



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

MARCH 2018

I remember being in a junior high school class whining to the teacher about having to take a test. She explained that education is like a building, each level is constructed on the solidness of the layer under it. You wouldn't build something on a foundation of marshmallows. She continued, "I need to know that you understand the basics of arithmetic before you can learn the principles of mathematics, because if you don't know the basics, you'll never understand the more advanced."

The same is true with our faith. We must first learn the basics of trusting God and his ways before we can grow and develop a deep relationship with him and others. The season of Lent is a forty day period before Easter (not including Sundays, because every Sunday is considered a "little Easter"). The season is modelled after the 40 day period Jesus spent in the wilderness after his baptism. It was a time of testing who he was physically, mentally, emotionally and most important, spiritually. In his baptism the heavens opened and the voice declared, "You are my Son." After that confirmation, Jesus needed to discover the fullness of what that meant. The wilderness affords us an opportunity to be tested, tempted, tried that we might be made wiser and stronger.

The Bible often uses the number "forty" to designate such a period. Noah and his family endured 40 days and 40 nights of rain while on the ark. Moses was up on Mt. Sinai for 40 days at which time he received the law. In the same way God's people were without his leadership for that period, and consider the trouble they got into. For forty years, the Hebrew people wandered in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. They wandered by faith, being fed by manna and quail, being led by a pillar of cloud and fire and their sandals never wore out. For forty days, the weary prophet Elijah fasted until he heard the still small voice of God. After his resurrection, Jesus bore witness to the faithful for 40 days until he ascended into heaven.

You've heard the expression, "What doesn't kill us will make us stronger." It's not Biblical, quite the opposite. It was said by Fredrich Nietzsche, the 19th century German philosopher. But times of testing do make us stronger in that in our trials and suffering we must hold onto the truth and power of God's promise all the more. In Isaiah 43:2, God assures us, "When you pass through the waters I will be with you; when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, the flames will not set you ablaze." In that same assurance Paul echoes, "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so you may be able to endure it." (I Corinthians 10:13)

The challenge of the wilderness is to deal with our vulnerabilities in that we can face them and name them and yet see them in the context of God's power and grace. We come to terms with the truth about ourselves yet we do so in terms of the truth about God's power to redeem us and in Christ to claim us. In that way we come to know the truth, the truth that sets us free.

This season of Lent is known as a time to sacrifice something we enjoy remembering the sacrifice of Christ for us. Somehow I don't think giving up chocolate comes close to Jesus giving up his life. Yet there is value in the discipline of foregoing for the sake of remembering. A better fast, in my mind, comes from Isaiah 58 where we are called to take on a new activity that honors God's call for us to do justice. When we give up something for Lent, what does it say to God when upon the end of Lent we go back to our old ways? On the other hand, when we take on a new spiritual behavior, we are called to continue in it even though Lent has ended.

At the heart of Lent is the intentional dying to our old selves, our old selfishness, our old nature grounded in sin. We say "no" to that which is not of God so that we can fully say "yes" to that which is of God. In Christ, our sinfulness is taken to the grave, and the joy of Easter Day is that as Christ is raised, so too we are raised. Through our giving of ourselves, we are opened to receive of Christ's grace. Through our suffering, we come to know that God is with us and in the knowledge of his presence we are redeemed.

As you make your way through the wilderness, be open to a deeper communion with God, who formed you and knows you and loves you and wants you far more than you could ever want him. He seeks to raise you up and bless you all the more.....

In Christ's love,

Pastor Jim

Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, March 4

Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

Sunday, March 11

Exodus 20:1-17
John 2:13-22

Sunday, March 18

Jeremiah 31:31-34
John 12:20-33

Sunday, March 25

Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 11:1-11

Maundy Thursday, March 29

I Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31-35

Easter Day, April 1

Isaiah 25:6-9
John 20:1-8

April Newsletter

Articles to be published in the April edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Thursday, March 15th. Please call the office with any questions or concerns.

