

# THE SPIRE

*Love God! Love Others!*



*Upland Baptist Church, 1851*

## March 2017

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Rev. Brenda A. B. Shaw, Pastor

# Lent Begins...Are you Ready?

Yet even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
rend your hearts and not your clothing.  
Return to the LORD, your God,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,  
and relents from punishing.

Joel 2:12-13

This week I was listening to the radio in the car and the announcer was talking about Lent beginning. He told his co-host that he was giving up soda for Lent. She responded that he did not drink very much soda. He laughed and said, then it won't be very difficult.

This is a prevailing attitude regarding Lent. We think about it as a time of sacrifice, but our desire to sacrifice is not very strong. We don't want life to be painful or difficult. We don't want to give anything up that we enjoy.

Yet, when we are honest with ourselves, we realize that if we don't work to make changes we don't grow into the people we want to be. We can't change if we are not willing to do the work.

God is not interested in a show. He doesn't want us to make it look good. He wants us to change our inward beings. We read in Joel that God calls us to return to him with all our hearts, with fasting, weeping and mourning. There are times when we need to recognize that what we have done is sinful and we need to turn to God. What Joel describes is the signs of grief. It is fitting because when we grieve, we are saddened because of something. In this case, we are saddened because of our actions.

Are there things in your relationship with God that cause you grief? Are there things in your life that are not the way you want them to be? Are there things that you know need to be changed?

I am going to guess that all of us can say yes. There are things that need to be different. Even when things are going well, the doctor can still find something that I need to improve upon. There is always room for growth.

But it is not enough to lament that things are not as we want them to be. It is not enough to say, oh that needs to be changed or I wish that were different. It is not enough to grieve that something is wrong.

Joel goes on to say... *rend your hearts and not your clothing*. As an outward sign of grief, they would tear their clothes and put ash on their heads. This showed the world that they were grieving. But here the distinction is made between outward and inward signs. It is not enough to show the world that you are grieving. We want our hearts to be changed. I can say something, but until I commit to doing something, nothing will change.

It is not about outward appearance. It is about changing our lives from the inside out. I am of the school that instead of giving something like chocolate, soda or television up for Lent, we should be working to put in a godly habit. Instead of just denying myself, I want to be changing. Maybe that means giving up television for an hour so I have time to pray, or giving up soda and making intentional gifts to the Food Bank. What does God want me to change and how can I do that? This is the question for Lent.

The good news is that God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. So, when we come to him, repenting, he receives us with mercy, grace and steadfast love. We need not fear that he will turn away from us, God will open his arms to us and show us the way to him.

So, I encourage you to mark this season of Lent, not with outward signs, but with changes to your heart. What does God want from you? How does God want you to change? Are there things in your life that need to be different?

You don't need to wear a sign saying what you are doing. You simply need to place the desire in your heart and commit your ways to God. God wants us to mark our lives for him, to be intentional about choosing him.

Today marks the beginning of a journey. Let us pray for one another that we will be faithful along the way and that we will allow God to speak to us throughout the journey. AMEN

Pastor Brenda

## **Lenten Devotional**

Our devotional reading for this Easter season of preparation is titled, "Living the Gospel Life. Daily Devotions for Christians on a Mission." For every day, from Ash Wednesday until Easter Sunday, it presents a Gospel message and a challenge for each of us to consider. The book is designed to inspire and challenge us to a faith that is active and alive during this holy season.

If you didn't get your copy at worship service on 2/26, be sure and pick one up this Sunday.

❖ Join us for special times of worship

### **Maundy Thursday**

April 13, 2017 at 7:30 pm  
Communion will be shared.

