



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

JUNE 2020

One word to describe the apostle Paul is authentic. He was straight forward about the assurances of God to the point that his understandings of faith, hope, grace and love are part of the foundation of who we are in Christ, personally and as the church. Yet his message is so authentic because he is open and honest about his own sin, his spiritual struggles, who he is outside of Christ. I find this evidenced in Romans 8, a portion of scripture that has both challenged and encouraged me along my journey. He speaks directly about those things with which each of us wrestle daily—the condition of this world, the bondage of our souls, the constant battle between who we have been, are, and seek to become. He describes our circumstance in this world as one of “groaning in labor pains.....waiting for the fullness of redemption.” Its that awkward time of “almost, but not yet.”

These past few months have been a testing time for our faith. We are all too aware of the damage a microscopic virus can do. We have seen how an unjust act can spark a whirlwind of violence. We seek institutions crumbling around us and wonder when the rubble will consume us. We know the feeling of helplessness. Paul writes, “the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27)

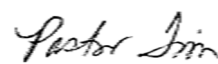
I have found that lately, most of my prayers have been in the form of sighs. In the depth of my heart I feel the pain of those around me, yet I cannot find the words to express it to God. But that’s okay, because God already knows how I feel, because God feels the anguish too. To be sure, God could miraculously make things right, right by our standards of rightness, but instead God chooses to walk with us through the storms—giving strength to endure, comforting our sorrow, bringing an ultimate good out of our suffering.

So, that being said, where is your faith through all that you’ve had to endure these recent months? Where have you faced your weaknesses and how have you been strengthened? In the midst of fear, where have you found courage and a sense of peace? Have your circumstances brought you to a deeper dependence on God? Have you been encouraged by the ways you’ve noticed neighbor reaching out to neighbor? Have you become more sensitive to the needs of others and have you felt uplifted by the hand of a friend? Where have you recognized God in your life and in the lives of those around you?

German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is credited with saying, “What doesn’t kill us, makes us stronger.” But I don’t build my life on the foundation of philosophies. My experience shows me that where I feel God’s presence in the midst of difficulties, I am drawn all the closer to him. And the closer I am drawn, the more I know God and the more I trust God, not only for the moment but for every step of the journey. Paul ends Romans 8 with these words, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.....for nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We’re not alone. We’re not abandoned. We have each other, and more important we not only have God—God holds us.....

In Christ’s love,



Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, June 7

II Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-20

Sunday, June 14

Romans 5:1-8

Matthew 9:35-10:8

Sunday, June 21-Father's Day

Romans 6:1b-11

Matthew 10:24-39

Sunday, June 28

Romans 6:12-23

Genesis 22:1-14

Sunday, July 5

Romans 7:15-25a

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Online Worship

Our Summer Schedule has begun. Each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. worship is broadcast via Youtube. You can access our Youtube channel by going to our website, www.r-church.com and clicking on the purple button labeled Sunday Worship or access can also be found through a link 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, dated for the current Sunday, 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. You can also print a hard copy from the website.

As We Move Forward

So, what are our plans regarding church activities?

- ⇒ We will continue with online worship at least through the end of June. Reentry to the sanctuary will be gradual and done in a responsible way, following CDC protocol for gatherings. Safety is our primary concern. As the time nears, you will be contacted. Seating will be distanced. Singing will most likely not be done for a while, physical contact will be limited.
- ⇒ Vacation Bible School will not be held this summer. That comes at the recommendation of the health department and larger church.
- ⇒ Our goal is to reconvene weekly Bible Study in September. While some churches have turned virtual, we do not want to move forward with only part of the group. One of the strengths of our program is the bond of fellowship we enjoy as we delve into God's word.
- ⇒ Sunday School usually is on hiatus during the summer. We hope to be able to hold classes in the Fall.
- ⇒ Food Distributions will continue on a drive through basis on the second Tuesday of the month for those who have registered through ICCAP.
- ⇒ Our Deacon's Pantry is in full operation. Those who would like food should call the church office. Arrangements will be made on when the food can be picked up. It will be put in a secure place to avoid social contact.
- ⇒ Hospital visits and visits to care facilities have been limited by the health officials for the well being of all involved. Once restrictions are lifted visits will resume.
- ⇒ Small groups (25 or fewer) will be allowed to meet in the Fellowship Hall with permission and responsible distancing. This includes the WIC Program, Boy Scouts (when weather keeps them inside), Grannies, and Thursday knitters. For more details, please call the church office.
- ⇒ We thank Jonathan and Doug Clayton for their energies and efforts in putting the worship service online. They have done a great job using the dated equipment we have available. Thank you for your patience through the learning curve. Our plan is to update the equipment so that even when we resume in house worship, the services can still be live streamed.
- ⇒ We are grateful to Marilyn Neal for her faithful service in providing quality music to our services of worship.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!



Those who are graduating this year are doing so in a way unlike any other. We would like to honor our high school and college graduates later this summer. We know that different educational institutions follow different paths, so we need your help in identifying who has finished their course of study and received their diploma/degree. Please contact the church office at 724-459-7991 with the graduates name so that we can include them in acknowledging their accomplishments and future plans. We need to know by June 28th.

