



The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

UPLIFT Newsletter

DECEMBER 2016

Before the Halloween candy can be discounted, we hear Bing Crosby crooning, “City sidewalks, busy sidewalks, dressed in holiday style, in the air there’s a feeling of Christmas....” You know that feeling, we all know that feeling. For some it’s the decorative bling, for others it’s the songs that we sing. For some it’s the nostalgia of days gone by when times were easier (or at least they seemed to be). For others it’s a matter of keeping the traditions alive as if to prove to ourselves that while times are changing, we need not be. It is a feeling sparked by our senses, a smell, a sound, a sight embedded in our memory. But sentimentality can only take us so far. While the feeling of Christmas is grounded in what was, its true beauty comes in where its taking us—in what will be.

The feeling of Christmas is best described by the light of the Advent candles—hope, peace, joy and love. These four gifts are at the heart of the Christian message and at the center of a Christian life. The Season of Advent begins the Christian year and so it is appropriate that we celebrate these life giving qualities of our faith.

The word Advent comes from the Latin meaning “to come.” It marks the arrival of a notable person, thing or event. As a people of faith we celebrate the coming of Christ in three different ways. We look back and remember the birth of Jesus, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. From the beginning of time, God assured his people that he would not leave them desolate, empty as a consequence of their sin. God promised that he would not have us abandoned, orphaned with no one to help. Into the darkness he would bring a light, a light so strong that the darkness could not overcome it. And that promise has been the source of our hope, for in the coming of Jesus we see that God is true to his word, the word made flesh that dwells among us.

We remember that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but so too in this season of Advent we celebrate that he is born in our hearts. In an echo of Isaiah’s prophecy, an angel tells Joseph, “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel—which means, God is with us.” The presence of Jesus was not relegated to an ancient time and place. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is just as alive in us today giving us peace in our every circumstance. Therein we find our confidence in our daily walk. It is the peace that passes all understanding, keeping, guarding our hearts and minds in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

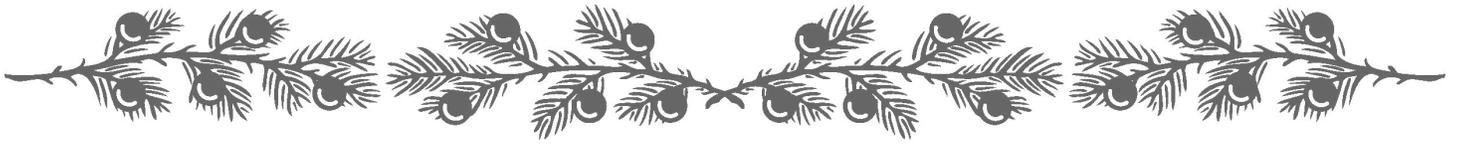
Jesus came to this earth. Jesus lives in our hearts today. Jesus will come again. This Season of Advent points beyond what was and is to what will be. Life is a daily battle—it always has been. Jesus says, “In this world you will have trouble, but fear not, for I have overcome the world.” The joy of our faith is that our trials are but for a time. As Jesus returns, he will execute his justice, setting free those who have been wrongly held back, lifting up those who have been oppressed, making known the truth tainted by liars, making right the wrongs of the ages. And joy shall fill the land, and hearts shall overflow with gladness for when all this world has fallen God’s truth stands eternal.

The hope of God’s promise fulfilled, the peace of God’s abiding presence, the joy of what shall be for those who, through their faith, have been redeemed, all this celebrates the love which is God in all his glory. It kind of makes fruit cake and egg nog look trivial doesn’t it.

In the air you breath through this journey we call Advent, may you sense the true feeling of Christmas. As the day arrives may you experience in some new and fuller way an understanding of God’s loving desire for you....

In Christ’s love,

Pastor Jim



Scripture Texts for Worship

The scripture texts for December are given for your study in preparation for worship.

Sunday, December 4

Isaiah 11:1-10

Matthew 3:1-12

Sunday, December 11

James 5:7-10

Isaiah 35:1-10

Sunday, December 18

Isaiah 7:10-16

Matthew 1:18-25

Saturday, December 24

Isaiah 9:2-7

Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Sunday, December 25

Isaiah 52:7-10

John 1:1-14

Sunday, January 1

Hebrews 2:10-18

Matthew 2:13-23

Middle School Youth Group

Coming in January...Youth Group for 4th, 5th and 6th grade students. Keep watching your Sunday bulletins for more information.

