

ADVENT UPLIFT Newsletter



The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

DECEMBER 2019

Once again we find ourselves in the midst of seasonal change. The variety of weather and temperature is one of the many things I enjoy about living here. The cold of Winter helps me appreciate the heat of Summer. The barrenness of Autumn makes me look forward to the new life of Spring. There is a beauty in the rhythm of nature, an ebb and flow of the anticipation of what comes next. There is a sense of order in the cycle of life.

While the world lives out the patterns of worldly change, as a people of faith we enjoy the drama of the spiritual story of God's hand in the lives of his children. Through the centuries, the faithful have moved to the rhythm of the church seasons. The new church year began on December 1 with the First Sunday of Advent. The word "Advent" comes from the Latin "adventus," meaning "coming." It's a time when the Christian church has looked back to the prophets of old, to their telling assurance that God would come to his people to save them. Their message offers a word of hope, a promise of peace, a celebration of joy and an expression of God's love for his children. Together we remember how God sent his law, but we disregarded it. So, God sent prophets, but we turned a deaf ear. So God chose to come in the flesh to dwell with us. During this season we look back and remember God's faithfulness.

But so too, this is a season of looking ahead in eager anticipation that just as Jesus came, lived with us, died for us, rose in victory and ascended in glory—he will one day return and take us unto himself in the fullness of the Kingdom. The Second Coming is referred to as the "Parousia" which is the Greek word for "coming." The promise of Jesus' return gives us hope and peace and joy and the beauty of God's unending love.

Each Sunday of Advent we take time to light the candles that chase away the darkness and illuminate our vision of the Lord. The brightness of the flames crescendo as the center white Christ candle is lit on Christmas Eve and the darkness is pierced and scattered and we are set free to welcome our newborn King. Its no wonder the candle held in our hands and the sound of Silent Night on our lips and in our ears touch our hearts. It is a moment when we are together in knowing that everything will be alright. Yet we are forgetful creatures and the assurances of hope, peace, joy and love leave our minds and we once again find ourselves back in the shadows.

But each year we are called back to the light. Each year we cry out "O Come, O Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel." It is sung and prayed in a mournful tone, for the cry to be saved comes from a fearful heart. Ancient Israel sang in expectation of Messiah's first coming. We, the Church, sing in anticipation of Christ's return.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.*

*O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.*

*O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things, far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go.*

*O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.*

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

In this season and in all seasons may you know you are set free and kept secure in the hands of your Redeemer....

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 1

Isaiah 2:1-5
Matthew 24:36-44

Sunday, December 8

Isaiah 11:1-10
Romans 15:4-13

Sunday, December 15

Isaiah 35:1-10
James 5:7-10

Sunday, December 22

Isaiah 7:10-16
Matthew 1:18-25

Christmas Eve

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

Sunday, December 29

Isaiah 63:7-9
Matthew 2:13-23

Sunday, January 5

John 1:(1-9) 10-18
Ephesians 1:3-14



Christmas Schedule

- Dec. 2** Poinsettia Orders Due
- Dec. 14** Holiday Cookie Sale
8:00-10:00 am
- Dec. 21** Cantata Rehearsal
10:00 am
- Dec. 22** 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 1—1st Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe
Acolyte: David Kerin
Flowers: Pat & Janeen Swope
Readers: The Faulk Family
Ushers: Todd & Stacy Faulk
Linda George, Kim McKinney

Projector: Shakira McKinney

Audio: Jaison McKinney

December 8—2nd Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone
Acolyte: Brennan Borbonus
Flowers: Alice Doak
Readers: The Terry Brown Family
Ushers: Rick & Willa Shoemaker
Elaine Jellison, Alan Lowman

Projector: Alex Kirkland

Audio: Andrew Baker

December 15—3rd Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Deb Lint
Acolyte: Brady Doak
Flowers: Christmas Poinsettias
Readers: The Artman Family
Projector: Kayla Moran
Audio: Olivia Eckenroad

December 22—4th Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Jean Heberling
Acolyte: John Kerin
Flowers: Christmas Poinsettias
Readers: The Clayton Family
Projector: John Clark Bruner
Audio: Elizabeth Bruner

Christmas Eve—7:00 PM

Liturgist: Jen Borbonus
Readers: The Borbonus Family

Christmas Eve—11:00 PM

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe
Readers: The Bruner Family

December 29

Liturgist: Dennis Gould
Flowers: Mary Anzelone

Offering Counters

Bob & Charlotte Cosharek

Advent Devotionals

A variety of Advent Devotionals are available to you at the back of the sanctuary. These guides are meant to help you as you move through the season to the coming of the Christ Child. The Season of Advent begins Sunday, December 1st.



