



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

DECEMBER 2017

Before history was recorded, humanity was intentional about marking time. Signs of nature tell us when to sow and when to reap, and when to repeat the cycle again. As we age, we recognize the distinct seasons of our life, and as we grow into the last, we watch the next generation pick up where we have left off. When earth returns to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we trust God in his faithfulness to do a new thing—with our souls and with what remains of the fruit of our earthly witness. And so, the story of God at work in the midst of his world continues.

Through time, the church has kept that ancient story alive, retelling it and in the retelling, reliving it. Just as there are seasons in the natural world and in our physical experience, so there are seasons in our life as the church. We began the year with the Season of Advent, a period of four weeks in which we hear God's voice through the prophets declaring the promise that he would come to us, in the midst of our circumstance. For well over a thousand years people of faith watched and waited and wondered how and when the promise would be fulfilled. With anticipation they hoped in expectation that their redeemer would come and set right what was wrong, free them from what tormented their souls, heal what broke their hearts. That is our focus as we move through Advent, that just as the ancients waited for the Messiah, the Christ, we having seen him await his return. "Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee."

Our season of anticipation and preparation climaxed as Jesus is born, Emmanuel—God with us. For the twelve days of the Season of Christmas we rejoice that God has seen us and heard us and now has fulfilled what he promised. The blessings of heaven have come to earth for us. But so too he has come for all who would welcome him. From the Season of Christmas we move into Epiphany as we celebrate the star that announced to all the world that God is here, and invites everyone to come and worship him.

The Sunday after Epiphany we remember the baptism of Jesus and therein recall our own baptism as we celebrate the covenant by which we are claimed. There in the waters of the Jordan—the heavens opened and declared the lordship of Jesus. And for the next five and a half weeks, we focus on the beauty of Epiphany—God making himself known as light in the midst of the darkness, permeating the shadows and casting out fear. That disclosure is climaxed in the transfiguration of the Lord where the heavens are opened again and Jesus is revealed for who he truly is.

From the revelation given from the heavens, we enter the Season of Lent as we contemplate what it means to follow Jesus. For forty days we enter the wilderness and are tempted and tested, learning what it means to trust God, even to the point of dying to ourselves—to our old nature. It is a journey that leads us to the grave as we put ourselves completely in God's hand.

But God does not leave Jesus and us in the grave. In the power of resurrection we are raised and the Easter message declares that just as Jesus is set free from the bonds of darkness and death, so are we. And for the next forty days the Season of Easter fills us with rejoicing as we recall the risen Lord in the midst of the believers.

On the fortieth day after the resurrection, Jesus is taken up into heaven, ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us. And suddenly there is a ten day period in which God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in heaven and earth again anticipates a deeper intimacy with the Almighty. And then, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends upon those who believe and the church is given birth as the breath of God fills it, fills us with life. For months to follow we seek to understand more fully what it means to be "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." Those months culminate with our celebration in late November of Christ the King—of all creation, of everything in our lives.

And so we come full circle, having moved through the Seasons of the church year. But mind you, it is not a vicious cycle, it is an intentional recollection and celebration of what God has done. May that be your focus in these coming days and may you find hope, peace, joy and love as you begin this new church year.....

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 3

Isaiah 64:1-9
Mark 13:24-37

Sunday, December 10

Isaiah 40:1-11
Mark 1:1-8

Sunday, December 17

Christmas Cantata

Sunday, December 24—AM

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
I Thessalonians 5:16-24

Sunday, December 24—PM

Isaiah 9:2-7
Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Sunday, December 31

Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Luke 2:22-40

Sunday, January 7

Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

Food Bank

Food items are distributed between the hours of 12:00 and 1:00 the first Tuesday of each month. The food bank is sponsored by ICCAP.

January Newsletter

Articles to be published in the January edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, December 17th. Please have all information to the church office by this date.