Bell Choir Notes

Bell Choir rehearsals are held Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. If you are interested in the Bell Choir and would like to join as a ringer or would like more information, contact Vicky Westley.

January Newsletter

Articles are due to the church office by Friday, December 16th.

Worship Assistants

December 4—2nd of Advent

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone

Acolyte: Austin Baker

Readers: The Harvey Family

Flowers: Joe & Elaine Jellison

Projector: Jonathan Clayton

Audio: Alex Baker

December 11—3rd of Advent

Liturgist: Jean Heberling

Acolyte: Eli Borbonus

Readers: The Gould Family

Flowers: Chick & Connie Stewart

Projector: Shakira McKinney

Audio: Jaison McKinney

December 18—4th of Advent

Liturgist: Barb Brown

Acolyte: Brylea Borbonus

Readers: The Tonkin Family

Flowers: Poinsettias

Projector: Kayla Moran

Audio: Tyler Moran

December 24—Christmas Eve 7:00

Acolyte: Danica Marsh

Readers: The Bruner Family

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 24—Christmas Eve 11:00

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe

Acolyte: Danica Marsh

Readers: The Marsh Family

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 25—Christmas Day

Flowers: Poinsettias

Projector: Blake Tonkin

Audio: Mitchell Tonkin

Offering Counters

Irving & Beverly Lindsey

2017 Flower Chart

The Flower Chart has been posted in the hallway outside the office. Take time today to sign-up for your choice of dates. Flower arrangements are \$20 each and checks can be made payable to the: Board of Deacons.

Christmas Cantata

Join us Sunday, December 18th at 11:00 a.m. for our Christmas Cantata entitled, "Jesus! The Advent of the Messiah" by Mary McDonald and Rose Aspinall, orchestrated by Ed Hogan. Come together and celebrate the arrival of the High and Holy One, the one Name above all names, Jesus! Worship Him and examine what His coming means for all who receive Him. Celebrate the season of His birth and honor the gift of a Savior—our Savior—Jesus!

Christmas Eve Services

The Early Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion Service will be held at 7:00 p.m. A traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion Worship will be held at 11:00 p.m. We hope you will plan to join us as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child!

Advent Devotionals

"Hope-Full Living" is the title of this year's Advent devotional booklet. It includes daily devotions for living life to the fullest. These devotions have been written by other older adults who hope and pray that this Advent will be a new and exciting ADVENTure for you and yours. Be ready to share your joy and hope in the newborn King, who is born in Bethlehem for you and for me. Please help yourself to a devotional located at the back of the sanctuary.

Year End Giving Statements

Financial statements of your giving will be mailed to each household mid to late January. If you would like your statement earlier, contact the church office.

Annual Cookie Walk

The church and community is invited to purchase delicious holiday cookies for gift giving, holiday parties, etc. Who has time to bake dozens of different cookies? No need, just make your favorite cookies and shop for the rest! The Annual Holiday Cookie Walk will be held Saturday, December 10th from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall. Cookies are \$7.00 per pound and all proceeds benefit the Pathway Homeless Shelter. Hope to see you at the Cookie Walk!

Year End Information

It won't be long and the year 2016 will soon come to a close. A **congregation-al meeting** has been scheduled for Sunday, January 29, 2017 immediately following worship. We will look at 2016 in review and look forward to the 2017 New Year. Please make plans to attend.

Year End Reports

Committee chairs and treasurers are asked to submit a report to include in the annual report for the Congregational Meeting. Please have your report to the church office by Sunday, January 22nd. If you have any questions or need information from the office, contact Jill during office hours at 724-459-7991 or email at upchurch@r-church.com.

A Big THANK YOU!

Thank you to all those who donated toward the Deacon Thanksgiving Basket Project. This year we were able to give out 25 baskets within the community! Thanks to the generosity of many. Numerous families were able to have a blessed Thanksgiving!

