

July 2020

The Higher Ground Herald

West Newton United Presbyterian Church

300 S. Third and E. Main Streets in West Newton, PA

From the Pastor's Desk...

July Worship Schedule

Worship begins at 10 AM. The services will also be live streamed on our Facebook page.

July 5 Independence Day
Theme/Communion
"Happy Independence"
Matthew 10: 40-42

July 12 Series: Character
"Slow, Slower and
Slower Yet".
Ephesians 4: 1-6

July 19 Series: Character
"The Gap"
Luke 36; 50
(Pulpit Supply)

July 26 Series: Character
"It's All Wrong"
1 John 4: 15-21

Why or What?

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

I find myself almost every day wondering about what's happening in our country – murders, violence, protests, destruction, vandalism, tearing down statues, autonomous zones being created, and a general trend seemingly toward anarchy. When will it all end? How will it all end?

Like many of you I wonder about all of it. I've been asked several times over the course of a week or two, "How can God allow these awful tragedies to happen? If God is love, why doesn't God intervene? The world seems to be indifferent to these events because nothing changes, the violence continues."

Whenever I hear about senseless killing, destruction and violence, I cringe. I feel a sickness in my stomach and a chill goes up my spine. I am burdened with the futility of it all. Sometimes I want to scream. Sometimes I weep. Mostly, I pray constantly for the end of this great disparity, that people everywhere will lay down their weapons, forego the violence, and love their neighbors. But nothing seems to change. Like with so many faithful Christians, it can quickly become overwhelming.

The majority of people seem to be indifferent about all this until it happens close to home. If it appears that I am complaining to God then so be it. I am overwhelmed whenever I see violence, injustice or when one group oppresses by violent means, another group. When I read the complaint of Habakkuk, the prophet, I find I am not alone. He too complained to God about all the violence in his time. He was concerned about helpless victims. He said, "O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you 'violence!' and you will not save?"

Habakkuk was concerned with the injustices of world politics. The leaders of his time were in opposition to the justice of God. The legal system favored the rich and powerful over the poor and less powerful, who were exploited. There was also a significant breakdown of social order in his time. "The law is slack," he said, and "justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous."

In Habakkuk's time authentic religion required public dedication to principles of fairness and equality. Therefore, the prophet concerned himself with inequities in the judicial system and the exploitation of different groups of people. Prophets were the ones who held society's authorities accountable. They spoke up against the abuse of power.

I wonder where the prophets are today. Where is the still, small voice of God who is willing to speak against the powerful people, against the violence, against the destruction of our time? In our own society it has become unpopular and unpatriotic to speak out against the chaos. Yet, the violence continues. Surely there is a voice who has the courage to say, "enough is enough."

Habakkuk argued with God as did all the prophets. His argument didn't grow from hostility but from a passionate search for the ways of God. He asked the same question asked by so many today; "If God is really good and in control of the world, how can such injustices happen?" After Habakkuk complained to God, God responded. You may or may not like God's answer, but we cannot say that he does not listen. God is not deaf, God is not indifferent and God does not remain silent. God, however, responds on his time frame not ours. Habakkuk had to wait. God cannot be forced into our time frame. God does not speak at our convenience. God responds, but on his terms.

So, our feelings of helplessness and our frustration over the violence in our country requires patience. As the psalmist said, "Wait for the Lord, and keep to his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on the destruction of the wicked." (Psalm 37:34) Habakkuk had to wait. He said, "I will stand at my watch post, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me and what he will answer concerning my complaint." God's response followed a time of waiting. God responds to our cries too, but we have to wait. God is God and we are not.

Secondly, God reminded Habakkuk there is still a vision, a plan. The righteous who long for justice will receive the strength to continue, not because everything will become just or that they will be rewarded for their efforts, but because they possess a larger vision of the way things should be, a different worldview. "For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay." In other words, God wants us to place a greater reliability on his eternal vision rather than the brutal events of the day. We live as "what could be," a world of peace and harmony not yet realized, rather than dwell on the injustices and tragedies of the times.

