

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

UPLIFT Newsletter

MARCH 2020

As we began the Lenten Season many of you attended the Ash Wednesday worship service. It is a humble way of approaching God—acknowledging our sin, turning from it in repentance, asking to know once more God’s mercy and seeking restoration in the gift of forgiveness. Lent is about coming to terms with who and how we are and moving toward a deeper understanding of who and how God is. As the ashes were imposed, we united our voices in praying the ancient words of Psalm 51, a hymn that was first spoken by King David yet is a reflection of our spiritual realities. They speak of our sin, transgressions, iniquity and guilt while offering us hope in God’s mercy, cleansing, joy and gladness. Lent is our journey from how we have been to who we can become.

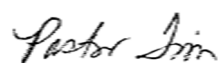
Together we pray, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right Spirit within me” (51:10). “Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit” (51:12). It’s a prayer to be changed, to be transformed, to be made new. It’s a prayer that is focused not only on our inner self, but also on our family situation, our community life, our being the church of Jesus Christ. We know all too well the sense of dying. What we long for is new found life, being recreated in the image of Jesus.

David writes, “You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart” (51:6). Change comes only through acknowledging the truth. That is why Paul calls us to “examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith” (II Corinthians 13:5) and Peter challenges us “to be all the more diligent to confirm our calling” (II Peter 1:10). A healthy relationship with Christ is not a “once and done” experience. Some think that because they can identify the day and time they welcomed Jesus into their heart, that moment is the end all and be all of their salvation. The Christian faith is our ongoing relationship with Jesus, one in which we are being made new every day. The saved soul testified to the church, “I praise God I’m not the man I used to be and I praise him that I’m not yet the man he’ll grow me to be tomorrow.” Morning by morning new mercies we see and new people we become.

One mark of a vital congregation is it engages in “lifelong discipleship formation.” That means they see themselves as a work in progress. While they have a keen understanding of who they are, a deep appreciation of their traditions, that does not define who they are becoming. The vital congregation senses the presence of the Holy Spirit moving them to a deeper understanding of what it means to be God’s people. We celebrate all the goodness that has been while at the same time we anticipate what will be. With eyes of faith we recognize those new things God is doing in our midst and we welcome the ways we will be enhanced and grow in them.

This season of Lent is about the joy of being reformed and refashioned by the hands of the Potter. While we have been used of him in faithful ways, there are even greater adventures to come. Look around and take notice to what has changed in your life and in your world. To some, change is a crisis—but so too change can be seen as an opportunity. As you journey through these days, what new avenues of service and adventure are you being called to travel.....

In Christ’s love,



Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, March 1

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7
Matthew 4:1-11

Sunday, March 8

Genesis 12:1-4a
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

Sunday, March 15

Exodus 17:1-7
John 4:5-42

Sunday, March 22

Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

Sunday, March 29

Romans 8:6-11
John 11:1-45

Sunday, April 5

Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 21:1-11

April Newsletter

Articles to be published in the April edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, 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 1

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone
Ushers: Steve, Joan & Kayla Moran, Gene Artman

Projector: Alex Kirkland
Audio: Andrew Baker

March 8

Liturgist: Lon Ferguson
Ushers: John & Mary Hileman
Steve & Joan Moran

Projector: Kayla Moran
Audio: Olivia Eckenroad

March 15

Liturgist: Barb Brown
Acolyte: Willow Weimer
Ushers: Bonni Dunlap, Irv Lindsey
Terry & Barb Brown

Projector: Shakira McKinney
Audio: Jaison McKinney

March 22

Liturgist: Rick Shoemaker
Acolyte: John Clark Bruner
Flowers: Rick & Willa Shoemaker
Ushers: Matt Borbonus family

Projector: John Clark Bruner
Audio: Elizabeth Bruner

March 29

Liturgist: Lisa Hainaut
Acolyte: John Clark Bruner
Projector: Chase Stuchal
Audio: Austin Baker

Offering Counters

Irving & Beverly Lindsey

Souper Bowl Update

We received our Souper Bowl of Caring Offering Sunday, February 2nd during morning worship. The total received this year is \$623.00. 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.

Dates to Remember for the Season of Lent and Easter

Wednesdays

Lenten Lunches, 12:00 pm

Wednesday, March 18

We host Lenten Lunch, 12:00 pm

Sunday, April 5

Palm Sunday

Thursday, April 9

Maundy Thursday

Worship & Communion, 7:00 pm

Friday, April 10

Community Good Friday Worship

Crossroads Church, 7:00 pm

Sunday, April 12

Early Easter Worship, 8:30 am

Easter Breakfast, 9:30 am

Easter Day Worship, 11:00 am

Bible Study

Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m., a group gathers for Bible study in the Fellowship Hall. The focus is on the New Testament book of Acts and Pastor Monroe is the leader. The group is open to all who would like to attend.

OGHS Offering

We will receive the One Great Hour of Sharing offering Sunday, April 5th 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.



Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 8, 2020.

Be sure to change your clocks. We spring forward!



We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Sunday, March 8th during the worship service. Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.