Thank you to all who helped make our Thanksgiving Dinner a success again this year. To those who prepared food, set up and cleaned up, those who contributed monetarily, the worship speakers and especially all the kitchen help, it was much appreciated. ~ The Thanksgiving Team



MADE IN AMERICA

(Blairsville, to be exact)



The Grannies sewing group has several handmade items available for your purchase. Funds raised through the sale of these items help to support our mission of providing a blanket to each person baptized in our church, quilts distributed to fire victims and Habitat for Humanity, stuffed bunnies and bears given to the Alice Paul House and Citizen's Ambulance Service, dignity robes to the Indiana Hospital Women's Imaging Center, lap robes for those in our church, and dining scarves for residents of St. Andrew's Village. These are just some of the distribution points of our sewing projects. As you consider your needs for the upcoming holiday gift-giving season, look to fill your stockings or gift bags with some of the following. Your generosity will help to support the sewing projects within our church and the community.

Fleece Scarves	\$7.00
Stuffed Bears, Bunnies & Ducks	\$10.00
Knitted Dish Cloths	\$2.00 to \$4.00 (depending on size)
Shopping Bags	\$2.00
Hanging Kitchen Towels-single	\$2.00
Hanging Kitchen Towels-double	\$5.00
Hot Pads	\$2.00-\$4.00 (depending on size)
Scrubbys for dishes or skin	\$2.00-\$4.00-\$6.00 (depending on size)

Contact: Janeen Swope (724) 739-0130

Christmas Caroling

Save the date...we'll be Christmas Caroling around town Thursday, December 22nd. Beginning at the church at 6:00 p.m., we'll walk around town spreading Christmas cheer then return to the church Fellowship Hall for hot chocolate and possibly some sweet treats! Everyone is invited. For more information, please see Jen Borbonus.

Offering Envelopes

2017 Offering Envelopes are available for pick-up in the back of the sanctuary. Please look for your name as some numbers have changed. If you would like a box of envelopes or we missed you, please contact the church office.





Community Christmas Concert

The Monday Music Club is welcoming you to the Community Christmas Concert to be held Monday, December 12th at 7:00 p.m. at the Christian & Missionary Alliance Church in Blairsville. Community church choirs will be featured as well as a combined community choir. We look forward to seeing you there.

A Christmas Musical Extravaganza

Homeschoolers for Christ Coop presents, "The Night Shift Before Christmas" a Christmas musical extravaganza. The shows will be presented Friday, December 16 at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 18 at 3:00 p.m. at Saving Grace Church, 921 Hospital Road, Indiana, PA. No tickets required, a love offering will be accepted at the door.

Christmas Performance

Contemporary Christian group, Mercy Me will perform at the Kovalchick Complex Thursday, December 8th at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available from the Kovalchick Complex. For more information, contact k.m.kaltreider@iup.edu or the website www.kovalchickcomplex.com.

Email Addresses

The church office is collecting email addresses of those who would like to receive updates on important information such as member deaths, cancellations due to weather, etc. Please submit your email or update your email address by placing it in the offering plate Sunday or email the office at:

upchurch@r-church.com.

Compassion Update

Dear Friends,

I greet to you and I wish you are fine. In this opportunity I tell you I have learned at the project about God's word and good cleaning habits. I tell you I am looking for a school to finish my studies. I help my mom to clean the house and my sister with the homework. I want you read John 3:16. I ask you pray for me and my family, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life....."

Love,

Jeferson Morales, Colombia

Dear Friends,

I greet you in the name of Jesus. I am very glad to write to you again. Praise Jesus. Here in Rwanda the weather is rainy and we are growing beans. How is your weather? I am studying in primary six. My family greets you in the name of Jesus Christ. I wish you peace of God. I thank you for a gift you sent me. I bought clothes and shoes.

Thank you,

Vestine Hagenimana, Rwanda

Family Promise News

In 2017 we will again be a host site for the Family Promise Program of Indiana County. We are scheduled to host families the weeks of: January 8-15, April 23-30, July 30-August 6 and October 22-29. Family Promise works with local churches and is a program that helps homeless families. The program provides a safe place to stay and helps families work on a plan to move forward. If you would like to volunteer to help during our host weeks, please contact Gene Artman or Pastor Monroe.

