



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United Presbyterian
Church of Blairsville, PA

NOVEMBER 2023

Through my forty-one plus years of preaching and teaching there have been hundreds of topics that have come up to which folks have commented, "I didn't know that was in the Bible." Conversely there are just as many topics on which the Bible is silent. God is not mentioned in two books of the Old Testament, Esther and Song of Solomon. The Lord's presence is inferred but not mentioned by name. The topic of patriotism is not mentioned. That is because our loyalty to God far exceeds our loyalty to any particular earthly nation. The focus of our citizenship is on God's kingdom no matter where we live geographically. Now in Romans 13, Paul is clear that we respect earthly authority. We follow the rules of the nation in which we live, unless those rules violate and dishonor who God calls us to be. We are Christians first and citizens of an earthly land second. The Bible doesn't waste words on earthly seconds, because in the end they will not stand.

Another word the Bible does not speak of is one that has consumed me lately—retirement. It is mentioned in passing in an obscure passage in Number 8:25-26. The Lord speaks to Moses about the Levites, the priests. "From 25 years of age and upward they shall begin to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting and from the age of 50 they shall retire from the duty of service and serve no more." Someone said, "Old preachers never die, they just go on and on and on" - but enough about our orations from the pulpit. Moses didn't begin leadership until he was 80 and continues until he died at 120. His protégé, Joshua started at 85 and went until he was 100. Scholars have no definitive understanding as to why the Lord chose 50 years of age as the limit for full priestly service. Maybe it had to do with physical stamina. The priests had to move the structural pieces of the tabernacle across the desert and they weren't light. Large animals were offered up in the ritual sacrifices, and they could sometimes be stubborn. Maybe by age 50, the priests were burned out by 25 years of round the clock service. Maybe at that age they were no longer relevant to the people's needs. Maybe they had to step aside, passing the baton of spiritual leadership to the next generation. Now priests over 50 could still assist, but they couldn't be in charge.

They say the most difficult instrument to play is second fiddle. When you've spent most of your life on center stage, it's painful being moved to stage right or left. When your grip is loosened from the reins you once held so tight, it's natural to try to grab hold of other things. Maybe that, because we allow our work to define us, and when we feel that work is no longer ours to do, we lose our sense of identity. Change is difficult, whether we're in a crib or a playpen or a classroom or a workplace or a care facility. But our life circumstance does not define who we are because it does not change who we are.

In a few weeks, I'll come through the kitchen door and say, "Bobbi, I'm home—forever." And under her breath she'll mutter "Great, now I got twice as much husband but half as much privacy." Partially true, but I'll still have 24 hours in a day and 7 days in a week. My challenge will be what do I do with them. For the past four decades my life has been dictated by everyone else's schedules and needs and convenience. And now I get to sit in the driver's seat. But with that freedom comes responsibility in how I use my time. Leaving my position here I had to surrender my email account. I'm no longer pastor@r-church.com. So I opened a new account that defines my rebirth, redeemedforgood@gmail.com. And so the discovery of this new stage of my life begins. They say when you have nothing to do, something inside dies. Every life event brings opportunity for the new, but so too it brings some grief for what you've left behind. We never stop growing up. We're always graduating to the next adventure. While you can't teach an old dog new tricks, you can put new tires on an old car—that's why they call it retirement.

My tank is filled, my wheels are aligned, it's been a good ride, but I have miles to go before I sleep. There are friendships to savor, memories to relive, new things to learn—new parts of myself to share with those who welcome me into their lives. And just as I am at the threshold of newness, so too there is a wonderful freshness headed to the threshold of this family of faith. May the fullness of God's goodness bless each of us as we move forward.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jim

Worship Assistants

November 5

Liturgist Mary Anzelone
Flowers Cindy Borbonus
Property Mgr. Terry Brown

November 12

Liturgist Pam Irwin
Flowers Gary & Barri Stuchal
Property Mgr. Bob Cosharek

November 19

Speaker Randy Degenkolb
Liturgist Jean Heberling
Flowers Terry & Barb Brown
Property Mgr. Kim McKinney

November 26

Speakers Faith Stories
Liturgist Bonni Dunlap
Flowers Diana Blazek
Property Mgr. Dennis Gould

November Offering Counters

Bob & Charlotte Cosharek

Worship Assistants

Volunteers to assist during the worship service are always needed. There are a variety of ways you can become involved as an assistant.

Greeter—welcome those coming in for worship and hand them a bulletin; answer questions like, “Can I sit anywhere?”

Liturgist—assist from the pulpit, by leading the Call to Worship, Prayer of Confession and reading the first scripture.

Audio-Visual Tech—after training, take your turn in rotation to run the sound and slides from the balcony during worship, and live-stream the service for those at home.

ICCAP Food Bank

The Blairsville Area Food Bank is held the second Tuesday of each month. Food bags are distributed to folks from the Blairsville Borough between the hours of 10:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m. Proof of address in the Blairsville Borough is needed when signing up.

Thanksgiving Dinner

Our annual Thanksgiving Dinner is scheduled for Sunday, November 19th immediately following worship. We hope you’ve made plans to attend. If you have any questions, see Doug Clayton or call the church office.

Best Wishes

A time of recognition for the retirement of Pastor Monroe will be held during the Thanksgiving Dinner. He and Bobbi have served faithfully along side of us since 2005. We hope you will plan to join us.

