



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

FEBRUARY 2021

What a difference a year makes. When I go through my “memory box” and see my school pictures from kindergarten to graduation I say to myself, “What a difference a year makes.” When I open holiday greetings and read news-filled Christmas letters I say to myself, “What a difference a year makes.” When I update my pastoral log of baptisms, weddings and funerals recording the names of the faithful who have come into this world and have entered the Church Triumphant, I say to myself, “What a difference a year makes.” As we move from sitting around tables in the Fellowship Hall, eating, laughing, visiting with each other as we hold our annual meeting to sitting in the pews or watching on our laptops as we take care of business, I say to myself, “What a difference a year makes.”

In January, 1964 as Bob Dylan released his hit, “The Times They Are-a-Changin’”, we hummed along with yet another folk singer – more into the catchy tune than to the prophetic lyrics. About the same time, the Byrds put to music the ancient words of King Solomon (10th century BC) as we find them in Ecclesiastes 3:18. “Turn, Turn, Turn”, “To everything there is a season, a time for every matter under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die....a time to mourn, and a time to dance....a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.” No matter which way we’ve turned this year we have had to face another challenge, in our personal lives, as a family, as a church. Yet in the midst of the change and the whirling of our turns we have discovered, that God is faithful and true to his promise. In God’s great mystery he strives with us where we are, yet he beckons us to and welcomes us to that new place he holds for us.

At a recent Presbytery meeting, held on a Zoom platform, we broke into chatrooms and shared how our congregational lives have been affected in 2020. To a person there was witness to the ways that in the face of weakness we have found a new strength, in the midst of scarcity our needs have been supplied and in forced physical distancing we have enjoyed a deeper spiritual bondage. Yes, things have been different but God has been good. We have recognized that what we want and what we need are not the same. We have learned the intimacies of fellowship in the things of the Holy Spirit. We’ve realized the being the church is not so much sitting together in the sanctuary as it is sharing the love of God where we are quarantined. We’ve gained the ability to see beyond the mask to the heart of our sisters and brothers. We’ve been reminded that we need others as much as they need us and it is only together in Christ that we can move into the future prepared for us.

As a congregation we have shown the resilience of Christian faith, and we have without ceasing, given thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (I Thessalonians 5:16-18). Calls and texts of encouragement, concerns carried on the wings of prayer, sharing of resources to feed the hungry and provide for those trying to keep their household above water, hands stretched out to comfort, hearts open to welcome. What a difference a year makes. How we have grown in our understanding and in our trust of God’s promise. Thank the Lord, we are not the people we once were and too we are not yet the fullness of who we are becoming. Paul concludes the words we just read with this benediction – “May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.” In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we who know the joy of redemption will say, Amen!

In Christ’s Love,

(Reprint of the Pastor’s Annual Report)



Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, February 7

Isaiah 40:21-31
Mark 1:29-39

Sunday, February 14

II Kings 2:12
Mark 9:2-9

Ash Wednesday, February 17

II Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Isaiah 58:1-12

Sunday, February 21

I Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:9-15

Sunday, February 28

Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38

Sunday, March 7

Exodus 20:1-17
John 2:13-22



We will gather for worship at 7:00 p.m. on Ash Wednesday, February 17th. There will be the imposition of ashes for those who wish to receive them and the Lord's Supper will be celebrated. We hope you will plan to join us as Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the Lenten Season.

Worship Assistants

February 7

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone
Streaming: Olivia Eckenroad
Proj/Audio: Kristi Eckenroad & Dennis Gould

February 14

Liturgist: Jean Heberling
Streaming: Chase Stuchal
Proj/Audio: Austin Baker & Cole Stuchal

February 17-Ash Wed Communion

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe
Streaming: John Bruner
Proj/Audio: Elizabeth & Abigail Bruner

February 21-First of Lent

Liturgist: Lon Ferguson
Streaming: Mark Borbonus
Proj/Audio: Eli & Brylea Borbonus

February 28-Second of Lent

Liturgist: Dennis Gould
Streaming: John Bruner
Proj/Audio: Elizabeth & Abigail Bruner

Offering Counters

Bob & Charlotte Cosharek

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

On Sunday, January 31st immediately following worship, we held our Annual Congregational Meeting. The work of the church during 2020 was reviewed and the 2021 Nominating Committee was elected. Reports distributed at this meeting are available at the back of the sanctuary for those who were unable to attend. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please contact the church office at 724-459-7991.