Worship Assistants

December 3—1st of Advent

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone
Flowers: Gene & Chery Artman
Readers: Ritchie/Ferguson families
Projector: Shakira McKinney
Audio: Jaison McKinney

December 10—2nd of Advent

Liturgist: Deb Lint
Flowers: Alice Doak
Projector: Alex Kirkland
Audio: Andrew Baker

December 17—3rd of Advent

Christmas Cantata
Flowers: Poinsettias
Readers: Clayton family
Projector: Kayla Moran
Audio: Tyler Moran

December 24—11 AM—4th of Advent

Liturgist: Rick Shoemaker
Flowers: Poinsettias
Projector: Blake Tonkin
Audio: Elizabeth Bruner

December 24—7 PM

Liturgist: Jen Borbonus
Readers: Matt Borbonus family

December 24—11 PM

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe

December 31

Flowers: Reeves Family
Projector: Shakira McKinney
Audio: Jaison McKinney

Offering Counters

Pat & Janeen Swope



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!

Christmas Cantata

Our cantata is entitled, "Invitation to a Miracle" by Joseph M. Martin. This is a season of miracles and wonders; a time to celebrate the glorious impossibility of God's magnificent gift of grace. Come celebrate, Faith, Hope, Peace, Love, Joy, Light and Life! Come celebrate Jesus! Know the wonder of grace! The Christmas Cantata will be presented in worship Sunday, December 17th at 11:00 a.m. Anyone wishing to participate is welcome. If you would like more information, please see Cindy Borbonus.

Advent Devotionals

Our devotional this Advent season is entitled, "Oh Holy Night!" by Sarah Reinhard. Advent is a season of preparation, so it's naturally busy, even without the cultural stress of more, more, more. This year, you and your family are invited to embrace Advent as a journey, one that may involve stumbles and tears. Let Advent be your gift to the baby Jesus, a way to get your heart and soul ready to receive him on Christmas Day. May this devotional serve you and your family well, helping you to prepare for the arrival of our Savior with prayer and action. May your Advent be blessed with Jesus, and may your family be better for it.



Holiday Cookie Sale (Cookie Walk)

Calling all bakers... families in the congregation are asked to donate at least 4 dozen cookies, candies, or holiday treats (no cupcakes, cakes, or pies) for our Annual Holiday Cookie Sale to be held Saturday, December 16th, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Please invite your fellow bakers, family, friends, co-workers, groups or organizations to participate. All baked goods may be dropped off in a disposable container on Friday, December 15th from 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. or 1:00-3:00 p.m. Also, volunteers are needed to help with the sale on December 16th. If you have any questions or would like to help contact Erica Ash, Nancy Hartmann or the church office. A sign-up sheet is located in the back of the sanctuary. Please let us know what kind of cookie you will be donating so we don't have too many duplicates!

The congregation and community are invited to purchase delicious holiday treats for gift giving, holiday parties, etc. on Saturday, December 16th. Who has time to bake dozens of different cookies? No need, just make your best cookies and shop for the rest! Cookies are \$7.00/pound and all proceeds benefit the Pathway Homeless Shelter.

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, bears and ducks 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, hats to be given with the Coat Drive, 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. Contact: Janeen Swope (724) 739-0130.

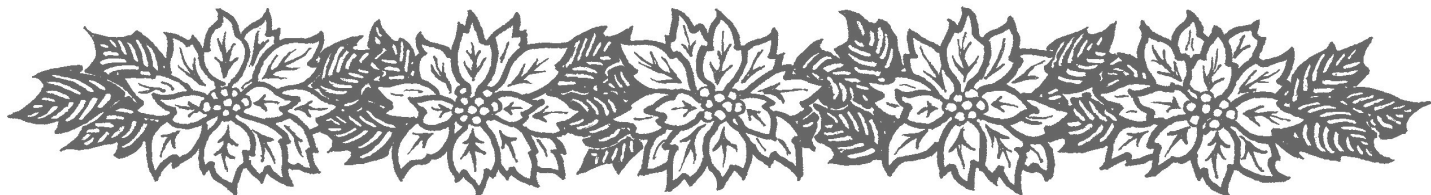
Stuffed Bears, Bunnies & Ducks	\$10
Knitted Dish Cloths	\$3 or 2/\$5
Hanging Kitchen Towels	\$2 (single)
Hanging Kitchen Towels	\$5 (double)
Hot Pads	\$2-\$4 (depends on size)
Scrubbys (good for dishes or skin)	\$2-\$4-\$6 (depends on size)
Hats	\$5

