



# UPLIFT

## Newsletter

The United  
Presbyterian Church  
of Blairsville, PA

SEPTEMBER 2020

So what's a parent to do? You teach your children right from wrong to the point you start feeling like a preacher. You model appropriate behavior to set a good example to the point you begin to think yourself a saint. You monitor your children's behavior to the point you're offered a job by the CIA. You raise your child by the book, the Good Book, yet they choose to rebel. It reminds me of the closing verse of the Book of Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes." (21:25)

Hard hearted stubbornness is at the root of sin. Refusal to submit to God, rebellion, was in the heart of the serpent, Eve and Adam. Sometimes even the most loving parent has to let their wayward child deal with the consequences of their disobedience. Yes, it hurts the child (and perhaps bruises the parent's heart even more), but it's the only way for the lesson to be learned. The Old Testament is filled with the unfaithfulness of God's people. There were times he would intervene and spare them from results of their folly, and then there were times when God as much as said, "Okay, you insist on doing things your way, you're on your own."

The Hebrews found themselves slaves in Egypt for 400+ years as a result of sinful persistence. Realizing their inability to save themselves they repented and God delivered them from bondage and delivered them to a Promised Land. Lesson learned? No, in time they returned to their old ways, giving their hearts in worship to false gods, disobeying the commandments they were taught to be true. So once again God removed his hand from them. God allowed the holy city of Jerusalem to be besieged by the Babylonians. The once powerful of the city were taken away to helplessness in a foreign land. Families were divided, fortunes were taken away, estates that once were glorious laid in rubble. For 70 years the Jews were exiled in Babylon.

If you ever noticed my nose is slightly pointed, its because I spent a lot of time standing in the corner of my bedroom. "You just stand there and think about what you've done until I tell you, you can come out." The Jews had plenty of time to think about things—things they shouldn't have done, things they should have done. Psalm 137 expresses the lament of being exiled to the corner. "By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept...our tormentors asked for mirth, saying 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

This season of COVID seems to some to be an exile. We have been snatched away from the security of the familiar and forced to live in a strange land. What once was no longer is, and what will be is beyond our knowing. Mind you, I'm not saying the Lord has removed his hand from us as a punishment for our sin. I'm not saying we have brought this all on ourselves. Being found in Jesus Christ, not even a pandemic can separate us from God's love. What I am saying is that as the church we find ourselves in a new place, a world that has been forever changed. We say, "I can hardly wait until we get back to normal," but that way of thinking won't get us anywhere. The ways we used to live out our faith are being called to a new way of witness. The nice predictable routines that brought us comfort and a sense of security no longer serve their purpose. The good news of salvation is as solid as ever, but the ways we share that news are different.

Like the Jews on the bank of the Babylonian river, I long to sing the songs of praise in the sanctuary, I long to extend the hand of peace and fellowship, I long to see familiar faces in familiar pews, I long to hear the discussion of Sunday School Classes, and boy do I long to fill my plate at a fellowship dinner. But just because it no longer is what it was doesn't mean it can't become something new, maybe even

## Scripture Texts for Worship

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

### Sunday, September 6

Romans 13:8-14  
Matthew 18:15-20

### Sunday, September 13

Romans 14:1-12  
Matthew 18:21-35

### Sunday, September 20

Matthew 20:1-16  
Philippians 1:21-30

### Sunday, September 27

Matthew 21:23-32  
Philippians 2:1-13

### Sunday, October 4

Philippians 3:4b-14  
Matthew 21:33-46

## Worship Assistants

### September 6—10:00 Worship

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe  
Flowers: Nancy Campbell  
Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

### September 13—11:00 Worship

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe  
Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

### September 20—11:00 Worship

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe  
Flowers: Annabel Machak  
Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

### September 27—11:00 Worship

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe  
Flowers: Ed & Becky Bence  
Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

### Offering Counters

Linda George & Marilyn Neal

something better. A recent survey from the Barna group shows that nationally, 35% are still and only attending their pre-COVID church, 14% have switched churches and found a place that meets their spiritual needs in a fuller way, 18% are viewing multiple churches online through the month—enjoying a variety of spiritual experiences, and 32% have stopped attending church during this COVID time (for reasons of health concern or discouragement). In the Chinese language, the word for “crisis” is also the word for “opportunity.” Paul assures us in Romans 8:28, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

As I said, I don’t think pandemic is a punishment from God and I do not believe God has turned a deaf ear and a hard heart to our cries. God knows the despair of his people and God cares for us in the midst of our need. Often times God’s compassion is expressed through us. In hard times we learn to see God in places we never before recognized him. In hard times we appreciate all the more what we have. In the hard times we trust God all the more. In times of change, we discover that God’s faithfulness to us is steadfast.