Prayer Chain

The prayer chain is coordinated by the Adult Sunday School Class. If you have a prayer request or know of someone's need for prayer, please contact Nancy Campbell or the church office. Prayer requests are kept in confidence unless permission is given to share.

Worship Assistants

March 4

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone
Flowers: Mary Anzelone
Ushers: Ed & Becky Bence
Mary Hileman
Steve Moran

Projector: Alex Kirkland
Audio: Andrew Baker

March 11

Liturgist: Jean Heberling
Flowers: Joy Fairbanks
Ushers: Bonni Dunlap
Steve Moran

Projector: Kayla Moran
Audio: Tyler Moran

March 18

Acolyte: Willow Weimer
Flowers: Annabel Machak
Flowers: Soni Clapper
Ushers: Gene & Chery Artman
Emma Riggi, Irv Lindsey

Projector: Blake Tonkin
Audio: Jaison McKinney

March 25

Acolyte: John Clark Bruner
Flowers: Rick & Willa Shoemaker
Ushers: Rick & Willa Shoemaker
Projector: Shakira McKinney
Audio: Jaison McKinney

Offering Counters

Emma Riggi & Irv Lindsey



Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 11, 2018. Be sure to change your clocks. We spring forward!

Dates to Remember for the Season of Lent and Easter

Wednesdays

Lenten Lunches, 12:00 pm

Wednesday, March 7

We host Lenten Lunch, 12:00 pm

Sunday, March 25

Palm Sunday

Thursday, March 29

Maundy Thursday

Worship & Communion, 7:00 pm

Friday, March 30

Community Good Friday Worship
Abundant Grace Church, 7:00 pm

Sunday, April 1

Early Easter Worship, 8:30 am
Easter Breakfast & Egg Hunt, 9:30 am
Easter Day Worship, 11:00 am

Easter Egg Hunt

Our Children's Easter Egg Hunt will be held during the Easter Breakfast on Easter Day this year. Please remember a basket or other container to collect your eggs. For more information, please see Jen Borbonus or Kim McKinney

Due to conflicting schedules, the Egg-stravaganza has been cancelled.

Maundy Thursday

On Thursday, March 29th at 7:00 p.m. we will gather for a Maundy Thursday Worship Service and the Lord's Supper will be celebrated.

Souper Bowl Update

We received our Souper Bowl of Caring Offering Sunday, February 4th during morning worship. The total received this year is \$828.00. One hundred percent of these gifts have been sent to ICCAP for the Indiana County Food Bank. Thank you to all those who supported the Souper Bowl Offering.

We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Maundy Thursday, March 29 at 7:00 p.m. during worship. Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.

2018 Per Capita Update

Per Capita, literally “per head”, is the amount requested from each member to cover the administrative expenses of the General Assembly, Synod and Presbytery. For 2018, that amount is \$31.30 per member on the active roll. That breaks down to: General Assembly—\$7.73, Synod—\$2.30, and Presbytery—\$21.27. The Session has taken action to withhold all per capita to General Assembly with the exception of contributions given with specific designation to it. Per Capita sent to support Synod and Presbytery is NOT used to support the General Assembly. For this reason, the session sees that those funds are paid unless you request that your share not be. If you have questions or need a copy of the 2018 per capita letter, please contact the church office or see Pastor Monroe. We want to honor your intentions for your gifts to the work of the church.

WyoTech Luncheon

A WyoTech Luncheon is planned for Tuesday, March 20th at 11:00 a.m. The luncheons are an outreach ministry of the Mission Committee and friends. If you would like to help with the luncheon, please see Pastor Monroe or Joan Moran.

OGHS Offering

We will receive the One Great Hour of Sharing offering Sunday, March 25th during the worship hour. These gifts will aid with food for the hungry, aid and shelter for those overcoming catastrophe and conflict and to resource communities working to end poverty and oppression. To help with remembering this offering during Lent, fish banks and giving calendars are available at the back of the sanctuary. The calendar can be used as a tool to help provide information as well as opportunities to add to your bank. A copy of the OGHS calendar is included in this newsletter.

