



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

DECEMBER 2018

I was blessed with a wonderful childhood, ideal in every way. Every room of the house brings back memories that warm my heart. As with most homes, after Thanksgiving the halls were bedecked with holiday decorations. Candles filled each window with light, Christmas cards lined the banisters, a nativity set was the focal point of the living room, stockings hung on the fireplace mantle, elves on the shelves kept vigilant guard, and a brightly lit tree adorned the family room. Christmas morning meant rising early, but before we were allowed to see our gifts, we had to wait until the camera was set up and all the packages were in their proper place. To this day, I can see my sister and me sitting on the top step anticipating what had been placed under the tree for us. Would it be exactly as the advertisements showed it? Would it be put together and ready to play with? Would everything on my list be there? Would my pile be bigger than my sister's? Would there be more toys than underwear and socks? While the wait time was about ten minutes, it seemed like ten hours. And then we heard the long awaited invitation, "Okay, you two can come down now." Each year is documented on film. If you like I can loan them to you for your family enjoyment (or not).

This season of Advent is a time of waiting with eager anticipation for the fulfillment of our heart's longing. Thousands of years ago, God promised his people that he would come to them in a special way. Through the prophets he spoke of the hope of a coming peace and joy. He foretold of an abiding love, a light in the midst of our darkness that would dispel our fear, and sadness, and tears. The people of old didn't know exactly how God would come, but in faith they knew that he would come. And so, for years, for centuries they watched and waited and wondered when.


Our celebration of Christmas is a witness to God's faithfulness. He promised he would come, and he did. And so earth shaking, so earth transforming was his arrival that the birth of Jesus changed how we mark time itself, BC and AD. In his coming, God understands us all the more—our questions, challenges, dreads, helplessness. Jesus understands our wrestling with sin and its consequences. Even though he did not succumb to the power of sin, he knew the reality of temptation. We call Jesus, Emmanuel, which means "God with us" and in every sense of that name God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit know our daily reality. God came to us, not because he had to. God without us is still every bit God. Rather God came to us because he wanted to, because he loves us and wants us to know and love him. So, God made a promise and he kept it, end of story—or not!

We know Jesus came, died, rose and ascended to heaven where he is enthroned on the right hand of the Father. But we also are given the promise, the assurance that Jesus will come again. As he came in lowliness and humility, he came to show us God's love and mercy and grace. He came to set us free from our sin and to knock down the dividing wall between God and humanity. When he comes again, he will come to judge the nations. As the God of love, God is also the King of Justice and the Lord of Righteousness. As the creator of all that is, he had the right, the responsibility to have the final word over creation. When he comes again, he will come in power and glory. Jesus will descend from the clouds, and unlike his arrival in Bethlehem, all the world will know that he has returned.

That is good news to the faithful, and we will welcome him because he is our Lord. But for those who do not acknowledge his lordship his return is not as welcomed. The question we consider in this Advent Season is—Where will we be found when he comes? Is there anything about our lives that will be condemned in the judgment? Are any of our relationships void of his love and mercy? Is there anything we would seek to hide in the hope he would not notice? Is there any part of us that we have not surrendered to him and his service?

Just as the coming of Jesus has made our hearts glad and filled our souls with hope and peace and joy and love—so too the assurance of his return is good news. Watch for him with an expectant spirit. Wait for him with an anticipation for the justice he brings. Live each day to his glory, prepared to be found as a bride adorned for her beloved. Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus. Come and make your kingdom complete....

In Christ's love,



Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, December 2

Jeremiah 33:14-16
Luke 21:35-36

Sunday, December 9

Luke 3:1-6
Philippians 1:3-11

Sunday, December 16

Zephaniah 3:14-20
Philippians 4:4-7

Sunday, December 23

Micah 5:2-5A
Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

Christmas Eve

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

Sunday, December 30

I Samuel 2:18-20, 26
Luke 2:41-52

Sunday, January 6

Isaiah 60:1-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Christmas Schedule

- Dec. 1** Cookie Baking in the kitchen
- Dec. 3** Poinsettia Orders Due
- Dec. 9** Advent Celebration—Luncheon & Activities following worship
- Dec. 15** Holiday Cookie Sale 8:00-10:00 am
- Dec. 22** Cantata Rehearsal 10:00 am
- Dec. 23** Christmas Cantata 11:00 am
- Dec. 24** Candlelight & Communion Worship 7:00 pm & 11:00 pm
- Dec. 25** Merry Christmas! Office Closed

