

Announcements and an Encouraging Word for November 1, 2023

Faith Hope Circle will be meeting in the church hall this 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.

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.

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

I'm rarely surprised by what can be found and what can't be found in scripture. However, I was surprised the other day when I turned to scripture to seek direction concerning something that has been troubling me for quite a while finding no explicit direction. As you know, much of the fodder that becomes the subject of these encouraging words comes from the issues that concern me and that I struggle with. In this case I am continually troubled by what seems to be a growing

unwillingness, especially among our political leaders, to compromise; that is for different disputing parties to come to agreement on issues. All too often issues become black and white, win or lose propositions. Compromise isn't even considered. It seems to even have become a dirty word in the halls of the U.S. Congress and elsewhere.

So, I went to scripture to find out what it says about the idea of compromise. Guess what? It's not there! I went through concordances. I went through my Thesaurus of the Bible. I went to the Bible Dictionary and to the authority of all authorities – Google. Nothing, the Bible doesn't seem to use the word other than to say we should be uncompromising in our faith. But does that mean that we should not attempt to find middle ground in our disputes?

As I researched, I realized that the idea of compromise may not be mentioned explicitly in the gospel, but it is replete with concepts that form the foundation of compromise. In the first verse of Romans chapter 14 Paul encourages us not to quarrel over opinions. In Colossians 3:13 he advises, "bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. In James 1: 19 – 20 we are advised, "let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Bearing with one another, forgiving one another, listening, and being slow to anger are all qualities of a person intent on compromise. In fact, compromise is impossible without these qualities.

The Bible does have something to say about the pride and lack of humility that contributes to uncompromising attitudes. "Before a man's downfall, his mind is arrogant, but humility precedes honor." - Proverbs 18:12. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." - Proverbs 16:18 .

Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, encourages the attitudes that lead to or encourage a compromising attitude when it comes to the disputes that tend to divide us. "Blessed are the meek (humble) for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God" Matthew 5: 5, 7, 9. Humility, mercy, and the desire to make peace are all contributing attitudes to seeking compromise.

So yes, scripture encourages us to be uncompromising in our faith, those ideals at the core of Christian belief. It does not, however, discourage us from finding middle ground in our disputes that are not at the core of our faith. One of my professors at seminary once told us that understanding scripture involves not only a reading of the text but also reading between the lines. As I read between the lines I find that scripture encourages those attitudes and behaviors that lead to finding middle ground in all those disputes that do not lay at the heart of Christian faith. In these matters no one is perfect, nor does anyone have a perfect perspective. Yet when we seek common ground through listening, bearing with one another, humility, forgiveness, and desiring reconciliation we may come closer to true peace or shalom in our lives together.

There is one last illustration I want to share concerning compromise and finding middle ground. My mom used to make a confection called "Christmas Fudge". Every holiday season she would make batches of it as gifts for friends and family. I would often help her in this endeavor. It included a mixture of a number of different ingredients, chief among them bakers' chocolate and sugar. I once was tempted to eat some of the baker's chocolate. Never again! It's nasty and terribly bitter. And have you ever just eaten spoonful's of straight sugar? It's not especially pleasant either. So here we have ingredients that by themselves are unappetizing and barely palatable. The sublime and heavenly taste

of chocolate fudge comes in finding the perfect balance between the two – in the middle ground – not too sweet and not too bitter with the addition of other hints of flavor like vanilla. That’s where the magic happens – in the middle ground. In the field of human affairs (and disputes) that’s also where the magic happens - in the middle ground where perspectives of both sides are worked together – with perhaps some out-of-the-box thinking that may have been lost otherwise. No one person, group of people, or political party has the perfect perspective. These days those perspectives tend to be extreme and unpalatable to the majority in the middle. I believe scripture encourages us to find ways to seek the middle ground – where the magic can happen and we can all move closer to the place of shalom that transcends our differences.

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