In these days of crisis, look for the opportunities to grow and make a positive difference in your own life and in the lives around you. Remember and treasure the ways things used to be, but do not allow them to define who you are. Throughout scripture, God declares, “Behold, I am doing a new thing—do you not perceive it?” With eyes and hearts filled with faith may we move forth with confidence and hope.....

In Christ’s Love,

*Pastor Jim*

## Congregational Meeting Scheduled

Following worship on Sunday, September 27 we will hold a congregational meeting as per our bylaws for the express purpose of electing our new classes of ruling elders and deacons and action on the 2021 Pastoral Terms of Call. The meeting will be available online to those members watching. A telephone number will be given for those who would like to call in with any questions. Names of officers and Terms of Call will be printed in the bulletin, but not posted online for the sake of privacy. Those who will not be attending the meeting in person, but would like the information ahead of the meeting can call the church office by 2:00 on Friday, September 25th. Any questions concerning the plan for the meeting, please call (724) 459-7991.

## REGULAR WORSHIP SCHEDULE BEGINS

Sunday, September 6 .....Worship—10:00 AM  
Monday, September 7 ..... Labor Day, Office Closed  
**Sunday, September 13 .....Worship —11:00 AM**  
**Jr./Sr. High Sunday School Class—9:45 AM**

Any questions, please contact the church office.

## Christian Education Update

Due to the ongoing uncertainty of whether it is safe to gather together in classrooms, the Session and the Christian Education Committee has made the following decisions regarding our Sunday School classes.

1. Pre-School through Fifth Grade - we are postponing starting classes. Children's Worship Bulletins will be emailed out to families. These bulletins are full of activities that follow the lectionary texts for that Sunday. The bulletins are age appropriate for ages 3-6 years and 7-12 years. There is a NEW feature added to the Children's Worship Bulletins - a secret code on the front cover. This secret code is unique to our church and allows SAFE and secure access to online games that reinforce the message for the week. You can continue Bible learning and discussion at home - while protecting children from the hazards of general Internet game sites. Several games are rotated - Memory Match, Word Search, Gems of the Bible and Coloring Book - so each week children will have something new to play. The games are geared toward all age levels so everyone can join in the fun! Follow these simple steps to access the fun!

**Step 1:** Your child picks up or is emailed a bulletin with a secret code on the front.

**Step 2:** At home they enter the secret code at [Games.ChildrensBulletins.com](http://Games.ChildrensBulletins.com)

**Step 3:** Pick a game and play!

**If you would like to receive Children's Bulletins by email, please call the office to have your email address added to our list. You will then begin receiving your child's bulletin on a weekly basis.**

2. Jr/Sr High Sunday School Class will begin on September 13th at 9:45 a.m. The classroom is big enough to allow for social distancing. Masks will be required. Any questions, please contact Bobbi Monroe, teacher; Mary Anzelone, Christian Education Committee Chair; or the church office.
3. Adult Sunday School and Home Builders classes are postponed until further notice

## Wednesday Morning Bible Study

After a long hiatus, Wednesday Morning Bible Study will resume on September 23rd at 10:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. We will be physically spread out and masks will be worn. Pastor Monroe will be using the sound system so as to be heard clearly. We will pick up where we left off—Acts 5:17. This is a bit prophetic in that our lesson will be on the angel who opens the prison door to set the disciples free.

## World Wide Communion

Because of COVID health concerns, we have not been serving the Lord's Supper. We plan to administer the sacrament on October 4th, World Wide Communion Sunday. Those who wish to receive will be asked to come forward to receive the elements from gloved elders and deacons. Those who wish to remain in their pew will be served where they are.

## Musicians

We are always looking for musicians willing to share vocally or instrumentally during worship. If you feel led to offer praise, please contact Cindy Borbonus and tell her of your interest.

## As We Gather

Because of the nature of this pandemic we understand the responsible caution being taken in returning to in person worship services. The best time for you to return is when you feel healthy and safe in social situations. It is impossible to guarantee safety, but be assured we are doing everything in our power. If you are in the building and notice anything that brings you concern, please let the pastor or church office know so the issue can be addressed.

## 2020 Nominating Committee

Our 2020 Nominating Committee is made up of Elaine Jellison, chair, Susie Cotti, Linda George, Alice Santoro, Nancy Boone, Willa Shoemaker (1<sup>st</sup> alternate) and Janeen Swope (2<sup>nd</sup> alternate). Please pray for them as they meet and discern leaders for the Class of 2023.

