

# UPLIFT Newsletter

The United Presbyterian  
Church of Blairsville, PA



SEPTEMBER 2023

As long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by the variety of religions practiced around the world. I know how important faith has been to our family and so I was sensitive to how much it played a part in other households in the neighborhood. For the most part, York was a Christian town with a beautiful blend of Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox believers. The local ministerium was active, encouraging the entire faith community to work together in promoting God's love in every corner of town. I particularly enjoyed the annual School of Religion offered each Lenten Season, a time when we came together to learn more about each other's faith practices. It may well be that God used those experiences to call me to a lifetime of ministry.

My awareness was broadened as I came into relationship with Jewish neighbors. There was a synagogue a few blocks away. Some of my teachers were Jewish. As a matter of fact, my first kiss in the coat closet was from a little Jewish girl named Marjorie Damashek. Those interfaith experiences taught me to appreciate how God was at work in the homes that surrounded ours. I never thought it was fair that the Jewish kids had off school on their holidays and also had off on ours, but in the end, learning about their beliefs helped me better understand my own.

The Passover/Easter connection and the Hanukkah/Christmas celebrations made sense, but each September just as we were getting into the new school year my Jewish friends celebrated the High Holy Days, a ten day period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. There were days they were happy and days they were sad, days they feasted like royalty and days they fasted like monks, days they filled their temple singing and days they stayed in their room praying. The variety of spiritual activity piqued my Presbyterian peculiarities.

Rosh Hashana this year begins at sunset on Friday, September 15 and concludes at nightfall on September 17. It marks the beginning of the Jewish new year. Leviticus 23 commends it to God's people. The sounding of the shofar, a ram's horn, serves as a wake up call for believers to begin a period of self examination. The day traditionally honors the birth of Adam and Eve, the beginning of their relationship with their creator. But so too, it marks humanity's waywardness in the ways we have dishonored God by our sin and our neighbors by our selfishness. In some places Jews have a tradition of stepping into a slowing stream and there they empty their pockets as a way of symbolically discarding their sins. What sins have we been carrying around that we would do well to get rid of? What burdens have we been bearing that we long to be rid of? What grudges have weighed us down and strained our relationship needlessly? Starting a new year with a clean slate is liberating. In recent weeks our Prayer of Confession declared, "Forgive us; liberate us! Let us be no longer bound by sin, but released, restored, set free to worship and serve you in freedom, through Jesus Christ our Lord." As the shofar sounds, the faithful declare, "The Lord is King. The Lord was King. The Lord will be King forever." We would do well to make such a declaration as the alarm clock calls us to face each new day.

As Rosh Hashana announces the Jewish New Year, ten day period of prayer, reflection, confession, contrition moves toward the climax of the second high Holy Day, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Tradition says that each year on the first High Holy Day, Rosh Hashana God inscribes each person's fate for the coming year into the Book of Life. And then for ten days, God watches, listens, searches hearts, assesses sincerity, waits and then on Yom Kippur God seals the verdict for each individual. We can be thankful that as Christians we live by grace. Our future is not determined by an annual ten day test, rather the God who knows us better than we know ourselves is ever ready to save. What God seals is not a verdict, rather in our baptism what has been sealed is a covenant promise that nothing in all of creation can separate us from him as those who are found in Christ.

If you have any Jewish friends, be sensitive to their spiritual journey this month between the 15th and the 25th. Encourage them in their faith but also by the way you live bear witness to the grace you have come to know in Christ. As you watch the news of what is happening in the middle east, be aware of how faith is at work in the hearts and souls of Jews and Muslims and Christians alike. Be aware of our differences but so too recognize that all people of faith are on a journey. While I trust you are secure in the promises of God that have enveloped you in your baptism into Christ, encourage those who are searching for that peace. Bear witness to the grace you have come to know and assure those around you that there is a wideness in God's mercy and there is room for all who surrender their hearts and souls.....

In Christ's love,

Handwritten signature of Pastor Jim

## Scripture Texts for Worship

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

### September 3

Exodus 3:1-15  
Matthew 16:21-28

### September 10

Ezekiel 33:7-11  
Matthew 18:15-20

### September 17

Romans 14:1-12  
Matthew 18:21-35

### September 24

Matthew 20:1-16  
Philippians 1:21-30

### October 1

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

## 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.

## October Newsletter

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

## Worship Assistants

### September 3—10:00 AM

Liturgist Rick Shoemaker  
Special Music Organ & Piano Duet  
Flowers Linda George  
Property Mgr. Dennis Gould

### September 10—11:00 AM

Liturgist Mary Anzelone  
Flowers Jill Wolford  
Property Mgr. Bob Cosharek

### September 17—11:00 AM

Liturgist Terry Brown  
Property Mgr. Patrick Swope

### September 24—11:00 AM

Liturgist Pam Irwin  
Flowers Ed & Becky Bence  
Property Mgr. Kim McKinney

### September Offering Counters

Linda George & Jean Heberling

*We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Sunday, September 10th during worship. Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.*

A **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** will be held immediately following worship **Sunday, September 24th** to accept the report of the Nominating Committee and the 2024 Pastoral Terms of Call.

