

DEC 2023

# Newsletter



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
SYLVA

**OFFICE HOURS:**  
**Monday - Friday**  
**8:00am - 12:00pm**

**OUR MISSION**

**To make disciples who love Jesus Christ,  
love the church, and love their neighbors  
as themselves.**

**(828) 586-4256**  
**office@sylvapres.org**  
**www.sylvapres.org**

**46 Presbyterian Drive, Sylva, NC 28779**

**Mailing Address:**  
**PO Box 2152, Sylva, NC 28779**

**Blake Daniel, Pastor**  
**Jean Chance, Administrative Assistant**  
**Courtney Umphlett, Music Director**  
**Margaret Hale, Organist/Pianist**  
**Heather Monar, Children/Youth Ministry**  
**Lilly Matheson, Children's Ministry Assistant**  
**Judy Henderson, Treasurer**  
**Grace Reed, Financial Secretary**  
**Lynda Parlett, Assistant Financial Secretary**

**December Deacon of the Month:**  
**Jenna Pendry (314) 348-0115**  
**Susan Blair (alt) (828) 508-2761**

# Merry Christmas!



## PASTOR'S NOTES

Dear church family,

**December is here, and another Advent season has arrived.** In just a few short weeks, we will celebrate the birth of Jesus and the coming of our Savior and Lord. In the meantime, what do we do? We worship, pray, and prepare. We decorate our houses and set our tables and open our hearts in wonder. We resist the all-consuming commercialism of our culture and make space for contemplation. We seek justice, show mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). In all this, we watch and wait for the coming of the King.



As we do, I want to invite you to trust, yet again, that this waiting time is not wasted time. As much as we want to rush the process and celebrate Christmas prematurely, God is up to something by inviting us into this time of anticipation. Just think of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, or crying out in exile. Think of Elizabeth and Zechariah, John the Baptist, and – of course – Mary and Joseph. Think of those shepherds, keeping watch over the flocks by night. The hope, peace, joy, and love of God's people is always forged in the crucible of waiting.

I hope you will take a look at the many updates and announcements within this newsletter. There are wonderful things taking place in the life of our congregation, and you are welcome to get involved in any of them. (If you need help, just let me know.) Together, let's recommit ourselves to walking the dusty road of discipleship, trusting that Jesus was, is, and always will be leading the way.

Yours,

**Blake**

*“As his sheep, we have been given a bountiful lot of prosperity and protection... What does this look like? We might imagine a herd of docile sheep resting freely under a shady tree as he stands with staff in hand, ensuring total serenity in his care. His peace ushers eternal shalom into every avenue of life.”*

*– from The Eternal King Arrives: Journeying Through Advent with Our Humble and Mighty Savior*

## WORSHIP

Join us for worship on Sundays as we offer our praise to God, study Scripture and learn about its relevance for our lives, and go deeper in fellowship and life together. In-person services take place in the sanctuary at 11:00am. We are also live-streaming for those who are not able to attend via our [YouTube page](#).



### SUNDAY SCRIPTURES

*December 3*  
*Isaiah 64:1-9*

*December 10*  
*Isaiah 40:1-11*

*December 17*  
*Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11*

*December 24*  
*2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16*

*December 31*  
*TBD*



### Do you have a prayer request?

Send prayer concerns or updates to our church prayer email address: [pray@sylvapres.org](mailto:pray@sylvapres.org)





## DOLLARS & CENTS

The Session has called a congregational meeting for December 10<sup>th</sup> for the purpose of presenting the 2024 budget which has been approved by the Session, and for having church members vote on the Pastor's Terms of Call. What do we mean by *Terms of Call*? Most of us have held jobs and are familiar with the process of interviews, personnel committees, background checks, basic salary information, W-4 forms, etc. A pastor is called to serve a church, not simply hired. Thus, his total compensation package is called *Terms of Call*. The presbytery has minimum requirements and our *Terms of Call* are examined each year by the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry to make sure these minimums are met. Other items such as vacation, continuing education, professional allowance, etc. are also spelled out. Every time there is a change such as a raise in cash salary or an addition such as offered sabbatical leave, the congregation must give their approval. The Board of Pensions sets the amounts for Annuity, Medical Benefits, and Insurance as a percentage of Effective Salary (cash salary plus housing allowance.)

