

UPLIFT Newsletter

The United Presbyterian
Church of Blairsville, PA

OCTOBER 2023

The telephone rang in the pastor's study. The person calling explained that his brother, Fred had died and he wondered if the pastor would do a funeral service. "It doesn't need to be long and fancy, all I ask is that during the service you say that my brother was a saint." With a little hesitation, the minister agreed. After all everyone deserves a nice service. In preparation for the funeral, the pastor asked around town trying to get a sense of what kind of man Fred was. After talking to a dozen people, not one could think of a good quality the deceased had exhibited in his life. This put the pastor in an awkward position, after all, he did make a promise to speak well of the departed. How could he speak the truth that everyone knew? After a prayer, the minister began his message. "You all knew the man Fred was. He was a rascal, a liar, a thief, a blasphemer, a ne'er-do-well. But compared to his brother here, he was a saint."

Each of us could take a sheet of paper, draw a vertical line down the center of it, label one side saint, the other sinner, and start writing the names of everyone we know. Life can be so clear about where certain names belong. But reality is if we were to repeat the exercise the next day the names would probably vacillate to the left or to the right. In some religious traditions the title of sainthood is bestowed by the church on individuals. Its not a matter of being sinless. Paul teaches that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." What is required is that the person has lived an exemplary life of goodness and virtue that is worthy of imitation or perhaps they bore witness to their faith as a martyr, dying a heroic death or maybe they experienced a dramatic conversion of heart where they abandoned immorality to cleave to holiness. A saintly life is also evidenced by miraculous behavior where God's intervention is undeniable. Human institutions are practiced at setting standards, demanding proof and assessing worthiness when it comes to sainthood.

But its interesting to note that although the word "saint" appears in the New Testament over sixty times, it is never used to refer to one individual—rather it always is in the plural, "the saints." We use the word in reference to those who model exemplary living, St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Luke. But in the scope of the New Testament, sainthood is a family trait of Christians. "So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

As we profess our faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed, we declare "we believe in the communion of saints." As Christians we are a community, literally the body of Christ, joined together in such a way that when one of us hurts, we all feel the pain and when one of us rejoices, we all are elated. Maybe that's why I am particularly warmed by gathering at the table on Worldwide Communion Sunday. It is a reminder of the vastness of the church, transcending national borders, translating into new languages, experiencing different expressions of faith. On my list of life changing moments is a worship service in Cairo, Egypt in 1983 as I sat in a stone cave two stories beneath street level surrounded by Coptic Christians. The only light was from the candles. The only music was intoned by the priest. The only language was thousands of years old. Yet through it all I felt a spiritual intimacy the likes of which I rarely feel each Sunday. In that time and place, those strangers became my flesh and blood because we shared the most important thing in life and ultimately in death.

But the communion of saints is not bound by here and now. As Christians we are mystically connected to those who have come before us, those who have been open to the movement of the Spirit as they bear witness to us. While they walked this sod, they did so with righteousness, a holiness that inspired us in such a way that even though they abide in heaven we still feel their presence in our hearts. As the hymn goes— "Yet she (the church) on earth hath union with God, the Three in One and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won."

We are made one with those who are, those who were and those who are not yet. The church is not bound by time or space. There are faithful souls who have not yet borne witness because their time in this world has not yet come. And I know that as we are one in Christ, by the grace of the Spirit they will live and build on the witness I have expressed. That truth calls me to build well while I am here so that those to come have a solid foundation.

We are the saints of God, stewards of the mysteries of faith. Be mindful of whose you are and hopeful in the inheritance laid up for you. "Speak out, O saints of God! Despair engulfs earth frame; as heirs of God's baptismal grace, his word of hope proclaim....."

In Christ's love,

Pastor Jim

Scripture Texts for Worship

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

October 1

Matthew 21:23-32
Philippians 2:1-13

October 8

Philippians 3:4b-14
Matthew 21:33-46

October 15

Philippians 4:1-9
Matthew 22:1-14

October 22

I Thessalonians 1:1-10
Matthew 22:15-22

October 29

I Thessalonians 2:1-8
Matthew 22:34-46

Home Communion

If you are not able to come to worship and would like to receive communion in your home, please call the church office at 724-459-7991 and arrangements can be made for the sacrament to be shared with you.

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.

November Newsletter

Articles to be published in the November edition of the UPLIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Sunday, October 15th.

