

UPLIFT Newsletter

The United Presbyterian
Church of Blairsville, PA

JANUARY 2024

“Let Go and Let God: What does that even mean?” - By Rev. Shannon White

No doubt, you’ve heard the slogan, “Let go and Let God.” It may seem extremely trite, especially if you’re in the middle of a life situation which calls for such an attitude and action. Those words, however simplistic as they may seem, may offer a profound lesson, and can lead to an experience of deep inner peace. I can relate. Let me explain. On August 27, I said goodbye to my daughter as she embarked on an adventure with the Peace Corps for the next 27 months. She has been assigned to Namibia on the western coast of Africa just north of South Africa. I have traveled to many countries, but I have not (yet) been to the continent of Africa. I have no idea, nor did she before she departed, what her living situation will be like. She has been told that she could either be living in a hut or an apartment. She knows she will be teaching in a secondary school situation and teaching life skills, gender equality and HIV education to students ages 9 to 24. This experience will, no doubt, change her and the trajectory of her life, as she encounters a new culture, meets new people and welcomes them into her life. I couldn’t be prouder of her vision and service. Here’s where the “Let go and Let God” begins to rub. As she has now settled into her 3-month orientation, she and the others in her cohort have been encouraged not to contact family back home, for a variety of reasons. Settling in to the new environment is one of them. I get it, but for me, the deafening silence of the separation has already come as a rude awakening. She has been living with my husband and me since her graduation from college in 2021, and the rhythms of our household have been sweetened by her presence. Letting go of her in such an abrupt manner so that she may pursue her own path and future apart from me and the rest of our family is an excruciating but necessary part of life.

Perhaps those who have just dropped children off at various college campuses or said good-bye to children getting on the school bus for the first time, or who have just ushered young adult children off to their professional lives may feel this same familiar pang of loss. Those losses are nothing, however, to the even more difficult and more permanent saying good-bye when a loved one is lost to death. That topic deserves a different, dedicated article. We all experience loss in our lives. The pain is oh-so-human. It’s necessary to take time to feel the depth of it, or it can become what mental health clinicians call, “complicated grief,” where another instance of grief is experienced before a previous experience has been fully processed. In such a situation, one can get stuck, in a way, in the grief cycle. Loss can also include the fear of the unknown wrapped in nagging questions such as: Will my child be ok, or will they face some sort of danger? Will I/they know what to do? In such a state, how could anyone live in peace?

So, how does one embody letting go in a healthy way ... and what does “Let God” even mean? While I have surely shed some tears, I am letting her go, knowing she has her own spiritual journey, and that God, who has loved me and will continue to love and watch over me for a lifetime, loves and watches over her as well. The scriptures are full of examples, both in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament of people who have been cared for through harrowing situations. I think of Abraham and Sarah, who were called away from everything they knew to be familiar and to start a new life. I think of the Children of Israel, who were led into the wilderness for 40 years before reaching the promised land. I think of Jesus asking the disciples to leave everything they knew and follow him. All of those stories give me examples of stories where people in the care of God have not only survived, but thrived, even through enormous difficulty. That same story of faithfulness has been lived out in countless people across faith lines through the ages. It’s not that people haven’t/don’t face peril in their lives, but through the good times and the difficulties, God was/is with them, loving them, having compassion on them and helping them grow. And so, it is with us. Even today and into the future, God is with us through all things, loving us, comforting us, having compassion on us and helping us to grow. That’s something I can hold on to.

I am reminded that any control we, as human beings, think we have in life, is all an illusion. Trying to control people, places, things or outcomes can only bring frustration, disappointment and pain to our lives. Feeling the important feelings of loss and then letting people and situations go, allowing the space they once occupied to be opened to God’s life-giving source of love and light, can bring hope for a whole lot of blessings both now and the future. That is how true and lasting inner peace is possible. A wise congregant wrote me a loving email right after my daughter left on her new adventure. She said, “Letting go has to be the most self-sacrificing gift a mother can bestow. Gut-wrenching, heart-wrenching, but with a secure belief in child AND God. You will be fine, but right now, it is probably all a puddle.” How right she is. Next summer I will go to Namibia and visit my daughter, meet her wonderful Namibian hosts and marvel at the gifts her new experiences have brought her and will continue to bring her. Ah — serendipity. I’m smiling. Just as I put the finishing touches on this article, I got a text from my daughter, “Made it to Namibia!” And so it begins.