We can ask "Why" until we are blue in the face. And, in life we may never receive an answer. We can question and argue with God about every injustice, tragedy and senseless act of evil that we witness, but to ask "why" is futile. What we really need to ask is "What." What can I do to make things better? Where in this land can I work to correct the injustices that exist? Scripture is clear throughout, God wants us to participate in a vision that leads to peace.

Finally, God also responded to Habakkuk by saying, "The proud have a wrong spirit, but the righteous live by faith." The book of Habakkuk ends with these words; "God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights." When violent things happen are you still able to say, "God is my strength?" Can you continue to be faithful in spite of all the chaos that abound everywhere?

Imagine what a different world it would be if more people would be generous with their lives. Thousands of acts of kindness happen every day which go unreported. We hear about the violence, death and destruction in the world but rarely do we hear about people of faith who try to make a difference, even by the smallest acts of kindness. When people act in faith they believe in the vision of a perfect world. They believe in a God who is love. Instead of asking why, they ask what. May we become more and more like that.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor John



2020 High School Graduates – The following High School Graduates from our congregation were honored by PW on **June 28th**: Steven Manon, Cody Ulander, Alexis Yuhas and Aubrey Bacha.

PW United Circle will not meet during the summer. Our next meeting will be September 16. We will use the **Horizons Bible Study – “Into the Light”**. Cost is \$10. Place your order with Linda Blick by **August 16**. All women are welcome to join the Circle meeting each month.

PW Sewing will not meet until September. If you would like to sew at home this summer, please see Jo Lynn Lowanse for supplies for some of our projects.

PW Birthday Offering collected \$135 from congregation donations. Your giving is a blessing.

Next Apple Dumpling Day is Thursday, Oct. 8, 2020.

Financial News

Financial News

1. Contribution Envelopes are available to anyone regularly attending our services, even if you are not a member. Linda Blick, Financial Secretary, will be glad to fill your request. If you have a Contribution number, you will receive a 6 month statement in July and a year-end statement in January showing your contributions to WNUPC. This statement can be used to show charitable giving on your income-tax form.
2. The Finance Committee urges you to give your contributions “regularly”. Please don’t skip giving your contribution just because you were away on vacation. The financial obligations of the church don’t take “vacations”.



Chancel Choir

Chancel Choir will return in the fall.

Contact Jim Sykes if you would like to get involved.

Bell Choir

Bell choir is on leave for the remainder of the spring and summer. They will return in the fall. Please contact Joyce Pawlik for more information or to become involved..



First Tuesday Fellowship Dinner

First Tuesday Fellowship Dinners will return again in September.



Men's Breakfast

Men's Breakfast is held on the third Saturday of the month at Gary's Chuckwagon at 9 a.m. Men's Breakfast will resume in September.





Coffee Fellowship Hour usually takes place following worship, on the second Sunday of every month, in our social room. At this time however, the next coffee hour date has yet to be determined.

Many people in our community often struggle to provide food for their families. The second Sunday of each month, we will be collecting money in support of the Westmoreland County Food Pantry now located at our church the second Friday of each month. Thank you in advance for your generosity. The next collection will be July 12.



Feeding the Community

Westmoreland County Food Bank, Inc.

The Westmoreland County Food Pantry will be located at our church going forward. This takes place the second Friday of every month.

The next Food Pantry pick up will be July 10. Until further notice we only need a minimum number of people helping. However, if you would like to help with this important mission in the future please contact the church office (724-872-7414) or Linda Shoaf (724-872-7857).

Our Session

Clerk of Session: Kris Edwards

Class of 2020

Annetta Carney

Michele Coleman

Anne Hustwit

Becky Moran

Class of 2021

Clark Detman

Ron Chamberlain

Colleen Martinelli

Harry Hepler

Class of 2022

Deb King

Joyce Pawlik

Pete Pritchard

Karen Murray

Session Highlights—June 22, 2020

Present: Karen Murray, Clark Detman, Becky Moran, Colleen Martinelli, Deb King, Pete Pritchard, Joyce Pawlik, Ron Chamberlain(by phone), Harry Hepler, Annetta Carney