### **Good Friday**

April 14, 2017 at 7:30 pm

### **Easter Sunrise**

April 16, 2017 at 6:30 am  
Breakfast to follow



## **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

### **LEGAL CORPORATION/MINISTRY COUNCIL**

- Reviewed the January financial statements.
- Discussed completed repairs around the Church and Chapel – the wall in front of the Church, the bathrooms in the food bank and the railing going into the Church.
- Upland Fire Company has agreed to clean the ceiling fans in the Church.
- Discussed the repairs that still need to be taken care of around the Chapel and the Church. We still plan to contact Williamson College of the Trades about painting the inside of the Church.
- Reviewed and updated three church policies – Holiday and Vacation Policy, Leaves of Absence Policy, and Severance Policy.
- Discussed personnel issues.
- Discussed the clearance requirements.
- Approved a contribution of \$1,000.00 to ABCOPAD's Partners in Ministry.
- Heard reports from the Team Leaders. Discussed and planned for upcoming events in the Church.

### **LENTEN ENVELOPES**

The Lenten Offering will go to our children's programs which are for the children in the congregation and the community. This includes Sunday School, the Monday Night VBS program, and the Summer Lunch/Activity program. The offering will help pay for materials, craft supplies, books, and games.







## **Sunday School's Valentine's Brunch**

On Sunday, February 12, 2017, Sunday School held its first brunch for the congregation. Hearts were all around! We had a great crowd – over 40 people attended. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful meal of breakfast casseroles, ham, fruit salad, Caesar salad, dessert and a great time of fellowship. We hope that if you couldn't make it this year, you'll join us next year. We would like to thank everyone who helped with the breakfast.

### **Special thanks to...**

- Everyone who baked, brought food, and/or helped in the kitchen: Linda Cook, Joan Decker, Jane Kofroth, Sue Kulp, Iris Messick, Charlene Miller, Dan Miller, Diane Ogram, Dawn Rafalski, Brenda Shaw, Darlene Strunk, Denise Sweeney, Betty Vandergrift and Jackie Wright;
- Those who participated in the devotions program – Katie Boyer-Mason, Tom Geveke, Cameron Klimek, Casey Klimek and Stephen Shaw;
- Linda Cook and Brenda Shaw, who organized the brunch and set-up; and
- Everyone who helped serve and clean up.

## **MINISTRY to Members ~ Dawn Rafalski**

### **Men's News**

There will be a Riverside Men's Breakfast on Saturday, April 22, 2017 at 8:15 am at New Hope Christian Church.

Mark your calendars - March 12, 2017, we will be having a "Souper Social" following worship. We will be having a little game time after the Social, so bring a favorite game, if you wish, have a little soup and dessert; and **JOIN THE FUN!**

# DISCIPLESHIP ~ Jane Kofroth

**VBS** volunteers prepare dinner for neighborhood kids on Monday nights at 6 pm. After dinner, there's a Bible lesson and a fun group activity from 6:30 to 7 pm.

We are glad to report that we've been blessed with a big upsurge in attendance – averaging 12-15 kids every Monday. Thank you to each one of our volunteer cooks and to all who so faithfully help serve and present the lesson every week. Also, thank you for keeping this program in your prayers.

## **Sunday School**

Our Sunday School class for children meets during worship service. All children are invited to go to the classroom downstairs right after Children's Talk. We are very grateful to each of our volunteer teachers.

### **Bible Study**

Bible Study group meets on Thursdays at 10 am. We continue with our study of Samuel. Come and join the group!

**Small Groups** are reading, Crazy Stories...Sane God by John Alan Turner. These stories, taken straight from the Scriptures, are crazy! They're full of peculiar details that make you wonder why God included them in His Word!

Mr. Turner's sharp insight into the lives of these characters and the lessons their crazy stories tell us about our God makes for a fascinating "read" and lively discussions! Even if you missed joining a group until now, this is the kind of book you can catch up on at any time.

**Tuesdays meeting date:** March 7 and March 21; April 4 and 18; May 2 and 16.

**The day time group meets at 12 noon.** Bring your lunch. We'll supply dessert.

**The evening group meets at 7 pm.** Dessert/snacks will be served.

# OUTREACH ~ Joan Decker

Monday night dinner program is doing very well. We have from 10 to 15 kids. Join us in the church chapel for Bible story and dinner from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. Our outreach program for Main Street Elementary went great for the bingo basket. Thanks to all who donated food items. If someone is interested in running grocery bingo, please call the church office and leave your phone number with the secretary. I will get back to you with the details.

