



The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

MARCH 2019

Many of you remember Father Chet of Sts. Simon and Jude. He enjoyed life and lived large. While there were some theological points on which we could not see eye to eye, the one thing we agreed on was the joy of a delicious meal. Father Chet was a wonderful host for the monthly gatherings of Blairsville clergy. On the second Friday we would gather in the church conference room and around the encircled tables were twelve jars of snacks: potato chips (his personal favorite), pretzels, peanuts, mixed nuts, cookies, sesame sticks, crackers, various candies, and dried fruits. It was always a delight, because he kept goodies we don't keep in the manse. It was always a feast, until Lent began—and then all the jars went into the closet until after Easter Day. I asked him one day if he didn't feel a bit hypocritical feasting until Shrove Tuesday and then fasting the next forty five days or so. He replied, "I may have some gluttonous inclinations, but I'm not a heathen."

Through the ages fasting has been a spiritual discipline maintained by every decent God fearing Christian. Perhaps you've been asked, "And what are you giving up for Lent this year?" Usually what we commit to give up says something about what holds us down. The Lenten Season is a time of prayer as we seek to discern God's will for our lives and a time of preparation as we seek to welcome the risen Lord. Through fasting our bodies are cleansed from impurities. After a few days, our minds are freed to move away from the physical needs of our body so we can focus on our spiritual being. Fasting teaches us the discipline of trusting God to sustain us. And it helps us treasure heavenly qualities more than earthly things. The fruit of faithful fasting is as varied as we are and through it we are nourished in both body and soul.

But fasting is not limited to that from which we abstain. When you get down to it, you can give something up for a period of time as long as you know that on such and such a date, you can resume indulging in your former passions. While it is noble to fast from certain things that keep you from faithfulness, it is better to engage in new activities that draw you closer to God, things that become a new way of life and discipleship.

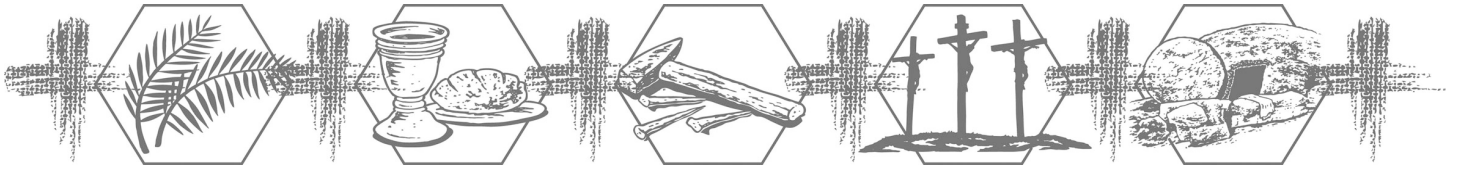
Isaiah 58 speaks of God's intention for true fasting. Its not so much giving up the bad as its taking on the good. Its not so much repenting of what causes God to weep as it is taking on what brings God joy and delight. Its feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, covering the naked, helping those who need a hand. Its defending those who are falsely accused, protecting those who are abused, listening to those who are misunderstood, picking up those who have been trampled down. In essence, true fasting is letting go of the anchors that are holding you down so that you are free to use your energy in making a positive difference for the sake of Christ.

Pope Francis has made this challenge to his flock, words we too would do well to heed. Fast: from hurting words and say kind words...from sadness and be filled with gratitude...from anger and be filled with patience...from pessimism and be filled with hope...from worries and have trust in God...from complaints and contemplate simplicity...from pressures and be prayerful...from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy...from selfishness and be compassionate to others...from grudges and be reconciled...from words and be silent so you can listen.

That's all fine and good if you're the Pope, but few can take on that definition of a fasting. This Lenten Season, choose one or two, or if you're feeling really righteous—three of these suggestions and let them be your goal. Anyone can give up sweets for a few weeks, but it takes a pure heart to make God smile. May you have a fruitful and faithful Lent.....

In Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Jim".



Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, March 3

Exodus 34:29-35

Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

Ash Wednesday, March 6

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

II Corinthians 5:20-6:10

Sunday, March 10

Romans 10:8-13

Luke 4:1-13

Sunday, March 17

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Saturday, March 24

Isaiah 55:1-9

I Corinthians 10:1-13

Sunday, March 31

II Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Sunday, April 7

Philippians 3:4-14

John 12:1-8

Confirmation Classes

Beginning in mid-March we will hold Confirmation Classes for young people interested in learning more about their faith and considering membership in the church. Classes will be Sundays from 12:00-2:30 p.m. A light lunch will be served. Classes will be held about 8–10 weeks including the following: March 17, 24, 31, April 7, 14, 28, May 5, 19, and June 2. If you would like more information, please see Pastor Monroe or Bobbi.

Worship Assistants

March 3

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone

Flowers: Alice Santoro

Ushers: The Bruner Family

Projector: Alex Kirkland

Audio: Andrew Baker

March 6—Ash Wednesday

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe

Ushers: Bill & Deb Lint, Pat Swope

March 10

Liturgist: Connie Bruner

Flowers: Annabel Machak

Projector: Kayla Moran

Audio: Olivia Eckenroad

March 17

Liturgist: Barb Brown

Flowers: Rick & Willa Shoemaker

Flowers: Soni Clapper

Ushers: Terry & Barb Brown

Projector: Blake Tonkin

Audio: Elizabeth Bruner

March 24

Projector: Shakira McKinney

Audio: Jaison McKinney

March 31—Communion

Projector: Alex Kirkland

Audio: Andrew Baker

Offering Counters

Pat & Janeen Swope

April Newsletter

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



Red Cross Blood Drive

Friday, March 15, 2019

1:30—6:00 p.m.

