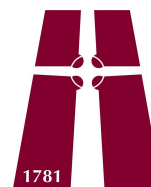


Presbytery of Redstone eNews

March 31, 2021



Please pray for...

District 1 Churches

>>Union Presbyterian Church, Murrysville,
Sue Washburn, Interim Pastor

>>Community United Presbyterian
Church, New Alexandria, Leonard Morgan,
Commissioned Pastor

District 2 Churches

>>United Presbyterian Church, West
Newton, John Manon, Pastor

>>Derry Presbyterian Church, Marnie
Abraham Russell, Covenant Pastor

District 3 Churches

>>Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, East
Liberty, David McElroy, Commissioned
Pastor

>>Palmer Community Presbyterian
Church, Adah, Laura Blank, Moderator

District 4 Churches

>>Bethany Presbyterian Church,
Johnstown, Denise Todero, Commissioned
Pastor

>>First Presbyterian Church, Johnstown,
Alice Tondora, Pastor

Reflections from ... Martin Ankrum, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Greensburg

And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. -Luke 23:33

The events of the last twenty-four hours of Christ's earthly life loom large before this day as we approach the end of Holy Week. There is much to be observed here: the gathering in the upper room, the instituting of a sacramental meal, a desperate prayer in a quiet garden, the sleepy and less-than-observant disciples, the arrest, the trial, and the subsequent execution. The shadow of the cross looms large over us this day, as it did, of course, over the path of the Christ many, many years ago.

One of my favorite theologians, Karl Barth, was noted for preaching to the prisoners in the Basel jail in his old age. He would venture down to the prison where he was invited by the chaplain to deliver the Word of God not to the high and mighty, not to the well-situated and outwardly pious, but to those in the deepest need of God's consolation - the very ones who shared the fate of Christ himself: those who have been tried and condemned.

Shocking isn't it? To think of Christ in these terms, as one who has been tried and found guilty, but this is the bare facts of the gospel reports, is it not?

The passage that is cited above was the text that Barth used for a sermon delivered to the prisoners on Good Friday in 1957. Any preacher can be secretly envious at the wisdom of selecting this snippet of scripture to meditate upon and consider the death of Christ amid criminals joined

together in a prison chapel. Barth, thanks to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, knew what he was doing.

After establishing the obvious-yet-often-neglected connection between the prisoners and our Lord in his execution, Barth makes an astounding claim about the two criminals:

Don't be too surprised if I tell you that this was the first Christian fellowship, the first certain, indissoluble, and indestructible Christian community. Christian community is manifest wherever there is a group of people close to Jesus who are with him in such a way that they are directly and unambiguously affected by his promise and assurance. ... The two criminals were the first certain Christian community.

Yikes! I had not thought of it in such terms, but Barth was right. The two criminals share in Christ's death in a way that Paul will later commend to all of us yet is outside of our unaided reach. They were there. They shared in his condemnation and execution, though they themselves had committed other crimes; crimes that were indeed their own. Barth then contrasted their presence with Christ to the absence of the wavering flock of disciples who largely absented themselves from the crucifixion, heading safely 'for the hills.'

Barth's claim about the criminal highlights to us our place in all of this. Are we not just like those criminals, guilty in our own way and deserving of judgment? And are we not just like that wavering community of disciples, faithful in some ways, yet faithless when the challenge is placed before us in sure and certain ways?

Thanks be to God, that Christ died for such as the criminals on the cross and the disciples in the hills ... people like us all.

Barth ended his discussion of the criminals, the Christ, the disciples, and us:

Consider the fact: Jesus died precisely for these two criminals who were crucified on his right and on his left and went to their death with him. He did not die for the sake of a good world, he died for the sake of an evil world, not for the pious, but for the godless, not for the just, but for the unjust, for the deliverance, the victory, and the joy of all, that they may have life. These two companions were evidently and undeniably criminals, evil people, god-less people, unjust people. And he, like them, was condemned and crucified as a lawbreaker, a criminal. All three were under the same verdict.

Yes, and we too, are under the very same verdict. The only hope we have is yet to be seen ...

