

Announcements and Encouraging Word for January 24, 2024

A quick note from the office...Typically emails for zoom worship go out on Monday mornings and the Encouraging Word and Announcements on Wednesday. But sometimes these notices get shifted to a different day dependent on extenuating circumstances beyond our control. If you notice that you have not received the Zoom Worship information by Friday, please contact the office and we will get that to you. As always, if you have any additional questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thanks!

End of Year Giving Statements

Once again, to save paper and postage, the church will not be doing widespread printing up and distributing annual giving statements. Everyone can now easily generate their own statements from their Realm account whenever they like. If you do require a hard copy done the traditional way, please just let the office know and we can provide one. If you haven't accessed Realm and need a new invite sent, just let the office know. You can also see all your current giving and history all the way back to 2008. Below are easy step by step instructions to print your giving statements.

Accessing Giving Record & End of Year Giving Statements

To generate and print out giving statements from your Realm account-

- Log into Realm
- Click on "Giving" on the left side of the page. It will automatically show your gifts for this year, to date, to verify your gifts.
- For Yearly Statements, click the Filter button (that droopy triangle symbol) and change the Gift Date Range to "Last Year". then click the blue "Filter" button.
- To print, simply click the Printer Icon. A report will generate, and you can click the Printer Icon in that window to print your statement.

- Done!

Giving Envelopes are available in the Narthex. A heads up, some of your giving numbers have changes as we needed less envelopes this year due to people using our e-giving option.

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

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Matthew 6:26

This is one of my favorite verses. I keep coming back to it again and again. It came to me this morning as I was looking out the front window watching the birds feast at the feeders we've strategically placed in front of it. I was doing what the Lord asked, looking at the birds of the air and wondering about how they must have felt coming upon this amazing cornucopia of food which had appeared as if by magic. God certainly was providing for them! Then it struck me. God was providing for them – through me.

Now I'm certainly not God! That bird food didn't appear through any kind of magic. Leslie and I purchased the feeders and set them up. Each Spring (or winter before we use them) we wash and repair them. I distinctly remember flirting with a hernia carrying bags of bird seed to the car, and from the car, and to the basement, and from the basement. I also remember refilling those feeders in the intense cold, snow, and wind of last week. Turns out it's hard work doing God's work feeding birds. It's not magic – it's work!

Now I'm pretty sure God will care for the birds with my help or without it. But when I think about it, I get a real boost thinking that God is including me in the work of caring for the birds of the air. Then thinking even more about it I realized that God's desire is to include me in God's work of caring for much more than birds. How about wildlife in general, the environment, and our natural resources. These things certainly need care, Does God call me to care for these as well? The only answer I can come up with is – absolutely! How about the destitute, the homeless, the refugees, and the immigrants seeking a safe place to live? Who will take care of them? I'm sure God has a plan, and I'm also just as sure God means to include me somehow in that plan.

God has a plan to care for the needs of the world and you and I are an indispensable part of that plan. I do believe in miracles, but I've learned not to count on them. Much of God's work in this world is not miraculous. Rather it requires the hard work of believers like you and me partnering with God in the work of saving, feeding, comforting, healing, building, and healing. The scripture I quoted above declares that God cares for people even more than the birds which God faithfully feeds. Feeding birds may be a good place to start, but much more is needed in this broken world. God has a plan to care

for all these needs – and it includes you and me. God cares for the brokenness of this world – through you and me.

I do enjoy watching the birds feasting on the meal I've provided. I'll enjoy even more witnessing people made safe, sheltered, fed, and whole, and knowing I had some little part to play in it as a participant in God's plan. I pray you feel the same.

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, make good decisions in this Coronavirus environment, and in please stay connected to each other and to God.

Blessings & Peace, Mike