(Reprinted from Presbyterian Foundation’s Pastor’s Life Newsletter)



Worship Leaders

January 7—Communion

Speaker	Mr. Graham Smith
Communion	Gene Artman
Liturgist	Jean Heberling
Property Mgr.	Terry Brown

January 14

Speaker	Mrs. Donna Yarnal
Liturgist	Mary Anzelone
Property Mgr.	Bob Cosharek

January 21

Speaker	Mrs. Donna Kanyan
Liturgist	Rick Shoemaker
Property Mgr.	Dennis Gould

January 28

Speaker	Mrs. Tammy Noss
Liturgist	Terry Brown
Property Mgr.	Todd Faulk

Offering Counters

Bob & Charlotte Cosharek

Volunteers are needed for ushering, helping with the sound, projector and streaming and serving as liturgist. Please call the church office if you are interested in helping in any of these areas.

ASH WEDNESDAY *Worship*

We will gather for worship at 7:00 p.m. on Ash Wednesday, February 14th. There will be the imposition of ashes for those who wish to receive them. Our guest speaker will be Mr. Randy Stear. This service of worship will be your first step into the Lenten season.

Financial Statements

End of the year financial statements will be mailed early to mid-January. If you would like your statement earlier, contact the church office at 724-459-7991.

Congregational Meeting

The 2023 year in review Congregational Meeting will be held Sunday, January 28, 2024 immediately following worship. We hope you will plan to attend.

End of the Year Reports

Committee chairs are asked to submit an end of the year reports for the Annual Ecclesiastical/Corporate Meeting. Reports are due to the church office by Sunday, January 21st. If you're not sure if you need to submit a report, please call the church office.

2024 Per Capita

Per Capita, literally "per head", is the amount requested from each member to cover the administrative expenses of the General Assembly, Synod and Presbytery. For 2024, that amount is \$37.40 per member on the active roll. That breaks down to: General Assembly—10.00, Synod—\$2.40, and Presbytery—\$25.00. The Session has taken action to withhold all per capita to General Assembly with the exception of contributions given with specific designation to it. Per Capita sent to support Synod and Presbytery is NOT used to support the General Assembly. For this reason, the session sees that those funds are paid unless you request that your share not be. A letter explaining your options with regards to your per capita is included in your newsletter. If you have questions, please contact the church office or see an elder. We want to honor your intentions for your gifts to the work of the church.

Handbell Choir News

Handbell Choir rehearsal begins at 6:00 p.m. each Wednesday evening. We need more ringers to complete our choir. If you have ever thought of giving handbells a try, please contact Vicky Westley. We can plan a time to meet so you can "test it out" before committing to ringing with the Bell Choir.

Chancel Choir Update

Our Chancel Choir rehearsals are held each Wednesday evening from 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. We would love to have new voices join the choir! Many of our seasoned members are no longer with us. If you are interested in singing in the choir, please see Cindy Borbonus. All are welcome!

2024 Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for the New Year are available for you to pick up at the back of the sanctuary. Please look for your name as we have condensed the number of boxes and your box number may have changed. If you do not have church offering envelopes and would like a box set, please drop a note in the offering plate or contact the church office at 724-459-7991.

Coupon Update

Thank you to Sandy Robertson for volunteering to continue the coupons for veterans ministry. A box is located at the back of the sanctuary for your cut coupons.

Consider Taking Part

THE SESSION COMMITTEES FOR 2024

Each year the committees of session seek to have volunteers become active participants. Please review the committees and their responsibilities and consider serving. In this year of transition we need volunteers to be active participants. Please review the list below and consider where you fit in. If you would like more information or have questions, please see an elder or call the church office. Chairs will be determined at the January Session meeting.

