



**2023**

## **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SYLVA**

Rev. Blake Daniel

Pastor

[blake@sylvapres.org](mailto:blake@sylvapres.org)

Mary Ferrick

Administrative Assistant

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**OFFICE HOURS:** Monday - Friday 9:00 to 1:00

[www.sylvapres.org](http://www.sylvapres.org)

### ***Our Mission:***

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

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear church family,

I'll admit it: I like the end of December and the beginning of January more than any other time in the winter season. It has a "calm after the storm" quality to it. Candles have been lit, presents have been opened, cookies have been eaten, and – though it's likely a mess from all the hustle and bustle – our house (and the church) feels lived-in and enjoyed, allowing for a time of rest and celebration.

I find the lyrics of "O Holy Night" have special meaning for me this year:

*Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.*

A new and glorious morn, indeed! Because of Christmas, the light has come. Because of Christmas, we know God has descended to us (rather than waiting for us to ascend to him), revealing himself in Jesus, *Emmanuel*, and promising to be with us always. Because of Christmas, nothing can ever be the same. The time of getting ready is over; the time of resting and celebrating is here.

As we move into a new year, it's worth looking back to reflect on a rich and rewarding 2022. It has not always been easy, but it has been good. As the year began, we were still in a pandemic holding pattern: meeting inside but without much singing; oscillating between color codes and safety protocols; unsure and insecure about the state of our membership, the fragility of our finances, and the precarious condition of the church in America – to say nothing of personal struggles and grief.

(Continued on the next page)

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Throughout it all, however, you've shown up and pulled together as the body of Christ. Our staff members have worked hard and led us well. Our elders, deacons, and committees have attended to the various needs of the church.

And we were able to gather inside for Christmas Eve worship for the first time since 2019, lighting candles and proclaiming the good news that Christ the Savior is born. Thanks be to God!

May the Lord grant you rest and celebration, and may you have a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and Blessed Epiphany season. I look forward to seeing you in 2023.

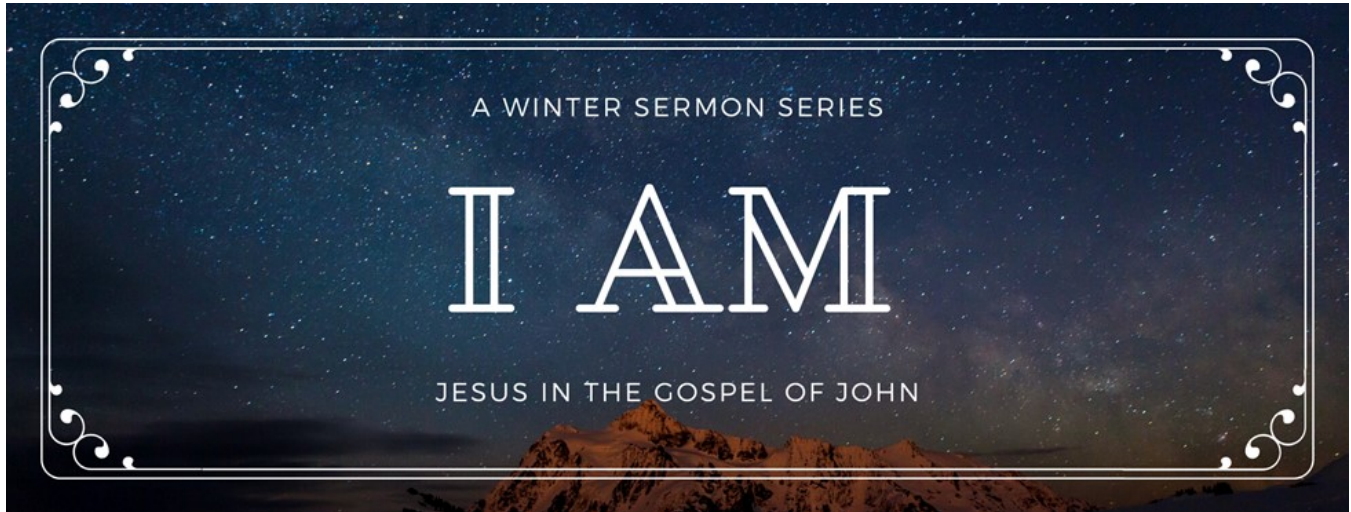
With you in Christ,

*Blake*



# CHURCH UPDATES

Coming in mid-January



## Worship News

Join us for worship on Sundays as we give praise to God, study Scripture and learn about its relevance for our lives, and go deeper in life together. In-person services take place in the sanctuary at 11:00am. We are live-streaming for those who prefer to worship from home via our [YouTube page](#).

