



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

NOVEMBER 2020

As the Peanuts Gang sits around the table, they share what they're thankful for. Charlie Brown says, "I'm thankful for the little red haired girl." Linus sighs, "I'm thankful for my soft, warm blanket." Snoopy muses, "I'm thankful for my dog house and a full dinner bowl." Woodstock twitters, "I'm thankful I'm not a turkey."

Even in the darkest of days, there is something for which we are grateful—sometimes its something we have and sometimes its something we don't have. Its all a matter of perspective. To say that this year has been trying is an understatement...concerns about the COVID pandemic, changes in our everyday routines, frustrations in the midst of political upheaval, an uncertain feeling about our future. What was will probably never be again, yet in the midst of change we are not forsaken. Although "the mountains shake and the waters foam, the nations are in an uproar and the kingdoms totter." (Psalm 46) God is still God. His voice can be heard over the din of the chaos. His hand can make a way through the rubble. His arm can cradle us from fear to peace. Though everything around us is falling away his bidding, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) is our blessed assurance that being found in Jesus, Jesus is mine and we are his.

It's been said that gratitude turns what we have into enough. Born a slave, lame from birth, Epictetus wrote banished from Rome and declared free after his death, "He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things he does not have, but rejoices for those which he does have." There are two words that are central to our Reformed Faith—grace and gratitude. The Heidelberg Catechism sums them up in its 86th question: Since we have been delivered from our misery by grace through Christ without merit of our own, why then should we do good works? Because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image, so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits, so that he may be praised through us, so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits, and so that by our godly living our neighbors may be won over to Christ. In other words, having been blessed we are called to become a blessing. Having been redeemed we can face all things knowing that we need not fear because we belong to God and being found in Christ, we know that nothing can separate us from him. As God's own, holy and beloved, we trust that no matter what our circumstance God will work all things for good regardless of evil's intention. The difficulty we face here and now is temporary. In the context of the eternal home prepared for us, this earthly sojourn is but a "brief momentary affliction" (II Corinthians 4:17).

Each Lord's Day as we present our tithes and offerings, we sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow...." The key to gratitude is remembering that all we have is a gift from God, undeserved yet given with love. Such is at the heart of the Psalms giving us perspective to "thank the Lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever."

Norman Rockwell is by far my favorite artist and of all his work, his piece entitled "Saying Grace" touches my heart most deeply. No doubt you've seen it. It debuted November 24, 1951 on the Thanksgiving issue of the Saturday Evening Post. The scene is a crowded, smoky restaurant across the street from an old factory. Workers gather to eat their lunch, but they are taken back by an older woman and her grandson who share their table, and in the midst of the busyness pause to give thanks. The theme was inspired by a Mennonite family Rockwell witnessed one day. They say a picture is worth a thousand words (actually this picture was sold for \$46 million in 2013). But in my heart, the scene is priceless—an image that keeps me grounded in humility while inspired in praise.

"Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One, give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ his Son. Let the weak say 'I am strong,' let the poor say 'I am rich,' because of what the Lord has done for us".....

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Jim

Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, November 1

Revelation 7:9-17

I John 3:1-3

Sunday, November 8

Matthew 25:1-13

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

Sunday, November 15

I Thessalonians 5:1-11

Matthew 25:14-30

Sunday, November 22

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

Ephesians 1:15-23

Sunday, November 29

Isaiah 64:1-9

Mark 13:24-37

Sunday, December 6

II Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

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.

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.

Worship Assistants

November 1

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone

Flowers: Clara Savage Family

Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

November 8

Liturgist: Rick Shoemaker

Flowers: Cindy Borbonus

Flowers: Lee & Bunny Ednie

Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

November 15

Liturgist: Jean Heberling

Flowers: Gary & Barri Stuchal

November 22

Liturgist: Lon Ferguson

Flowers: Terry & Barb Brown

November 29-1st of Advent

Flowers: Greg & Marlene Shirley

Offering Counters

Bob & Charlotte Cosharek



Thanksgiving Baskets

Thanksgiving Baskets for families in the community will be assembled by the deacons. We ask that you consider donating food items or giving a monetary contribution. Articles of food can include: canned fruit or vegetables, boxed baked goods, pie fillings, Jello, boxes of stuffing mix, cranberry sauce, just to name a few. A container will be available at the back of the church for the collection of food donations. (Please check expiration dates on items before donating them.)

If you are aware of a family who may need a Thanksgiving Basket, please contact Marilyn Neal or Pastor Monroe, 724-459-7991 by Monday, November 16th. Thank you for your generous help. We look forward to sharing another happy holiday with those in our community!

