

UPLIFT

Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

JULY 2020

While we do not know for certain who God used to pen the Letter to the Hebrews, we do know that it offers counsel and guidance to the Christian Church on the topics of justice, judgment, perseverance, power and suffering. None of us can deny its relevance to where the church is today. Some describe us as the “church in exile,” strangers in a strange land, the people of God far from home. Others describe our current situation as Christians to be the “church deployed,” a people of faith sent into a troubled world to offer a message of hope and extend a hand of comfort. And then there are those of us who are so numbed by our current reality that we just stop and freeze in place—waiting, watching, wondering if things will ever return to a manageable way of living.

We are in no way the first generation of believers to endure times such as these. Such chaos and disorder is the way of life in this world and there are times when such things of life impinge on the things of faith. Hebrews 10:23-25 says, “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” We can only speculate on what it was that kept those early Christians from meeting together. Was it spiritual laxity, hectic schedules, fear of being persecuted, disagreements over doctrine? As Christians, we were formed for community. Paul refers to us several places as being the body of Christ, joined together as one entity working toward the same goal with the same vision and the same passion. Through the ages those who call themselves believers have made up all sorts of excuses not to meet together to worship—each as lame as the next. But over these recent months, even the most faithful of Christians has known the frustration of not being able to assemble as God would have us do. Not being in the sanctuary on a Sunday morning has truly been like being a fish out of water. The rhythm of the week is disrupted we do not begin with praise and fellowship and the knowledge that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. Who would ever think a microscopic virus had the power to keep us from those we love the most. Now mind you God has not abandoned us through this COVID ordeal. As Paul writes, “....extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed.” (II Corinthians 4:7-9).

Some say, “the good news is we see light at the end of the tunnel.” Others add, “yea, but the light is an oncoming train.” We don’t know what is in our future, but we do know that we can’t resign ourselves to the unknown. We are God’s people called out of what is with the hope and assurance of what will be. We are in God’s care yet we are called to move with caution and responsible behavior.

The elders you have elected to lead this congregation have taken their responsibilities seriously. Their concern has been for your physical safety and spiritual well being. While decisions have been made with the utmost of faith, they have also taken seriously the guidance of the medical and social leadership. Jesus says, “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

While we hope the use of technology has helped you in the sharing of worship services, we realize that its just not the same as being with your brothers and sisters in the sanctuary for worship. The session has wrestled with when to re-open the doors and has set the goal of doing so on Sunday, July 26 with a 10:00 a.m. service. We know that some will be there with bells on, some will wait a little while to test the waters, some will choose to watch from home from now on, and some may have found their needs met in other ways during this interim period. You should only return to worship in person when you feel comfortable about doing so. Certainly, if you are not feeling well, we ask that you stay

Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, July 5

Romans 7:15-25a

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Sunday, July 12

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Romans 8:1-11

Sunday, July 19

Genesis 28:10-19a

Romans 8:12-25

Sunday, July 26

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Romans 8:26-39

Sunday, August 2

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:13-21

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.

Ministry in the Midst of COVID-19

There have been many acts of generosity shared in the midst of our current dilemma. Folks have been good to reach out in an effort to help their neighbors through this difficult time. If there is a specific need that you have please speak with the pastor. There may be some resources available to help you move forward. We can't make every problem go away, but if we can help lift one burden at a time, we're making a difference,

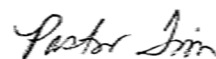
home so as not to compromise others. We remind you that even if you do not feel comfortable coming in person, you can still be a part of the worship experience via Youtube or facebook.

What can you expect if you come in person? Our hope is to have someone welcome you by opening the door and handing you a bulletin. We ask that you wear a mask as per CDC and state health department recommendations/requirements. While we affirm individual choices, we maintain the right of individuals to enter the cleanest environment possible. An usher will escort you to a seat. The sanctuary will offer seating in accordance with appropriate social/physical distancing. We will use every other pew, alternating which half of a pew is used. Households will be encouraged to sit together. You will notice that hymnals, pew Bibles, pillows and blankets have been removed for the time being. Projections of words will be offered. If you need a pillow or blanket, please feel free to bring one from home and take it with you after worship.

During the service we ask that you keep wearing your mask (unless there is a medical reason you can't). Softly proclaiming (mouthing) the words of the hymns is preferred to forceful (audible) singing for the safety of those around you. There will be no physical contact in the passing of the peace or receiving of the offering. Plates will be in the back of the sanctuary. At this point we do not have a method to insure that the sacrament of communion can be celebrated safely. Following the service, worshipers will be dismissed by pew to allow space to exit the sanctuary safely. Hand sanitizers and wipes will be available on the back table. After worship, the sanctuary and restrooms will be cleaned.

In his poem, "To a Mouse," Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote, "The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft a-gley." In essence, no matter how carefully a project is planned, something may still go awry. We appreciate your patience and cooperation as we move forward. Please know that your physical safety and spiritual well being are important to us. Should the number of COVID events rise and the commonwealth return to phase yellow or red, we will re-close the sanctuary until we can return with assurances. If you have any questions or concerns about our plans, please feel free to call Pastor Tim or the church office at (724) 459-7991 or (724) 459-8174 (manse).

In Christ's love,



A Few Opportunities as we Move Forward

Jonathan and Doug Clayton have been instrumental in putting together the technology needed to share our worship services online. New equipment has been purchased to upgrade what we currently have and supplement to meet standards. They estimate that three people will be needed each Sunday morning to livestream the service. At some point this Fall, Jonathan will need to return to college, and work schedules will restrict some peoples' availability. For this reason we need people to be trained to work the equipment. There are projection needs, sound needs and computer needs. We have a new camera, new sound board and new computer. Please let the church office know of your interest in being a part of this new venture, by the first week of August so that the training can be coordinated.