Excused: Anne Hustwit, Michele Coleman

- Meeting opened at 6 PM with Scripture (Romans 8: 35-39) read by Pastor John and prayer by Deb King.
 - Accepted minutes from May 17, 2020 meeting as presented.
- Worship & Sacraments—Annetta Carney cleaned out cabinet and reorganized area to store communion supplies.
- Membership Care & Outreach– confirmed church picnic for September 20, 2020.
 - Budget -no report
 - Christian Ed.—Young Disciples will begin in September.
- Building & Grounds—invoice received for new hot water tank, modifications, and installation in the amount of \$6870. This was paid from the church’s Key Bank account.
- May 2020 financial report was received and approved as presented. The report indicated income exceeding expenses by \$3994.67.
- Pastor John distributed information to those session members needing to update required clearances.
 - Approved Yelich wedding for July 10, 6 Pm in the sanctuary.
 - Approved pulpit supply for July 19, 2020.
 - Approved no session meeting for July and to move August meeting to August 9.
 - Approved removing seating restrictions in the sanctuary. All other parts of the “return to in-person action plan” remain in place (chapel will still be open for alternate place of worship, Social room will not be used).
- July 18 family outing to Wild Things baseball game is cancelled. Pastor John has completed process for refund of ticket deposit (\$320).

Session Highlights—June 22, 2020 (cont.)

- Received information from estate of Sara Jane Fulmer. The church will be receiving \$851. Bill Blick (Pres. Of Corp) and Pastor John will get necessary paperwork signed by notary and returned.
- Christian Bojarski presented a plan (with well done Power point presentation) for his proposed Eagle Scout project. The project is to construct a permanent stage in the courtyard. Lengthy Q & A , followed by Session discussion. Original motion and second was to table decision until a certified blueprint assuring all regulations were met. This motion passed. A second motion was made to amend the first motion to add a sense of assurance to Christian Bojarski that Session would consider this proposal given the proper blueprints from an architect. This motion was approved.
 - Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8 PM.



Disciples Bible Study will resume in September.



We want your photos!

If you take any photos throughout this year at church activities please share them with us. They can be emailed to the office at any time. Thank You!



July Birthdays

Ava Ohler	6th
Mary Anne Lender	8th
Shawn Martinelli	8th
Sandy Berch	12th
Dennis Day	16th
Tyler Mesiarik	18th
Bill Lash	18th
Colleen Martinelli	18th
Ray Vargo	19th
Jordyn Polovina	22nd
Todd Cole	23rd
Zack Mesher	23rd
Ted Wojkowski	23rd
Catherine Harris	24th
Emily Vargo	24th
Ben Markle	24th
Jason Mesher	25th
Art Hoak IV	25th
Kris Edwards	26th
Jocelyn Cramer	28th
Kathy Yelich	29th
Jonathan Lewis	30th



happy anniversary

July Anniversaries

Greg & Dianne Franks	23rd
John & Linda Sparico	23rd
Kerri & Rob Bojarski	25th
Clark & Linda Detman	25th
Jim & Judy Oblack	27th

We would love to announce and celebrate your birthday and wedding anniversary. Please let us know when it is...

July 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5 10 Worship with communion	6	7	8	9	10 Food Bank Yelich/ Krasnevich wedding	11
12 10 Worship	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 10 Worship (Pulpit Supply)	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 10 Worship	27	28	29	30	31	

Bulletin/Prayer List Changes

Please submit any announcements for the bulletin or changes to the prayer list by the **end of the day on Wednesdays each week.**

Deadline for updates and notices for the August publication of *The Higher Ground Herald* will be **Monday July 27th.**

Contact the church office by phone at 724-872-7414 or email at wnupc1@gmail.com

Office hours are Monday—Friday 9 a.m.—2 p.m.

Weekly attendance

June	Adults	Children	Total	Offering
7	43	3	46	\$5487
14	53	-	53	\$4392
21	51	3	54	\$2491
28	73	5	78	\$3751
4 week total				\$16,121

Would you like a visit from Pastor John?

Or, do you know someone who would?

Please contact him at 724-872-7414 (office) or 606-261-0232 (cell).

Email: wnupc1@gmail.com

Website WNUPC.com

