



The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

APRIL 2017

It's always a bit awkward to write an Easter article while still in the midst of Lent, in the same way it's difficult to write my Easter sermons while spiritually engaged in Holy Week. That which is on either side of the cross stands in tension with the other side, yet you cannot truly experience one without the other. Then again, that is the nature of our faith journey, to ask questions and wrestle with possibilities, only to be led to a new level of understanding and a renewed sense of belief.

As the ashes were imposed on our foreheads, we were reminded that it was from dust we were formed and to dust we will return. That reality grounds us in our humanity, reminding us of who and how we are. And throughout the Lenten season we reflect on those things around us and within us that keep us from being open to the fullness of life God offers us. Cleaning our spiritual house is hard work. It requires us to come to terms with who we are, to sort through the clutter that distracts us from what is of lasting value, to let go of what weighs us down, and to claim the gift of freedom Christ offers us. We are quick to glance into the mirror to make sure there is no broccoli in our teeth, but God calls us to examine ourselves in the deepest of ways—considering the truth of how we've been, the purity of our motives, and the readiness of our hearts to give ourselves completely in faith.

A few months ago, there was a series of ads on television of a professional athlete saying, "It took me years of dedicated sacrifice and practice, hours of painful exertion on the field to get this jersey." Then up walks a kid who says, "Yea, but my mom bought me the same jersey for \$29.99 at the Pro Sports Shop." Now, which jersey has true integrity and value? Paul writes, "For if we have been united with Christ in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." (Romans 6:5) No pains, no gain. No sacrifice, no glory.

There are no short cuts on the way to the cross. Jesus claimed no divine privilege to exempt him from the price to be paid for our sin. As Paul says, "He emptied himself (completely)...humbled himself...and became obedient unto death on a cross...therefore God has highly exalted him." (Philippians 2) Our call is to be crucified with Christ, to the point that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. It is only in our complete surrender to him that we are set free to become who he created—and recreated us to be.

For that purpose, Holy Week is such an important part of the journey. Too often folks go from the Hosannas of Palm Sunday directly to the Alleluias of Easter Day and then wonder why it all seems like a hollow victory. I would challenge you to be intentional in your devotion and to walk as closely as you can with Jesus into darkness of the valley. With him we experience the rejection, the betrayal and denial of others, the sense of abandonment, the challenge of trusting God to be true to his promise. As we come to the cross we seek to understand what it is to die to ourselves, to let go of every earthly security and to put it all in God's care. We wrestle with a sense of being forsaken. (Psalm 22) We try to imagine the darkness of the grave, of being in that place where God is not. And while we can never experience anything near what Jesus experienced, we open ourselves to the depths with the hope of exaltation in the power and joy of resurrection.

As with any relationship—we only receive of it to the point that we are invested in it. On Wednesday of Holy Week we will gather at noon at Sts. Simon & Jude to hear of Jesus in the garden. On Thursday evening we will gather in our Fellowship Hall to celebrate the Passover Meal, the Seder, remembering how God has redeemed his people, and in our celebration of communion, how God has saved us personally. On Friday evening we gather at Abundant Grace Church to focus on the cross on the hill called Golgotha. And then on Saturday, in our private devotion, we ponder the grave, Jesus' descent into Hell, the lack of life without God's abiding presence. And then, from the darkness the light breaks forth and we rejoice in the wonderful news that Christ is risen and we are raised with him. It is only having known the darkness that we can know the sweet release.....

In Christ's love,

Pastor Jim



Scripture Texts for Worship

The scripture texts for April are given for your study in preparation for Worship.

Sunday, April 2

Ezekiel 37:1-14
John 11:1-45

Palm Sunday, April 9

Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 21:1-11

Easter Day, April 16

Colossians 3:1-4
Matthew 28:1-10

Sunday, April 23

Acts 2:14, 22-32
I Peter 1:3-9

Sunday, April 30

I Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

Sunday, May 7

I Peter 2:19-35
John 10:1-10

May Newsletter

Articles to be published in the May edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, April 16. Please call the office with any questions or concerns.