Worship Assistants

December 2—1st Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone
Flowers: Pat & Janeen Swope
Readers: The Moran Family
Ushers: Gene & Chery Artman
Nikki Reeves, Pat Swope
Projector: Shakira McKinney
Audio: Jaison McKinney

December 9—2nd Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Lon Ferguson
Flowers: The Reeves Family
Readers: The Eckenroad Family
Ushers: Rick & Willa Shoemaker
John & Mary Hileman
Projector: Alex Kirkland
Audio: Andrew Baker

December 16—3rd Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Bonni Dunlap
Flowers: Christmas Poinsettias
Readers: The Baker Family
Ushers: The Moran Family
Projector: Kayla Moran
Audio: Olivia Eckenroad

December 23—4th Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Jean Heberling
Flowers: Christmas Poinsettias
Readers: The Terry Brown Family
Ushers: The Tonkin Family
Projector: Blake Tonkin
Audio: Elizabeth Bruner

Christmas Eve—7:00 PM

Liturgist: Rick Shoemaker
Readers: The Borbonus Family

Christmas Eve—11:00 PM

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe
Readers: The Bruner Family

December 30

Special Music: Blairsville Brass Group

Offering Counters

Irving & Beverly Lindsey



Advent Devotionals

Our devotional this Advent season is entitled, "God with Us" by David Boyd. We often say to one another "God be with you!" But we often fail to contemplate the miracle and meaning behind the message of "God with us" in the person of Jesus Christ. Theologians call this the incarnation. We simply call it Christmas—the day God came down to be with us, embodied in the human flesh of a baby born in Bethlehem. There is something very real and personal about God coming down to be with us in this way. His dwelling among us is something that shapes us, comforts us, nurtures us and directs us. In this time of preparation, explore the deep impact this embodiment of God has on our very hearts and souls and life of faith. The Season of Advent begins Sunday, December 2nd.

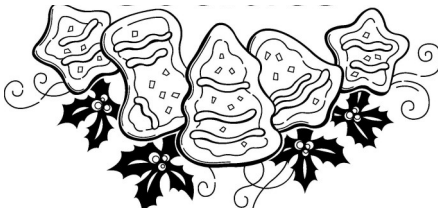


This year's cantata is entitled, "Darkness into Light" by Mary McDonald. *The cantata will be presented in worship Sunday, December 23rd at 11:00 a.m.* A final rehearsal will be held Saturday, December 22nd at 10:00 a.m. Anyone wishing to participate is welcome. Regular choir practice will continue to be held Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. followed by cantata rehearsal at 8:00 p.m. If you would like more information, please see Cindy Borbonus.

January Newsletter

Articles to be published in the January edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, December 16th.

We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion at our Christmas Eve Candlelight Services at 7:00 and 11:00 p.m. Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.

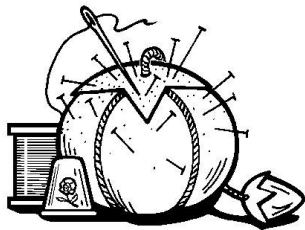


Holiday Cookie Sale (Cookie Walk)

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 15th, 8:00 – 10:00 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 14th from 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Also, volunteers are needed to help with the sale on December 15th. If you have any questions or would like to help contact Erica Ash, Joan Moran, Elaine Jellison 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 15th. 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/dozen 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

Food Bank

The Blairsville Area Food Bank is held the second Tuesday of each month in our Fellowship Hall. Food bags are distributed to folks from our community between the hours of 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. When residents sign up for the first time, proof of address in the Blairsville Borough is needed. The Blairsville Food Bank is sponsored by ICCAP.

Congratulations!

Dick Gibson was recently recognized, at a dinner in his honor, as Man of the Year by the Union Mission for his work and guidance as a member of the board. The Union Mission is located in Latrobe and is one of the only shelters who serve men in Western PA. Dick has been instrumental in the ongoing growth and success of the mission. Congratulations, Dick!

Christmas Concert

The Blairsville Monday Music Club's annual Community Christmas Concert will be held on Monday, December 10, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at SS Simon & Jude Catholic Church. There will be many from the community participating. We hope you will join us.