A Community Lenten Devotional

Again this year we had folks from the community prepare a devotional message for the scripture of each day through Lent. The submissions were compiled into booklet form, duplicated, then distributed to area churches for use during the Lenten Season. Devotionals are available at the back of the sanctuary to use in your personal study during the Lenten Season. What a wonderful way for the Christians of Blairsville to share Christ as one.

Veteran’s Banner Fund

The Blairsville area sets a great example in the way we come together to honor our veterans, including the annual Veterans Day parade, the flag display at the cemetery, and the Veterans Memorial near the bandstand. In keeping with this proud tradition, the American Legion Auxiliary of Blairsville, Unit #407, began sponsoring a Veteran’s Banner Project in 2016. Through this project, almost 300 two-sided full-color banners honoring our “Hometown Heroes” have been erected on utility poles on many of the borough’s streets and even extending along Old Route 22 to Burrell Township. The banners create a powerful, permanent display, reminding us daily of those who protect our freedom and showing our visitors how much we value and appreciate our veterans. Individuals and families sponsored the initial cost of the banners (\$150). Over time, some of the banners will need to be replaced due to normal wear and tear. Each replacement will cost approximately \$60. A maintenance fund has been setup and a total of \$3,500 in donations have been received to date. The goal for the fund is \$18,000, enough funding to replace all 300 banners when needed. The American Legion Auxiliary holds the funds in a separate account dedicated to this purpose, and 100% of the donations are used for banner maintenance. Donations of any size are appreciated. Gifts can be mailed to: American Legion Auxiliary #407, c/o Marge Patz, President, 300 S. Brady Street, Blairsville, PA 15717.

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 14 through August 12. For more information on cost and dates of age specific camps, contact the church office or checkout www.pinesprings.org.

Community Lenten Lunch Schedule

The Community Lenten worship services are held each Wednesday through the Season of Lent and begin at 12:00 noon. Following the service a soup and sandwich lunch is served by the host church. This year’s schedule follows:

Mar. 4	Dawn Krishart.....	Pilate’s Wife	C&MA Church
Mar. 11	Rev. Joe Baird	Nicodemus	Hebron Lutheran Church
Mar. 18	Rev. Steve Bugay	Peter	United Presbyterian Church
Mar. 25	Rev. Rusty McClurg	Pilate	Hopewell United Methodist Church
Apr. 1	Sharon Kendall	Mary Magdalene.....	First United Methodist Church
Apr. 8	Susan O’Shaughnessy.....	Guards at the Tomb	SS Simon & Jude

GOOD FRIDAY—7:00 p.m.

Apr. 10	Rev. Harold Hicks	Thieves on the Cross.....	Crossroads Community Church (former Free Methodist Church in Blairsville)
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Mission Moment—Update from Rwanda

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from Rwanda. God has blessed me with so many opportunities. Every month I receive requests from students and former students to visit their churches. As I am preparing to be gone for a few months, the requests have increased. This month I was out twice, in two entirely different settings but both had wonderful similarities. Both were interdenominational, international and to students' home areas. The beginning of the month I went to a former student's parish in the north. Ernest is Methodist, so this was an interdenominational from the outset, as I took several of Ernest's friend with me to see where he is now assigned as a pastoral intern. Our delegation of Presbyterians, Anglicans and Pentecostals from Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and US made the 4-hour trek and were warmly welcomed. Since this is his home area, his mother, several brothers and a sister were present to welcome us, along with his supervising pastor. Worship across Rwanda is much the same, regardless of the denomination, so we felt at home as we sang and danced and heard the Word of God. I was blessed to be given the task of sharing the word of God. After, we shared a meal and conversation and laughter. We felt the strong bond of Christ that binds us together across all differences. This past weekend we took a longer trip to the extreme east. We left Butare late Saturday afternoon, spent the night in Kigali, 3 hours from Butare, and left at 5 a.m. for a 9 a.m. service. My student Alphonse wanted me to visit the chapel he had served before coming to study theology. It has been closed by the government two years ago, needing to meet government standards of safety. I had helped them put a roof in place and they wanted to thank me. Since the building is not yet finished, we had to worshipped at a neighboring chapel of the parish. He wanted some of his friends to experience the church, so again we were a cross-section of Presbyterians, Anglicans, Pentecostals, Rwandans, Burundian and America. Because of the distance from PIASS, Alphonse had not been home in over 6 months, so it was a homecoming. His parents, brothers and sister were there to greet him and us, as well as his former congregation. The worship was lively, and spirit filled. After a wonderful meal and fellowship, we went to the chapel he had served to see the building. A small congregation was waiting for us, singing until we arrived. They took a risk, since the chapel is not yet opened by the government, but they wanted us to see the progress. They had prepared gifts for Alphonse and me, to thank us. They escorted us in and out with singing. They understood that we only had a short time, since we had a 7-hour trip to get home. That did not stop the warmth and generosity of spirit that greeted us. This is part of the building of unity that is happening in the body of Christ here and it is contagious. My hope is to bring some of this spirit of unity back with me to share with all of you as I visit in your congregations and with you individually over the 3 months I will be in the States. I ask that you pray for the final preparations for the trip and for my small congregation here as they prepare to carry on ministry without their pastor. Looking forward to seeing many of you in April, May and June.

Blessings,

Kay



**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.*