

Mt. Carmel UMC News and Encouraging Word

November 26, 2024

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**ALERT: The office will be closed tomorrow, Wednesday, November 27th.
Have a Safe and Happy Thanksgiving!!**



Thank you...

To our Liturgists who read each Sunday. Our December schedule is...

12/1 Sari McLeod, 12/8 Warren Magruder, 12/15 Jeri Hayden, 12/22 Warren Magruder, 12/29 Sari McLeod

To our Narthex Greeters that greet you each Sunday along with Fran of course. Our December schedule is... 12/1 Gail Miller, 12/8 Deb McMurtrey, 12/15 Becky Bishop, 12/22 Jennifer Harris, 12/29 Ernie Donaldson

To our Coffee Hour Teams, The Fauconnet Family, The Johnson Family and Faith Hope Circle

IMPORTANT DATES

Thanksgiving Eve, Wednesday, November 27th at 7pm there will be a service at Community Methodist Church on Fort Smallwood Road in Pasadena. Our very own Pastor Mike will be liturgist. All are welcome to attend.

All ladies of the church are invited to the Faith Hope Circle Christmas luncheon to be held Thursday, December 5th at 12:30 at Pasta & Vino restaurant in the Food Lion shopping center on Mountain Road. If you plan on attending, please RSVP to the church office.

IT'S TEA TIME YA'LL!!! This year we will be ushering in the holiday season with our first Christmas Tea, Saturday, December 7th, 3-5pm. Tickets are on sale now!! Only \$12 a ticket. Please contact the office if you would like to purchase one, or two, or a whole table!

2024 Advent Study

STARTS TONIGHT!!!! Please Join Pastor Mike on Zoom for our 2024 Advent Study – This year we will be guided through our study using the book “An Unlikely Advent” written by Rachel Billups. This four-week Advent study focuses on the experiences of four sets of often overlooked characters in the Nativity story. During this Advent season, Rachel Billups guides readers through the themes of hope, love, joy, and peace by sharing the stories of Elizabeth and Zechariah, Herod, the Magi, and the shepherds. Each set of unexpected characters has something to teach about living faithfully on the journey to Christmas. **As with our other bible studies this one is accompanied by a video with a segment assigned to view at your leisure as you prepare each class. The video is available through the church’s Amplify.Media account. Some of you have used this before. For those of you who have not, information about accessing the videos will be sent when you register for the bible study.** The book – An Unlikely Advent – is available through Amazon and Cokesbury. It is also available on Kindle. For those who wish to dig deeper there is a workbook available that goes with the study. **These bible studies will be Zoomed so we need to know who you are so we can send you the Zoom link. The dates are November 26, and December 3rd, 10th, and 17th at 6:30pm. Please let us know ASAP if you would like to be a part of this by contacting the office.**

Other events around town...

Sunday, December 1st at 2pm Trinity Church of Annapolis welcomes Dr. Karen Jung-Yeon Yim a former pianist at Trinity and is an award-winning musician. She will perform works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schumann. A free will offering will be taken for the performance.

Outreach News

Holiday Sharing is in full swing. All families and seniors have been sponsored for Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. Sponsors have been assigned for the children's gifts for Christmas as well.

If you have missed out on that phase of our holiday giving, we are still collecting pasta products and boxed macaroni and cheese for the local food pantry. Their shelves are currently empty. Please consider making the holidays your "Season of Giving".

An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike

A poor carpenter, a betrothed yet unwed mother, and shepherds abiding in the fields. These were the first to know about and witness the birth of hope into a world where hopelessness reigned. Jesus, the bringer of hope was born into a world of poverty, into a nation toiling under the tyrannical rule of a vassal king, who was himself a puppet of Caesar Augustus. It was a world of corruption and harsh intolerance. A hopeless world. The child born in Bethlehem, witnessed by shepherds and heralded by angels would bring hope to the hopeless, healing to the afflicted, and the joy of salvation to a world

immersed in sin. The hope that was born into the world two-thousand and twenty-four years ago is still in force. The good news and joy of that birth is just as fresh today as it was on the day of Jesus' birth – as long as you and I make room for Jesus in our hearts.

That's something I think we tend to forget. I know that I have – especially during these last few weeks. Over the last several weeks I've been overcome with a feeling of joylessness and hopelessness; powerless in the face of a tide that has turned and is sweeping my relatively kind and safe world away. These feelings are fueled by a fear that we may have put anger, vengeance, intolerance, pettiness, and prejudice in the driver's seat and must now await the inevitable crash.

Then the other day as I was brooding over these dark thoughts something happened to redirect my contemplations. I was on one of my tedious drives up to northern Frederick County. I had managed to find a radio station that was already playing Christmas music, and I heard the familiar and comforting notes of "Joy to the World." "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!" It suddenly hit me like a ton of bricks that we are about to enter the season of hope when we prepare to celebrate the day that hope and joy was born into a hopeless and joyless world. Jesus was born into our world not just to overwhelm the darkness of first century Israel and Palestine. Jesus was born into the world to overwhelm the darkness of every century – including the one we are now living in. Jesus was born to overwhelm our anger, our desires for vengeance, our intolerance and pettiness, and our fears with love. I realized that by dwelling on my fears I was allowing that darkness to overwhelm me. Rather I need to dwell on the good news of love's incarnation into the world and allow that incarnation into my heart.

The hymn continues, "Let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare him room". Hearing these familiar words sung once again I was reminded that I can either allow my heart to be occupied by things like fear and worry over temporal events over which I have little control, or I can allow the joy of the Lord to overwhelm my heart filling it a hope that no earthly power can diminish. As I hear the hymn using the sovereign language of, "Lord" and "King", I have to ask myself – who or what am I allowing to be Lord and sovereign over my life; that which is temporal or that which is eternal? I realize now that it is within my power to evict all the fears and negativity that I've been feeling over the last several weeks from my heart and invite the Lord of Love, born in Bethlehem, to occupy it. Perhaps the reason I'm feeling so down is that somehow through the turmoil of worldly cares arising over the economy, an endlessly divisive electoral process, and the rise of incivility, I've somehow evicted the wrong tenant from my heart. In this season of Advent I'm reminded that as I make room for Christ Jesus in my heart as Lord and sovereign, Christ's presence will drive the negative things out.

If you are like me and approaching this holy season with bitterness or fear that is overwhelming you consider the possibility of following the advice of the hymn "Joy to the World". Make room in your heart for Jesus to occupy it as Lord and sovereign of your life. Invite Christ into your heart every day, all year long, and I am sure your days will be filled with hope and joy that will outshine anything worldly striving has to offer.

That's all for this week. Continue to care for each other with love and holy affection. I look forward to seeing you Sunday, or at least knowing of your presence on Zoom. Until then – Blessings & Peace - 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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Office Hours – Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 9-2