Graduate Recognition

On Sunday, July 19 we will honor our 2020 high school graduates, Abigail Bruner and Kayla Moran during the morning worship service. We would like to introduce these young ladies to you in this month's newsletter.

Abigail Faith Bruner is the daughter of Clark and Connie Bruner and the sister to Elizabeth and John Clark.

Her high school activities include:

*Indiana County 4-H carrying a variety of projects including market and breeding goats, market swine, market lambs, dairy beef, dog, horse, sewing and textiles including fashion revue, wildlife and forestry, shooting sports, and woodworking; Indiana County 4-H Ambassador, and regional 4-H overnight camp counselor.

*Homeschoolers for Christ Cooperative graduate and participant in musicals

*Locks of Love hair donor for 13 years

*Blairsville Presbyterian Church usher, attends Sunday School and Bible study regularly, special music presenter.

After graduation Abigail would like to become a 4-H volunteer leader, learn to drive, and have a house of her own.

Her future plans include attending classes to learn more American Sign Language so that she can teach classes to people who want to learn beginning sign language.

Some of Abigail's favorite memories from our church's activities are Christmas Eve candlelight services, Seder Meals, taking communion and signing songs in church.

She looks up to the Ball Brothers Christian singing group, especially Andrew Ball, because they spread the love of Jesus with their music, through her favorite song, "It's About the Cross."

Abigail's life verse is John 14:6,

"I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one can come to the Father except through me."

Kayla Grace Moran is the daughter of Steve and Joan Moran and the sister to Tyler.

During high school Kayla was involved in Remembering Adam, Marching Band, Student Council, National Honor Society, was class treasurer, yearbook, chorus, district chorus, band, Blairsville Competition Majorettes and solo and team competitive baton twirling.

Kayla's hopes and dreams are to graduate from college with her bachelors degree in nursing. Then continue her education to obtain her master's to become an Endocrinology Nurse Practitioner.

She plans to attend Carlow University for nursing and twirl with the University of Pittsburgh marching band as a Pitt Golden Girl.

What Kayla always looked forward to at church each year was Vacation Bible School, from the time she was in it as a child to helping with the activities. She truly enjoyed playing games with the kids and their smiling faces always were the highlight of her week.

We asked Kayla to name one person she looks up to and why: "It's tough to pick one person since I have many role models in my life. Honestly, my parents are one of my biggest role models, but another big role model is my older brother, Tyler. (this way both parents are equal lol). My brother is one of the most ambitious and hard-working people I know which came from my parents. I'm always so proud to call him my brother and I'm glad that he's always there for me when I need him and always pushes and inspires me to do my best."

Kayla's life verse is Proverbs 3:3-6,

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

Food for Family Thought

*If you were asked to design a brand-new place for people to worship God—a place unlike anything you've seen—how would you design it? Be as specific as you can.

-Tell your child about the church you attended when you were young. Share what you liked best about that church—it might have been a work of art, the stained glass windows, the altar—whatever it was that appealed to you.

*If you could build a private bridge or tunnel that would take you directly from your home to any place at all, what would it connect to?

-Prayer is one of the surest ways we connect with God. At any time, in any circumstance, you can talk to God heart-to-heart. Make prayer a daily habit in your home.

Mission Moment

Greetings from Rwanda. Even with all that has happened in the world in the last month, I am doing what I believe God is calling me to do and that is to continue to function in the role to which he has called me here in Rwanda and trust the rest of his creation to his care.

I have been called to teach and that is what I am doing in an entirely new format, as many other teachers around the world are. For the first time in more than 30 years, I am teaching without being able to see my students' faces, to judge their understanding of the material by their expressions or body language, to easily interact with them. Schools here are closed until September and we are to teach online. The Higher Education Council of Rwanda has presented a wonderful platform called Moodle for this that offers a Zoom-like feature to have a virtual classroom. The platform includes easy methods for teachers to share resources, for students to submit assignments and get feedback and for teachers to track and record attendance and grades. The problem is that for the students to access this platform, they must have a computer, internet access and a steady supply of electricity. Only about a third of our students have all of these essentials. That means that we, of necessity, must "jury-rig" a system that works. We are a resourceful group and have come up with our modified system. It is not ideal, but it works. We are using Moodle for sharing resources and collecting and marking assignments. Those students who do not have access to Moodle are sending their assignments to fellow students who do, and their classmates are submitting them for them. The actual "teaching" is taking place on WhatsApp since most students have smartphones and are able to access the internet for short periods of time. I send my lecture power points via WhatsApp, along with a recorded introduction. The students read the notes and then type their questions via text messages, to which I respond. They can respond too, for a short discussion. This is challenging with complex topics like the doctrine of sin or the free will of humans within the providence of God, but it provides the opportunity to give clear, concise explanations and opens the way for further questions. It is working. There are still a few students who have no way of accessing the class and I grieve for that, but they will be able to do a face to face type makeup in September when classes are to resume. We are trying to be faithful to do what God has called us to do in the face of challenges, to not lose sight of the reality that God still calls us to be faithful in the midst of difficulties.

My prayer is that you are able to do the same in the midst of the chaos and confusion of life at present. These are challenging times for so many reasons and our systems and institutions are being tested to respond to "new norms." I pray we are all faithful to the God of all creation. Thank you for your continued support. I could not be here without you. You are partnering with me in this difficult time. I praise God for you.

Yours in Christ,
Kay Day



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.

August Newsletter

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