Coupons Wanted

Please save your coupons. Erica Ash is involved with a project that sends coupons to veterans. Please make sure they are manufacturer coupons and that they have not expired. Please see Erica if you have any questions.

Officer Training

Training for newly elected officers or present officers who would like a refresher, will take place Sunday, December 11th following worship. Those attending are asked to bring a sandwich for lunch. Ordination and Installation of new officers will take place Sunday, January 8th during worship at 11:00 a.m.

Mission Moment

Nativity of Jesus Christ / Christmas Day

I have a favorite T-shirt.

It's not my favorite shirt because it's fancy or colorful. In fact, it's just a white shirt received at the finish line of a 5-kilometer charity walk more than a decade ago.

This shirt is special to me because it's autographed by thoroughbred racing Hall of Fame jockey Pat Day, who won the 1992 Kentucky Derby aboard a longshot—Lil E. Tee.

He wrote carefully with a permanent marker:

To Tammy
God Loves You!
John 3:16
Pat Day
06-17-06

As I hold this well-worn shirt in my hands this Christmas Day, I think of the moment it represents and how much God knew I'd need a reminder of his love for me in the days ahead. God knew storms were coming my way.

My mom learned she had terminal lung cancer, and she passed away less than three months after her diagnosis.

God loves me. God loves everyone in the world.

My husband battled and survived prostate cancer.

God loves me. God loves everyone in the world.

I have attended funerals for friends and co-workers, as well as my brother-in-law, my mother-in-law, my nephew, my last aunt, my last uncle.

God loves me, God loves everyone in the world.

This Christmas Day and each and every day ahead, God is preparing the way and providing everything needed for life's journey. Although we may be tossed around like an old T-shirt, once we put on Christ, nothing can separate us from the love of God who has written his love letter in our hearts.

*Tammy Warren, Communications Associate,
Presbyterian Mission Agency*

Volunteers Needed

Torrance State Hospital's Volunteer Services needs our help! They need volunteers to give time to help patients with cookie decorating and to organize patient gifts. If you can give an hour or more any weekday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to help, please call Lenore (Lenny) at 724-459-4464. Let's help make this a Merry Christmas for patients at Torrance State Hospital.



Help Starts Here

PA 2-1-1 Southwest is a free resource and information hub that connects people with community, health and disaster services in 11 counties through a free, 24/7 confidential phone service and website. If you have a concern or a need dial 2-1-1 or email info@pa211sw.org and you will be connected to an organization that can help.

Property Update

If you notice something around the church property that needs repaired, please refer the matter to the Property & Maintenance Committee. Either place a note in the offering plate or leave it in the church office. The secretary will forward the concern to the chair of the committee. Please be very specific as to what the problem is, so that the issue can be handled.

Home Communion

If you are not able to come to Sunday morning worship and would like to receive communion in your home, please call the church office at 724-459-7991 and arrangements can be made for the sacrament to be shared with you.

*We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Christmas Eve during 7:00 and 11:00 p.m. worship.
Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.*

Christmas Day Worship

Worship will be held on Christmas Day. We hope you will come to celebrate the coming of our new born King. Sunday school will not be held December 25th or January 1st. Classes will resume Sunday, January 8th.



Worship Assistants Needed

The Worship Committee is always looking for those willing to serve as liturgists on Sunday mornings. Perhaps you or another member of your family is interested in this service. Please see Elaine Jellison or contact the church office.

The Deacons are always looking for those willing to serve as ushers on Sunday mornings. If you would be willing to greet parishioners as they arrive and hand them a bulletin, then pass the plates during the offering, we would love to hear from you. A sign-up sheet is available in the back of the sanctuary.



On the Night You Were Born

By Nancy Tillman

On the night you were born the moon smiled with such wonder
That the stars peek-ed in to see you and the night wind whispered,
"Life will never be the same"

Because there had never been anyone like you...ever in the world.

So enchanted with you were the wind and the rain
That they whispered the sound of your Wonderful name.
Heaven blew every trumpet and played every horn
On the wonderful, marvelous night You were born.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6-7