



# UPLIFT Newsletter

The United  
Presbyterian Church  
of Blairsville, PA

MAY 2020

Someone said, “This year when we changed our clocks, we didn’t realize we’d be going from standard time to the Twilight Zone.” The weeks have been surreal, schedules altered to the point we’re not sure what day it is, relationships strained to the point we have one nerve left and someone is always standing on it, and our vision of the future is blurred by an ever present shadow of a microscopic virus. Who would have ever imagined so much could change so quickly from the good old days of six months ago. We would all agree, the new normal is getting old.

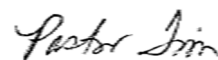
As big as this world is, we are truly connected to one another. What happens in one place has implications for those who live half way around the globe. The proverb “Misery loves company” is true, but keeping company is tough to do six feet apart. We’re all in the same boat, yet we feel so alone. The irony is in order to be together, we must first stay apart. The word quarantine is an antiquated term, over 700 years old. In old Venice, when a ship came into port and was suspected of carrying disease, those who were aboard were kept from getting off for “quaranta giorni”, 40 days—thus the word quarantine. The number forty appears well over a hundred times in scripture. The Hebrews were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years, for 40 years they wandered in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. The life of Moses is neatly divided into three distinct forty year periods. In the days of Noah, it rained 40 days and 40 nights. Moses stayed on Mt. Sinai and Elijah stayed on Mt Horeb for 40 days and nights. After his baptism, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil. Forty is a biblical number of testing, praying, waiting on God, trusting that God is at work doing some new thing with us and around us. It is a time of change, a preparation for what will be. From the point of conception to the delivery of the child is in about 40 weeks. In Leviticus 12, a woman was told to rest for 40 days before returning to full activity. After his resurrection, Jesus remained with his followers for 40 days before he ascended to his heavenly throne.

I have a long list of topics I want to write about at some point. One of them is the significance of those forty days Jesus sojourned here after he was raised from the grave and before he was raised to glory. Was it a quarantine of sorts? Was he changed in some way through his experience in and understanding of Hell? Was he refined through the power of resurrection? If you were to ask forty theologians, you would get forty different answers. But more important is how we are changed as those who have been raised with Christ. How have we been changed by our recent encounter with the frailty of human life? How has our faith been made stronger or how has our trust wavered by what we’ve faced these past weeks?

Many just want this whole ordeal to be over so we can be done with it. But the reality is, we will never be the same. What lessons have we learned about ourselves, our relationships with each other, our relationship with God? Where have we seen God at work, when have we felt him closest to us, how have we become a conduit of his love and grace? We may not know the answers to such questions right now. We’re still dealing with the aftermath of the storm, if indeed the storm is passing. We may not understand until a generation or two or three from now. But hope fully we have come to know the peace of the promise given us, “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46)

The Lutheran Book of Worship offers this prayer, *“O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

In Christ’s love,



## Scripture Texts for Worship

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

### Sunday, May 3

I Peter 2:19-25

John 10:1-10

### Sunday, May 10-Mother's Day

John 14:1-14

I Peter 2:2-10

### Sunday, May 17

John 14:15-21

I Peter 3:13-22

### Sunday, May 24

John 17:1-11

I Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

### Sunday, May 31

John 7:37-39

Acts 2:1-21

### Sunday, June 7

II Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-20

## Online Worship

Each Sunday at around 11:00 a.m. worship is broadcast via Youtube. You can access our Youtube channel by going to our website, [www.r-church.com](http://www.r-church.com) and clicking on the purple button labeled Sunday Worship. Or access can also be found on our facebook page, **The United Presbyterian Church of Blairsville**. The link will be available and labeled for you to click on. By accessing us either way, you will be redirected to Youtube and can click on the video to begin worship. The bulletin is available under the video. You can scroll along with the words for the Call to Worship, Prayer of Confession, Hymns and Affirmation of Faith.

## The Church Building

The Session will determine when to resume public gathering for worship and use of the church building. They will abide by the directives of local and national governmental officials as well as by the guidance of the Spirit for what is best for this family of faith. When we return to the building, we will continue with safe distancing and masks as needed. Physical contact will be at a minimum. Passing of the peace will be verbal only, seating will be spread out by family/household units, offering will be received as one enters or leaves the sanctuary (instead of passing the plates). Communion will be received in a way that is safe.

When the time is right, you will be informed via email, telephone, and/or postal service of the details of reconvening. We realize that not everyone will feel comfortable returning that first Sunday back. Worship will still be provided virtually. The important thing is that you return only when you feel safe to do so. The building has been sanitized and will be done so again before reentry.

## Shepherding the Flock

We are grateful for the prayers of the people—for those around us and for this ministry. We also thank those who have contributed financially to meet the ongoing expenses we face. Through you and your generosity, God has blessed us. As those who have been blessed we want to be a blessing. If you are facing any hardships in the midst of this dynamic, please speak with the pastor as to how the church can be of support.

## 2020 General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) meets each even-numbered year somewhere in the United States to discuss and be directed in the ministry of the church. Over 600 ruling elders and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament gather to discern God's will. This year, the Assembly was scheduled to meet June 20-27 in Baltimore, MD. The convention center that had been engaged has since been converted to a field hospital for infected patients. The contingency plan put in place is to have the elected representatives from each of the presbyteries to meet virtually on Friday, June 19 and Friday & Saturday, June 26-27. The business on the agenda has been abbreviated. Some will have to wait until 2022. That which has not been shortened is the time and energy devoted to prayer and Bible study. We will keep you informed as to how you can take part in Assembly activities through your computer.