Coats-For-Kids Drive

The 6th Annual Coats-For-Kids Drive is being held. We are receiving monetary donations for the purchase of specific size coats for kids in need. Please mark your donation clearly for "Coat Drive" and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church. If you know of a family with children who may need a winter coat, please contact Janet Smith.



Wednesday Morning Bible Study

Wednesday morning Bible Study meets at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. We ask that masks be worn throughout our time together, if possible. Please respect the space of others when choosing your seat. Pastor Monroe will be using the sound system so as to be heard clearly. For those who would like to participate from home, we are set up to offer Bible Study via Zoom. If you are interested, please call the church office for more details.

We will celebrate the Lord's Supper on *Christ the King Sunday, November 22nd* during worship. As was done for World Wide Communion, 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.



Don't Forget...

Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday, November 1st. Mark your calendars and remember to change your clocks!

2021 Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for the New Year will soon be available for you to pick up at the back of the sanctuary. If you do not have church offering envelopes and would like a box set, please contact the church office at 724-459-7991. If you would like your envelopes mailed to you, please call the office.

The church office
will be closed
Thursday, November 26
and
Friday, November 27
for the
Thanksgiving
Holiday

Advent Devotionals

A variety of Advent Devotionals will be available to you on Sunday, November 29th. These guides are meant to help you as you move through the season to the coming of the Christ Child. You can pick one up at the back of the sanctuary.

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.

December Graduates

It's our tradition to recognize the accomplishments of our students. If you are aware of anyone who may be graduating in December, please contact the church office.

Thank You

Thank you to Tom Smith for his many years of faithful service as assistant treasurer for our church. At the last Session meeting, Dennis Gould was elected as our new assistant treasurer.

Session Meetings

Our elders regularly meet the fourth Tuesday each month. At the last Session meeting, the regular meeting day was changed to the third Tuesday of each month.

Thank You

We thank those who work so hard each week to prepare the church building for groups coming in and our use on Sunday. Please know that we are making every effort to provide a safe environment. Your patience and cooperation in this process is appreciated.

Musicians

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

Opportunities Moving Forward

We are continually in need of volunteers to be trained to run new worship equipment. We are very grateful to those who have stepped up already. Please see Dennis Gould or contact the church office to be a part of this new venture.

Mission Moment

Once upon a time in a pandemic

While staying connected to family, friends and church, Paula Howlett, a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in DeKalb, Illinois, has followed all the rules for social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a retired early childhood special education teacher, Howlett understands how easily things like viruses can spread. So, she's been cautious, talking to her granddaughters by phone, video chat, driveway visits or inside-outside front-door story time, which the kids loved. "They could see the pictures much better through the glass than on screen," Howlett said. Maisie, who turned 5 in June and began kindergarten in the fall, has continued her weekly dance classes virtually, and Freya celebrated her first birthday with a safe, socially distanced parade. Maisie is "quite verbal," Howlett said. "Sometimes she tells me, 'I want to read you a story.' Then she tells a story from a book we've read before." Although Howlett would love to give her granddaughters a big hug, the closest she's been to them in months is this inside-outside storybook time that began as a spur-of-the-moment idea. Typically, she'd been reading by video chat with the girls each evening before bedtime. They never seem to tire of hearing Grandma Howlett, whom they lovingly call "Guy Guy," read the same stories again and again. "I have tons of books," Howlett said. "They seem to like just about anything." Favorites include any of the adventures of "Franklin the Turtle," "Five Minutes' Peace," a story about a mother elephant and her three energetic elephant children, and "Bad Hair Day," a tale about a little girl who wears a hat because she isn't quite sure about the at-home haircut her mother gave her. "I try and sneak in other books," but they ask for these often, Howlett said. Before the pandemic, Howlett saw the girls nearly every day, since they live just across town, maybe three miles away. Their paternal grandmother, "Nana Wendy," lives just south of DeKalb, and also sees the girls often. Sometimes Nana and Maisie go for socially distanced bike rides, or Nana may jog behind Maisie as she rides her bike. Howlett's daughter, Kat Schnorr, mother of Maisie and Freya, grew up attending Westminster Presbyterian Church and has followed her mom's career path in teaching. Schnorr worked for several years as a nursery attendant before accepting the position of Sunday school coordinator and teacher at the church. Westminster Presbyterian Preschool, now in a different location and known as The Growing Place, was Howlett's first job after college graduation. She is currently president of the board and her youngest granddaughter, Freya, is in the day care program. Howlett has a couple of dogs, close friends and has enjoyed virtual church during this time of isolation. She knew the technology was in place but had never need to try it before. She's noticed that former members who have moved away are also tuning in to worship virtually. "Easter Sunday was wonderful. I really felt in community, seeing who's there as their names come up. Westminster also has a 'virtual coffee hour' Zoom meeting, so people can catch up with one another and pass along prayer concerns. It's not the same, of course, but certainly better than not having anything." She says it is an exciting time to be part of Westminster Presbyterian. The church hopes to call a youth pastor soon. For now, there are only a few preschool-age children in the church, maybe six or seven, but a ministry for children in a nearby apartment building and a mid-week dinner program are promising post-pandemic outreach ministries. May 27 was Howlett's 69th birthday. Granddaughter Maisie told her mother, "I think we should have a parade for Guy Guy's birthday. And, I think we should do it as soon as she wakes up!"