## Sunday Scriptures:

- 1/1/2023 – Matthew 2:13-23 (*Guest: Rev. Rebecca Mathis*)
- 1/8/2023 – Matthew 3:13-17
- 1/15/2023 – John 1:1-18
- 1/22/2023 – John 3:1-21
- 1/29/2023 – John 4:1-26

# CHURCH UPDATES

## A Prayer for the New Year

*O Lord, our Father!*

*Our hearts are filled with somber thoughts*

*as we reflect on our misdeeds of the past year.*

*And our ears are deafened by the voices of the radio and in the newspapers,  
with their numerous predictions for the coming year.*

*Instead we want to hear your word, your voice, your assurance, your guidance.*

*We know that you are in our midst,*

*and are eager to give us all that we need, whether we ask or not.*

*[This year] we ask for one thing only:*

*that you collect our scattered thoughts,*

*getting rid of the confused and defiant thoughts that may distract us,*

*and thus enable us to concentrate on your limitless generosity to us.*

*You were abundantly generous to us last year,*

*and will be no less generous to us next year, and in every year to come.*

*Fill us with gratitude to you.*

*Amen.*

- Karl Barth, Swiss pastor and theologian (1886-1968)

## Grateful thanks from the Staff

The Staff at the Church want to express to the congregation their gratitude for the generous Christmas gift this year. Not only do we get to be a part of this amazing church, but to be the recipients of your extra kindness at Christmas time, is such a great blessing.

Thank you, and a happy, healthy New Year's to you and yours!



# CHURCH UPDATES

## Dollars and Cents for January

Happy New Year! It is time to put a brand new approved budget into the computer, crank out the 2022 contribution receipts, and work on last year's W-2s for the staff and 1099s for the contracted workers. But mostly it is time for us to look forward to what the Lord has for us as individuals and as a community in 2023. If you were at the Congregational Meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup>, you will have the 2023 budget in hand. (I have extra copies in my office, available upon request.) We unanimously approved changes to Blake's Call of the Pastor. If you look closely you will see three additional budget lines, landscape improvements, hand bell expenses, and repairs to the transition house. Many lines were lowered but all staff received an 8% cost of living raise. I hope you will consider increasing your giving as you are led and you are able and including our church community in your daily prayers. We finished the year in good shape thanks to some generous end of year gifts. Thank you so much for your faithfulness.



I

In His Service,

*Judy Henderson*

### There are three easy ways to give:

- ♦ Visit our giving webpage and set up a one-time or recurring donation.
- ♦ Mail a check to FPC: P.O. Box 2152, Sylva, NC 28779
- ♦ Drop off a check during church office hours.

# CHURCH UPDATES

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



### **Sunday School**

You're invited to Sunday School! Children's Sunday School meets upstairs in the main church building at 9:45am. Bruce Henderson leads a class for adults, also at 9:45am, in the upstairs classroom of the MJPC, and Pastor Blake leads a class at 9:45am in the Garden Room next to the Fellowship Hall.

Questions? Contact the [church office](#). We'd love to have you!

### **Presbyterian Women's Bible Study**

All women of the church are also invited to our Bible Study on Thursday, January 19th at 10:00 am in the Garden Room.

Contact Sylvia Smythe with any questions:

[sylviasmythe43@icloud.com](mailto:sylviasmythe43@icloud.com)

# CHURCH UPDATES

## SESSION UPDATE

It was a quiet December session meeting. The highlight was the review of service by the two elders rotating off after their most recent six-year terms, David Noland and Roger Murajda. David and Roger served during the difficult period when decisions needed to be made about meeting together or not and about means of taking services online. They will be missed, indeed. The session also completed a few tasks that the denomination's Book of Order requires, including reviewing the records of the diaconate and reviewing the membership roster. Those relatively menial tasks reminded me of several more important things. First, we are not alone in our ministry. The Presbytery provides oversight and accountability that is absent when churches are independent of any denominational framework. Second, we are not alone in our ministry. In addition to the session, we have the diaconate, a hard-working staff, committee members, choir members, Sunday School teachers, and other volunteers who make the church work. Finally, we are not alone in our ministry. Our church directory includes many people who are not members. Yet they contribute to the work of the church in many ways. We are blessed.

The session will meet the second week of 2023 with new members and new enthusiasm. Pray for us.

*Bruce Henderson*

Clerk of Session





# CHURCH UPDATES

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Greetings!

December was a busy month for our children and youth. They sent Christmas cards to our homebound church members and enjoyed a cookie exchange and ornament decorating. This event turned into an outreach event for the Cub Scouts, and we were so happy to host them! Some of our youth also helped pack bags of food for the students of Jackson County who are in need over the winter break.

We are looking forward to what January has in store for our children and youth!

Warmly,

*Heather Monar*



*Cookie making with the Children's Ministry and the Cub Scouts!*

# CHURCH UPDATES

## Worship Committee

### Hymnal Update

The Worship Committee would like to thank everyone for the feedback you have provided as we have researched newer hymnals that might enrich our worship together. Your thoughts and concerns support our guiding principles that a hymnal must be biblically based, support our reformed tradition of worship, honor the centuries of great hymns that have been foundational to our worship, and include the best of the more recent hymns that can deepen our worship.

