



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

MAY 2021

For a number of months, our Wednesday morning Bible Study has been exploring the birth and expansion of the early church as recorded by Luke in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. In particular we've learned of the missionary journeys of Peter and Paul as the Holy Spirit has used them to preach and teach the gospel message. In the next to last chapter, Acts 27, Luke recounts the details of a sea voyage Paul takes. Strong winds, perilous waves, frigid temperatures batter the ship and crew. In an attempt to keep the vessel afloat, the men throw cargo overboard, even to the point of dismantling and ejecting the tackle. By the grace of God, the ship carrying 276 souls spots land and is able to run aground in a reef, without the loss of life. As the men make their way to shore, the natives of Malta welcome them and extend to them "unusual kindness."

From the safety of dry land, they look to the sea at their shipwrecked vessel with the waters of the bay filled with flotsam and jetsam. Those words have come to mean "bits and pieces" or "odds and ends," but technically they're maritime terms. Flotsam (from the French "to float") is debris left in the water as a result of a shipwreck. It was not put there deliberately, and can legally be claimed by the owner. Jetsam (from which we get the word jettison) is debris that was deliberately thrown overboard in an attempt to lighten the load and stabilize the ship. Because it was discarded deliberately, the law says "Finders keepers."

Our experience over the past year has been a shipwreck of sorts. While we rejoice as infection rates decline and vaccination rates increase, we nonetheless remain guarded. Sometimes light at the end of the tunnel means you're out of the woods. Other times it means you're in the path of an oncoming train. We may not be sure of what's ahead, but we are well aware of what has been left behind, a sea filled with flotsam and jetsam. Our lives have been disrupted and our losses are not yet fully realized. We have thrown away some of those things that weighed us down in an attempt to keep our lives afloat, and there are parts of us that have been ripped apart as we have crashed into the shore. Some of our losses can be reclaimed while others are gone forever. But the good news is we're still alive and by the grace of God we are offered unusual kindnesses.

Just as our personal lives have been changed so too our life as a community of faith. We grieve the time we've lost together as a family. We lament those things, those ways that we have been forced to put aside to stay afloat. We are perplexed by the strangeness of this new place in which we are called to live. But God is able to take our sadness and from it bring joy. God is able to turn our mourning into gladness. God is able to take death and from it resurrect life. That is the good news of this Easter season. As painful as this past year has been, God is able to bring from it a newness of life. In the face of forced change, we have been introduced to a better way of living. What we thought we couldn't live without we realize wasn't as important as we thought it was. And what we thought we could never accomplish has now been realized. Indeed, "with God all things are possible and in all things God works for good with those who love him and are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). This season of Easter, these forty days since the resurrection, we have enjoyed life with the risen Lord. But in a few days we will remember how the Son ascended into heaven where he is seated at the right hand of the Father. And once again there will be a sense of darkness and uncertainty.

But before Jesus ascended, he told his disciples to wait for he had a wonderful gift that was on the way, the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom we will be transformed, changed, never again to be the same. So, with the celebration of Pentecost, we are born again, renewed in the fullness of God's abiding presence.

We are the people of God and there is an unrelenting resilience to our faith. While we have enjoyed what was, it is but a foretaste of what will be. While where we were was comfortable, where we are being led is glorious. Life in the Spirit is an adventure and no matter where it leads us we move closer to the splendor of the Father's glory.....

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Jim

Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, May 2

I John 4:7-21

John 15:1-8

Sunday, May 9

I John 5:1-6

John 15:9-17

Sunday, May 16

I John 5:9-13

John 17:6-19

Sunday, May 23

John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

Acts 2:1-21

Sunday, May 30

Isaiah 6:1-8

Romans 8:12-17

Sunday, June 6

Genesis 3:8-15

II Corinthians 4:13-5:1



May 23 is Pentecost Sunday. The sacrament of Holy Communion will be shared during worship and the Pentecost Offering will be received. A gift to the Pentecost Offering helps the church encourage, develop, and support its young people, and also address the needs of at-risk children. 40% of the Pentecost offering will be retained by our congregation and be used to make an impact in the lives of young people within our own community. The remaining 60% is used to support children-at-risk, youth, and young adults through ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Please prayerfully consider your gifts.

Worship Assistants

May 2

Liturgist: Connie Bruner

Flowers: Bill & Deb Lint

Streaming: John Bruner

Proj/Audio: Elizabeth & Abigail Bruner

Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

May 9-Mother's Day

Liturgist: Mary Gorslene

Flowers: Joan Moran

Streaming: Olivia Eckenroad

Proj/Audio: Kristi Eckenroad & Dennis Gould

Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

May 16

Streaming: Chase Stuchal

Proj/Audio: Austin Baker

Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

May 23-Pentecost Communion

Flowers: Lee & Bunny Ednie

Streaming: Mark Borbonus

Proj/Audio: Eli & Brylea Borbonus

Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

May 30

Streaming: John Bruner

Proj/Audio: Elizabeth & Abigail Bruner

Ushers: Pat & Janeen Swope

Offering Counters

Linda George & Marilyn Neal



Graduates

We are looking for those in the congregation who are graduating. It is our tradition to honor the accomplishments of our graduates. If you or your child will be graduating, please contact the church office at, 724-459-7991 or upchurch@r-church.com.

June Newsletter

Articles to be published in the June edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Saturday, May 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.

Chancel Choir

The Chancel Choir will take a break for the summer and will resume in the Fall. We thank Cindy and the choir members for their dedication of coming together to provide special music for our worship services. We invite those who would like to share their musical gifts or know of someone who would be interested in sharing special music during a summer worship service, to contact Cindy Borbonus.

