

# Mt. Carmel UMC News and Encouraging Word

April 3, 2024

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## IMPORTANT DATES

***This Thursday, April 11, the Faith Hope Circle will be meeting at 12:30 in the Church Hall.*** All ladies of the church & community are invited. Bring your lunch, dessert will be provided. Please also bring your items to be donated to Autumn Lake Healthcare for Bingo prizes.

***This Sunday, April 7, after the 9:30 service, we will be having a Pasta Night Meeting.*** We'd love to have all join!! The event is only 3 weeks away and we must SELL SOME TICKETS!!

***Monday, April 15 at 6:30pm there will be a Unified Board meeting in the Church Hall.***

***Sunday, April 21 4-7pm, PASTA NIGHT!!!!*** Tickets are **ON SALE NOW**. Please call or email the office if you would like to purchase some. ***We are also looking for volunteers to help sell some tickets, deliver flyers to local businesses, and get the word out.*** The flyer is attached to this Newsletter.

## NEW BIBLE STUDY

**New Short Term Study** - Can only one religion be true? Why is there suffering and evil? How can I believe in a God that I can't prove? These and similar thorny questions are the subject of a short-term study which will begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April. The study is entitled Ask: Faith Questions in a Skeptical Age. The book we will be following, same title, was written by Bishop Scott J. Jones the Resident Bishop of the Great Plains Area of the United Methodist Church and Reverend Arthur D. Jones a United Methodist Pastor. This study will last eight weeks and consider eight challenging questions concerning faith and some possible answers. The book is available through Amazon or Cokesbury and is also available on Kindle. The Video that accompanies the study is available through our churches subscription to Amplify Media. Please let us know if you are interested in participating in this study, go ahead and order the book and be prepared on the 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter.

## *In Other Important News*

**Please note that Jennifer will be out of the office from April 8<sup>th</sup> – April 17<sup>th</sup>.** If you need anything, please call or email the church. Someone will get back to you. **VERY IMPORTANT – YOU CAN STILL PURCHASE PASTA TICKETS DURING THIS TIME.** Send an email or leave a message with your name and how many tickets you would like, and we can hold them for you at the door for you.

**A special thanks to all that purchased an Easter Lilly or donated in honor/memory of a loved one.** I have attached a list of the honorariums and memorials.

**The Outreach Committee thanks everyone who contributed to the Lenten Food Drive for the Pasadena Food Pantry.** All food items that were collected have been distributed to families in need. However, we will keep the collection box in the narthex for any food items you would like to donate. Please remember that we cannot distribute any items containing pork products (No pork and beans or Spam, please). Because of your help, we were able to distribute over 100 bags of donated food during the month of March. The Food Pantry sends their gratitude to Mt. Carmel for your generous donations.

**Did you know there will be a solar eclipse on Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>?** AA Public Library wants you to be prepared and is giving out free Solar Eclipse Glasses. Get them while they last!!

## **Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike**

Long ago but not so far away, when I was a student at Largo High School, an amazing teacher taught me a wonderful thing. He taught me to not freak out about the tests I had to take. He taught me that tests were opportunities to improve. Instead of worrying about failing I needed to embrace an upcoming exam as an opportunity to test my knowledge and see where I needed to improve. Testing and trials can be good things. In fact they are necessary if we are to grow.

Something many of us have had the opportunity to do is fly. One reason it's so safe to fly is that the aircrafts we are passengers on have been tested, and tested, and tested again. Before entering passenger service test pilots have taken those aircraft up and subjected them to maneuvers that would terrify the average passenger. They try to shake the wings off. They try to shake the tail off. They try to break the plane. Before they even take it into the air the parts of the plane are subjected to all sorts of punishment to discover weaknesses or problems that, once discovered, are fixed. The purpose of the test is not to "fail" a particular design but to make it better, safer, and much more reliable.

Better and more reliable is what I hope my faith is becoming. In the matter of faith, an untested faith is a faith subject to failure. A strong and dependable faith is a tested faith. This is why Paul writes in Romans 5:3 – 4 *"And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope."*

In my career as a United Methodist pastor I have had the privilege of meeting individuals who soar gracefully through whatever life-storm they happen to be facing. It may be a diagnosis of cancer, the death of a loved one, or some other catastrophe that would tear "the wings of faith" off many – yet they soar right over it. I pray that one day I'll have a faith like that. I recognize that the reason they meet the storms of life so gracefully is that their faith has already been tested through many trials. Now I'm not sure that "exulting in my tribulations" accurately describes how I face my trials and tests in life. Nevertheless, I do accept them as opportunities to grow and strengthen whatever faith I have.

Right now, we are all enduring various trials that will test our faith. We have a choice here. We could "freak out" in the face of those things that test our faith. Or we could accept them, if not welcome them as an opportunity to see where we need to improve ourselves for whatever trials lay ahead. That's my encouragement to you today – **greet these trials we are now facing not as opportunities to crash but opportunities to soar.** As you find weakness, reinforce it with prayer. As doubt threatens to bring you down, immerse yourself in scripture and meditation. As we do this, we will find that we will face each trial, not with despair, but with hope.

That's all for today. Be well, be forgiving and gracious. Be safe, stay connected, and I'll see you in church or on Zoom this Sunday.

Blessings and Peace, Mike

## Weekly Reminders

**If you have prayer requests**, even if you plan to share them at Sunday worship, please 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.** (Join us in your pj's with a morning cup of coffee) I open the Zoom meeting at 9 a.m. to give people time to sign on. 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.**

**Mt. Carmel United Methodist Church**

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