

## Announcements and Encouraging Word for February 21, 2024

**REMINDER: THERE WILL BE NO ZOOM SERVICE THIS SUNDAY.**

**We are in need of Liturgists for Sunday Mornings.** This is a wonderful and easy way to get involved. You do not have to read every Sunday. We put together a schedule that works with your availability. We would love to hear from you! Just contact the office if you are interested.

**Easter is almost here!!** A beautiful Easter Lilly is such a touching way to remember or honor a loved one and contribute to our church. Please see the attached form to order yours. You can also donate to the Trustee's Fund or the General Fund to honor your loved one. If you have any questions, please contact the office.

**SAVE THE DATE!! Our Pasta Dinner will be on April 21<sup>st</sup> this year.** More information and lots of opportunities to volunteer to come.

**The Outreach Committee is asking for your help to stock the shelves at the Pasadena Food Pantry (Soup Kitchen).** The need to help local families **is greater than ever.** In January that Food Pantry alone served 113 families. That is a large number considering they were closed on New Year's Day. ***We are suggesting for this Lenten season instead of giving something up we take on this local mission by donating pasta products to stretch meals or chicken noodle soup for those cold winter nights. As of Monday, the pantry was totally out of donated food.*** A box will be placed in the narthex for donations. Often you can purchase store brand items for a lower cost. We appreciate any and all help you can give at this time!

**Mt. Carmel Child Development Center is having a Spring Fest and Breakfast with the Easter Bunny Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 8am-12pm.** Breakfast includes bottomless pancakes, 2 sausage links and a drink. Advanced ticket purchase is required. Please see the attached forms. You can also pick up the forms 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](mailto: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**

As much as we like to think that we are in control of things and that we can handle anything that comes our way we are often reminded that this is not the case. Events occur in our lives that remind us that there are some things that we just can't control. There are realities of life that we can't do anything about. If you think about it, there are quite a few situations that fit this category but this week I'm just going to write about the three major truths that impact our lives which we can't do anything about. They are the focus of lent.

"Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return". These are the words spoken at the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Truth number one – we are mortal. We are going to die and there is nothing we can do about it. It is the fundamental truth of life. Yet this truth applies only to our physical bodies. Even as we are reminded of our physical death, we have the assurance that our spiritual bodies live on. As we follow Jesus on the Lenten journey, we know we are following him to his death. But we also know that we are greeted at the end of the journey by an empty grave on Easter morning. Likewise, we are reminded that our earthly journeys will end the same way, but that because of Jesus' act on the cross, everlasting life awaits us all.

Paul writes in Romans 7: 15 – 20, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.” This is Paul’s somewhat convoluted way of acknowledging the second truth of Lent that we can’t do anything about – sin.

The truth is that sin is as much a part of us as our DNA is a part of us. Just as we can’t shed our DNA neither can we shed sin. It is a part of us, and we can’t do anything about it. God understands that we can’t do anything about it. That’s why God became a man and dwelt among us in the first place. We couldn’t do anything about sin, but maybe God could.

This brings us to the third truth of Lent that we can’t change; it is God’s forgiveness announced from the cross. Nothing we do can change God’s love for us. Nothing we do can reverse God’s forgiveness. Like death and sin, it is beyond our control. And that forgiveness was pronounced by Jesus, God incarnate, upon those who were nailing him to the cross, the soldiers that gambled for his clothing, upon the priests whose actions had brought him to that place, and to every other human being down through the ages to you and me. For as I said above, we all sin – it’s an indelible part of us. It was pronounced even before we knew we needed forgiveness. No apology was necessary for this forgiveness, it was unmerited.

We can’t change this last truth, but we can accept it. We can accept it by following Jesus’ example and forgiving others as Jesus forgave us. That means forgiving without first asking for or expecting an apology. It means dispensing with our own pride that often demands the contrition of another before forgiveness is rendered. It means releasing our own desires for retribution and showing mercy. For how can we accept God’s mercy if we can’t dispense it ourselves? And believe me, it is hard to forgive as Jesus forgave if we are nursing resentments, anger, and the desire to get even. No, we can’t change the truth of forgiveness, but we can participate in it.

That’s how God handled the first two truths of Lent, the reality of sin and death. In Jesus God forgave sin and made a way through death to everlasting life. Something we couldn’t do, but God could.

That’s all for today. I’ll see you a week from this Sunday on Zoom (remember no Zoom this Sunday). Until then be well, stay safe, and please stay connected to each other and to God.

Blessings & Peace, Mike