Tammy Warren, Communications Associate, Presbyterian Mission Agency

At Home Worship Resources

In past weeks, we have tried to pass on by email faith building resources to use at home. The Presbyterian Outlook has been making available "Faith Formation at Home" and "Christian Education at Home." The first resource is focused more on family worship. The second is to assist parents in teaching Bible lessons to their children. The Christian Education Committee of our church has also invested in "Children's Bulletins." Each week, along with the "Christian Education at Home" resource, Children's Bulletins are sent via email for the children of our church. They include activities that reinforce the message of that Sunday. If you are interested in receiving either or all of these resources, "Faith Formation at Home" or "Christian Education at Home" and the Children's Bulletins, please contact the church office at 724-459-7991 to be added to the email list. If email is not an option, a paper copy can be mailed to you.

Looking Ahead to Lent

The Ministerium has again decided to compile and publish a Community Lenten Devotional in 2021. Again this year there are several scriptures to choose from each day through Lent. Those who volunteer to submit a devotion will list the scripture lesson they have chosen, a devotional message of about 400 words, and a one or two sentence prayer. You can sign your name, or remain anonymous. All submissions will be gathered by Tuesday, January 26th and will be compiled into booklet form, duplicated, then distributed to area churches for use during the Lenten Season (which begins Ash Wednesday, February 17). Our congregation has been assigned 6 days. They are listed below:

MARCH 1 - Taken

MARCH 2 - Taken

MARCH 3 - Taken

MARCH 4 - Taken

MARCH 5 - Psalm 19; Exodus 19:9b-15; Acts 7:30-40

MARCH 6 - Psalm 19; Exodus 19:16-25; Mark 9:2-8

Volunteers are needed to write devotional thoughts for the days not taken above. If you feel led to share with your brothers and sisters in Blairsville, please let Pastor Monroe know of your willingness as soon as possible.

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.



December Newsletter

Articles to be published in the December edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, November 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 and you will be connected to an organization that can help.

Thank You from Rwanda

Brothers and Sisters,

We would like to take this opportunity in order to greet you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. How are you now?

After receiving your important financial support, we thank you very much for your gift given for us. It will help in a lot of things notably modern hand washing station at the Gitarama Parish.

We pray for you; be blessed.

Yours faithfully,

Pastor Alphonse Ndererehe
Gitarama Parish

Compassion Update

Dear Friends,

I your child Hagenimana Vestine pleased to write to you in the name of Jesus, how are you doing? We are also fighting against COVID-19 and many people have died out of it. We therefore thank God for the gift of life we have, it is by the grace of God. How are you doing? My parents and relatives are greeting you. The weather is cold. How is your weather?

Yours,

Hagenimana Vestine



**“A word fitly spoken is like
apples of gold in pictures of silver.”
Proverbs 25: 1 1**

**The secret of happy living
is not just doing what you like
but liking what you do.**

**The seven ages of man:
spills, drills, thrills, bills, ills, pills, wills**



Tel-A-Story

The Tel-A-Story phone number is 1-888-878-8660. After listening to the recorded message, a child is given the opportunity to press "1" to talk to a real person and hear more about believing in Jesus. What a great way to reach more children during the pandemic! Please be sure to share this number with the children you know.

Food for Family Thought

1. If you could travel back in time to live through any one year or event in American history, which year or event would you want to experience?
**Quickly make a spiritual timeline that lists the moments and events in your life that had the most impact on your spiritual beliefs. Review the highs and the lows, and list the top three most influential events. Reflect on what God was trying to tell you in these moments.
2. If you could safely witness any special effect being filmed for a movie, which one would you want to see above all others?
**Sometimes we expect God to appear in our lives like a special effect in a blockbuster movie. But it's more likely that we'll recognize God in the ripple rather than in the wave, or hear God in the silent aftermath rather than the raging storm—if only we take time to look and to listen.
3. When you consider our amazing and complex earth, in what particular aspect of it do you find it easiest to "see" God?
**I recall how long it took to learn how to hit a baseball. As he pitched ball after ball my way, my father would chant, "Keep your eye on the ball." But fear had me closing my eyes and swinging blindly. In your life, what does fear prevent you from seeing?