"Thank you to all who helped make our Thanksgiving dinner a success again this year. Those who stepped up to help the committee, 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. Thank you to all who stayed and enjoyed the meal and fellowship. We are so thankful for our church family! "

Christmas Schedule

Dec. 3	New Member Orientation 9:45 am Officer Training 12:00 pm
Dec. 9	Middle School Youth Group
Dec. 10	New Members Unite 11:00 am
Dec. 16	Holiday Cookie Sale 9:00-11:00 am Cantata Rehearsal 10:00 am
Dec. 17	Christmas Cantata 11:00 am Christmas Program 6:00 pm
Dec. 22	Christmas Caroling 6:00 pm
Dec. 24	Worship 11:00 am No Sunday School Candlelight & Communion Worship 7:00 pm & 11:00 pm
Dec. 25	Merry Christmas! Office Closed

We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Sunday, December 24th during worship at 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 pm. Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.



Year End Information

It won't be long and the year 2017 will soon come to a close. A congregational meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, January 28, 2018 immediately following worship. We will look at 2017 in review and look forward to the 2018 New Year. Please make plans to attend.

Year End Reports

Committee chairs and treasurers are asked to write a report to include in the annual report for the Congregational Meeting. Please have your report to the church office by Sunday, January 21st. 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.

2017 Year End Financial 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.

2018 Flower Chart

The Flower Chart for 2018 has been posted in the hallway outside the office. Take time today to sign-up for your choice of dates. Flowers are placed on the organ during worship and can be taken home with you following the service. Flower arrangements are \$20 each and checks can be made payable to the: Board of Deacons.

2018 Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for the New Year are available in the back of the sanctuary for you to pick up. If you do not have envelopes and would like a set, please contact Jill in the church office at 724-459-7991.

Newsletter Mailings

We send our newsletter to a number of people. Every now and then, we do a review of our mailing list to keep it current to those who have shown an interest in the life and work of the congregation. Should you stop receiving this newsletter, but would like to stay on the mailing list, all we ask is that you call the church office and your name will be put back on the list. We do this as an issue of stewardship so that we are not sending out unwanted mail.

Welcome Our Newest Member

Our newest member will unite with the congregation Sunday, December 10th during worship.

Heather Clawson is from Blairsville and has one son. She enjoys exercising, yoga, walks and spending time outdoors. Heather works for CWM Environmental as a sales representative. She was baptized in the Methodist Church. As a member of our congregation, she would like to grow stronger in her faith to help teach her son the Word of the Lord.

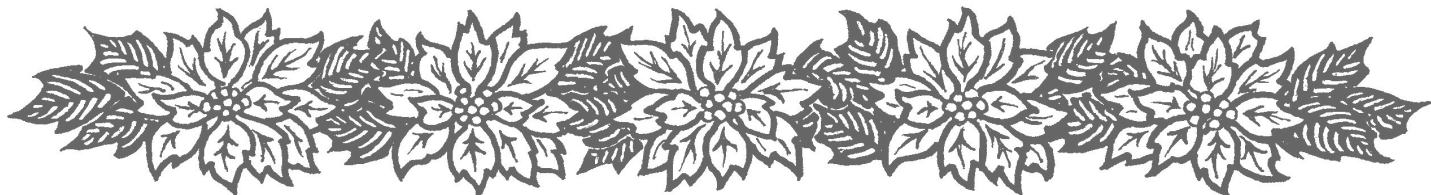
Officer Training

Officer training is scheduled for Sunday, December 3rd immediately following worship. Oncoming elders and deacons are asked to please bring a bag lunch and plan to stay for a time of conversation.