Church Membership

There are several in the congregation who have expressed interest in becoming members of the church. If you are interested or would like more information, please see Pastor Monroe or contact the church office, 724-459-7991.

Communion Servers

The Worship Committee would like to assemble a list of elders and deacons who are comfortable serving communion. If you would be willing to volunteer to serve the sacrament, please contact Gene Artman .

MOMENT FOR MISSION: Getting through ‘rough, anxious times’

The global pandemic’s impact on mental and semipiritual health was the focus of a recent panel discussion by the Presbyterian Mental Health Network.

The online discussion was the first major event for the network, which is striving to become an information hub for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) pastors and members looking for ways to better serve the mental health needs of their congregations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it a myriad of mental health challenges.

“During the pandemic, and everything else that’s going on right now, I don’t think you will find a human being that is not struggling with their mental health,” said Tara Rolstad, a network member and professional speaker. “These are just rough, anxious times.”

Sharing their expertise at the event was the Rev. Dr. Bridget Piggue, director of spiritual health at Emory University Hospital Midtown in Atlanta; the Rev. Dr. Jerry Cannon, head of staff at C.N. Jenkins Memorial Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC; and Dr. Valerie Lipscomb, ruling elder/clerk of session at Kirkwood Church in Bradenton, FL.

The panel discussion focused on “the specific issues that the pandemic has raised for our faith community,” Rolstad said. “So whether that’s pastors, church leaders, congregants and even families in the communities that we serve, how has the pandemic specifically affected our mental health and what are some of the issues that folks are already struggling with?”

The event, which was free and open to the public, also touched on “solutions and some of the ways we can help each other,” she said.

In a Kaiser Family Foundation Tracking Poll conducted in mid-July, 53% of U.S. adults reported that their mental health had been negatively impacted by worry and stress over the coronavirus. That was up from 32% in March, the first time the question had been included, according to KFF.

Many adults also reported specific troubles, such as difficulty sleeping (36%) or eating (32%), increased alcohol consumption or substance use (12%) and the worsening of chronic conditions (12%) due to worry and stress over the coronavirus, KFF noted.

By holding a panel discussion for those who are affected or have an interest in mental health, “we definitely are hoping that they will be encouraged that there’s an organization dedicated to this issue now and that they’ll show up to be a part of this conversation,” Rolstad said.

The network also hopes to attract people who might be interested in becoming more involved with the network, which was called for as part of a Presbyterian mental health initiative adopted by the 223rd General Assembly in 2018.

The network is intended “to provide a point of connection and support for people who want to work on mental health ministry where they are,” said Donna Miller, Associate for Mental Health Ministry for PC(USA).

Darla Carter, Communications Associate, Presbyterian Mission Agency

Summer Camping Opportunities thru CAPNWP (Camping Association of the Presbyteries of Northwestern Pennsylvania)

Camp Lambec is a picturesque 92-acres along Lake Erie shore with a beach. A great place for family-style seasonal camping. Paddleboats and canoes on the pond, with nearby indoor and outdoor chapels makes for a convenient and comfortable experience. Recreation hall, dining facilities, and nearby cabins add to the opportunity to this special camp facility for all sports.

All staff and volunteers who work with camp programs answer the call to servant leadership, are background checked and receive extensive training. Many of our staff have years or decades of experience. They are trained and experienced in leading meaningful and age-appropriate Bible study and worship for youth. Many of our leaders work, or are pursuing careers in, education or church vocations.

If you are interested in more information about summer camps, call the church office, 724-459-7991 or pick up a brochure at the back of the sanctuary.

We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Pentecost Sunday, May 23rd during the 11:00 a.m. worship service. Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.

Thoughts on 2021 Vacation Bible School

Due to the ongoing pandemic, this Summer the Christian Education Committee is considering an online Staycation VBS program. This program is offered through The Presbyterian Outlook site we currently use for our online Sunday School program. The theme verse will be from Psalm 34:8 *Taste and see that the Lord is good!*

Parent(s) along with our elementary-aged children will go on a journey exploring the places Jesus traveled and discovering the ways we can travel and share God's love while staying right in our own homes!

Staycation Bible School will make your family imagine that you're at your favorite restaurant or café as you explore together five food stories of the Bible. Using stories from the Old and New Testaments you will see the ways that God provides food for the world and how God uses us to help feed a hungry world.

We want to be sure you understand this program requires the parent(s) to participate with the child(ren). Please let the church office know if your family would be or would not be interested in participating.

COVID-19 Vaccines for Homebound

- * A working group of agencies in Indiana County have been developing a list of individuals who are "home bound" and are in need of a COVID-19 vaccine shot. According to the PA Department of Health, each county Area Agency on Aging office is designated as the point of contact for patients to register to receive a vaccine delivered to their home. At the present time Area Agency on Aging and Visiting Nurses Association have identified approximately 35 residents on the list. If you know of anyone considered a "home bound" individual who are in need of a COVID-19 vaccine, please contact the Area Agency on Aging directly to get them signed up. Their contact number is 724-349-4564. They will coordinate vaccination delivery in conjunction with IRMC to schedule the individual.
- * Also, transportation is available to those who can participate in public vaccination clinics but need a ride. Transportation can be arranged through INDIGO by calling 724-465-2140.
- * Finally, those individuals who are having difficulty making an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine, the Area Agency on Aging can also be contacted to work with them on getting an appointment scheduled.

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

If you could literally jump into the pages of any book you've ever read and experience the action along with the characters, which book would you choose?

**Think about a fictional character (from a book, comic book, movie, or TV program) that you admired when you were the age your child is now. Tell your child about the character and the story, sharing what you most enjoyed and appreciated about them and what lessons you learned.