

Mt. Carmel UMC News and Encouraging Word

May 8, 2024

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IMPORTANT DATES

THIS Thursday, May 9 from 11am – 9pm, the Child Development Center is having a Ledo Pizza night fundraiser It's so easy! Online, Carryout, and Dine-in options available. Just bring in the flyer **or** show the flyer on your phone **or** enter the code for online orders **or** just mention you are supporting the Mt. Carmel CDC and 20% of the proceeds will be donated to the school! I've attached the flyer to this Encouraging Word. *Tell your friends!*

Mother's Day is this Sunday!! *Don't forget to pour on the love!*

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.

In Other Important News

The Outreach Committee will continue to collect food for the food pantry. The collection box in the narthex is 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).*** The Food Pantry continues to send their gratitude to Mt. Carmel for our generous donations.

Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike

We've just had the first session of our study concerning questions about faith in a skeptical age. The first chapter explored the question: "Can only one religion be true?" We live in a world where we are no longer isolated from the many various religions in the world. Before the days of mass communication or the internet religion tended to be a regional thing. People tended to adopt the religion that was prevalent in their region. Now we are exposed to many different religious perspectives on an almost daily basis. Many of those religions claim to be the one true religion and adherents to those religions are very much invested in being right while everyone else is wrong. So, religion becomes a very polarizing influence in modern culture. Even within the "Christian" religions we have many competing and differing perspectives – each one claiming to be the only right perspective, or at least more "right" than the others. The question we need to ask ourselves is how "can we be faithful to Christ while remaining gracious and respectful to other perspectives?"

There is a video segment that goes with each chapter of this study. While watching the video I was struck by the comment of a young man who was participating in a discussion group. He said something along these lines, "Being Christian is not about being right; being Christian is about being loving." It was then pointed out that Jesus lived in a world like ours with many differing and competing religious perspectives. He got along well with everyone – except those who were so invested in being right that they excluded all others, and even those he was patient with. He freely associated with those his own religion deemed to be outsiders, foreigners, unclean, or sinners. In his interactions with these folks, he focused not on being right but on being compassionate and loving. In doing so he attracted many followers.

John 4: 1 – 42 highlights one such instance. Here Jesus is in conversation with a Samaritan woman who had come to the well where he was resting to draw water. Here Jesus is interacting with someone from a completely different culture who was considered to be inferior by his own religion and essentially beneath contempt. Not only is this person a foreigner but she is also a woman who according to Jewish purity laws might be considered unclean. Yet Jesus engages in earnest conversation with her in an open and compassionate way disregarding the differences. Here he sets the tone for the rest of us. It's not about being right or having the exclusive path to God. It's about respecting, and loving others, and through that respect and love showing them Jesus.

Being Christian is not about being right or even having all the right answers. It's not about excluding others or being superior to others who have differing belief systems. It's about loving them in spite of the differences and through that love revealing Jesus' love to a divided world. In this way Christianity can be a unifying force in the world rather than one that divides.

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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