Worship – Worship services, sacraments, music, funerals, weddings

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

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

Finance – Finances, special funds, and annual budget

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

Property & Maintenance – Construction, maintenance, repairs, housekeeping, safety, security, yard work, inventory

Congregational Fellowship – Suppers, picnics, outings, trips, camping

Evangelism – New member recruitment and assimilation, outreach, publicity

LEADERSHIP FOR THE NEW YEAR

The Session

CLASS OF 2024	CLASS OF 2025	CLASS OF 2026
Jim Antis	Gene Artman	Bonni Dunlap
Terry Brown	Doug Clayton	Todd Faulk
Jean Heberling	Bruce Highberger	Rick Shoemaker
Mel Woodring	Kim McKinney	

The Board of Deacons

CLASS OF 2024	CLASS OF 2025	CLASS OF 2026
Chris Antis	Susie Cotti	Lindsay Barto
Linda Neal	Mary Gorslene	Lynnette Borbonus
Brylea Borbonus	Pam Irwin	Kristi Eckenroad
	Vicky Westley	Dianna Messenger

Church News Email

In addition to emailing members of the congregation information weekly about upcoming Sunday services and other special events, we are considering emailing the monthly newsletter to interested individuals. If you aren't receiving the weekly updates, that means we don't have your email address! Please email upchurch@r-church.com so that we can add you to the list to receive updates.

Please let us know if you would prefer a digital copy of the newsletter or if you would like to continue receiving a printed format. upchurch@r-church.com

February Newsletter

All articles to be published in the February 2024 edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, January 14th.

Many Thanks

To the Session and Congregation,
A BIG thank you to many of you for your ongoing support and encouragement to us throughout the year. Thank you also for your prayers, cards, gifts and most of all your friendships. We look forward to a blessed and happy New Year in 2024!

Cindy, Sandy, Jill, Peg and Pam

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 11th during morning worship. One hundred percent of these gifts will be sent to ICCAP in support of the Food Bank.



MADE IN AMERICA
(Blairsville, to be exact)

The Grannies sewing group has several handmade items available for your purchase. Funds raised through the sale of these items help to support our mission of providing a blanket to each person baptized in our church, quilts distributed to fire victims and Habitat for Humanity, stuffed bunnies, bears and ducks given to the Alice Paul House and Citizen’s Ambulance Service, dignity robes to the Indiana Hospital Women’s Imaging Center, lap robes for those in our church, hats to be given with the Coat Drive, and dining scarves for residents of St. Andrew’s Village. These are just some of the distribution points of our sewing projects.

Our holiday displays are put away but we want you to know that products are available year round to purchase. Your generosity will help to support the sewing projects within our church and the community. Special orders can be taken, contact the church office-724.459.7991.

- Animals, stuffed..... \$10
- Aprons \$5
- Bags \$3
- **Casserole Cover \$5, special order
- Coasters, quilted.....4/\$6
- Dining Scarf/Bib \$5
- Dish Cloths, knitted..... medium \$4, large \$5
- Hats..... \$6
- Hot Pads, quilted medium \$5, large \$6
- Hot Pads, knitted/crocheted medium \$4, large \$5
- Kitchen Sets (2 hot pads, dishcloth) \$10
- Lap Robe \$20
- Place Mats, Steelers\$5 each
- Place Mats, Christmas \$5 or 4/\$16
- **Plastic Bag Holder \$3, special order
- Runners, quilted \$17
- Runners..... medium \$10, large \$12
- Scrubby, netting..... \$3
- Swiffer Cover \$5
- Walker Bib \$5
- Towels..... \$6

2024 Community Lenten Devotional

The ministerium has decided to compile and publish another Community Lenten Devotional in 2024. There are several scriptures to choose from each day through Lent. Those who volunteer will share a devotion of about 450 words, list the biblical reference from one of the listed lectionary texts or a text of the writer’s choice citing the version of the Bible used, followed by the devotional and a two-sentence prayer. Giving your name is optional but appreciated. Send devotionals to the church office email, upchurch@r-church.com or drop off a hard copy by Sunday, January 21st. Lent begins Wednesday, February 14, 2024. Easter is March 31, 2024.

All submissions will be gathered and compiled into booklet form, duplicated, then distributed to area churches for use during the Lenten Season. Our congregation has been assigned 3 days. There are several texts per day. Volunteers are needed to write devotional thoughts for these days. If you feel led to share with your brothers and sisters in Blairsville, please contact the church office and let Jill know of your willingness as soon as possible.

