

Mt. Carmel UMC News and Encouraging Word

April 24, 2024

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IMPORTANT DATES

Thursday, May 2, 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.

Sunday, May 5, we will be having a Pasta Night follow up meeting after our 9:30 service. We invite everyone that attended or helped with the event to be there. Any feedback on the event, what went well AND what didn't, how to improve it, all of it is welcome and encouraged. If you can not make it but have thoughts to contribute, please email Jen in the office.

Pasta Night Recap

Oh, what a night! Thank you to all who came to our Pasta Night!! It was a huge success with many people leaving with full bellies! *A very special thank you to all that volunteered!!* Without you it isn't possible. **And lastly, I'd like to thank our chef Sari McLeod and all those who contributed baked goods to the night.**

Graduate Alert

Do you know someone that is graduating high school, college, or graduate school this year? We would love to celebrate their accomplishment! Please email Jen in the Church office with all the appropriate information including a photo.

Last CHANCE TO SIGN UP

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 April 30th at 7pm.*** 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 16th to discuss the 1st chapter.

In Other Important News

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.

Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." 2 Timothy 4: 18

These are the words of Paul written to Timothy from prison. It is believed they were written in the very last days of his imprisonment, prior to his death. They very well could be the last words penned by Paul. He was facing death, probably by beheading. Yet his confidence in God radiates throughout this epistle. He was in prison, facing death, yet he felt safe in the arms of God. Having knowledge of the Jewish scripture perhaps the words of Psalm 91 were foremost in his mind during these last days.

'He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."
For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.'

I admire Paul for his confidence in the Lord even as he was facing the end of his life. At times I envy the safety he felt under God's care. Jesus had told his followers "I will be with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b) Paul took him at his word. He knew that no matter what happened he was safe in the arms of his savior.

We could all use a dose of that confidence especially these days. There seems to be a great deal to fear in the world. Just last Tuesday morning Dawn, our Child Care director, and I toured the church and its grounds with three Anne Arundel County police officers as they assessed our security situation

in preparation for our applying for a government grant to finance security enhancements. They pointed out possible problems and the measures we could and will be taking; things that I never would have thought of. Some of them are very simple and others potentially expensive (hence the need for a grant). This is a positive thing. It feels good to be taking steps to enhance the safety of our children, our parishioners, and of course the residents of the parsonage (my family and I).

Yet no measure of physical safety or security we in our human weakness can devise will be complete or foolproof. Existence in our world is risky business. We need to always remember that when all else fails there is still God. God is our safety net. Without our confidence in God our sense of security would be incomplete.

The greatest danger we face isn't physical, it's spiritual. As Paul sat in that cell facing the end of his earthly days, I'm sure there was a battle raging within him. Bitterness against his captors and situation battling against kindness and acceptance, despair battling against hope, fear of death battling against his confidence in resurrection. In these battles he leaned on God who carried him through, a spiritual battle that he won.

Our lesson here is that our greatest danger is not in earthly threats, in the end these are of no consequence. Our greatest danger lies in what our earthly challenges can do to us spiritually. A case in point can be found in what fear is creating within many of our fellow citizens. It is fear that is driving the intolerance, anger, xenophobia, and incivility we see on every hand. These are all spiritual wounds caused by fear, and in my opinion, they reflect a lack of confidence in God.

Paul did not give into fear. He continued trusting in God to the very end. Trusting in God he continued serving God right up to the end of his earthly life spending whatever time he had left writing a masterpiece of faith and confidence in God we call 2 Timothy.

Let's not let fear overwhelm us or get the better of us. Let's not give in to the anger, hate, or intolerance fear generates, and the spiritual damage they cause. Rather may we seek confidence in the face of our fears, confidence founded on the truth that "the Lord will rescue us from every evil attack and save us for his heavenly kingdom." In the face of whatever trials come our way may we do as Paul did, lean on God, and allow God to carry us over our fear.

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 – Pastor 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 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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