This year's CHRISTMAS CANTATA is entitled, "Everlasting Light—The Promise of Christmas" by Lloyd Larson, Mary McDonald, Jay Rouse and Larry Shackley. The cantata will be presented in worship Sunday, December 22nd at 11:00 a.m. Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings following Chancel Choir from 8:00-8:30 p.m. A final rehearsal will be held Saturday, December 21st at 10:00 a.m. Anyone wishing to participate is welcome. If you would like more information, please see Cindy Borbonus.

Christmas Concert

The Blairsville Monday Music Club's annual Community Christmas Concert will be held on Monday, December 9th at 7:00 p.m. at the C&MA Church. There will be many from the community participating. We hope you will join us.

January Newsletter

Articles to be published in the January edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, December 15th.

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 14th, 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 13th from 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Also, volunteers are needed to help with the sale on December 14th. If you have any questions or would like to help contact Joan Moran, Bonni Dunlap 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 14th. 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 our handmade items. A display is setup in the parlor. Your generosity will help to support the sewing projects within our church and the community. Contact: Janeen Swope (724) 739-0130.

2020 Communion Dates

January 12 – Baptism of Our Lord Communion

*February 26 – Ash Wednesday

March 8 – Lenten Communion

*April 9 – Maundy Thursday

May 31 – Pentecost Communion

July 19 - Communion

September 13 - Communion

October 4 - Worldwide Communion

November 22 - Christ the King Communion

*December 24 - Christmas Eve Communion

(*evening services)

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.

Congregational Meeting

The 2019 year in review Congregational Meeting will be held Sunday, January 26, 2020. Following worship we will share lunch together and then begin the meeting.

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 19th.

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.

2020 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.

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.

Our Leadership

We thank Bonni Dunlap and Elaine Jellison, elders and Jen Borbonus, Ken Doak, Tom Holby, Beverly Lindsey and Bobbi Monroe, deacons for their leadership and service. Those elected to leadership positions at our September meeting include: Gene Artman, Lisa Hainaut, Bruce Highberger, Jeff Lewis and Rick Shoemaker, elders; Elizabeth Bruner, Vicky Doty, Jamie McKinney and Vicky Westley, deacons. Officer training for oncoming elders and deacons is scheduled for Sunday, December 15th immediately following worship. Please bring a bag lunch and plan to stay for a time of conversation. The service of Ordination and Installation is scheduled for Sunday, January 5, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.

VOLUNTEERS are needed to run the sound and projector at the 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service. If you are interested or available to help out, please contact the church office.

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

All gifts received are sent to be used:
50% for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges
50% to assist current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs

2020 Flower Chart

The 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 we ask that you pick up by the following Tuesday. Those remaining after Tuesday will 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."

Food Ministry to the Community

We have been blessed to provide a ministry of food to the community and we are fortunate to do so in partnership with others. Each November, students from the Blairsville School District gather food that is distributed at Thanksgiving and throughout the year. For the past two years we have received resources from the Indiana Turkeython (United Way and WCCS 1160 Radio). This year they gave \$500 to help folks in Blairsville, \$300 from Blairsville Walmart and \$200 from Ideal Market in Homer City. Our brothers and sisters from the Greater Methodist Parish gave \$500 to help with the 32 baskets given out by the Deacons. We also have some families who donate food during the year. We are grateful for the way our community works together to make a positive difference. Thank you for your partnership.

Bible Study

This year our Wednesday Morning Bible Study examined Paul's letter to the Ephesians and the Book of Daniel. Beginning in January, we will explore the Acts of the Apostles as we study Luke's witness to the way the Holy Spirit was and is active in the Church.

Bell Choir

Our Handbell Choir rehearses Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. in the Bell Room. We are looking for two ringers to complete our choir. No experience is necessary just a willingness to learn. If you are interested in more information about the bell choir, please see Vicky Westley or contact her at 724-289-7313. You are also welcome to come to rehearsal to experience the fun.

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.

Thanks for All the Help

Thank you to all who helped make our Church Family 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!