Worship Assistants

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.



Community Concert

Join in the fun and come to the Blairsville Monday Music Club Christmas Concert at Saint Simon and Jude Catholic Church December 11th at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome!

Property & Maintenance

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 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.

Help is a Phone Call Away

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.

Mission Moment

New Jersey Congregation Honors Former Police Chief

In a season marked by special dinners and other festive events, members of a New Jersey congregation are remembering a special commemoration of their own. Earlier this year the Missions Committee at First Presbyterian Church of South Amboy held a potluck to honor former Police Chief LeRoy Kurtz and other New Jersey police officers. The committee surprised Kurtz with the help of his family and church members. The biggest joy was watching Kurtz realize that his whole family was there to greet him and celebrate his faithful years of service as well as his 91st birthday. About 65 people enjoyed food, fellowship and music. The committee also made a \$3,000 donation to the New Jersey State Policemen's Benevolent Association in Kurtz's honor. "We are humbly honored to give back to our men and women in blue," said elder Mary Porcello. "We wanted to express the joy we had and honor our wonderful Chief LeRoy Kurtz. The gift we made in Mr. Kurtz's name was just a small token, but filled with much love."

Thank You!

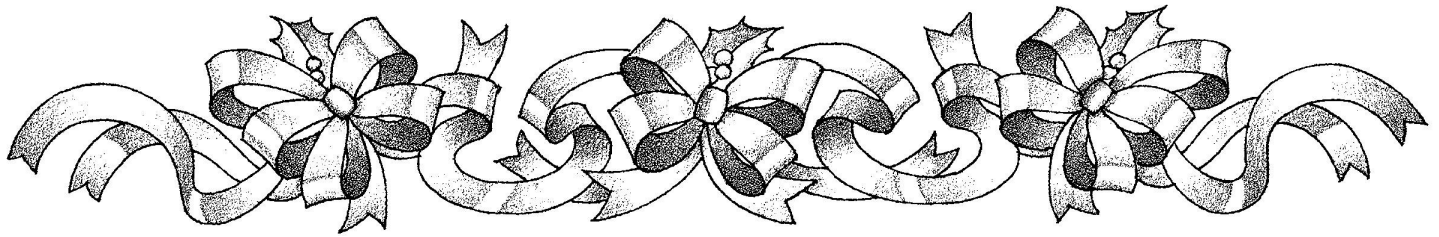
Thank you to all those who donated toward the Deacon Thanksgiving Basket Project. This year we were able to give out 25 baskets within the community! Thanks to the generosity of many. Numerous families were able to have a blessed Thanksgiving!

Christmas Caroling

Save the date! We will be Christmas Caroling Friday, December 22nd. All those who would like to participate are asked to be at the Fellowship Hall by 6:00 p.m. Watch your weekly bulletin for additional details.

Sunday School Christmas Program

Calling all Sunday School students from the nursery class through the high school class, it's not too late to participate. We would love to have all of our students involved in this year's Christmas program. Our presentation will be Sunday, December 17th at 6:00 p.m. There is one rehearsal scheduled for Sunday, December 17th at 5:00 p.m. Anyone interested in being a part of the program or if you would like more information, please contact Cindy Borbonus.



Did You Know...

The Pathway Homeless Shelter is located at 127 Grant Street, Blacklick . It is operated by the Indiana County Community Action Program (ICCAP) and provides emergency support services to families and individuals. It is the only homeless shelter in Indiana County. Our congregation supports this ministry in a number of ways. Our Deacons collect specific items each month based on the needs of the shelter. The items include cleaning supplies, personal care products, food items, towels, pillows, etc. In addition, the shelter accepts donations of small appliances and items that can be given to clients when they are able to move into permanent housing. This includes cookware, dishes, bedding, and any item that would be used in a home. Throughout the year special offerings may also be donated along with proceeds from the Evangelism Committee annual cookie sale.

**If we missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office. We would like to include all of our church family on the birthday and anniversary lists.*

