
Uplift Newsletter

United Presbyterians Living In Faith Together

The United Presbyterian Church of Blairsville

June 2008

A little boy was asked by his Sunday School teacher why he was a Christian. He had to think for a moment because he had never before pondered that question. After a minute, he responded, "I'm not sure, I guess because it runs in my family." Family traditions are wonderful. But when they are acted out because "that's the way things have always been done" – or when their substance has been drained and their meaning forgotten, they are hollow. So it is with faith. I have actually heard people say that they know they're going to heaven because their grandmother was a saintly woman or because their mother prays for them all the time. Unfortunately, you can't be brought into heaven on someone else's apron strings or coat tails. Or maybe I should say fortunately our relationship with God has much more depth and richness than that.

In 1 Peter 3:15 we are counseled, "...in your hearts, reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you..." While faith is personal, it is not private. Because we are connected as the "body of Christ", the church, what God is doing in my life relates to what God is doing in your life, and what God is doing in your life relates to what God is doing in the lives of those around you. We cannot anymore live out our faith in isolation than an ember can remain aglow apart from the fire. Being in relationship with each other means being open about our journey of faith, where we've been with God, where we are, and where we sense we are being led. When we are willing to open up and share our faith story with others, we find walls that once divided us crumble and misconceptions that once discolored our understanding fade away.

Some folks have exciting stories of conversion, you know, like Paul on the road to Damascus or John Newton, "who once was lost but now is found, was blind but now can see." Some can tell you the date and time they were "saved and gave their life to Jesus." If pressed, they could even tell you the color of the socks they were wearing when it happened. I'm always impressed and touched by such dramatic encounters with God. There is even a part of me that is envious, for my faith story does not have all the pizzazz to leave people saying "wow". I don't remember a time when I didn't believe in God. Jesus was always present in our home, in our conversations, in our decisions, in our hope. To be sure there were times I sensed his presence more than other times, but I know he was always there. Through the years and experiences of life, I became more sensitive to his presence in my life, and little by little I turned my life over to his control to the point that "it was no longer I who lived, but Christ who lived in me" (Galatians 2:20). The more I trusted Jesus and came to know his faithfulness, the more open I became to following the Spirit to new places. Once there, I discovered things about God's goodness and grace I never imagined were possible. Day by day, step by step, crisis by crisis, I have grown in my understanding of what it means to live out my baptism in the assurance that I belong to God.

It's a story that will never have an ending, because with God, there is always a new beginning. It is a story that will be lived out eternally. What is true for me will also be true for you in Christ. Those on the Evangelism Team will be doing some thinking about the personal journeys of faith. It is our hope that they will be ready, willing and able to share their stories with you so that you might be encouraged in your journey. It is also our hope that they will be able to help you to tell your story of faith – so that when someone asks about the hope that is within you, you are able to answer clearly and joyfully...

In Christ's Love,