

# Mt. Carmel UMC News and Encouraging Word

December 3, 2024

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## Thank you...

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

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... 12/8 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

**A very special *sweet* thank you to all that helped with the apple pie fundraiser.** Thank you to everyone that donated ingredients, prepared the pies and all those who bought pies. We sold 43 this year and raised \$430.00 for the church!

## IMPORTANT DATES

**All ladies of the church are invited to the Faith Hope Circle Christmas luncheon to be held Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup> 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 office.

***IT'S TEA TIME YA'LL!!!*** This year we will be ushering in the holiday season with our first Christmas Tea, Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 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!

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be at 7pm. Please join us for this beautiful service.**

## 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

I'm rarely surprised by what can be found and what can't be found in scripture. However, I was surprised the other day when I turned to scripture to seek direction concerning something that has been troubling me for quite a while finding no explicit direction. As you know much of the fodder that becomes the subject of these encouraging words comes from the issues that concern me and that I struggle with. In this case I am continually troubled by what seems to be a growing unwillingness, especially among our political leaders, to compromise; that is for different disputing parties to come to agreement on issues. All too often issues become black and white, win or lose propositions. Compromise isn't even considered. It seems to even have become a dirty word in the halls of the U.S. Congress and elsewhere.

So, I went to scripture to find out what it says about the idea of compromise. Guess what? It's not there! I went through concordances. I went through my Thesaurus of the Bible. I went to the Bible Dictionary and to the authority of all authorities – Google. Nothing, the Bible doesn't seem to use the word other than to say we should be uncompromising in our faith. But does that mean that we should not attempt to find middle ground in our disputes?

As I researched, I realized that the idea of compromise may not be mentioned explicitly in the gospel, but it is replete with concepts that form the foundation of compromise. In the first verse of Romans chapter 14 Paul encourages us not to quarrel over opinions. In Colossians 3:13 he advises, "bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." In James 1: 19 – 20 we are advised, "let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Bearing with one another, forgiving one another, listening, and being slow to anger are all qualities of a person intent on compromise. In fact, compromise is impossible without these qualities.

The Bible does have something to say about the pride and lack of humility that contributes to uncompromising attitudes. "Before a man's downfall, his mind is arrogant, but humility precedes honor." - Proverbs 18:12. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." - Proverbs 16:18 .

Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, encourages the attitudes that lead to or encourage a compromising attitude when it comes to the disputes that tend to divide us. "Blessed are the meek (humble) for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God" Matthew 5: 5, 7, 9. Humility, mercy, and the desire to make peace are all contributing attitudes to seeking compromise.

So yes, scripture encourages us to be uncompromising in our faith, those ideals at the core of Christian belief. It does not, however, discourage us from finding middle ground in our disputes that are not at the core of our faith. One of my professors at seminary once told us that understanding scripture involves not only a reading of the text but also reading between the lines. As I read between the lines I find that scripture encourages those attitudes and behaviors that lead to finding middle ground in all those disputes that do not lay at the heart of Christian faith. In these matters no one is perfect, nor does anyone have a perfect perspective. Yet when we seek common ground through listening, bearing with one another, humility, forgiveness, and desiring reconciliation we may come closer to true peace or shalom in our lives together.

There is one last illustration I want to share concerning compromise and finding middle ground. My mom used to make a confection called "Christmas Fudge". Every holiday season she would make batches of it as gifts for friends and family. I would often help her in this endeavor. It included a mixture of a number of different ingredients, chief among them bakers' chocolate and sugar. I once was tempted to eat some of the baker's chocolate. Never again! It's nasty and terribly bitter. And have you ever just eaten spoonful's of straight sugar? It's not especially pleasant either. So here we have ingredients that by themselves are unappetizing and barely palatable. The sublime and heavenly taste of chocolate fudge comes in finding the perfect balance between the two – in the middle ground – not too sweet and not too bitter with the addition of other hints of flavor like vanilla. That's where the magic happens – in the middle ground. In the field of human affairs (and disputes) that's also where the magic happens - in the middle ground where perspectives of both sides are worked together – with perhaps some out-of-the-box thinking that may have been lost otherwise. No one person, group of people, or political party has the perfect perspective. These days those perspectives tend to be extreme and unpalatable to the majority in the middle. I believe scripture encourages us to find ways to seek the middle ground – where the magic can happen and we can all move closer to the place of shalom that transcends our differences.

That's all for today. I'll see you on Sunday either on Zoom or at in-person worship. Until then be well, stay safe, and please stay connected to each other and to God.

Blessings & 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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**Office Hours – Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 9-2**