Update from Kay Day

Greetings to all,

Thanksgiving is over and many of you are beginning the rush for Christmas. Life in Rwanda is very different from that in the States at this time of year. First, the country does not celebrate Thanksgiving, but that didn't prevent me from doing so. The menu was a bit different (no turkey or cranberries or pumpkin pie) but the spirit was the same. Since there are no Americans with whom I am close here in Huye, I did the next best thing and invited folks I thought could appreciate the tradition. There are two visiting German professors teaching at the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS) at present. Both have traveled and studied in the States, so I invited them. Then, two of our masters' students and former students of mine are studying and are away from their families, so I invited them. Because one of the Germans was traveling on Thursday, we eat our meal on Wednesday evening. None of these differences prevented us from having a great feast and enjoying a time of sharing our blessings and thanking God for them. It was a great time.

There is no Black Friday here, either. In fact, shopping and gift giving is not emphasized at all. Most people will shop a day or so before Christmas for special food and new clothes for Christmas Day – no elaborate gift giving. The shops are not decorated with Santa or trees and there is no “White Christmas” or “Jingle Bells” in the background. No one decorates their houses with lights or trees. It is business as usual until December 24. Then it will be impossible to get a bus ticket because everyone will be traveling home for worship and food together. For me, business as usual is teaching. I will begin an intense weekend course with the new English course. This means teaching our Education students Friday evening from 6-9 and Saturday all day, 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., with an hour for lunch and an hour for dinner. There will be 50 students packed into the multimedia center, designed for 30 students, for an interactive, multimedia teaching. I have just finished this course with the Theology and Peace students, and they enjoyed the format. We'll see about the education folks.

My pastoral duties are much the same as any pastor in the States – Advent focus, encouraging folks to keep their eyes on Jesus' coming rather than the activities around them. While Advent is not widely observed throughout Rwanda, we in the English chapel celebrate it. The chapel is really a “lab school” for my students, since I teach preaching and worship leadership. Interestingly, I have gotten text messages from several of my former students who are now serving churches, asking for the liturgy for Advent. That is an encouragement to my heart.

However you are occupied in this time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I pray that you are drawn closer to Christ, the one who gives us light and life and joy this season and always. Thank you for partnering with me and making it possible for me to be here. You bless me by your support. Without you, I could not be here. May this Advent open your eyes more fully to the love of Christ.

Merry Christmas,
Kay

2020 Community Lenten Devotional

The ministerium has decided to compile and publish another Community Lenten Devotional in 2020. This time there are several scriptures to choose from each day through Lent. Those who volunteer to submit a devotion will list the scripture lesson, a devotional message of about 400 words, and a one or two sentence prayer. You can sign your name, or remain anonymous. All submissions will be gathered by February 1st and will be compiled into booklet form, duplicated, then distributed to area churches for use during the Lenten Season (which begins Ash Wednesday, February 26). Our congregation has been assigned 6 days. There are 5 texts per day. If you choose to participate, please read through them and choose one for your focus. Volunteers are needed to write devotional thoughts for these days. If you feel led to share with your brothers and sisters in Blairsville, please let Pastor Monroe know of your willingness as soon as possible.

March 16				
Psalm 80	Psalms 77, 79	Gen. 44:18-34	I Cor. 7:25-31	Mark 5:21-43
March 17				
Psalm 78:1-39	Psalm 78:40-72	Gen. 45:1-15	I Cor. 7:32-40	Mark 6:1-13
March 18				
Psalm 119:97-120	Psalms 81-82	Gen. 45:16-28	I Cor. 8:1-13	Mark 6:13-29
March 19				
Psalms 42-43	Psalms 85-86	Gen. 46:1-7, 28-34	I Cor. 9:1-15	Mark 6:30-46
March 20				
Psalm 88	Psalms 91-92	Gen. 47:1-26	I Cor. 9:16-27	Mark 6:47-56
March 21				
Psalms 87, 90	Psalm 136	Gen. 47:27-48:7	I Cor. 10:1-13	Mark 7:1-23



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

Coupons for Our Military

A big thank you to all those who continue to participate in clipping coupons for our military. We are at our 2nd year anniversary of sending coupons overseas to military bases and have reached a total of \$225,846.46! Thank you so much for your commitment to this program. Let's keep going and see the total at our 3rd anniversary!