



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

NOVEMBER 2021

We've been together nearly seventeen years, you and I. During that time we've gotten to know each other pretty well, to the point we have each other figured out. But there are some things about each other we haven't discovered—yet. One thing you may not know about me is that I enjoy boardgames. I have hundreds of them (literally hundreds). In some I learn facts I didn't know. In some I develop the ability to strategize. In some I have to deal with the consequence of rolling the dice. In some I learn that sometimes I must lose something in order to gain something. Playing boardgames is really a metaphor for living. These past eighteen months or so, I've learned that sometimes you move ahead three spaces and in the next turn, you're pushed back two.

Through COVID we've felt like everything we do is a roll of the dice. We've learned that you can be as careful as possible, yet you are only as safe as the person next to you. You can play by all the rules, but disease doesn't follow the rulebook. To quote the Scottish poet Robert Burns, "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley." I guess that's why telling God our plans sometimes makes God laugh, because only he knows the plans that have been made for us. That's not to say God is some puppeteer controlling our every move and determining our every outcome. But it is to say that even though life is beyond our control, it is not outside God's care for us. While we don't know what tomorrow holds, we know without a doubt who holds tomorrow—and knowing that is enough.

There is not a part of society, a part of our personal lives that has not been untouched, hampered by the pandemic. To be sure, the normal in which we once found comfort will never be the same. Sometimes the light at the end of the tunnel is a haven of rest and sometimes that light is an oncoming train. Communities of faith everywhere have been wrestling with change. Some smaller congregations who have been living on the edge have closed their doors and resigned to their circumstances while others have gotten up, dusted themselves off, tightened their belts and pressed ahead in new ways. Some have seen the change as a death sentence while others have faced it head on as a challenge. Researchers have studied the statistics on American churches and found a 30-30-40 pattern. During the pandemic, thirty percent of church attenders have drifted away from their faith community. Some out of frustration, some out of fear, some out of the self realization that religious practices don't mean that much to them after all. That doesn't mean they aren't spiritual any longer, it just means they don't find the need to experience faith as a community of believers. The next thirty percent finds themselves on the fence. They haven't decided to leave the church, but they're not sure if they're going to return. They've gotten used to doing other things on Sunday morning. They can watch services online at their convenience. They still feel connected to the congregation, but they don't feel the need to always be there. The last forty percent of folks have returned. They're back in the saddle and ready to ride, wanting to see the church move forward. Mind you, this 30-30-40 is not the case in every church situation, it is just a pattern found by people who study this kind of thing. Yet it calls us to consider where we are at this point—and where we want to be. But even more important it calls us to discern where God wants us to be. A 0-0-100 would be wonderful.

The Session has been open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout this ordeal. We have lamented those things we've felt have been lost while at the same time embracing new opportunities put before us. Currently we have a team of elders putting together a survey to help us understand where we are in our life together and where you feel God is leading us in the ministry entrusted to our care. We hope you will respond to our inquiries by completing the survey prayerfully and with a sense of vision.

In the chorus of my favorite hymn we sing:

*Great is thy faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed thy and hath provided -
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!*

In Christ's Love,

Scripture Texts for Worship

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

Sunday, November 7

I Kings 17:8-16
Mark 12:38-44

Sunday, November 14

Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25
Mark 13:1-8

Sunday, November 21

Revelation 1:4b-8
John 18:33-37

Sunday, November 28

Jeremiah 33:14-16
Luke 21:25-36

Sunday, December 5

Malachi 3:1-4
Luke 3:1-6

Bible Study

Each Wednesday morning at 10:00 a.m., we gather in Fellowship Hall and by ZOOM for Bible Study. Our focus is on the gospel of John. As we gather, we will follow CDC guidelines. Please call the church office with any questions or concerns.

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, 724-459-7991.

Food Bank

The ICCAP Food Bank distribution is held the second Tuesday of each month from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. When signing up for the first time, proof of residency in Blairsville borough is needed.

Worship Assistants

November 7

Liturgist: Mary Gorslene
Flowers: Cindy Borbonus
Streaming: Mark Borbonus
Proj/Audio: Eli/Brylea Borbonus
Ushers: Alan Lowman

November 14

Liturgist: Dennis Gould
Flowers: Gary & Barri Stuchal
Flowers: Lee & Bunny Ednie
Streaming: John Bruner
Proj/Audio: Elizabeth/Abigail Bruner

November 21-Communion

Liturgist: Rick Shoemaker
Flowers: Terry & Barb Brown
Streaming: Olivia Eckenroad
Proj/Audio: Kristi Eckenroad/Dennis Gould

November 28-1st of Advent

Liturgist: Jean Heberling
Advent: Jean Heberling &
Readers: Elaine Jellison
Flowers: Ron & Kim McKinney
Streaming: Mark Borbonus
Proj/Audio: Eli/Brylea Borbonus

Offering Counters

Linda George & Jean Heberling

Community Thanksgiving Worship Service

A Community Thanksgiving Worship Service will be held Sunday, November 21st at 7:00 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church in Blairsville. The Rev. John Smaligo will share the message. Rev. Smaligo is the interim minister at Hebron Lutheran Church. This community service is organized by the Blairsville Ministerium.



December Newsletter

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

New Leadership

At our September 26th Congregational Meeting, the following were nominated and elected to three year terms: to the office of ruling elder, Class of 2024—Jim Antis, Terry Brown, Jean Heberling and Mel Woodring; to the office of deacon, Class of 2024—Chris Antis and Linda Neal. We look forward to the service and leadership they will offer. We thank Gene Artman, Terry Brown, Jean Heberling, Brent Ritchie, Elaine Jellison and Rick Shoemaker for their service on this year's Nominating Committee.