Mission Moment—Update from Cindy Corell

Dearest friends,

Please know that as we all go through this pandemic with our individual and corporate challenges, you each are so appreciated and loved by our partners and me in Haiti. Not long ago, Fabienne Jean, coordinator of FONDAMA, our Joining Hands network in Haiti, and members of the network's executive committee, wanted our U.S. partners to know we are all in their prayers. An excerpt: *In these difficult and worrying times, FONDAMA team wants you to know that it shares your worries and sorrow and prays earnestly for a lasting and peaceful outcome. They hold precious in their hearts and memories all the efforts that you have made in favor of Haitian communities in the trials they live every day. You were always present — in thoughts, by your actions, and in prayers. In difficult times, you always answered the call to accompany poor people and help them to recover.* One of the many miracles in working with those on the margins is hearing and feeling their response. It is beyond gratitude. It is grace. We all are suffering through this time—each of us in all corners of God's world. You will not be surprised to hear that the people of Haiti already coping with poverty, political unrest, and all the misery that comes with those conditions are hanging on by a thread. Not since the earthquake have our friends in Haiti felt such uncertainty and hunger. Their fear is reminiscent of January 12, 2010, and the days and months after. The earth beneath their feet shook, concrete buildings crumbled, a loud roar filled their ears, and survivors of the Haiti earthquake of 2010 thought the world might be ending. The world did not end on Jan. 12, 2010, but the cataclysmic event was sure to be the worst disaster Haiti had known. They hoped it would be the worst disaster they would know in their lifetimes. Ten years later, a pandemic marches across this tiny island nation, taking lives, creating fear, and further destroying its already feeble economy. COVID-19 rolls across Haiti like a slow-moving earthquake. Still, unlike the disaster of 2010 or the hurricanes in 2011, 2013, and 2016, no humanitarian groups or mission teams are coming to supply food, healthcare, and economic first aid. On March 19, President Jovenel Moïse, in a televised press conference, announced the first official case of COVID-19 infection, declared a national emergency and said all airports, ports, and borders would be closed the next day. Authorities set a curfew, closed schools, and asked non-essential businesses to close. FONDAMA's coordinator Jean describes how essential calls to isolate and shelter-in-place press Haitians between absolute hunger and a deadly virus. "Containment is one of the recommendations of the government that the population must respect," Jean said. "But the living situation of most of the population forces them to choose between life and survival. In fact, most Haitians live below the poverty line, with no way to save for the rainy day COVID-19 presents. They must go out each day to scratch out enough of a living to feed their families. This puts them in contact with others and in direct threat of bringing home the virus." While the government of Haiti has promised support to families and communities, we have not seen evidence of that. And frankly, the people of Haiti do not depend on their oft corrupt government, but in fact, distrust that aid to Haiti from the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, US Aid and Development, and the International Monetary Bank will make its way to hurting communities. But there is hope, however small. FONDAMA, along with many church-to-community partnerships, is working to find relief for the people of Haiti. We work in rural areas and urban regions. We are in contact with leaders across the country, gathering funds to support community gardens and opportunities for people to grow food at their homes.

As I have mentioned, one miracle of walking with people on the margins is understanding the depth of their prayers for us. Another miracle is knowing that you care deeply for our friends across the world. I am ever so grateful for all the ways you have supported my service to Haiti. Though I am not there during this pandemic time, I carry your hearts to all of them through emails, messages, and all the technology we can find that works.

If you would like to know more about our work through FONDAMA, please visit this site:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/hunger/internationaldevelopment/joininghands/joining-hands-country-profiles/haiti-jh/>

If you would like to understand more, please write to me. I am happy to speak with your congregations or other groups through technological means. I look forward to the time when we can be together—in your church or, even better, in the beautiful nation of Haiti. Please know that we appreciate all your care for our friends, and we wish you health and well-being through these challenging times.

Peace and grace, Cindy Corell

Compassion Update as of Wednesday, May 27, 2020

Dear Friends,

Over the past month, I've typed the words, "How are you doing?" more times than I can count. I've sent those words in emails and texts, spoken them on the phone and in video calls. I need to hear if my friends and loved ones are okay. You may be wondering the same thing about your sponsored Compassion kids, Hagenimana and Mutabazi. How are they doing? Several times every week we get updates from each of the 25 countries where we serve. Our faithful staff is filing those updates and letting us know what regulations are in place, and how they are able to continue to minister, especially to the most vulnerable families. I wanted to take a moment to share with you about the latest updates from Rwanda. I hope this will give you a glimpse into the lives of your children now and also give you assurance that our partner churches around the world continue to serve and love your children.

RWANDA

Schools, places of worship and Compassion centers are closed until September. A curfew is in place from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., and masks must be worn in public at all times. Center workers are communicating with beneficiaries and caregivers by phone where possible. They have been able to provide care and support to the most vulnerable children, including those who are malnourished and have medical issues, and staff is working with local governments to provide food to families. Sponsor gifts to children and families are being delivered as electronic cash transfers. The Compassion Rwanda office is working with local staff to offer counseling support during this difficult season.

May this update give you powerful ways to pray for your sponsored children and the people of Rwanda.

Rich Van Eaton, Sponsor & Donor Relations Director

Thank You

We are thankful for the generous support to the church these recent months. Even though doors have been closed, financial responsibilities go on. Your faithful stewardship is truly appreciated and enables our mission and ministries to continue.

Changes and Needs

We realize that with changes at work and personal situations some needs have been unmet. If you find yourself in need of some assistance, the church does have limited resources that might help you get through things. There are monies available on a case by case basis. Please speak with the pastor about how we can help you get by.

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.

July Newsletter

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