## 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. Call the office if interested.

**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.

## Our Regular Schedule

### Begins Sunday, September 10th

The worship hour will begin at 11:00 a.m. and our Chancel Choir will be back with us.

## Board of Deacons

After a break for the summer months, our Board of Deacons will begin gathering for monthly meetings starting in September. The next meeting will be held Tuesday, September 6th at 6:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

## Handbell Choir News

Rehearsals will begin at 6:00 p.m. on September 6<sup>th</sup>. 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.



## FIRST SATURDAY...

Is a Christian Education program that we would like to organize for students in grades K-6. As its name indicates, the program would be held the first Saturday of each month. Gatherings would include a mix of Bible stories, games, crafts, science projects, snacks and lots of fun!

At this time, we are seeking feedback and those interested in helping to organize and work with the program. We have scheduled a meeting for Tuesday, September 12th at 6:00 p.m. and will meet in Fellowship Hall. All those interested are encouraged to attend. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact the church office. Thank you.



### 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.

### Our Nominating Committee

The work of the Nominating Committee is some of the most important in the life of the church. They will be meeting soon to begin their work. Those serving have the responsibility to bring before the congregation the names of those who will potentially serve as elders and deacons. Please be in prayer for them as they discern God's will for our church's leadership. Also be in prayer for those individuals who will be asked to serve.

The Nominating Committee includes:

Kim McKinney-chair, Gene Artman-elder, Chris Antis-deacon, Elaine Jellison, Barb Brown, Lynette Borbonus, Linda George and Pastor Monroe. Willa Shoemaker and Diana Messenger are the alternates.



### American Red Cross

We will host an American Red Cross Blood Drive Friday, September 8<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 – 5:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. All who come out to donate will receive a Red Cross tee shirt, while supplies last and a coupon for a free haircut at Sport Clips Haircuts. For more information, visit Red-CrossBlood.org or call 800-Red Cross.

### You're Invited to the Movies

Trinity Presbyterian Church in Clarksburg will host a Movie Night September 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. You are cordially invited to join them in their sanctuary to watch the presentation of the movie "The Jesus Revolution." This is a true story of a national spiritual awakening in the early 1970's and its origins within a community of teenage hippies in Southern California. The movie is rated PG-13 and is approximately two hours long.

### 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. It's 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](mailto:angelswings@diamondpharmacy.com) for more information.



## How Well Do You Know Your Bible

### Bible Trivia

*Answers in the next newsletter*

1. What was the name of the woman who hid the spies at Jericho?
2. Which disciple looked after Mary after the death of Jesus?
3. True or False—Ananias and Sapphira died after lying to the Apostles about their offering.
4. What was Matthew before he followed Jesus?
5. Who returned to Israel to build up the walls of Jerusalem?

### BIBLE TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. What is the first book of the Bible? What is the last book of the Bible?  
**Answer:** First book—Genesis; last book—Revelation
2. What did Jacob give Joseph that sparked jealousy in his siblings?  
**Answer:** A coat of many colors (Genesis 37:1-3)
3. What did God say from the sky when Jesus was baptized?  
**Answer:** “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-16)
4. Before Jesus started preaching, what was his job?  
**Answer:** Carpenter (Mark 6:3)
5. Who went up yearly to worship God at Shiloh, and one year prayed to God for a baby?  
**Answer:** Hannah (I Samuel 1:3-23)

### Back to School Prayer



Dear Lord,

You delight in creating beauty, in calling forth new and good things, in forming unexpected relationships of love, in teaching us your will and your ways. As we look to a new school year, we thank you for educators and administrators, bus drivers and cafeteria workers, custodians and coaches, counselors and school board members. We recognize that it takes a multitude of gifts, a myriad of resources and a whole lot of energy and compassion to teach our children well. We ask your blessing upon all of those called to these positions. Grant them stamina and imagination, joy and patience.

We remember, too, those families for whom school offers particular stresses and challenges - children who learn differently, those with needs that may be obvious or unseen, parents struggling to buy school supplies, students who come to class hungry or afraid. Show us how to best support all families. Give us eyes to see those hurting and the will to advocate on their behalf.

Remind us, Lord God, that we are one community of your beloved, responsible for one another, gifted with each other, all uplifted when everyone is tended and nurtured in your name. Amen.