



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

APRIL 2021

I saw a cartoon the other day. As the chocolate Easter bunny laid on the couch in the psychiatrist's office he said, "I don't know Doc, I just feel so hollow inside." You've probably never felt like a chocolate Easter bunny (and if you have, we should have a talk) but there is not one of us who doesn't know the sensation of feeling hollow, empty, numbed. Life in this world has a way of draining us of energy, emotion, direction. The expectations of those around us consume us one bite at a time. In loving concern we care for others to the point we can't care anymore. The constant changes each day brings leaves us unsure of whether we're coming or going. A philosophy professor asked her class— "which of the two is most detrimental to society, ignorance or apathy?" When called upon, one student replied, "I don't know and I don't care."

Jesus stepped into a hollow world and made an announcement. "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) God sees the emptiness that plagues the hearts of his people, hears the cries of the hopeless soul, knows those thoughts that shadow our vision and weigh us down. And God wants so much more for us. Each day, a part of us dies. Sometimes it's because of the way we've been treated, sometimes because of foolish choices we've made and sometimes because of the nature of things in this world. But God is not content to allow death to consume his people. Taking the curse of sin and death upon Himself, Jesus takes them to the grave and as he is raised he proves his authority and in that power declares us free.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is perceived in different ways. Some dismiss it as impossible foolishness of deluded people. Some say it's merely a metaphor intended to make people feel good. Some say Jesus died in body, but his spirit was raised from death. But as Christians we believe that Jesus physically died and descended into the grave, into Hell itself. While he himself was sinless, he took on the weight and consequence of our sin—mine and yours'. He literally took that sin as far away as it could be taken. And in the same powerful love with which Jesus died, the Father raised him from the grave. With the bond of sin broken, not only was Jesus set free, but so too we are set free to live. And that which was made hollow by the world was filled with hope and purpose by God.

In I Corinthians 15, Paul addresses what resurrection means to us and for us. If Christ has not been raised we are still in our sin. That means our faith has been futile and we have been scammed by God. It means we have been lied to, fools who are to be pitied. It means that hope is empty and life here is hollow. It means this world is all that there is, death is the end. God has been defeated and we are helpless.

But the good news of Easter declares to all creation that Jesus Christ is risen, he's alive and because he lives, we live also. The Heidelberg Catechism (question 45) gives us perspective. "What benefit do we receive from the resurrection of Christ? First, by his resurrection he has overcome death that he might make us share in the righteousness which he has obtained for us through his death. Second, we to are now raised by his power to a new life. Third, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection."

That is why we sing, "Because he lives, I can face tomorrow, because he lives all fear is gone; because I know who holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives."

May the resurrection of Christ fill your hollowness with peace, hope and joy.....

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Jim

Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Maundy Thursday, April 1

Exodus 12:1-14
John 13:1-17, 31-35

Sunday, April 4-Easter Day

Isaiah 25:6-9
John 20:1-18
Mark 16:1-8

Sunday, April 11

Acts 4:32-35
John 20:19-31

Sunday, April 18

I John 3:1-7
Luke 24:36-48

Sunday, April 25

I John 3:16-24
John 10:11-18

Sunday, May 2

I John 4:7-21
John 15:1-8

May Newsletter

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

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.

Worship Assistants

April 1-Maundy Thursday

Liturgist: Bobbi Monroe

April 4-Easter Day 8:30 AM

Streaming: The Clayton
Proj/Audio: Family
Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

April 4-Easter Day 11:00 AM

Liturgist: Mary Gorslene
Streaming: The Clayton
Proj/Audio: Family
Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

April 11

Liturgist: Lon Ferguson
Streaming: Olivia Eckenroad
Proj/Audio: Kristi Eckenroad & Dennis Gould

April 18

Liturgist: Jean Heberling
Flowers: Terry & Barb Brown
Streaming: Chase Stuchal
Proj/Audio: Austin Baker

April 25

Liturgist: Dennis Gould
Flowers: Ron & Kim McKinney
Streaming: Mark Borbonus
Proj/Audio: Eli & Brylea Borbonus

Offering Counters

Elaine Jellison & Becky Bence



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 as special music during a worship service to contact Cindy for more information.

OGHS Offering Update

We received the One Great Hour of Sharing offering Sunday, March 28th during the worship hour. These gifts will be sent to aid with food for the hungry, aid and shelter for those overcoming catastrophe and conflict, and to resource communities working to end poverty and oppression. To date, our offering total is \$443.18. There is still time to give if you haven't had the opportunity to send your gifts.

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.

Coats for Kids Continue

Coats for Kids continue to be available to children and teens in the community. Please contact Janet Smith or the church office should you become aware of a need. Last year, 36 coats were distributed to kids in the area. Thank you to all those who have contributed to the coat program.

Many Thanks

Over the years, Bill Lint has faithfully maintained bulletin boards around the church bringing messages of encouragement and hope. We thank him for the many ways he uses his artistic abilities to God's praise.

Update from Haiti-Cindy Corell

Dear friends,

Crime in Haiti's cities and towns is so rampant that leaving your home means taking a chance.