First Saturday

We would like to begin a Christian Education Program for students in grades K-6 called First Saturday. We are in need of volunteers who want to participate in a ministry to children. The commitment level is one day a month. The next planning meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 14th at 6:00 p.m. If you are interested in Christian Education for kids, please consider being a part of this new venture. For more information, call the church office 724-459-7991.

Church Office Hours

Office hours have changed.

Monday and Wednesday
Office Closed

Tuesday, Thursday & Friday
8:00 am—4:00 pm

December Newsletter

Articles to be published in the December edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, November 19th.



Handbell Choir News

Handbell Choir rehearsal begins at 6:00 p.m. each Wednesday evening. We need 1 or 2 more ringers to complete our 2-octave choir and 3 or 4 more ringers to be able to play our 3-octave music. 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!



Christmas Cantata

Rehearsals for our Christmas Cantata are held each Wednesday from 8:00-8:30 p.m., following Chancel Choir rehearsal. Advent and Christmas are beautiful times in the church and music is part of that beauty. If you would like to participate with the special music for the holidays, you are invited to attend rehearsals. The Christmas Cantata will be presented during worship Sunday, December 17th at 11:00 a.m. Please see Cindy Borbonus for additional information.

Church Anniversary Ornaments

Keepsake ornaments of the church from Wendall August Forge are available to purchase at a cost of \$12.00 each. Checks can be made payable to the church. Please see Linda George or call the church office.



The 9th Annual Coats-For-Kids Drive

The 9th Annual Coats-For-Kids Drive is now underway. Again this year we are receiving monetary donations for the purchase of specific sized coats. Please mark your donation clearly "Coats" and place it in the offering plate.

If you know of a family with children who may need a winter coat, please contact Janet Smith or the church office.

Angels' Wings at Christmas

The Angels' Wings Program provides gifts at Christmas time to individuals and families who reside in Indiana County and who financially qualify, in addition to providing gifts to veterans as a thank you for their service to our country. The program is sponsored by Diamond Drugs, Inc. in cooperation with ICCAP. If you are interested in ways you can help this Christmas time, check online at <https://www.angelswingsprogram.com> or email angelswings@diamondpharmacy.com for more information.

Church News

As many of you know, Rev. Monroe will retire as of December 31, 2023. His last Sunday in the pulpit with us will be November 12, 2023. We hope you will join us on this special Sunday at 11:00 a.m. We are sad to see him leave but wish him the best in his retirement. We plan to keep you informed about upcoming Sunday pastors/speakers and other activities with a weekly email; we will also be posting information on the church's facebook page. Please pass the word to others in case we are missing email addresses. Let them know to contact the church office so we can add them to our list.

Blankets for Kids

A Blanket Drive is being held to receive NEW blankets or throws for children served by Indiana County Children & Youth Services. Twin size is preferred. We will receive the blankets through November 26th. Please place donations at the back of the sanctuary. If you have questions or would like more information, please see Bonni Dunlap.

Veteran's Day Concert

The Blairsville Community Band will present their free Veteran's Day Concert this Saturday, November 11th at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the River Valley High School. All are welcome.

Community Christmas Concert

A Christmas Community Concert will be held Monday, December 11th at 7:00 p.m. in our sanctuary. The concert is being sponsored by the Blairsville Monday Music Club and all area church choirs, music groups and area musicians are welcome to participate. Each group is asked to present one or two musical Christmas songs and there will be two combined songs performed with all participants. The first rehearsal for the combined numbers will be held Monday, November 6th from 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Music for the combined numbers will be passed out at the first rehearsal. All interested participants should attend this first rehearsal. Questions may be directed to the club director, Cindy Borbonus.

Grandma's Gifts of Love

Grannies are in need of a new sewing machine. The ones they use have been donated. Recently one stopped working and cannot be repaired. They are asking for financial donations to purchase a new machine. An estimated cost is between \$300-\$500. Please mark your gift clearly "sewing machine."





How Well Do You Know Your Bible

Bible Trivia

Answers in the next newsletter

1. It is "better to obtain wisdom" than what?
2. What are the nine fruits of the Spirit?
3. What did the Philippian jailer say to Paul after he heard the gospel?
4. Who helped pay the bills for Jesus and the disciples ministry?
5. How did Samson die?

BIBLE TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Who was Jesus' most famous cousin?
Answer: John the Baptist (Luke 1:36)
2. Who was the judge who defeated the Midianites with only 300 men using torches and horns?
Answer: Gideon (Judges 7:15-22)
3. Who was the judge who took a Nazarite vow from birth and fought against the Philistines?
Answer: Samson (Judges 13:6-24; 15:20)
4. How many times did David spare Saul's life?
Answer: Twice: in a cave and in camp while Saul slept (I Samuel 24:3-4 and I Samuel 26:1-12)
5. During his time as king, who was David's main enemy?
Answer: The Philistines (I Samuel 17—II Samuel 23)

GRATITUDE game

Start a fun tradition by playing this game on Thanksgiving.



What you need:

- M&M's or other colored candies
- A bowl
- The list below (adapt the colors, as needed)

Red: a need God has provided for
Orange: a gift you've received
Yellow: something you've recently learned
Green: something in nature
Blue: a special memory
Brown: someone you love

What you do:

1. One at a time, people pick a candy and share what they're thankful for (according to the color).
2. Pass the bowl around and continue reflecting on God's goodness until all the candy is gone!