I hope and pray that you will attend the meeting and support next year's budget with your continued giving.

In His Service,

**Judy Henderson, Treasurer**



**AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE  
FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER: 91**

*November Donations*  
(11-1 / 11-29)

REGULAR FUND: \$20,747.03  
CONTINGENCY FUND: \$250.00  
DISASTER FUND: \$200.00  
ORGAN FUND: \$148.45  
PASS THRU: \$25.69  
ADVENT GIFT MKT: \$980.00

**TOTAL DONATIONS: \$22,351.17**

*3 Ways To Give*

*Recurring Donation*

Set up a one time or recurring donation:  
<https://www.sylvapres.org>

*Mail a Check*

Mail a check to:  
First Presbyterian Church  
P.O. Box 2152  
Sylva, NC 28779

*Drop It Off*

Drop off a check during  
office hours or at worship.

## SESSION

At the annual Congregation Meeting on December 10, as Clerk of Session, I will report on a proposed change to the Call to the Pastor. Early this year, I received a letter from the Presbytery indicating that our Session needed to review its Call to the Pastor to see that it includes a statement about the availability of sabbatical leaves for the pastor. An elaborate set of sabbatical guidelines was included. I brought the letter and guidelines to a Session meeting where we had an extensive discussion and unanimously approved a motion to develop a sabbatical policy. The matter was referred to the Personnel Committee. They returned the following policy, consistent with Presbytery guidelines, in the form of a motion that was unanimously approved at the Session's regular meeting in October:

***A pastor who has been employed for six years is eligible for up to a 12-week sabbatical. It is to be approved and planned in consultation with the Session not less than six months prior to the requested time.***

The general tenor of the Session's discussions has focused on the positive potential of sabbaticals for both the pastor and our church. For the pastor, a sabbatical provides for a period of study, learning, and renewal. A sabbatical is not a vacation. The pastor designs a specific project or course of study, approved by the Session. The longer a pastor has been away from their seminary training, the more they need a mechanism for renewing their knowledge and skills. One way pastors experience renewal is by moving to a new position at another church. We hope that a sabbatical will increase the likelihood that our pastor will stay with us, bringing back new energy and new knowledge.

The reason for the 6-month planning period is so the pastor can schedule replacements for leading Sunday services and to find other pastors who can serve communion, conduct baptisms, wedding, and funerals as needed, moderate Session meetings, and provide pastoral care during the sabbatical period. The Worship Committee has included a larger than normal budget for pulpit supply in next year's budget in case of need. However, the Session is optimistic that we can find volunteer Sunday leadership from our church's large body of ordained ruling elders and

mission partners. We expect the Presbytery to offer help with the more formal functions.

If you have questions about the change to the call before or after the December 10 congregational meeting, please speak with me.

Happy Advent,

**Bruce Henderson**

## MUSIC MINISTRY

Happy December everyone! Advent is one of my favorite times of the church calendar. I love the music and the mystery as well as the anticipation. However, this season is tough for musicians as there are always so many things to do. This year, I am choosing to breathe through the busy and take time each day to reflect on the mystery of Christmas.

We are very excited to present our Christmas music program soon! The program will be **Saturday, December 16 at 6:00 pm**. Titled "**Care for the Stranger**," this Christmas program that focuses on the ways Christ brought hope to the world of those marginalized while also being ostracized himself. We will be taking donations for HERE in Jackson County, which is an organization that helps the homeless in our area. The suggested donation is **\$5.00** but we will

take any amount you can give. Can't afford to donate? We would still love your presence!

**Courtney Umphlett**



## MISSIONS

**A "Can't Miss It" Event:** Our supported missionaries to South Africa, the Gieser family, will be visiting on **Friday, December 15 at 6:00 pm** to give a presentation about their ministry with college students there. We will have a pizza and salad, dinner so please come support them and learn about their important work!