## Opportunities Moving Forward

We are continually in need of volunteers to be trained to run new worship equipment. There are projection needs, sound needs and livestream needs. Please see Dennis Gould or contact the church office to be a part of this new venture.

## 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.

## Christian Education at Home

“Give Thanks” - by Joelle Brummit-Yale  
August 26, 2020—The Presbyterian Outlook



There is no doubt that the last many months have been challenging. And while the difficulties of the pandemic shouldn't be ignored or made light of, giving gratitude for the goodness around us isn't an exercise in futility. In fact, it can be a life-affirming and life-giving practice, especially when we focus our gratefulness toward God. Using Psalm 105 as inspiration, you and your children will create a visual offering of gratitude to God. Begin the time with your children by playing “**the thank-you game.**” Sit together in a circle. Then ask each person to thank another person in the family for something she has done or said in the last week. Continue to rotate through your family members for several rounds. Discuss how it felt both to offer thanks to someone and to receive thanks. Note that giving and receiving gratitude “fill us up.” Expressing and hearing gratitude reminds us that we are valued and that we are connected to one another.

Read aloud Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c. Share with your children that like us, God loves receiving our gratitude. Many of the psalms were written to do just that. Discuss how this particular psalm lets us know that we are called to give God thanks. Then have your children brainstorm a list of everything they are grateful to God for. You may want to write these down so that you have a record of their thoughts for the next part of the lesson.

Remind your children that the psalm tells us not just to “give thanks to the Lord,” but also to make God's deeds known among the peoples (Psalm 105:1). Together select and complete one of the following crafts to share gratitude for God.

**Window signs:** Gather sheets of paper, crayons or markers, and clear tape. Ask your children to write or draw pictures of what they are grateful to God for. Encourage them to make their letters or pictures large. Tape the completed pictures to the windows of your home. Make sure they are facing outward so those passing by will see them.

**Sidewalk chalk:** If you have sidewalk in front of your home, ask your children to write or draw pictures of what they are grateful to God for. Let them know they are sharing their thanks not only with God, but are also letting all those who pass by your home see the goodness of God.

**Mobile craft** (see picture): Gather sheets of paper, crayons or markers, a hole punch, yarn, and a clothes hanger. Cut the paper into 4-inch squares or circles. Ask your children to write or draw pictures of what they are grateful to God for on the paper pieces. Then use the hole punch to place a hole at the top of each piece. Cut enough pieces of yarn to be used for each piece of paper. Make sure the yarn pieces are varying lengths. Tie a piece of yarn to each piece of paper using the hole made by the hole punch. Then tie the yarn to the clothes hanger, staggering the pieces across the hanger to make a mobile. Place the mobile on your porch or in a prominent location in your home as a reminder of God's good works.



**Poem:** This activity is best to use with older children. Ask your child to write a poem sharing what he is grateful to God for. Encourage him to share the poem with your pastor to use as part of a future worship service.

**JOELLE BRUMMIT-YALE** is the director of children's and youth ministries at Chapel in the Pines Presbyterian in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. When not at the church, she can usually be found at home with her son and husband caring for their many animals and developing their family homestead.

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Rwanda. The COVID-19 virus has taken a great toll on the finances of many around the world, including PCUSA. In a valiant attempt to address this issue for long-term benefit, PCUSA has offered a generous voluntary retirement package to those of us who qualify – are 63 or over and have at least 3 years of service. I am certainly in that category at 71 with 14 years with World Mission. I have decided, for several reasons, to take this offer, so I will be retiring as of September 17, 2020. This is totally voluntary. There is no pressure for me to accept this offer. I made my decision after prayerful consideration. First, the offer is most generous and makes the transition to retirement financially possible as I will return to the States on Sept 14, and after quarantine, will reestablish my home there. Second, it comes at a time at PIASS that it is possible for me to leave with a clear conscience, that I will leave classes and students at a good place. The work is never done, but this is a good transition point since I have taught all my classes for this year. While I would like to see the English chapel reopened before I leave, we will trust God for that. But most important. I have God's peace about this. The day I got the notice that there would be an offer forthcoming, I was unsettled and began to pray. I spent most of that evening in prayer, seeking God's direction. I had made the decision last year to renew my contract for another 4 years and was content with that decision. Now here was a call to look at that decision again. I was disturbed, so I prayed diligently. I fell asleep praying and slept peacefully through the night, which for an old woman with a weak bladder is close to a miracle. At 5:30 a.m., my usual morning, I awoke from a dream where I was sorting through my belongings and packing to leave. As I came fully awake, I had a great peace that I should take the offer of retirement, if it made financial sense. I had God's peace that surpasses all human understanding. The offer exceeded my expectations. God has provided for my transition back to the States. The airport is now open and there are reasonable, safe flights available. Beyond that, I believe this is a responsible decision for the body of Christ. I can retire and in so doing may help someone younger to keep a needed job. This is part of living in community, a lifestyle I have cherished here in Africa. This is not to say that I will not miss my colleagues and my students and the life here in Rwanda. I will. But I also know that this is God's time and he is working in all of this. He has confirmed it for me in scripture repeatedly in the last few weeks. I praise him for his word to me and for his clear direction. I want to take this time to thank you for accompanying me on this wonderful adventure of faith that led me first to Malawi and then to Rwanda. You have made it possible for me to minister through your financial, prayer, and fellowship support. You have been part of this journey and this ministry. Together we have seen God work in individual's lives and in his church. I ask for your continued support of the global witness of the Presbyterian Church, (U.S.A.), and our ongoing journey with our global partners. Over the next several days you will receive a letter from Sara Lisherness, Interim Director, Presbyterian World Mission that will include information about an invitation for a virtual farewell gathering for me, hosted by Mission Engagement and Support. I hope that you consider attending. Now, I look with expectation to the next adventure that God has for me. I don't yet know what this retirement will look like or how God will use my time and energies, but God knows, and I am trusting him for his leading to a different type of ministry, in his grace. I'll be in Pittsburgh Sept. 14 and retired Sept. 17. I hope to hear from you and maybe even see some of you, as safety allows. God bless you for your faithfulness.