It’s Right Around the Corner...

Vacation Bible School is only a few months away. The fun is scheduled for the week of June 11-15. If you love to have fun, work with kids & learn new and exciting things, we want you! Volunteers are needed in many areas. All those interested in helping this year are asked to contact Kim McKinney. No experience is necessary! For more information, contact the church office. Those working with children are required to have their clearances.

Community Lenten Mid-week Services

The Blairsville Area Ministerium offer community Lenten services each Wednesday through Lent followed by a light lunch. The schedule is as follows:

March 7	United Presbyterian Church.....	Rev. Rusty McClurg
March 14	First United Methodist Church	Rev. Steve Bugay
March 21	Hopewell Methodist Church	Rev. Harold Hicks
March 28	SS Simon & Jude Church	Rev. Tim Monroe
Good Friday, March 30—7:00 p.m.....	Abundant Grace Church.....	Rev. Cory Braatz


Presbyterian Women

The Presbyterian Women Mission Trip to Church World Service in New Windsor, MD is scheduled for August 21, 22 & 23. For more information contact Doreen Stiffler at 724-525-1359.

Church Camp Opportunities

If you enjoy camping, this information is for you. Pine Springs Camp is nearby, located in Boswell, PA. It has been providing vital encounters with Jesus Christ since 1948. Camps are available as follows:

- Grandmas, Moms and Tots (ages 3-7)
- Discovery (completed grades K-2)
- Exploration (completed grades 3-5)
- Journey (completed grades 6-8)
- Expedition (completed grades 9-12)

Camps are available beginning June 10 through August 8. For more information on cost and dates of age specific camps, contact the church office or checkout  www.pinesprings.org.

Mission Moment—*March 2018 Update from Rwanda*

Dear friends and family,

Lenten greetings from Rwanda. Reflecting on this period of self-evaluation and service, I want to share an experience with you of broadening vistas of ministry.

The truth is, sometimes ministry opportunities come to meet you. That is what happened to me with an international students' Bible study. This is a group of international students who all study at the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS). Rodrique, a Burundian student who organized the study, came to me after Christmas to ask if I could meet with his group for an hour each week for five weeks and answer their questions about how the Old Testament relates to the New Testament. Since that is a favorite topic of mine, I eagerly said yes. The fact that they meet on Mondays from 10 - 11 p.m. was not a deterrent, even though I usually work on a different time table, being in bed by 10:30 to be up before 6 to start my day. The international students are all taking evening classes, so beginning at 10 p.m. is reasonable to them, since they don't finish class until 9 p.m. I agreed. It seemed like a good opportunity.

It turned out to be a great opportunity. All the students are in the peacebuilding program, so they do not come with a theological frame of reference, as many of my students do. They are from four countries in the Central African region and a group from Japan. Most who attend are Christians, eager to strengthen their faith, but a few are non-Christians, curious, since they are studying at a Protestant institution and eager for time with other internationals. The mix was refreshing. I had had many of them in large English classes but I did not really know them individually. Their questions were insightful and challenging. The sessions were energizing. More than that, they were relationship building. This was an opening to minister to folks outside my usual circle of teaching. I was blessed by their openness and eagerness. Many of the discussions were deep and penetrated to the heart of the gospel. This has also opened other possibilities to work with these students, to bring them closer to the larger Christian community in PIASS. This past Sunday, several of them attended the English worship service at the chapel that I serve. They have asked for other Bible study topics as well.

Your support of me here in Rwanda is also reaching folks from Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Tanzania, South Sudan and even Japan. Thanks you. Together we are working on a broader international scale than you might have imagined. I could not be here without your prayers and your financial contributions. I ask that you continue to partner with me in these ways, so that we together continue to minister to the people God places in our paths. I pray God brings new opportunities of you to serve where you are. He may be bringing the world to your doorstep, too, for you to share Christ's love. It is a joy to be surprised by God's open doors.

Blessings,
Kay Day

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.