We Honor Our Veterans

Wreaths for Indiana County Veterans Project will take place Saturday, December 8th at 12:00 noon at the county cemeteries. Wreaths will be placed commemorating and giving thanks for our deceased veterans. Many churches across the county will ring their bells for one minute as the wreaths are placed.

Thank You!

Once again this year, students at Blairsville Elementary, Middle and Senior



High Schools collected food items to be distributed throughout the community. We thank them for their generosity and responsible citizenship.

End of the Year Reports

Committee chairs are asked to begin thinking about end of the year reports for the Annual Ecclesiastical/Corporate Meeting. Reports are due to the church office by Sunday, January 14th.

Financial Statements

End of the year financial statements will be mailed early to mid-January. If you would like your statement earlier, contact the church office at 724-459-7991.

2019 Offering Envelopes

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

CPR Training

CPR training is being coordinated by the Deacons. If you are interested in attending a CPR training event, please call the church office at 724-459-7991 or see Susie Cotti. The date for training has been set for Saturday, January 19th. A time will be determined closer to the date.

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.

Bible Study

Bible study is held Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. We have been looking at Acts 19-20 and Ephesians 1. The study is led by Pastor Monroe. All are welcome.

Opportunities for the New Year

- ◆ The Worship Committee is looking for volunteers to be liturgists during morning worship. If you are interested in more information or to volunteer, please contact Elaine Jellison.
- ◆ The deacons are looking for volunteers to usher Sunday mornings during worship for the New Year. A sign-up sheet is located on the table at the back of the sanctuary. If you would like to volunteer, please sign –up for your choice of dates or contact the church office.
- ◆ The 2019 Flower Chart is located on the bulletin board in the hallway by the church office. You may sign-up for your choice of dates. Flowers will be delivered to the church for worship by Gary’s Floral. After worship, you may take your flowers home or they can be delivered to one of our home bound members. Dedications to be printed in the bulletin can be submitted to the church office or noted on the sign-up chart. Flower arrangements are \$20 each and checks can be made payable to the “Board of Deacons.”

Thank You!

Our Deacons prepared 35 Thanksgiving Baskets to share with local families. Many were picked up and used on Thanksgiving Day. Those that weren’t picked up will be given to other families at Christmas time.

Thanks for All the Help

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 speaker 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!



Bell Choir

Our Bell Choir rehearses Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. in the Bell Room. We are looking for two ringers. No experience is necessary just a willingness to learn. If you are interested in more information about the bell choir, please see Vicky Westley. You are also welcome to come to rehearsal to see what happens there.

29th Oldies Attic Turkeython

Last month, WCCS-AM 1160 radio conducted its 29th Oldies Attic Turkeython. This year, our Deacon’s Pantry was chosen to receive from the generosity of all the listeners who participated. We were given \$275 in gift cards from the Blairsville Walmart, and \$200 in gift cards from the Indiana Walmart. We are grateful to be entrusted with these gifts and will see that they are well used to meet needs in our community.

Congratulations

Heather Hartmann graduates from the honors college at Slippery Rock University on December 15, 2018 with a bachelors of science degree. Her major is Middle Level Mathematics and minor is Elementary Math and Instructional Strategies for Students with Disabilities. Congratulations, Heather!

Confirmation Class

We have a nice number of young people to form a Confirmation Class to explore what it means to be a part of the church. Our goal is to begin in March. Letters will be sent out in January explaining the classes.

Coats for Kids Drive Update

Thank you to all those who donated toward this year's Coats for Kids coat drive. We were able to purchase and give out 36 coats to kids in our community. Also, we were able to help two adult women in the Family Promise Program who needed winter coats. Money was available from another church benevolence fund to purchase them. A big thank you to the grannies and stitching group for all their donated hats and scarves that we were able to provide along with the coats.

Cards for the Holidays

A card is a nice way to brighten someone's day at this time of year. Remember our homebound members and friends or those you haven't seen in a while when you're sending your holiday greetings. You can check with the church office if you need a mailing address.

New Pastor

The Plumville and Atwood congregations will welcome a new pastor, Racquel Tomacruz. She will be ordained and installed on January 6, 2019.



Poinsettias

Thank you to the Board of Deacons for once again giving the congregation opportunity to order poinsettias for Christmas.

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 at 724-459-7991.

Property & Maintenance News

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.

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.

