

Announcements and Encouraging Word for February 7, 2024

A graveside service for Diane Malat will be held at 11:00 am this Thursday, February 8th at Cedar Hill Cemetery 5829 Ritchie Highway Baltimore, MD 21225. I have spoken with Cedar Hill Cemetery, and they request if you are attending, please wait in your car in the parking lot in front of the little blue house. Stay in the lot until the silver hearse arrives and then follow it to the location. If you are running late or have questions, there is staff in the blue house to help. In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to the Vistas Healthcare, 30265 Commerce Drive Suite 202/203 Millsboro, De 19966

Please submit your Valentine's Day wishes BY FRIDAY AT NOON!! You don't want to leave anyone out. It is such an easy way to send some love and light. Please email the office with your wishes. You can also use the attached form and drop it off at the office.

From Pam Mertz - During November and December a total of \$110 was earned for the general fund. This was from a combination of rabbits and hearts as well as quilted items and jars of homemade jam from Penny Pelligrini. Thanks to everyone for your continued support.

We will be holding a 2024 Fundraising Planning Meeting on Sunday, February 18th after the church service. All are welcome! We are looking for fun, new ways to raise some funds for our church. We are also looking to set some dates for our traditional fundraisers. Hope to see you there.

There will be a Unified Board Meeting on Monday, February 19th at 6:30 in the church hall.

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!

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

Suddenly, the future kind of slapped me in the face. I realized that in several years I'll be retiring and I'm going to need some place to live. The good news is that unlike some of my colleagues who face retirement, I do own a house. The bad news is that said house will need to have quite a bit of work done before I move back into it. It will be fifteen years older than it was when we moved out and the years have left their mark. So, a couple of weeks ago I began assessing what needed to be done. The list grew longer, and longer, and longer. In fact, the list continues to grow. I became increasingly overwhelmed by the size of the task ahead of me. That's when the future slapped me in the face - the moment of despair when I realized that it might just be impossible to have the house ready.

I considered that growing list realizing the future was coming, ready or not, and I was not going to be ready. How am I going to get that house ready in time, especially when it will be mostly just me doing the work? (I don't mind a little sweat equity, it's the only way this is going to get done, but we're talking about barrels of sweat here.) I felt like the disciples when Jesus told them to feed 5,000 people with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish.

Of course, I believe in miracles, but I don't see this miracle happening without a good deal of input from me. After the initial shock of realization, a few rather sleepless nights, and a great deal of prayer, I realized I had been stymied by the "big picture" which was overwhelming. That big picture, however, is made up of a lot of little pictures and each of those taken separately is much less crushing. In looking at things this way what seems overwhelming looks much more doable. So, I'm resolved to get it all done, but in small bites. If I plan well, get the tasks in the right sequence, not procrastinate, and use my time wisely it all will get done.

We can apply this same principle to the ministries that we are called to engage in as Jesus' disciples. The scope of what needs to be done is daunting. We are living in a time when it seems incivility, insensitivity, injustice, and violent rhetoric reign. People are more concerned with their allegiance to presidential candidates than their allegiance to Christ – sometimes to the point of worship. War is a grim reality in too many parts of our world and the specter of global conflagration is ever upon us. The list of human brokenness seems to continue to grow. We, as followers of Jesus, are called to address it all. But it all just seems so overwhelming! Where do we even begin?

We begin one small bite at a time. It's easy to be stymied by the "big picture" and become overwhelmed. But just as it is with my "This Old House" project, the big overwhelming picture is made up of many little pictures and addressing each, when tackled individually, with God's help and guidance, will be much more feasible. A long and difficult journey is simply the putting together of many small steps. There is so much we are capable of when we look at the problem in this way. I can't feed all the hungry people of this world, but I can feed one. I can't fix poverty, but I can help one person who may be struggling with it. I can't battle global hopelessness, or injustice, but I can embrace and help lift up one person who is its victim. You get the idea. Jesus fed the five thousand, with the help of his disciples, and the people were fed – one person at a time. They were fed by the miraculous power of Jesus, but Jesus employed average individuals like you and me to get it done. Nothing has changed. Jesus transforms the world miraculously through many individual acts of love and kindness supplied by you and me. Don't try to save the world. Just help one person when the opportunities arise. Then with Christ's help we'll get it all done.

That's all for today. I'll see you on Sunday on Zoom. Until then be well, stay safe, and please stay connected to each other and to God.

Blessings & Peace, Mike