**United Christian Ministries:** We are collecting boxes of **instant oatmeal** for the **holiday food bags** going to Jackson County School children this month. Please give if you are able so children will have some nutritious

***We only have 1 box of  
oatmeal on the Giving  
Tree in the Fellowship Hall  
so far and we need to  
collect 250 boxes.***

food during their winter break away from the school cafeteria.

The next **Cove Cleanup** will take place on **Saturday, December 9 from 10:00 to 12:00**. Volunteers are needed to help pick up trash along Grindstaff Cove Road. Safety vests and trash bags will be provided. We have 3 long handled grabbers that can be used, bring your own if you have one.

**Advent Gift Market:** Our second annual Advent Gift Market was held on Saturday, November 18. Gifts to assist impoverished families, individuals and children in Jackson County and around the world **totaled more than \$1,400, surpassing last year's total by more than \$200**. Thank you to everyone who came out, especially to those who took the time to learn about our local nonprofit organizations and the work of the Presbytery USA across the country and worldwide. A special thank you to Judy Henderson and Frances Hess who assisted at the checkout, to the Children's Ministry who led our middle school students in the hat, glove and blanket drive for the homeless, and to the Scouts who led the collection of pet food for United Christian Ministries.

As you ponder the approaching New Year, please prayerfully consider joining the Mission Committee. We need

helping hands to faithfully fulfill Jesus' command to serve others.

Merry Christmas!

**Lynda Parlett**

## HOSPITALITY

In November the Hospitality Committee finished organizing the kitchen. We continue to provide meals, visits, cards and prayers to those in need. We are looking forward to assisting in celebrating several events in December. We will be welcoming home for a visit the **Gieser family on Friday, Dec. 15 at 6 pm**. The Giesers are beloved church members who are missionaries in South Africa. A **pizza and salad party** is planned in the church fellowship hall.



The next evening, **Sat. the 16<sup>th</sup>**, is our church choir and handbell musical program **"Care for a Stranger"** at **6 pm** with a light finger food reception to follow. On Christmas Eve we will have our traditional Christmas Eve service and reception at 5 pm.



Please plan to be a part of these joyous events.

**Beth Baxley**

## **PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN**

Our November study focused on Jesus and the healing of the demoniac, as told in the gospel of Luke, Chapter 8. This led to a discussion on how our understanding of mental health and mental illness has changed over the years and how care has changed, while always keeping in mind the Lord's healing power. We also talked about what we can do as individuals and as a church to support people with mental health issues.

Our next study on **Dec. 21 at 10 am** in the Garden Room, from our series of Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts will be "A Bleeding Woman Encounters Christ." As always, all the women of the church are welcome. If you don't have a study guide, please call Donna Mason, 507-2210 or Beth Baxley, 399-0735 and we will get you one.

**Beth Baxley**

## **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**

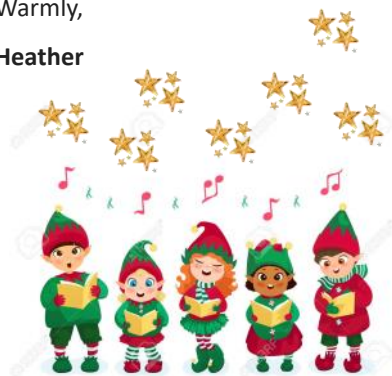
Greetings,

Our middle school Sunday school group collected gloves, hats, and blankets for the non-profit HERE in Jackson County. It was a wonderful success, and our middle schoolers loved the opportunity to get involved in the needs of our community. Thank you to all who donated!

Coming up on December 16th, our high school Sunday School is helping to host our Christmas party for families with young children. Families, please come by from 4:30-5:30 pm in the fellowship hall to enjoy some snacks, some Christmas trivia, and maybe even some Christmas carols! All children performing in the Christmas music concert that evening will need to be at the church at about 5:30, so stop by the party before the concert.

Warmly,

**Heather**



## COMMUNITY



**Women's Community Bible Study**

Wednesday mornings from 9:00 - 10:30am at Sylva First Presbyterian Church

**New study begins on Dec. 6**



A non-denominational Bible Study open to all ladies. Childcare is provided.