Worship Assistants

April 2

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone
Acolyte: Eli Borbonus
Flowers: Alice Santoro
Ushers: Rose Lewis, Gene Artman,
Nancy Hartmann, Dennis Gould
Projector: Shakira McKinney
Audio: Jaison McKinney

April 9—Palm Sunday

Liturgist: Jean Heberling
Acolyte: Willow Weimer
Flowers: Linda George
Ushers: Gary & Shane Boone
Tom & Julia Holby
Projector: Kayla Moran
Audio: Tyler Moran

April 16—8:30 Worship

Ushers: Ron & Kim McKinney

April 16—11:00 Worship

Liturgist: Bonni Dunlap
Easter Flowers
Ushers: DeWayne & Nikki Reeves
Jim & Mary Piper
Projector: Blake Tonkin
Audio: Mitchell Tonkin

April 23

Liturgist: Connie Bruner
Flowers: Ron & Kim McKinney
Ushers: Bob & Charlotte Cosharek
Tom Holby, Alex Kirkland
Projector: Jonathan Clayton
Audio: Alex Baker

April 30

Liturgist: Dennis Gould
Flowers: Janet Smith
Ushers: Terry & Barb Brown
Bob & Vicky Doty
Projector: Shakira McKinney
Audio: Jaison McKinney

Offering Counters

Elaine Jellison and Jim Neal



Maundy Thursday Seder & Communion

We will join together and share a Seder Meal Maundy Thursday, April 13th at 6:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Following the meal we will continue as we celebrate the Lord's Supper. We ask that you use the form in this newsletter to let us know if you plan to attend. Also note, we are looking for volunteers to help set-up Wednesday, April 12th at 6:00 p.m. and those to stay after the Seder to help clean-up. Please note on the form if you are willing to help.

Dates to Remember for the Season of Lent and Easter

Wednesdays..... Lenten Lunches, 12:00 pm
April 5..... We host Lenten Lunch, 12:00 pm
April 8..... Eggstravaganza, 10:00 am
April 9..... Palm Sunday
April 12..... Seder Set-up, 6:00 pm
April 13..... Maundy Thursday Seder, 6:30 pm
April 14..... Community Good Friday Worship
Abundant Grace Church, 7:00 pm
April 16..... Early Easter Worship, 8:30 am
Easter Breakfast, 9:30 am
Easter Worship, 11:00 am

Community Lenten Mid-week Services

The Blairsville Area Ministerium offers community Lenten services followed by a light lunch. A service is held at 12:00 noon followed by soup and sandwich lunch. The schedule is as follows:

April 5United Presbyterian Church.....Rev. Dawn Krishart

April 12SS Simon & Jude Church Rev. George Prior

April 14Abundant Grace Assembly of God Church Rev. Rusty McClurg
Good Friday, 7:00 p.m.

Graduates

Parents of graduates, our church tradition has been to recognize the efforts and accomplishments of our children and young adults, especially at graduation time. But it is really hard to keep up with who's graduating from what school and what their future plans are going to be. Please notify the office or see Kim McKinney about your child's pending graduation from high school or college so that we may show your son or daughter how much we care. Graduate recognition will be Sunday, June 4th during the morning worship service at 10:00 a.m. If your graduate has a talent they would like to share during the recognition service such as singing, playing an instrument, speaking, etc., please let Kim or the office know.

Christian Camping Opportunities

For many years four presbyteries (Kiskiminetas, Beaver-Butler, Shenango, and Lake Erie) have shared in ministry through two church camps, West Minster Highlands in Emlenton, PA and Camp Lambec on the shore of Lake Erie. Because of low attendance at the Highlands it is not financial feasible to open the camp in 2017. Because of water sanitation issues, Camp Lambec is not able to open for the season. Should your children be interested in Christian camping, there are two camps located fairly close, Pine Springs Camp in Jennerstown, PA is administered by Washington and Redstone Presbyteries and Camp Crestfield is affiliated with Pittsburgh Presbytery. For more information, you can contact Pastor Monroe or visit the camps websites: www.crestfieldcc.org and www.pinesprings.org.

Caring for the Elderly

A part-time position is available at Seton Center Adult Day Service as an Adult Day Service Aide. The position is Monday-Friday and includes paid time-off and paid holidays. If you are interested, please call Sr. Kathleen at 724-832-2810.

Thank You

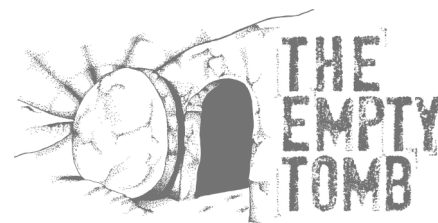
Dear Deacons,

Thank you for your donation of cards for our patients at Torrance State Hospital. You can't imagine the joy these cards will bring our patients.