Yours in Christ,  
Kay Day

## Stewardship Works

Your faithful acts of stewardship have been appreciated, especially during these recent months. Our expenses continue whether the sanctuary is filled or empty. Because of your generosity we have been able to retain staff, meet bills and assist those in need.

## Pastoral Care

Because of health restrictions, visitors have not been permitted to enter hospitals and other care facilities. Clergy have also been advised not to enter personal residences as not to spread any disease unknowingly. If you have any pastoral needs, please contact the minister so some creative solution can be found.

## October Newsletter

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

## Help Starts Here

PA 2-1-1 Southwest is a free resource and information hub that connects people with community, health and disaster services in 11 counties through a free, 24/7 confidential phone service and website. If you have a concern or a need dial 2-1-1 or email [info@pa211sw.org](mailto:info@pa211sw.org) and you will be connected to an organization that can help.

## **A Note from the Pastor:**

You may not realize it, but I am by my nature an introvert. That is part of the reason I do not take part in social media. As a pastor, my life is very much in the public eye and I appreciate a degree of privacy. There is a downside to that. In order for me to access others on social media, I need to open an account. If I want to hear my friends preaching on their Facebook page, I have to be on Facebook. I signed up (kicking and screaming). There is however nothing on my page. Each day I receive requests to “friend” good people. Because I do not have the time and energy to maintain online relationships, I have not accepted any of these offers. If you have made such a request and have not received a response, please do not take it personally. Frankly, my personal life is pretty dull and uninteresting (which is not a bad thing). I am, however, always available through email and can be contacted at pastor@r-church.com. There is also an antiquated contraption called the telephone. Please don’t hesitate to call.

## **A Prayer for Provision this School Year**

*God will supply all my needs from His glorious riches,  
which have been given to me in Christ Jesus.*

*(adapted from Philippians 4:19)*

Father, thank you that You take care of us. Lord, I trust that whatever my kids lack this year in school, You will teach them. For the ones doing school away from me, I ask that You give them teachers who are filled with compassion, understanding and grace. I pray that I am filled with compassion, understanding and grace as I teach the ones at home. Fill their school year with abundant favor and blessing. I pray no detail will be left undone for them for this year; everything they need will be provided for them. Thank you that You are preparing me to teach this year and prepping my kids to learn. In Jesus’ name, Amen!  
(from flourishingtoday.com)

## **Food for Family Thought**

1. Suppose you were told that you could have one wish come true—but the wish you make would have to be for someone else, not for yourself. What would you wish for, and for whom would you wish it?  
\*\*Empathy is a fundamental building block for all moral growth. Make it a family value to frequently consider how your behavior and choices affect others. When your child talks about other children’s experiences, gently ask, “And how do you think he/she felt about that?” This will nurture your child’s capacity for compassion.
2. Suppose that, whenever you talked, it wouldn’t be your voice that people heard—it would be the sound of a particular animal. Which animal’s sound would you choose for your voice?  
\*\*Eating meals together regularly as a family has many benefits. When children are heard and responded to during mealtime conversations, they discover their own voice. They gain the confidence and security that assures them they belong.