3rd Annual Community Lenten Devotional

The Blairsville Area Ministerium has decided to once again put together a community Lenten devotional. Scripture texts have been distributed to the participating churches and individuals have written their devotions to share. Assembly of the booklets will begin this week. Many copies will be published and they will be made available to you by Sunday, February 14th. If you would like a digital copy sent to you via email, please contact the church office, 724-459-7991. We would like to thank those who volunteered to write devotions from our congregation. Also, a special thank you to Kathy Bella for submitting artwork for the cover. It truly is a community endeavor and appreciated by so many.

Souper Bowl of Caring Offering

Since 1990, young people have been leading the charge and inspiring others to collect dollars and food around the time of the Super Bowl Game. The money and food collected then is given, 100%, to a local charity. More than \$110 million has been collected, changing the nation's largest weekend of football into the largest weekend of caring. We will receive our Souper Bowl of Caring Offering Sunday, February 7th during morning worship. One hundred percent of these gifts will be sent to ICCAP in support of the Food Bank.

We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Ash Wednesday, February 17th during the 7:00 p.m. worship service. Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.



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 uses 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.

2021 Flower Chart

The 2021 Flower Chart is hanging in the hallway outside the church office. If you would like to order flowers for Sunday worship, please use the chart to sign-up for your choice of date. Flowers are \$20/Sunday and checks can be made payable to the Board of Deacons. We hope that those ordering flowers through the deacons would take the arrangement following worship or pick them up at the church by the following Tuesday. Flowers that remain at the church after Tuesday will be shared with homebound members of the congregation. Please contact the church office with any questions or concerns.

Chancel Choir

The Chancel Choir gathers for rehearsal each Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Safety measures are followed while meeting. If you are interested in joining the choir or if you have questions, please contact Cindy Borbonus. We also invite those who would like to share their musical gifts during worship to contact Cindy for more information.

Update on Community Lenten Lunches

Each year the community gathers each Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. during Lent for a worship service followed by a luncheon. Last year the remaining lunches were cancelled in March due to the pandemic. The ministerium has decided to cancel the Lenten Services for the 2021 season due to the ongoing safety concerns.

March Newsletter

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

The Session Committees for 2021

Each year the committees of session seek to have volunteers become active participants. Please review the committees and their responsibilities and consider serving. If you would like more information or have questions, please see Pastor Monroe or an elder. Chairs were determined at the January Session meeting.

Worship – Worship services, sacraments, music, funerals, weddings – Co-chairs, Doug Clayton and Gene Artman

Mission – Benevolences, special offerings, global & local missions and missionaries – Chair, Gene Artman

Christian Education – Sunday school programs, curriculum, adult education, youth work, leadership education – Chair, Mary Anzelone

Finance – Finances, special funds, and annual budget – Chair, Rick Shoemaker

Stewardship – Stewardship education and programs, challenges the congregation in its faithful use of the many different resources entrusted to our care – Chair, Kim McKinney

Property & Maintenance – Construction, maintenance, repairs, housekeeping, safety, security, yard work, inventory – Co-chairs, Pat Swope and Bob Cosharek

Congregational Fellowship – Suppers, Dinner Theater, picnics, outings, trips, camping – Chair, Joan Moran

Evangelism – New member recruitment and assimilation, outreach, publicity – Co-chairs, Lisa Hainaut and Lon Ferguson

At Home Worship Resources

In the past year, we have tried to send on by email faith building resources to use at home. The Presbyterian Outlook has been faithfully making at home resources 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.

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 to maintain a clean and safe environment. 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.

Stewardship Works

Your faithful acts of stewardship have been appreciated, especially over the last year. 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. We thank you for your faithfulness.

Food for Family Thought

1. If you had to wear an object around your neck at all times, something that would be attached to a thin chain or string, what would it be? Don't choose something too heavy-you have to wear it all the time!

**One of the most powerful ways to nurture a living faith in your child is to adorn your home with objects that represent your faith-a cross, a family Bible, a statue, a prayer. These objects speak to your child around the clock of the faith that sustains us in this lifetime.

2. If you asked 5 people who know you to write down the one word that best describes you, what do you think would be the most common word? Consider the answer carefully from their viewpoint, not yours.

**Children need our feedback. But be sure to tell the whole story. While it's important that we help our children gain self-discipline by correcting them when they've slipped, we also should commend them of their truest identity-as beloved sons & daughters of God.