me from falling. One day I did slip. I was about sixty feet up the side of a cliff when I lost my footing and down I went – only for about five feet. My fall was arrested by my friend on belay.

We are all climbing toward the Kingdom of God. Our entire life is spent in that climb and often we come to difficult sections of the climb that test us spiritually. There are parts of the cliff we call life that are especially dangerous, or hazardous, and frightening. Yet Jesus is on belay. Jesus will catch us when we start to fall. Jesus will apply tension to allow us to navigate the difficult parts. Without Jesus the climb would be impossible – we couldn't even begin. Yet as we trust in Jesus, knowing he is on belay, we have the confidence to continue on knowing that Jesus will save us should we start to fall.

John Newton describes this well in his hymn Amazing Grace.

“Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.”

The times we live in are difficult and frightening for many but when we allow Christ Jesus to set the pattern and purpose for our lives as our Lord and trust him as our Savior, we will find that we have everything we need to live our lives victoriously. We need to be reminded of this each day. So next time you enter our sanctuary, look to your left, take a moment to contemplate the Lord and Savior window, and know the Christ is with you as Lord and Savior every step of your way.

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