Worship Assistants

October 1—Communion

Liturgist Jean Heberling
Flowers Mark & Lynnette Borbonus
Property Mgr. Dennis Gould

October 8

Liturgist Mary Anzelone
Flowers Barb Kocsis
Property Mgr. Bob Cosharek

October 15

Liturgist Mel Woodring
Flowers Jill Wolford
Property Mgr. Pat Swope

October 22

Liturgist Rick Shoemaker
Flowers Cindy Borbonus
Property Mgr. Terry Brown

October 29

Liturgist Dennis Gould
Flowers Mary Anzelone
Flowers Elaine Jellison
Property Mgr. Kim McKinney

October Offering Counters

Elaine Jellison and Becky Bence

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 the minister, 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.

Coupons for Veterans Update

We have been receiving manufacturers coupons for veterans for several years. Over the years, we have donated a total value of \$567,694.20. As of the end of December, Erica and Ellen would like to be done handling this program. If anyone is interested in taking it over, they are willing to teach the process. We are grateful to them both for their service.

Handbell Choir News

Handbell Choir rehearsal begin 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 will begin Wednesday rehearsals on September 6th 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!

Budget Planning Begins

The Finance Committee will soon begin to review information for the 2024 church budget. Committee chairs are asked to begin planning for next year and consider your financial needs. If you have any questions or would like additional information that would help your planning process, please contact the church office.



Don't Forget...

Daylight Saving Time ends
Sunday, November 5th

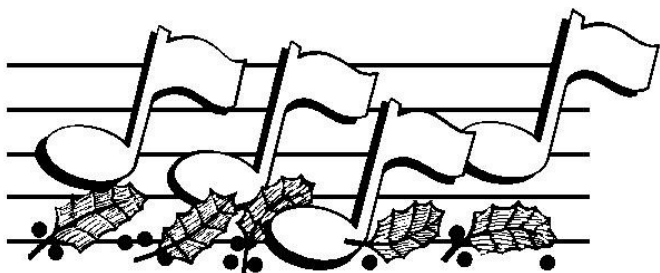
Mark your calendars and remember
to change your clocks!

New Leadership

At our September 24th Congregational Meeting, the following were nominated and elected to three year terms: to the office of ruling elder, Class of 2026– Bonni Dunlap, Todd Faulk and Rick Shoemaker; to the office of deacon, Class of 2026—Lindsay Barto, Lynnette Borbonus, Kristi Eckenroad and Dianna Messenger. We look forward to the service and leadership they will offer. We thank the Nominating Committee for their work.

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.



Christmas Cantata

Rehearsals for our Christmas Cantata will begin Wednesday, October 4th from 8:00-8:30 p.m., following Chancel Choir rehearsal. Christmas is a beautiful time of year 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.

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.

SOUP LUNCHEON & MEN WITH MIXERS



The Congregational Fellowship Committee has planned a Soup & Sandwich Luncheon for Sunday, October 15th following worship. We will gather around tables in Fellowship Hall for a time of refreshment and fellowship. Lunch will be provided by the committee. Those attending are asked to bring a dessert.

Following the meal, the fun begins with our Men with Mixers Auction. Men of the church will prepare their favorite dessert/baked good items to be auctioned off. The proceeds will benefit our Coats-for-Kids outreach. A sign-up sheet is available at the back of the sanctuary for those wishing to participate. Contact Joan Moran or Linda George for more information.



The 9th Annual Coats-For-Kids

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.

World Communion Sunday

We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Sunday, October 1st, World Communion Sunday during worship. The cloth on the communion table and the baskets used to serve the sacrament are gifts from our partner congregation in Rwanda, the Gitarama Church.



How Well Do You Know Your Bible

Bible Trivia

Answers in the next newsletter

1. Who was Jesus' most famous cousin?
2. Who was the judge who defeated the Midianites with only 300 men using torches and horns?
3. Who was the judge who took a Nazarite vow from birth and fought against the Philistines?
4. How many times did David spare Saul's life?
5. During his time as king, who was David's main enemy?

BIBLE TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. What was the name of the woman who hid the spies at Jericho?
Answer: Rahab (Joshua 2:1-7)
2. Which disciple looked after Mary after the death of Jesus?
Answer: John the Evangelist (John 19:25-27)
3. True or False—Ananias and Sapphira died after lying to the Apostles about their offering.
Answer: True (Acts 5:1-11)
4. What was Matthew before he followed Jesus?
Answer: Tax Collector (Matthew 9:9)
5. Who returned to Israel to build up the walls of Jerusalem?
Answer: Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1-7:73)



First Saturday is a Christian Education program that we are planning for students in grades K–6. As its name indicates, the program will be held the first Saturday of each month. Gatherings will include a mix of Bible stories, games, crafts, science projects, snacks and lots of fun!

We have scheduled a second **planning meeting** for **Thursday, October 5th at 6:00 p.m.** and will meet in the second floor of the Christian Ed wing (above Fellowship Hall). All those interested in helping are encouraged to attend. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact the church office. Watch your bulletin for updates. Thank you.