- Thursday, March 7**—Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9; Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23
- Friday, March 8**—Psalm 81:6-11, 14, 17; Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34
- Saturday, March 9**—Reserved

Communion Dates for 2024

- January 7—Baptism of Our Lord
- February 14—Ash Wednesday
- March 31—Easter Day
- May 19—Pentecost Sunday

*The Session has approved the above 1/2 year schedule. Additional dates will be discussed at their meeting.

Boy Scouts Soup & Chili Cook Off

Boy Scout Troop 4 will hold their Annual Soup and Chili Cook Off, Sunday, February 18th in the Fellowship Hall. Cost is \$10.00 per person. They will have 12 different soups and chili’s to enjoy, plus bread and delicious desserts. This is a Boy Scout fundraiser to help cover expenses incurred in camping and other activities throughout the year. Thanks for your support.

The United Presbyterian Church

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Website: www.r-church.com ~ Email: upchurch@r-church.com

January 1, 2024

Dear Supporters of Our Ministries,

We thank you for your support of the work of this congregation. Without your generosity we could not faithfully carry out our call. At every turn, the Session seeks to model good stewardship in the use of your gifts.

As we did last year, we want to give an opportunity to those who wish to have their per capita withheld out of concern for the direction of the General Assembly. Per Capita (literally “per head”) is the amount requested from each member to cover the administrative expenses of the General Assembly (national level of the church), Synod (state level of the church) and Presbytery (regional level of the church). For 2024, that amount is \$37.40 per member on the active roll. That breaks down to \$10.00 to General Assembly, \$2.40 to Synod, and \$25.00 to Presbytery.

The Session of this congregation has taken action to withhold all per capita to General Assembly with the exception of contributions given with specific designation to it. There are some members who, although they disagree with the direction of the General Assembly still feel called to support it as they seek to change the direction. Per Capita sent to support Synod and Presbytery is not used to support the General Assembly. For this reason, the session sees that those funds are paid unless you request that your share not be. Please remember that not a penny of per capita money sent to support Synod and Presbytery goes to implement General Assembly work.

If you have specific concerns, you may fill out the form below and submit it to the church office by mail or by placing it in the offering plate. We want to honor your intentions for your gifts to the work of the church. If you do nothing, only Synod and Presbytery per capita will be sent out.

Name _____

2024 PER CAPITA

- Enclosed is my contribution for my share of the entire per capita, General Assembly, Synod and Presbytery - \$37.40 per member.
- Enclosed is my contribution for my share of per capita to Synod and Presbytery - \$27.40 per member.
- I do not want any of my share of per capita sent on to General Assembly, Synod or Presbytery - \$0.00.



How Well Do You Know Your Bible

Bible Trivia

Answers in the next newsletter

1. How did Esther get to talk with the king?
2. True or False: John the Baptist wore clothes made of goat hair.
3. What was another name for the apostle Paul?
4. Who was the last king Daniel served under in the Bible?
5. Where did David spare King Saul's life the first time?

BIBLE TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Who was Jesus' adoptive father on earth?
Answer: Joseph (Luke 2:1-7)
2. Who was Jesus' human mother?
Answer: Mary (Luke 2:1-7)
3. Who first heard the good news of Jesus' birth?
Answer: Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)
4. What symbol marked the birthplace of Jesus?
Answer: Star (Mark 2:1-12)
5. Who visited Jesus as a toddler and what did Jesus receive?
Answer: The Wisemen; gold, frankincense and myrrh (Luke 2:1-12)



Community Lenten Lunches

The Blairsville Area Ministerium will again offer the community Lenten services and lunches this year. Each Wednesday through the season of Lent, beginning at 12:00 noon, a Lenten service is held followed by a soup and sandwich luncheon. A schedule of dates, places, and pastors are listed below.

- 2/14.....Crossroads Church Pastor Harold Hicks
 - 2/21.....Hopewell Church..... Pastor Susan O'Shaughnessy
 - 2/28.....C&MA Church.....Pastor Bill Heenthal
 - 3/6.....Hebron Lutheran Church Pastor Fred Craig
 - 3/13.....United Presbyterian Church..... Father Dino Laude
 - 3/ 20.....Black Lick Methodist Pastor Jim Kendall
 - 3/ 27SS Simon & Jude Church Pastor Jenn Krishart
- Good Friday at 7:00 p.m.
- 3/29Blairsville Methodist ChurchPastor Mark Ferlin