## A New Way

We're glad for all the positive feedback received on virtual access to Sunday morning worship services. We are thankful for the time and technical assistance given by Jonathan and Doug Clayton and the musical leadership given by Marilyn Neal. Our plan is to continue broadcasting the services online, even when services are offered in the sanctuary. Many friends from out of town have appreciated the ability to take part in worship. Because of the online format, we have had to acquire a higher level of copyright usage. We thank you for your patience as we learn how to use new technology. We are grateful for the ways our ministry is both enhanced and broadened.

## **Mission Moment**—Update from Kay Day

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from Rwanda, as the world continues to wrestle with the fallout of the coronavirus. In Rwanda, this past month has presented challenges and opportunities. April is always an emotional time as the country commemorates the genocide of 1994, but that has been compounded this year with the lockdown of the country that prevented gatherings for remembrance or travel to memorial sites. Our lockdown has been strictly enforced and honored by the people, but that has come at a cost, both emotionally and economically. People have not been able to gather to remember. We are not allowed outside our homes, except to buy essentials for life, and there has been no travel outside our city or village. This has had a great economic impact on people, since most live from the daily income of selling their products in small businesses. With shops and street vendors closed, there has been no income for many. These are the poorest in the country, and they are the most significantly affected. Beyond gathering together, another element to the Rwandan remembrance is giving aid to the survivors, especially widows and orphans. This is usually in the form of helping with housing, or school fees and the like. This year, however, it has taken a different focus. The government and the churches have combined efforts to provide food for the neediest in the communities, regardless of genocide status. Instead of being given to just survivors, cooking oil, rice and beans have been distributed to all in need. The churches have been at the center of this action. Even though Christians have not been allowed to gather for worship, they have contributed money, and the elders and pastors have purchased the food, then organized distribution according to need. All of this has been done honoring social distancing. Those who gathered, kept their distance and waited patiently to receive what would be life-sustaining supplies. So even in the midst of lockdown, ministry has been happening. The love of Christ has been extended. Commemoration has taken a new direction, uniting people in a new way. God has brought good out of difficulty. My ministry has taken on new directions as well. I can be in touch with my “scattered” congregation, mostly students who have gone to their homes around the country. While many do not have the home internet connections to support virtual worship, they have some limited service on their phones. I have written spiritual encouragements for them twice a week. These, I have discovered, have been shared beyond our congregation to several others and even internationally. In addition, I have been able to take on some English editing projects that I would not have had time for otherwise, and this past Sunday I preached, via WhatsApp conference call, to a congregation of one of my former students. There were technical challenges, as the call dropped twice, but we reconnected and continued. I even recorded a sermon for use by a congregation in the States, so I was with them virtually. So, just as is happening with all of you, ministry is taking on new forms. God is using us in the midst of, and because of, this pandemic. The hardest decision for me was to cancel all my plans for a trip to the States this year. Hopefully, in 2021, when churches are open again and travel is safe, I can be with you in person. In the meantime, I thank you for your continued support, financially and spiritually, and as you pray for me, I assure you I am praying for you. I am safe and well and being used by God. I pray that is true for all of you, as well.

Yours in Christ,

Kay

*“It is well, it is well with my soul”*

## **June Newsletter**

Articles to be published in the June edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Friday, May 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.

## **Tithes and Offerings**

Ministry is still occurring at the church—it just looks different. Online worship in your home has replaced sitting in the pews of the sanctuary. As before, the office is occupied 5 days a week to answer phone calls and requests for help. Like you, we are adjusting to this new temporary normal and like you our current expenses continue. Your gifts are important to our unceasing ministry at this time. We thank you for prayerfully supporting our ministry. We thank the many who have continued to send their offerings to maintain the operation and work of the church. Tithes and offerings can be sent to:

UPC

137 N. Walnut Street  
Blairsville, PA 15717

## 40 Things I've Learned in Life

-Regina Brett (90 years old)

1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.
3. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.
4. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and parents will. Stay in touch.
5. You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.
6. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
7. It's ok to get angry with God. He can take it.
8. When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.
9. Make peace with your past so it won't mess up your present.
10. It's ok to let your children see you cry.
11. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
12. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.
13. Everything can change in the blink of an eye. But don't worry; God never blinks.
14. Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.
15. Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.
16. It's never too late to have a happy childhood. But the second one is up to you and no one else.
17. When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.
18. Over prepare, then go with the flow.
19. Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.
20. No one is in charge of your happiness but you.
21. Frame every so-called disaster with these words "In five years, will this matter?"
22. Always choose life.
23. Forgive everyone everything.
24. What other people think of you is none of your business.
25. Time heals almost everything. Give time, time.
26. However good or bad a situation is, it will change.
27. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
28. Believe in miracles.
29. God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do.
30. Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now.
31. Growing old beats the alternative—dying young.
32. Your children get only one childhood.
33. All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.
34. Get outside everyday. Miracles are waiting everywhere.
35. If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab our back.
36. Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.
37. The best is yet to come.
38. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
39. Yield.
40. Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.