The congregation of the Covenant Presbyterian Church in Boswell voted to close the church effective December 31, 2020. There will be a closing service at that church, 327 Allegheny Street, Boswell, PA, on Sunday, April 11, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. Social distancing and CDC guidelines will be followed. Please keep this congregation in your prayers as they move forward.

The 2020 Session Minutes and Church Register review dates have been set as follows:

- Tuesday, April 13, 2021 - Time TBD - First Presbyterian Church, Johnstown
- Tuesday, May 11, 2021 - 5:00 p.m. - Redstone Presbytery Center
- Tuesday, May 25, 2021 - 5:00 p.m. - First Presbyterian Church, Greensburg (pre-Presbytery meeting)



2nd SUNDAY EASTER SERVICE (and possibly others)

Looking for a break after Lent and Easter Sunday? Redstone Presbytery will have pre-recorded services available for your use in your congregation.

--For Easter Season Service - John 20, click [here](#) for the bulletin and click [here](#) for the video.

--For Easter Season Service - Acts 4, click [here](#) for the bulletin and click [here](#) for the video.

Feel free to use these on April 11 or any other Sunday.

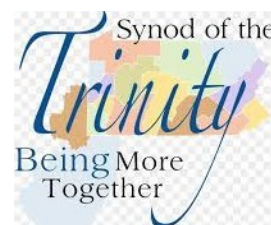


The Inter-Presbytery Leadership Formation, a joint ministry of Redstone, Washington, Upper Ohio Valley, Kiskiminetas, and Pittsburgh Presbyteries, are again offering workshops this spring. The next workshop in the series is:

- **April 17, 2021 - Creative and Faithful Celebrations of the Sacraments - Rev. Laura Blank, Instructor**

These workshops are FREE and will be offered from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. via Zoom video conferencing. If you want to attend this workshop, please RSVP to [Bobbie](#) at Redstone Presbytery by Thursday, February 18th and let her know and she will forward you the login information.

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS... For Pastors, Leaders and Congregations. Virtual gatherings for this time and the new day that is unfolding within and among us as we move beyond the Pandemic. The Synod of the Trinity is offering several spring opportunities for you to breathe, recalibrate, and revision, moving ahead over what has been, and may still be, a long road. The vaccines offer a promising future even while continuing with masks and distancing. A way forward - the promise of new wholeness - now and not yet. As Christians, we understand that reality. It takes practice and attention to remain nimble and open to the Spirit as we go. We trust that you will find encouragement and tools to aid your walk and leadership in these offerings. Explore one or all three...the choice is yours.



- **Tuesday, April 6, 2021 - 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. - The Next Right Thing: Grace-Filled Ministry in a Turbulent World (Through Improvisation) - Rev. Mary Ann McKibben Dana**
- **Friday, April 16, 2021 - 9:15 to 10:45 a.m. - Moving Through to the Other Side - Rev. Dr. Graham Standish**
- **Monday, April 19, 2021 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. - From Surviving to Thriving: Designing Toward Post-Covid Ministry - Rev. Mary Ann McKibben Dana**

More information and registration [available here](#)

Redstone Pastor Information

Weekly Zoom Pastor Check-In

Wednesdays at NOON - virtual food and fellowship

Redstone Pastors Facebook Group



Matthew 25 Initiative

Nearly 500 PC(USA) congregations have accepted the exciting and bold invitation to become "a Matthew 25 church." Look for ideas and opportunities that you church too can join our Matthew 25 Initiative. See the worship and ministry resources by [clicking here](#).

Presbytery Staff

[Richard "Skip" Noftzger](#)

Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk

[blog address](#)

[twitter address](#)

[Bobbie Martin](#)

Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper

*Communicate the
Word...*

Carry on the Work...

Change the World...

Together

Presbytery of Redstone

www.redstonepresbytery.org

Presbytery of Redstone | 1004 Mt. Pleasant Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

[Unsubscribe {recipient's email}](#)

[Update Profile](#) | [Customer Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by secretary@redstonepresbytery.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!