

# Mt. Carmel UMC News and Encouraging Word

December 18, 2024

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

## Thank you...

To our Liturgists who read each Sunday. Our December schedule is...  
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... 12/22 Becky Bishop, 12/29 Ernie Donaldson

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

## IMPORTANT DATES

**This is the last week to honor a loved one with a donation for a poinsettia or contribution to the General Fund or Trustee's Fund. We will be collecting until this Friday.**

## Readiness 360 Survey

**Earlier this month you received an email with a link to our Readiness 360 Survey. If you haven't already, please take a few minutes to fill out the survey.** The aim of the The Readiness Initiative is to revitalize the mission and ministry of our congregation, to envision a future ministry, and to engage in that vision. We believe that this is a vital step in ensuring the future ministry of our congregation.

## An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike

"God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him." 1 John 4: 8b - 9

In my household one of our favorite things to do during the Christmas season is watch schmaltzy sappy Christmas movies. You know the ones, the Hallmark (now Netflix) variety. Yes, I know that's a

shameful confession, but it's apparently one that many other people make as well since the number of these movies multiplies every year. If they weren't popular, that wouldn't happen. Yes, they are schmaltzy, predictably formulaic, emotional pablum, but we love them just the same. So, we grab the popcorn, a box of tissues, and indulge, perhaps wishing somehow that the real world worked that way.

So, what's their secret? Why are they popular? If I were to hazard a guess, I would say that they are popular because in those movies love always wins. Always! Despite all the trials and tribulations faced over the course of the narrative love always wins in the end. It's a refreshing alternative to many of our real-world situations where things don't always end up so predictably wonderful. That's why we like them.

Something that we need to remember is that while these stories about a love that always wins are fantasies, the real Christmas story is not. We celebrate the very real event of love coming down at Christmas, a love that always will have the last word, a love that always wins. No matter what very real dramas overtake us in this life we have this wonderful Christmas assurance that love always wins. Always! Through whatever trials we face we will have a happy ending as long as we participate in the narrative. That is the promise of Christmas.

Despite the cynicism, distrust, fear, and anger that is so much a part of our world, love will always have the last word. Despite fearful events that threaten our existence, in the end love has the final word. This isn't a fantasy happy ending, it's a very real one. You and I are participants in this wonderful love story, not spectators. Unlike the actors in those stories we watch unfold in those Christmas movie fantasies, we have the power to invite others into the narrative so that love may have the last word in their world as well.

All movies have a tagline, a pithy statement that teases us to watch the movie. The tagline for our non-fiction narrative in which we all have a part? Love wins – Always! Rest in that promise in this holy season. Take to heart the words of the hymn, "Love Came Down at Christmas".

*"Love shall be our token; love be yours and mine.  
Love to God and neighbor, love for plea and gift and sign."*

That's all for today. Take care, let your light shine, and I'll see you on Sunday. 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](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**