

Announcements and an Encouraging Word for December 6, 2023

Christmas 2023 Poinsettia Memorials (We need your help to make the sanctuary look festive and beautiful!!)– 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.**

From the Outreach Committee – "It's not too late! We have adopted 6 local seniors from the Holiday Sharing program for Christmas. Outreach will do all the work. But, we need your donation so we can purchase gift cards for each of them. Please make a donation to the church and **write Holiday Sharing in the memo section of your check.** We would like to deliver gift cards to the seniors by December 18. Outreach thanks each of you for all your support throughout the year. Have a Blessed Christmas and peaceful New Year. "

The Church and Child Development Center will be collecting new winter items for local families in need. New adult and new children's items are needed. Gloves, mittens, jackets, socks, hats and cold gear of any kind are welcome. Please place new donated items in the box located next to the Christmas Tree in the church hall. Please contact the office if you have any questions.

We are looking for blue or white rope lights to use for the CDC's Nativity Play. We would love to have 24 feet, but any length would be helpful. If you can donate, please bring them by the church labeled with your name and we will make sure to return them after the show. Thanks!

THIS IS OUR LAST PUSH!! ~ 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> **We are no longer taking catalog orders BUT you can still shop online via our Personal Store Link listed above.** You can still pick up a catalog to shop and then place your order online. 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."

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



Peace. There's a lot of meaning packed into that word. In the Hebrew the word for peace is "shalom" and is associated with material well-being, good harvests, and safety from wild beasts and enemies. In the New Testament the Greek word for Peace, "Eirene", is defined as the absence of strife among individuals or nations. Peace occurs in association with righteousness, that is being in a right relationship with God and neighbor. Unfortunately for many these days such peace seems unattainable and is therefore desired greatly and at the top of our Christmas wish lists. We yearn for the arrival of "Peace on Earth and goodwill toward men." (Luke 2:14 NKJV)

I pray daily for peace. I pray for world peace. I pray for peace of heart, mind, and soul; the absence of care or worry over the state of the world and the state of my own spirit. I can't help but be greeted each day with reminders of our political, religious, and civil brokenness. I'm greeted each day with news of raging military conflict and ideological battles. Each day my prayer rises, "Lord, give us peace!"

Peace is the subject of the third window on the left as you enter our church sanctuary and approach the altar. I call it the Peace window and it was given in honor of the Rev. and Mrs. Walter R. Harris by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Lusby and Laura Mae Dodson. This window features a descending dove bearing an olive branch in its beak. Traditionally in the church this symbol represents the peace that is associated with baptism. We are reminded of the dove that descended on the occasion of Jesus Baptism.

“And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3: 16 – 17

Our association with Jesus through baptism is a relationship meant to be a source of peace for us. United as we are in Christ, we need not fear the chaos that often erupts into our lives and our world. Rather we take comfort that, come what may, our lives are in Christ's hands and that Jesus has made a way for us to a new kingdom unblemished by the brokenness of this world. Through baptism we are able to live in the life-giving light of that Kingdom even as we make our way through this one.

But there is more to the message offered by this window. The descending dove is also a symbol of the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus.

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you . . . But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid”. John 14:16-17, 26 – 27.

Here I’m reminded that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, is given to teach many things including the ways of peace. Our Lord calls us to be peacemakers and the Holy Spirit will, as we heed its promptings, lead us in the way of peacemaking. Jesus taught us a great deal about peacemaking. When we turn the other cheek, we are enabling peace. When we forgive others, we are making a way for peace. When we pray for our enemies and persecutors, we are enabling peace. When we live humbly, we make peace possible. In many ways throughout the Gospel our Lord models peacemaking in his relationships with others. We are given the Spirit to, among other things, guide us in the application of Jesus' teaching as we engage them in our modern situations.

This window reminds us then of two things as we pray for peace. First, that peace has already been made possible by virtue of our baptism. Not only are we made citizens of a Kingdom where peace reigns, we live in the light of that Kingdom here and now. Secondly, we are enabled to be agents of peace through the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we follow Jesus’ teaching and example. This means that the peace we pray for is not something we expect to receive passively. Yes, true peace is a characteristic of the Kingdom we will enter when our sojourn in this one is complete. But peace is not a characteristic of this world we now inhabit. We are called to not only pray for peace but to be active participants in making peace. As we pray for peace we need also to actively work toward peace,

guided by the Spirit who brings peace. As we pray for peace, we need to ask ourselves "how am I an agent of peace, how can I be a peacemaker"?

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