Best Regards,

Lenny Meketa

Volunteer Resources Coordinator



For Pastoral Care

Local hospitals are no longer calling the church when parishioners are admitted as patients. If you or a friend from the church would like pastoral care at these times, please call the church office or contact Pastor Monroe to let him know.

Save Your Coupons

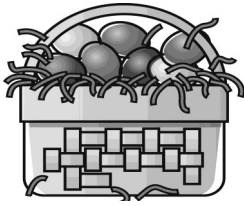
Coupons for veterans are being collected. Please save manufacturer's coupons only. The program allows up to one month expired. If possible, please cut coupons and separate into food and non-food bundles. There is a box at the back of the sanctuary to place the coupons in marked Coupons for Veterans. If you have any questions, please see Erica Ash or Ellen Williams.

Torrance Hospital Donations

The deacons are collecting new or gently used men's shoes size 10 or larger for patients at Torrance State Hospital. You can leave the shoes in the office or in the back of the church in or near the Torrance Hospital bin.

Food Bank

The food bank is held at our church the first Tuesday of each month. Food items are distributed between the hours of 12:00 and 1:00. Proof of residence is needed when signing-up for the first time. The food bank is sponsored by ICCAP.



EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA EASTER EGG HUNT 2017

Saturday, April 8, 2017

10:00 AM-12:00 PM

Here at the church

Ages: Preschool-Grade 5

Activities will include:

The story of Easter told in a creative way, craft, games, and of course the EASTER EGG HUNT

*Please remember a basket for your eggs

*Wear clothes according to the weather

*Bring a friend to share the fun with

If you have any questions,
please see Jen Borbonus

Volunteers are greatly appreciated

Please consider helping out!

You can drop this form in the offering plate,
leave it in the church office, or give it to your
Sunday School teacher.



EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA & EGG HUNT

NAME _____

Age _____ Phone # _____

Parent or Guardian _____

It Won't Be Long Now...

Vacation Bible School is only a few months away. The fun is scheduled for the week of June 19-23. If you love to have fun, work with kids & learn new and exciting things, we want you! Volunteers are needed in many areas. A planning meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 20th at 6:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. All those interested are invited to attend. No experience is necessary! For more information, contact the church office.



Workshop Scheduled

"Helping, Hoping, Healing: A Faithful Response to Persons and Families Dealing with Drug Addiction" is the title of the workshop scheduled by the Presbytery Mission Team of the

Kiskiminetas Presbytery. The workshop is for persons who are seeking tools for ministry and caring, and may be of help to those who feel drawn to care for someone who has a drug addiction. Suggestions and information will be offered about how to reach out to a person or their family. Pastors and parishioners alike may find encouragement to extend compassion and help to those around them who are affected by the disease of drug addiction. The main presenter is the Rev. Drew Himes. He holds his bachelor of arts degree from Westminster College; his Master of Divinity from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary; and Master of Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh. He is currently licensed to practice social work in the Commonwealth. Having experienced the costs and struggles of addiction firsthand, Rev. Himes hopes that the information provided will give a wealth of tools that can be used to help end this horrible and destructive disease.

The workshop will be held on three different dates and three different locations. Dates and places are:

April 22, 2017—Grace Church, Kittanning

April 29, 2017—Marion Center Church

May 6, 2017—Clarion Church

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the workshop runs from 9:00—11:45 a.m. The workshops are free and snacks will be provided. Please register for the workshop of your choice no later than a week before the scheduled date. Registration forms are available in the church office or call the presbytery office at 724-783-7196. Please let Pastor Monroe know if you are interested in attending one of the workshops.

61st Good Friday Breakfast

YMCA Gymnasium

Friday, April 14th at 6:30 a.m.