We reviewed several hymnals and are excited to report that we have found one which we feel will support our worship for years to come. *Lift Up Your Hearts* is, as the editors write, a collection of hymns that is “biblical, Reformed, balanced and accessible.” It contains the hymns we have treasured for generations as well as the best of new hymns, songs from the global church and settings of all the psalms. In addition the hymnal is a rich source of prayers, litanies, scripture readings and creeds that will enhance our worship.

We would like to make a more detailed presentation about the hymnal and encourage you to attend the February 1<sup>st</sup> Family Night Supper to learn more about *Lift Up Your Hearts*. We think you will agree that the creators of this hymnal succeeded in creating a resource that “is deep enough to give voice to our praises and laments, contain both our sung prayers and God’s words to us, and play a significant role in the faith formation of Christians young and old alike.” The purchase of new hymnals will be totally supported by donations. Each hymnal will cost \$20 and there will be the opportunity to designate hymnals in honor or memory of loved ones. Donations can be made by check or online to the Hymnal Fund.

*Steve Baxley*



# CHURCH UPDATES

## DEACON UPDATE

This month the deacons say goodbye to Alisha Thomas, after three years, and David Porter, after six years. We thank them for their service, especially in Alisha's role as co-moderator and David's role as secretary. Both had a gift for keeping our group effective and organized.

We welcome back Robby Hess for another three-year term, and two new members: Jeff Pope and Susan Blair. We look forward to coming together as a group to do Christ's work for the church. The deacons will spend much of our first meeting thinking and planning for the rest of the year.

Looking back, the deacons were happy to be able to help with the Christmas Eve service, and were happy that we could once again have it in the sanctuary.

The deacons pray for our church's prayer concerns. If you would like to add to the prayer list, please email [pray@sylvapres.org](mailto:pray@sylvapres.org) or call the church office (828-586-4256).

The deacon of the month for January is Kelder Monar (919-259-8480) and the alternate is Robby Hess (828-507-9316).



*Kelder Monar*

# CHURCH UPDATES

## FUN & FELLOWSHIP



Join us for dinner in the Fellowship Hall on the first Wednesday of the month at 6:00pm! If you're able, please bring covered dish to share (side, salad, dessert, or some kind of entrée). If not, come anyway! We would be honored to host you.



*Family Night Supper in the Fellowship Hall*



# Community News

## United Christian Ministry Bag Packing

We had a great turnout for the UCM bag-packing event on Saturday, Dec. 17 at Sylva FUMC. All the hot chocolate that our congregation donated was combined with other food items, such as peanut butter, jelly, and macaroni and cheese, which was then bagged for families in need to use over the holidays. It was such a joy to see so many different churches come together for a good cause!



# CHURCH UPDATES

## Opportunities to Serve



# YOUR HELP NEEDED

Sign up for:

-  FLOWERS FOR THE SANCTUARY
-  GREETING & USHERING
-  HELPING IN THE NURSERY OR CHILDREN'S CHURCH

## AUDIO / VIDEO HELP NEEDED!

We are looking for volunteers to help run the sound and video for Sunday morning services. Want to learn how and sign up for a shift? Please contact the church office at [office@sylvapres.org](mailto:office@sylvapres.org)

**Interested in serving on a church committee?** Notify the Church Office or our Pastor!

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



# CHURCH UPDATES

**do you have a  
prayer request?**

Send prayer concerns or updates to our church prayer email address:

[pray@sylvapres.org](mailto:pray@sylvapres.org).

This email will be monitored by our Pastor, Administrative Assistant, and an appointed Deacon. You may also contact the church office at 828-586-4256 to share a request. In an effort to consolidate our prayer list, we will no longer be posting requests in the weekly bulletin. Instead, a copy of the prayer list will be included in Pastor Blake's weekly email and mailed out to those without internet. Please notify the church office if you have questions.



# CELEBRATE!

## Birthdays

1/1 Blair Yount

1/1 David Porter

1/11 Tom Crawford

1/13 Dianne Scott

1/20 Peg Shafer

1/24 Jean Guilford

1/28 Luke Daniel

If you would like your birthday or anniversary listed in future newsletters, please send the information to [office@sylvapres.org](mailto:office@sylvapres.org)

# CONTACT INFORMATION

**Pastor:** Blake Daniel

**Administrative Assistant:** Mary Ferrick

**Music Director:** Courtney Umphlett

**Organist/Pianist:** Margaret Hale

**Children & Youth Ministry Director:** Heather Monar

**Children's Ministry Assistant:** Sydney Kugel-Humphrey

**Treasurer:** Judy Henderson

**Financial Secretary:** Grace Reed

**Assistant Financial Secretary:** Lynda Parlett

## **Deacon of the Month:**

Kelder Monar - (919) 259-8480

Robby Hess (alternate) - (828) 507-9316

## **Church Office:**

Phone: 828-586-4256

Email: [office@sylvapres.org](mailto:office@sylvapres.org)

[www.sylvapres.org](http://www.sylvapres.org)

## **Physical address:**

46 Presbyterian Drive

Sylva, NC 28779

## **Mailing address:**

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Sylva, NC 28779

