

Mt. Carmel UMC News and Encouraging Word

June 26, 2024

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IMPORTANT DATES

Zoom is BACK!!! You should have received a link on Monday. If you didn't and need it, please contact the office.

Please join us after this Sunday's Service to honor Joe and Shannon Shanefelter. We want to properly thank them for all they have done for our church.

Church News

Our search continues for a new accompanist. Please share our job listing with anyone you may think qualifies. I have included in this email as an attachment a job listing flyer that can be distributed throughout our community. Please, please spread the word!! This same listing also appears on our website. <https://mymcumc.org/index.php/newsletter/> "Great opportunity for piano teachers/students to earn a supplemental income. Small, friendly church in Pasadena, Marland looking for an accompanist to play a baby grand piano on Sundays, one service each Sunday at 9:30 a.m., plus Christmas Eve, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday early evening services. For additional information or to submit your interest, please call the church office at 410-255-8887 or e-mail mtcarmel21122@gmail.com."

The July/August Edition of The Upper Room is now available. You can get your copy in the Church Narthex.

LITURGISTS NEEDED!!

We need 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.

Outreach News

The Pasadena Community Food Pantry needs a mountain of boxed macaroni and cheese. Sometimes we get macaroni and cheese from the food bank. Sometimes it has to be purchased. Every week we prepare 54 bags of donated food. Each bag contains two boxes of mac and cheese. You get it. It does not need to be the premium blue box of mac and cheese. Store brand works. Let's see how many boxes we can gather before the end of June. Thank you for your continued support of this important local group.

An Encouraging Word

“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12

The thirteenth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians has a lot to offer and most of us are familiar with some of the words, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud”, etc. That’s right, we hear it a lot at weddings. It’s called the love chapter for good reason.

But one of my favorite verses in this chapter doesn’t seem, at first glance, to have anything to do with love. It’s verse twelve which I just quoted above. Here Paul is grappling with our inability to perceive, or even understand, the whole truth of God given our limited human perceptions and senses. It’s the verse I love to use when I encounter someone who is absolutely sure they know the whole truth about God and are about to beat me over the head with it. I’ll say something like, “I’m so glad you understand God so fully and completely, I’ve been struggling with God for 66 years and I’m sure I don’t see God or understand God very well at all.” Then I’ll point out that Paul struggled with understanding God as well, so I’m in good company. Then I’ll quote 1 Corinthians 13:12. Does it work? Hardly!

During the vacation I just completed we experienced an unfortunate mishap which involved someone’s prescription eyeglasses going for a swim and ending up at the bottom of the lake. I’m not going to say anything more about the occasion or how it transpired other than to say that they weren’t mine, I wasn’t wearing them at the time, and I had nothing to do with it. However, I did take part in the recovery effort which involved myself, and the person who lost them in the first place, snorkeling and diving in five to eight feet of water in order to reacquire the missing eyewear.

I need to point out something here. The diving masks which we were using do not have prescription lenses in them, they can’t be worn over eyeglasses without becoming absolutely useless, and the individuals wearing them are already blind as bats (remember he lost his glasses, and I wasn’t about to repeat the exercise with mine). Neither of us wear contacts. A further complication is that the lake bottom is dimly lit, murky, covered with seaweed, and six or seven feet deep where we were looking with very much less than perfect eyes. And we weren’t exactly sure where they were lost in the first place. So, all we could see as we snorkeled was a very blurry suggestion of a greenish and weed covered lake bottom. Talk about seeing something dimly. Suddenly I was reminded, in a bout of what must have been hypothermia induced clarity, of Paul’s words in verse twelve.

Even with the aid of scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit we humans are imperfect creatures who tend to be visually challenged when it comes to the things that are of God. Our vision and consequent understanding of God can be interfered with in so many ways that we are lucky to even perceive that there is a God. Our “sight” is influenced and distorted by worldly cares, our prejudices, our political leanings, our quality of life, our hungers and desires, and just about anything else that impacts our lives. We try to see God through the murk of the world.

The bottom line here is that no one has a direct line of sight to God, and if someone says they do have such clarity of vision, and you believe them, then I’ve got a bridge up in Brooklyn New York that I’d like to sell you. We all see God, the Kingdom, as though we are looking at a dim reflection in a

mirror. No one has the perfect view. But we do all have pieces of the picture. God reveals God's self to each of us in many different and wonderful ways. That means that if we want a better view of God then we need to listen to each other and respect the views and ideas that others bring; the puzzle pieces they bring to the table. I know that's hard to do in this increasingly opinionated and polarized world, where all opinions concerning God are fiercely held, and each are to some degree incorrect. Yet if we work together and each share whatever vision or view of God we have, then the picture we have of God will come into clearer focus, and one day we will see God clearly.

This is why bible studies, prayer groups, and fellowship groups are so important. They are occasions for sharing the ways God makes God's-self apparent to each of us. They are occasions for putting the puzzle together. That's why engaging in ministry and service in Jesus' name is important because it's while engaged in such ministries that we gain a better perspective on Jesus as we encounter him in the lives of the people we serve.

We did eventually find the glasses by the way. We spent most of the day snorkeling and diving. After a lot of effort and work we managed to figure out where the glasses were essentially by figuring out where they were not. Finally, the aha! moment came, and they were recovered. But it wasn't easy. It took work and effort. Likewise, no vision of God comes easily but only through concerted effort. I encourage you to keep seeking, to keep looking, and improving your focus on God. Share what you know and what you think you know. Share how you have encountered God. Eventually the aha! moment will come, and we will see God face to face.

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

4760 Mountain Road, Pasadena, MD 21122, 410-255-8887, mtcarmel21122@gmail.com

Office Hours – Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 9-2