Remember the food bank with can goods. Also, if anyone is interested in helping out at the food bank, please call the church office at 610-874-7474. Please join us on Sunday morning for worship at 10:00 am.



**Communications Team Leader**  
**John Kofroth**

Maybe you planned to connect to the live broadcast of our worship service at 10:00 on Sunday morning, but other things got in the way. Suddenly it's 2:30 pm and you might be thinking, "It's too late. I missed it." But, you didn't.

You can go to the church website, the Live Broadcast page, and watch the recording of the worship service at any time. In fact, you can go back and watch services from several weeks back. If you have any questions about what information and services are available on the website, just ask your Communications Team Leader.

# Home and International Missionary birthdays for March

Dr. David G. Parajon                      3/3  
P.O 5061  
Managua, Nicaragua

[david.parajon@internationalministries.org](mailto:david.parajon@internationalministries.org)

Ms. Karen Smith                              3/17  
412 N. Wayne Ave. – Apt. 106  
Wayne, PA 19087

[karen.smith@internationalministries.org](mailto:karen.smith@internationalministries.org)

Rev. Timothy Long                          3/18  
1374 Los Coches St.  
Chula Vista, CA 91910

[tim.long@internationalministries.org](mailto:tim.long@internationalministries.org)

## March Birthdays

12    Tricia Gervase  
21    Joe Hobaugh  
22    Rev. Brenda Shaw  
      Kyle Lord  
25    Rachel Miskowic  
30    Normajean Colby  
      Katie Boyer

## March Anniversary

28    Betty and Bob Singley

# Finance Team Leader – Brian Klimek

With apologies, below is the corrected first page of the 2016 Annual Financial Report. The one correction from the original report to now is the amended and corrected breakdown of our Benevolences for 2016 (Missions Sent to ABCOPAD).

## Annual Report of the Treasurer January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016

Fellowship Fund balance as of December 31, 2016	\$2,144.73
Cemetery Fund balance as of December 31, 2016	\$0.00
General Fund balance as of December 31, 2016	\$3,647.75
Christmas Card Offering (2016)	\$293.00
Lenten Offering (2016)	\$440.00
Advent Offering (2016)	\$163.00
<u>Benevolences for 2016 (Missions sent to ABCOPAD)</u>	
Missions - Unified Budget	\$6,783.92
America for Christ	\$123.00
American Baptist Women - Love Gift	\$48.73
World Mission Offering	\$238.00
Retired Ministers and Missionaries	\$437.35
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$195.00
Partners in Ministry	\$1,000.00
Deborah's House	\$274.00
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$9,100.00</i>
<u>Benevolences for 2016 (Sent directly to the Organization)</u>	
Upland Volunteer Fire Company	\$150.00
Center for Pastoral Counseling	\$200.00
Riverside Association	\$150.00
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$500.00</i>
<b>Total Benevolences 2016</b>	<b>\$9,600.00</b>

## Worship Team Leader – Sue Kulp

Lent began on March 1<sup>st</sup> with Ash Wednesday at 7:30 pm. A Lenten Service took place with the placing of ashes on the foreheads of the faithful. It was a day of fasting and prayer to help ourselves prepare for Easter. Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of blessing ashes made from palm branches blessed on the previous year's Palm Sunday, and placing them on the heads of participants.

Pastor Brenda has provided Lenten Devotionals to help us prepare for Jesus' Resurrection. The booklet is called, LIVING THE GOSPEL OF LIFE: Daily Devotionals for Christians on a Mission. Each devotional provides the reader with a Challenge. Please take time to think about and explore the topic presented. Pastor Brenda will discuss the Challenges during the Sunday Services during the season of Lent. A copy can be picked up on the back table in church. Use this prayerful and reflective time to discipline yourselves to the hearing, listening, and following of God's Word.

**“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”** (Genesis 3:19)