Tickets—\$15.00 per person

(Please see Marilyn Neal for tickets)

Guest Speakers Julie Kemp and Landon Whitley



About the speakers:

On a Sunday morning in 1997 Julie Kemp, her husband, Andy and their 8 year old son, Landon were driving home from church, when an ambulance broadsided their car. Andy died instantly. Rescuers stabilized Julie but did not initially realize there was a third passenger in the car. Landon died at the scene but was brought back to life. As an ambulance rushed him to Carolinas Medical Center, Landon slipped away again and was, again, revived. At the hospital, he was pronounced dead, but came back again. After two weeks in a coma, Landon opened his eyes. To everyone's amazement he had no brain damage. But in the midst of her joy, Julie had to tell Landon that his dad had died in the accident. Julie says, "I said, Landon, do you know where your dad is? And he told me, 'Yes, I know where he's at. I saw him in heaven.'" Years have passed since the accident but Landon still clearly remembers his amazing experiences in Heaven. Julie and Landon faced many struggles in recovering from the accident, but continued to share their story. Landon says Jesus sent him back with instructions to "tell others about Jesus," and that's what he does.

Free Vaccinations

The Department of Health has scheduled immunization clinics for those who are uninsured or underinsured. Vaccinations are given by appointment only. The Blairsville Community Center is the local site and the clinic will run from 9:45—11:15 a.m. The dates are April 19th, May 17th, June 21st, July 19th, and August 16th. Please call the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 724-357-2995 if you have questions.

Special Music

Our chancel choir has been rehearsing special music for Palm Sunday and Easter Day. If you would like to sing along with the choir for these special days, please see Cindy Borbonus or come to choir rehearsal Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome to participate for special music or make it a little more permanent participating until the end of the choir season. (the end of May) All are welcome!

Compassion News

Dear Friends,
Greetings to you in the name of Jesus. Wishing you a happy New Year. We are now sowing sorghum. How are you doing? My family and I are doing well. Thank you for the letter and the nice picture that you have sent to me. I end up wishing you peace from God!

Your child,
Hagenimana Vestine

.....
SEDER—a traditional Jewish Passover meal that celebrates God's deliverance from bondage.
Each food served helps to tell the story.

Maundy Thursday, April 13—6:30 p.m.—Fellowship Hall

Following the meal we will continue as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, remembering how Christ completes the act of salvation in our lives.

Please let us know if you plan to attend.

Name _____ Number attending _____

_____ I would like to help set-up Wednesday, April 12 at 6:00 p.m.

_____ I would like to help clean-up following the Seder.

Mission Moment—*A church with no children steps out in faith and receives an incredible gift*

In many ways, the story of our little church is very much like the story of your church, if your church is like over half of all PC(USA) congregations, with fewer than 100 members. And I have walked through the halls of our building much as you have walked through the halls of yours, listening to church members telling stories of “better days,” of youth groups, Sunday school, Christmas pageants and the like.

Yes, I walked through those empty halls, peering into empty classrooms full of leftover children’s books and musty educational toys. As I walked, I prayed, “Lord, this is just not right. Please bring children back to this church. Please fill these empty rooms once again.”

During that time, we—all 25 members of St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church—began to pray for children. Drawn to Genesis 15:5, we claimed God’s promise to Abraham, “Count the stars”:

He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

As we prayed, we began to look with fresh eyes around our own community, looking for children, and discovered that both the Boys and Girls Club and Hemingway Elementary School were our neighbors, within a stone’s throw. We approached them and began to plan together for our first community Vacation Bible School. We worked and watched as God opened doors and provided all that we needed, from community volunteers, to supplies, to reduced prices on snacks, all which culminated in three glorious days of holy chaos with 70 children. At the end of that first year, we all agreed that this was the most thrilling mission trip we had ever been a part of. The best part is that we got to sleep in our own beds at night.

While we exhaled in deep thanks for this annual gift of children, God’s promise continued to materialize when the director of a participating private school asked us to mentor *her* children who attend online classes with little personal interaction. This request gifted us with 20 middle and high school youth who now come to us every Wednesday afternoon for Bible study and recreation. The empty classrooms are now filled with students who sink comfortably into sofas and chairs, and enjoy a game of pool or ping-pong.

Today we are planning our fourth VBS, wondering if our numbers will exceed the 160 children that came last year. Each year has been a walk of faith for our little church, and each year God has provided abundantly for our needs and added to our partners, which are now two schools, five churches and our own youth group of volunteers. One of our partnering churches approaches this VBS week as a mission trip, driving 40 miles each day and bringing their adult and youth volunteers, their children and their entire VBS budget!

A night sky full of stars, answers to prayer, sticky fingers, happy smiles and the laughter of children—these are the gifts of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God!

Rev. Dr. Lisa B. Culpepper , Stated Supply Pastor, St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church, Hemingway, South Carolina Chaplain, Presbyterian Communities in Florence, South Carolina