An opening coffee will take place on Dec. 6 at 9AM. Study books will be available at \$10 each.



Women of all ages are invited! Women's Community Bible Study, a nondenominational bible study meeting at First Presbyterian Church in Sylva, will begin a new study on December 6: "*Matthew: The Arrival of the King.*" This study shows how Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah and that a new kingdom on earth had begun.

WCBS meets on Wednesday mornings from 9am to 10:30am at Sylva First Presbyterian Church. A Zoom class is also available.

An opening coffee will take place on December 6 at 9am. Study books will be available at \$10 each. Childcare is provided.

WCBS follows the Jackson County Public School schedule.

For more information, contact Joyce Pope at 631-9496.

## COMMUNITY





### United Christian Ministries

**Needed for the Month of December:**

Pasta and pasta sauce, canned chicken,  
peanut butter, jelly,  
pop top cans of food for the homeless

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**Always needed:**

shampoo, body wash,  
dish detergent, laundry detergent,  
paper towels, toilet paper,  
diapers, and pet food

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### UCM Holiday Food Bags for Jackson County Children:

We will be collecting boxes of instant oatmeal for children in need during the winter break.  
We have pledged to collect 250 boxes.  
You can help us reach this goal by leaving your donations on the giving tree in the Fellowship Hall.



## UPCOMING EVENTS



We invite all from our congregation and community

to attend this simple potluck dinner.

Please bring a dish to share if you are able.

If not, come anyway!

We'd love to host you!



## UPCOMING EVENTS



*Come learn more about  
ministry in  
Cape Town, South Africa!*

# Pizza Dinner with the Giesers

Friday, December 15  
6:00pm  
FPC Fellowship Hall

The banner features a red textured background with two slices of pepperoni pizza on the left and right sides. The text is in white and green fonts.



## FPC Music Department Presents

### *"Care For the Stranger"*

Musical musings on how Christ calls us to care for others

**Saturday, December 16th at 6PM**

Suggested Donation: \$5.00  
Donations go to  
HERE of Jackson County

The banner has a green background with white stars and a string of white lights. There are silhouettes of evergreen trees at the bottom corners. The text is in white and green fonts.



## UPCOMING EVENTS



### *Worship on the Longest Night*



**December 20th**  
**6:00 PM**



### *Candlelight Worship*

**December 24th**  
**5:00 PM**



## FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE



The Church Office  
will be closed for  
the holidays  
on Monday & Tuesday,  
December 25 & 26

## CHURCH DIRECTORIES

UPDATED DIRECTORIES ARE AVAILABLE AT YOUR  
REQUEST FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE. A FEW COPIES  
ARE KEPT AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE SANCTUARY.

To keep the directory current, send all  
changes/corrections to [office@sylvapres.org](mailto:office@sylvapres.org)



## OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

### HELP NEEDED

#### SIGN UP FOR:

Greeters/Ushers - Audio/Video - Children's Church  
Flowers - Coffee Fellowship - Nursery

Interested in serving on a church  
committee? Notify the pastor or the  
church office.

Christian Education  
Finance - Hospitality - Missions  
Personnel - Property  
Worship - Transition House

# December Birthdays



- December 1 - Frank Royce
- December 2 - Rady Large
- December 6 - Blake Daniel, Seth Gelbaugh
- December 12 - Wren Gelbaugh, Laura Lindsay, David Noland, Dottie Thornburg
- December 13 - Angie NolaInd
- December 15 - Kelder Monar, Patti Sparling
- December 17 - Grace Blunt
- December 20 - Jenny Porter, Lacy Thornburg
- December 21 - Besan Nash
- December 24 - Livingston Kelley, Gloria Stockton, Jacqueline Pendry
- December 30 - Judy Henderson, Becky Wilson

# Anniversaries

- December 16 - Brenda & Patrick Hill
- December 18 - Barbara & Tim Boyer, Charles & Frances Hess
- December 27 - Grace & Roger Blunt
- December 28 - Dianne & Greg Scott
- December 29 - Danielle & Jeff Ollar
- December 31 - Heidi & Jake Buchanan