Fellowship Hall

Dates to Remember for the Season of Lent and Easter

Wednesdays

Lenten Lunches, 12:00 pm

Ash Wednesday, March 6

Worship & Communion, 7:00 pm

Wednesday, March 27

We host Lenten Lunch, 12:00 pm

Sunday, April 14

Palm Sunday

Maundy Thursday, April 18

Seder

Good Friday, April 19

Community Worship

Second Baptist Church, 7:00 pm

Sunday, April 21

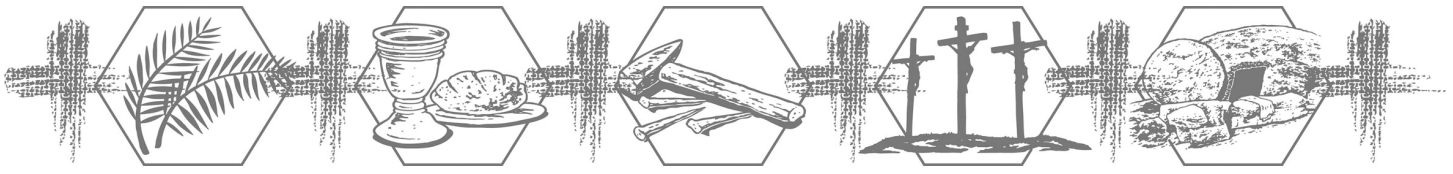
Early Easter Worship, 8:30 am

Easter Breakfast, 9:30 am

Easter Day Worship, 11:00 am

A Community Devotional

This year, we have taken the lectionary Gospel reading for each day of Lent and asked folks from the community to prepare a devotional message that relates to that portion of scripture. Each devotion lists the assigned scripture lesson, a devotional message of about 400 words, and a one or two sentence prayer. The submissions were compiled into booklet form, duplicated, and distributed to area churches for use during the Lenten Season (which begins on Ash Wednesday, March 6). Congregations taking part in the devotional are—United Methodist congregations, C&MA, Hebron Lutheran, St. Peter's Episcopal, Sts. Simon & Jude and our church. What a wonderful way for the Christians of Blairsville to share Christ as one. Booklets are available at the back of the sanctuary. Please take one per family.



Community Lenten Lunch Schedule

On Wednesdays at 12:00 noon throughout Lent community churches will host worship followed by a light lunch.

- March 6** Black Lick United Methodist Church, Rev. Jim Kendall
- March 13** Christian & Missionary Alliance Church, Rev. Brett Dinger
- March 20** First United Methodist Church, Blsv., Rev. Tim Monroe
- March 27** United Presbyterian Church, Father Steve Bugay
- April 3** Hopewell United Methodist Church, Rev. Joe Baird
- April 10** Hebron Lutheran Church, Hebron Representative
- April 17** Sts. Simon & Jude Church, Rev. Cory Braatz
- April 19, Good Friday-7:00 p.m.** Second Baptist Church, Rev. John Buchmann

Donations for Torrance Hospital

The Volunteer office at Torrance Hospital is looking for donations to benefit all of the patients. Donations of the following are being accepted through our deacons (gently worn and new especially large sizes):

- shoes & boots (men and women)
- socks—white & colored (men and women)
- underwear (men and women)
- bras-various sizes (no underwire)
- clothes (men and women)
- buttons—size of a nickel or dime (for repairs)

Donations can be placed in the container at the back of the sanctuary. Please know that your donations are very much appreciated. For more information, please see Susie Cotti or call the church office.

ALICE Training

Do you know what to do with the threat of an active shooter? Would you like to learn? The ALICE or Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evaluate Training Program is a pioneer in active shooter preparation. A free public overview of the ALICE Training Program will be held Thursday, March 14th from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the New Florence Presbyterian Church. The training is sponsored by the New Florence Community Library.



Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 10, 2019. Be sure to change your clocks. We spring forward!



Seder Meal

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

Maundy Thursday, April 18
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.

Maundy Thursday Seder Meal

Name _____

Number attending _____

_____ I would like to help set-up Wednesday, April 17 at 6:00 p.m.

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

Mission Moment-Ash Wednesday

“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. . . . Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, . . . if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in. — Isaiah 58:3–12

Singular and plural. The “you” in this passage is singular and plural. In the original Hebrew it is plural, and the “you” that God is exhorting is the whole people of God. As a people they have been ignoring the hungry and needy, they have been tolerating injustice, they have been oppressing workers.

But there’s no “you” plural without a “you” singular, and in God’s calling out to the people we hear why the two go together: *“If you remove. . . the pointing of the finger. . .”* That’s the trick for us in a plural “you.” We point at others either because others are the ones who are taking care of the needy — so we can say, “Hey, we’re doing what you said” — or because we hold others responsible and point to them as the ones who are at fault. God’s words to the people here through Isaiah are words of tremendous substance, and the actions God calls for are clearly not optional if what one really desires is to live with God. It’s precisely because the “you” is plural — that God has called us as individuals *together* — that our capacity for living together in love and justice *is* the capacity for living with God.

I wonder sometimes when I read these passages if God is really asking if we are willing to live with one another and with God in anything that resembles God’s grace. Why wouldn’t we be? Consider the images above, of light, healing, God leading us and God’s glory walking behind us. God will answer our calls and say, “Here I am”; our needs will be satisfied in parched places. Our neediness, too, is expressed in the singular and plural: “our” needs as God’s people, “our” needs as individuals beloved by God within God’s beloved community.

Rev. Dr. Michelle J. Bartel

**Time you enjoy wasting
is never wasted time!**