Haitian parents fear each time their children leave for school. They hold their breath and are ever watchful when they go out to find food or work.

The deep fear of kidnapping or robbery or worse is like a terrible storm that won't let up.

"How long, O Lord?" cried the writer of Psalm 13. "Will you forget me forever?"

As a Joining Hands network, FONDAMA fights for farmers across rural Haiti. In two desperately poor communities, our organizations are aided in growing gardens close to their homes. Thanks to your generous support, families soon will harvest that produce and begin to plant again.

Since the people of Haiti won independence from French slaveholders, land has been their livelihood. A smidgen of an acre of arable land is enough to grow crops, and maybe raise a few goats or a cow.

Until the 1980s, that is how Haitians have survived. The country produced its own food.

Corruption breeds poverty, and unjust international interference has resulted in an island nation that depends greatly on food imports, is extremely vulnerable to deadly droughts and storms, and its small stakeholder farmers are at great risk of land-grabbing.

Haiti is on the brink of dictatorship. President Jovenel Moise's term ended on Feb. 7, 2021 many of his critics and Haitian constitutional scholars claim. But near daily protests have not stopped him. If anything, critics claim, Moise is dangerously amassing more illicit power, including pushing for a referendum to adopt a new version of the Constitution written by Moise and which would give him greater power.

In mid-February, members of the United Nations Security Council questioned Moise's actions, but many Haitians fear the country is descending into further chaos and insecurity. The people of Haiti are hungry, and worse than that, they are exhausted.

It's almost been a year since I've been at my home in Port-au-Prince. Instability sent me back to the U.S. in September 2019, and when I was finally returned in March 2020 COVID-19 struck. World Mission evacuated me again. Yet, I share the Haitians' fear and worry, even if only from far away.

In my eight years as a mission co-worker serving alongside the people of Haiti, I've never felt their hopelessness. Often, I share their many difficulties, but their faith always has been deeper.

Or is it? These past months of worsening news have taken their toll – on our dear friends in Haiti, and on me.

It helps to read the last few verses of Psalm 13:

"But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me."

No doubt once again you will ask how you can help our friends in Haiti during this desperate time?

Be assured that you already have begun. Our FONDAMA garden project that puts fresh produce close to family homes is growing. It's not the whole answer, but it's a start. We are so grateful for the donations already received. Gardens were planted in December in Dofine and Kenscoff. Harvest is coming within weeks.

Then new gardens will be planted, we hope and pray, in other communities.

But there is something more you can do. Let us hold onto hope for our weary friends in Haiti.

Please keep them in prayers, praying:

Loving God, please remind your children in Haiti that it is you who holds them tight. Replenish their courage. Feed their strength. Assuage their great anguish. Respond to their thirst for hope amid all their troubles. Help us to find resources to continue projects that create ways for them to feed their families with dignity and joy. It is in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Thank you, friends, for all the many ways you support our ministry in Haiti, and my opportunity to accompany the people there, even while I am not with them in person. It is because of your gifts that we are able to walk with God's people of deep faith.

Cindy Corell
Mission Co-Worker



Easter Blessings

We thank all those who shared their talents for our Easter celebration this year. We appreciate the Bell Choir members who rang at the early service, the Blairsville Brass who played during the 11:00 service, our Chancel Choir for their musical selection, Jonathan and Doug Clayton for running the sound and streaming equipment, and Pat and Janeen Swope who ushered for both services. We thank the deacons for arranging to have the beauty of the flowers in worship and to all those who ordered. We are truly blessed with many who are willing to share their time and talents.

Persevere PA-COVID 19 Crisis Counseling Program

Do you feel stressed, overwhelmed, alone, afraid, anxious? During these uncertain times, you are not alone. Connect with a free crisis counselor. Please call 1-855-284-2494. There are trained professionals available 24/7 ready to help you navigate these unprecedented challenges. These services are free and confidential.

Emergency Rental/Utility Assistance Program (ERAP)

Were you and your family affected by COVID-19 and behind on rent or utilities? If so, you may qualify for assistance. All assistance requested must be related to COVID-19 issues. To apply online, visit COMPASS at www.compass.state.pa.us or contact ICCAP and mention you are calling about the Emergency Rental & Utility Program.



Food for Family Thought

1. If you were given the opportunity to try and break any world record, which one do you think you would have the most fun trying to break?

**Introduce your child to the lives of the holy men and women of our faith. These people were not perfect. But, in the word of Saint Paul, they fought the good fight and ran the good race. Some did truly heroic things; others lived quite ordinary lives. All of them learned to love and serve God in the circumstances they were in.

2. If you won a grocery-store contest in which your prize was to fill up one shopping cart with anything you wanted, what specific items would be in your cart by the time you got to the check-out line?

**A trip to the store can be an occasion for lessons on gratitude and compassion for others. Almost two-fifths of the world lives on less than \$2.00 per day. Many lack not only food, but clean water and cooking fuel. The next time you are shopping with your child, count your blessings and think about what you can do for others.