

# Mt. Carmel UMC News and Encouraging Word

March 12, 2025

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**THERE WILL BE NO ZOOM THIS SUNDAY**

## Weekly Schedules

**Liturgist** - Our March schedule is...

03/16 – Warren Magruder, 03/23 – Sari McLeod, 03/30 – Warren Magruder

**Narthex Greeters** - Our March schedule is...

03/16 – Donna DeLawder, 03/23 – Gail Miller, 03/30 – Jen Harris

**The Unified Board will be meeting on Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 in the Church Hall.**

## Mark your Calendars

**Spring Flea Market, Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 9-1.** Our Fall Flea Market was such a success that we decided to do it again! If you would like to reserve a table, please contact the office. Spaces are \$25, with limited tables available with each space if needed. If you have any questions, please contact us.

## Pasta Night Success!

**WOW! What a great Night Sunday turned out to be!!** We served over 100 people!! Our chefs and bakers outdid themselves. ***A special thanks to our amazing chef Sari for spending so much time cooking and prepping to make everything extra delicious. Tom also did a great job with that garlic bread! Our Bake Sale Table was headed up flawlessly by our Birthday Queen Cathy!*** I can't thank those that donated or volunteered their time enough - the Fauconnet Family, the Harris Family, Denise Calabrese, Debbi McMurtrey, Steph and Ernie Donaldson, Sarah Ann Parsons, Rose Kallenbach, Elly Hammen, Anne Cahill, Diane Corwell-Young, Bill and Susan Canis, Donna DeLawder, Pat Johnson, Gina Baker, John and Darlene Schmitz, Pam Mertz, Becky and Curtis Bishop, Mike Budzinski, Gail Miller, Marilyn Williams, Fay Reed, Pat Mulkey, Lana Matovcik. (I'm sure I forgot someone and for that I am so sorry but so thankful for your help!) A night like this always comes together last minute no matter how much you plan and I am so very grateful to everyone that jumped in to help the cause! ~Jen

## An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike

*\*\*\*Pastor Mike is out of the office this week, so I pulled this Encouraging Word from April of 2021\*\*\**

Yesterday was an absolutely beautiful day. I hope you had a chance to enjoy it. I tried to do exactly that ensconced in a comfortable chair on the back porch, gazing over the farm, and watching the puffy clouds drift by. I had a wonderful beverage in my hand and was listening to some swing jazz - yes people say I'm an odd bird at times. This is what I call "down time" for me. It's a time for me to unplug from the world and try to plug into God. I was cherishing every moment of it.

Then the distractions began. First the wind started to blow a bit and the wind chimes set up a discordant note against the jazz. Then our neighbor fired up his lawnmower. It's not just any mower, it's a lawn devourer! It sounds like a four-engine turboprop on it's take off run. So, I turned the jazz up. So much for my tranquil cloud gazing with God. Of course, if I had really wanted to be cloud gazing with God I probably shouldn't have been listening to Jazz or enjoying the beverage.

Our journeys of faith, following in Jesus' footsteps, are filled with distractions. These distractions may be unanticipated and unintended, yet I believe some are intentional. Sometimes as we follow Jesus, I think we want distractions and deliberately set ourselves up for them. That's right I said deliberately.

Sometimes I think we want our holy down time; we just don't want it to be *that* holy. We don't want God to fill it. So, any distraction might be a welcome excuse to keep us from being alone with God. We allow the distractions to divert us. If I had really wanted my down time to be an encounter with God then I could have taken a walk on one of the farms horse trails and truly been alone. I could have left my smart phone and beverage at home. I set myself up for the distractions that ensued yesterday afternoon.

You may be familiar with the story about Mary and Martha found in Luke 10:38 – 42. Jesus and the disciples stopped at Mary and Martha's house. Martha, instead of attending to what Jesus was teaching and doing got distracted by the many household chores she imagined needed to be done. I think she may have set herself up for those distractions. There is no reason to believe that Jesus' visit was unexpected or unanticipated. Martha probably had plenty of time to "clear the decks" and get everything exactly right for Jesus' visit. I think that possibly Martha wanted to be distracted. I think at times we all do.

Mary, on the other hand, had no problems laying aside the distractions and being fully present with Jesus – standing on holy ground. Her attentiveness to Jesus would lead her to the foot of the cross and then to her encounter with an empty tomb. We don't know what Jesus was teaching during that visit to Mary and Martha, but it was an opportunity for both of those women to stand on Holy ground. One of them did and found herself at the very center of God's saving act. The other is never mentioned again.

Standing on holy ground, attending fully in our encounters with that which is holy, allows God to engage and use us. Maybe that's why we don't always want to be fully present with God, God may engage and use us. So, we listen to sermons but don't listen too carefully. We read scripture, but don't really let it sink in. We avoid the "uncomfortable" or "religious" discussions with our friends. We pray a lot, but often don't wait in the following silence to hear an answer – eager to get to the next distraction.

Encounters with the Holy Spirit can be enlightening but they can also be filled with challenges and insights that could be more than a little uncomfortable. Encounters with the Holy Spirit are dynamic, they invite change, and we don't always welcome change enthusiastically. Whether the occasion be

inviting Jesus into your house for lunch or cloud gazing on the back porch with God, they are both occasions for an encounter with the Holy Spirit. These occasions are opportunities to stand on holy ground, an experience that can be really intense, even life altering, so we look for distractions. We set ourselves up for distraction because we really don't want to hear what the Holy Spirit tells us or contemplate the insights such an encounter will reveal. This is the theological equivalent of preparing for what might be an uncomfortable meeting by pre-arranging the interruption of an "important" phone call – a welcome distraction.

Holy Ground is a place of sacrifice. Holy Ground is a place of transformation. As Jacob discovered in Genesis 32:22 -32 it is a place to wrestle with God and where God unlocks holy potential in us. It's not always an easy or comfortable place to stand. We are afraid of the sacrifice and that some cherished part of us may be lost. We fear potential transformation. Many of us would prefer our distractions. Yet we will find that when we do set aside our distractions and become fully present with God, on Holy Ground, that we will come away from that experience spiritually strengthened rather than diminished. We will come away with greater insight and less confusion. Like Mary we will find ourselves participants at the very center of God's work of salvation rather than distracted bystanders.

So here's the really tough question, one that I ask myself every day. What is distracting you (and I) from being fully present with God and standing on Holy Ground? Do we cherish our distractions more than we cherish standing on Holy ground? Are we afraid of what we may hear or discover in that holy place and why would that be? What distractions are keeping you from discovering your full potential in God's hands? What distractions are making your potential Holy Ground less than holy and thereby less transformative? Just some thoughts to help you move from where you may be stuck right now to where God intends for you to be.

## 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**