Church Anniversary

September 22nd marked our 199th anniversary as a congregation. We are starting to make plans for our bicentennial celebration. Be thinking of ideas and ways you can be involved.

Pastoral Concerns

As you are well aware, concern about the spread of COVID is still very high. Indiana County is currently experiencing one of the most severe infection rates in the Commonwealth with all area hospitals filled. Visitation at hospitals and care facilities is limited, if allowed at all. Indiana Hospital no longer informs clergy of admission. The only way Pastor Monroe would know of health concerns is if you inform him or the church office. Because of the safety of the health environment, the pastor only provides home visits to those who take the initiative to invite him.

**Veteran's Day Concert
Community Concert Band
Thursday, November 11
7:00 p.m.
River Valley Senior High School
Auditorium**

*Face Coverings required

Getting to Know You

Let us introduce you to two currently serving elders:

Lon Ferguson—Class of 2023

My name is Lon Ferguson and my wife Jean Serio and I live in Homer City, PA. I have two children, Katie and Shane who are both safety professionals with Kate working in Columbus, OH and Shane working in Louisville, KY. Kate is married to Bernie Lockard and they have three children under 5 years of age. Jean has two sons, Sam and Joe. Joe works in marketing and lives in Brazil and Sam and his wife Jayme are both Respiratory Therapists who work in Pittsburgh. They have one son, Luke who will be six and start Kindergarten this year. I grew up three miles from Blairsville and attended the Hopewell United Methodist Church. I was active with the Methodist Youth Fellowship and later was a Co-Leader with Brent Ritchie of this group. I attended IUP for both my BS and MS in Safety Sciences and received my Doctorate of Education from the University of Pittsburgh. The majority of my 40-year career as a Safety Professional was spent at IUP where I was a Professor and Chairperson of the Safety Sciences Department. In my spare time, I enjoy hunting & shooting, yard work, woodworking and spending time with my Grandchildren and my boxers. Prior to this church, I served the Grace United Methodist Church in Indiana, PA for 15 years. I served on the Church Council, Finance Committee and was Chair of the Staff/Pastor/Parish Relations Committee. In the past I have volunteered at the United Way and at the Indiana County Food Bank. I look forward to continuing to serve this church as an Elder and help the church serve the needs of its members, the community and to spread the good news of the Gospel.

Pat Swope—Class of 2023

Born and raised in Altoona, PA, my wife Janeen and I joined this church a few years after we married in 1977 and settled in Blairsville. After 42 years at the Conemaugh Power Plant in New Florence, I retired and we now live in a senior condo community in Derry. Our son Chuck (Charlie), grew up as a member of this Church. He was married here, to a Blairsville girl, and they live in Baltimore. Ordained as a Deacon in this Church in 2000, and then later ordained as an Elder, I have served mainly on the Property and Maintenance Committee. With our families living “out east”, God gifted us with this church family and a facility that feels like home. I believe we honor these gifts when we give back some of our time and resources to keep this great old Church going.

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 Pastor Monroe, 724-459-7991 by Monday, November 14th. Thank you for your generous help. We look forward to sharing another happy holiday with those in our community!

Meals Available

If you or someone from the congregation is recovering from surgery or illness and would appreciate a meal being delivered, the deacons would like to be of help to you. Please contact Janet Smith. We don't know if there is a need unless you let us know.

Coats-For-Kids Drive

The 7th 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.

College Scholarship

Westminster College in New Wilmington is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA). Students who are church members and attend the college are eligible for considerable scholarship assistance (up to \$84,000 for those who qualify). If you would like information, please contact Pastor Monroe. Program deadline is December 1, 2021.

Egg Cartons Needed

A person in the area who raises chickens finds the hens laying a large number of eggs. She shares them with folks through our Deacon's Pantry. We have a need for clean egg cartons. If you have some available, please bring them to church and we will see she gets them.

We will celebrate Communion Sunday, November 21st during the 11:00 a.m. worship service. Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.



How Well Do You Know Your Bible?

BIBLE TRIVIA

1. What catastrophe did Joseph predict by interpreting Pharaoh's dream?
2. Who were Noah's three sons?
3. Who were the only two Israelites allowed to go into the Promised Land after many years?
4. Who was Bathsheba's husband?
5. What famous queen visited Solomon?

Answers in the next newsletter

BIBLE TRIVIA ANSWERS FROM SEPTEMBER

1. Who were Adam and Eve's three sons listed in the Bible?
Answer: Cain, Abel and Seth (Genesis 4:1-2, 5:3)
2. How many brothers did Joseph have?
Answer: Joseph had 11 brothers: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin. (Genesis 35:23)
3. How many of Jesus' brothers are named in the Bible?
Answer: Four of Jesus' brothers are named, James, Joseph, Simon and Judas. (Matthew 13:55)
4. What is the shortest book in the Bible?
Answer: Ill John is the shortest book with 1 chapter, 14 verses and 299 words.
5. Which human author wrote the most books in the Bible?
Answer: Paul who wrote 13 books: Romans, I & II Corinthians, Philemon, Galatians, Philippians, I & II Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, I & II Timothy and Titus.

Food for Family Thought—

Question: If you were in charge of planning for and building a brand-new museum, what specific theme would be the focus of the museum and where do you think would be the best place to build it?

Thought: What values or advice would you like to leave as a legacy to your child? Why not draft a "moral will." This is like a regular last will and testament, but instead of monetary or physical bequests, it lists the moral qualities, virtues, and values you hope to pass on to your child—the words you hope they can live by.

Question: If you could change the ending to any movie you've ever seen, what movie would it be and how would you change the ending?

Thought: Prayer changes things. It may not automatically change the circumstances I am struggling with, but it does change me. It makes me more willing to seek the will of God and pursue it in my life. When that happens, I find that what really needed to change were not my circumstances, but myself.

