

2024

*January  
Newsletter*

FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH,  
SYLVA

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

46 Presbyterian Drive, Sylva, NC 28779

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 2152, Sylva, NC 28779

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.*

*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*

**January Deacon of the Month:**

*Jeff Pope - (828) 736-7867  
Susan Gingerich (alt) - (239) 634-2249*

*Happy  
New  
Year!*



## PASTOR'S NOTES

Dear church family,

Usually I'm not one for New Year's resolutions. I tend to find them trendy and guilt-inducing and, therefore, easily abandoned. But this year feels different to me. Call them goals, objections, or aspirations – this year I'd like to make some resolutions of my own and commit to carrying them out, remembering the words of Proverbs 16:9: *"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."*



So in humility and hope, here are some of mine:

- I hope to spend more time in communal prayer. Prayer is a personal discipline that I have tried to grow in over the past few years, but it's also a corporate discipline that needs to be shared among God's people. I hope to share in and facilitate opportunities to pray with other Christians as together we seek the Lord's guidance for our lives and our life together.
- Related to that, I hope to spend more time visiting with all of you this year. Whether in the form of home visits, lunches or coffee dates, walks on the Greenway, or other get-togethers, I'd like spend time with each of you in places beyond our church walls and in times besides Sunday morning. So be on the lookout for an invitations, or feel free to drop me a line.
- Call me crazy, but I also hope to run a marathon. The longest footrace I've ever accomplished is a half-marathon (13.1 miles), so this is the next logical goal. Plus, I've been inspired by Ben Pendry and other runners in our midst. Can I do it? And without any major injuries to my body or spirit? We will see.
- And I hope to continue some good patterns established at home and church over the past year: camping with my family in our pop-up; swimming in rivers and waterfalls; working in the yard; preaching and teaching among the people of God; discerning God's will for our con-

gregation alongside our church leaders; and serving the larger community in Jesus' name.

How about you? What goals, objectives, or aspirations – yes, resolutions – do you have for the year to come? What do you feel like God is leading you to take on or let go of as a new season approaches? What hopes do you have for our church family?

I encourage you to journal your thoughts and then to share them with someone else for prayer and accountability. None of us knows the future, of course, and Jesus tells us take things one day at a time – but it doesn't hurt to examine our desires and to place them before others and the Lord, trusting his Spirit to keep leading the way.

See you in 2024!

**Blake**

## **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](#).

### **Do you have a prayer request?**

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

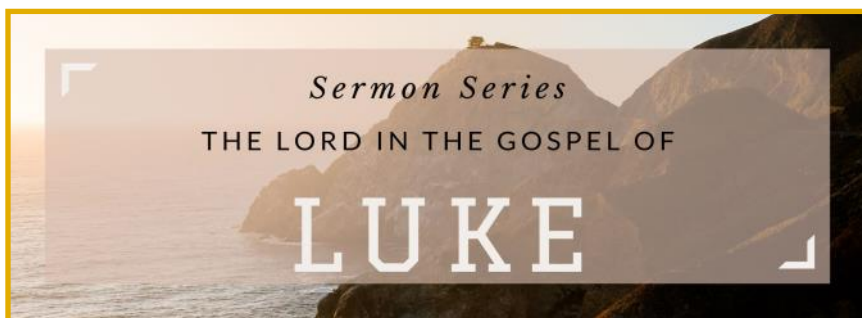
### ***SUNDAY SCRIPTURES***

**Jan 7—1st Sunday After Epiphany—Luke 3:15-23**

**Jan 14—2nd Sunday After Epiphany—TBA**

**Jan 21—3rd Sunday After Epiphany—Luke 4:1-13**

**Jan 28—4th Sunday After Epiphany—Luke 4:14-30**





## Five-day Bible Reading Plan

You can find a five-day Bible reading plan on the table in the entry hallway.

Take as many as you need.

### **DOLLARS & CENTS**

Happy New Year to all. As I write this, we are a few days away from the end of our giving year so my totals will be incomplete, but I am so grateful to report that we are finishing the year strong. As of December 27, 2023, donations to the general fund were \$284,365 and we brought in \$8,140 in Transition House rent and building use income totaling \$292,505. We spent \$285,084. The Lord provided just what was needed. We also received \$39,948 in designated gifts. This included \$8,496 for staff Christmas gifts, distributed according to Session instructions.

We are blessed with generous givers who are responsive to our needs, predictable and unexpected. You will be glad to know

that Blair Yount and James McManus, with the help of Target Locating, were able to track down and repair our water leak for under \$1000. We are also blessed with people who give of their time and talent working “as unto the Lord.” Colossians 3:23.

I hope you will join me in looking forward to what God has for us in 2024.

In His Service,

**Judy Henderson, Treasurer**



AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE  
FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER: 91

*December Donations*

(12-6 / 12-27)

REGULAR FUND: \$ 33,203.65  
CONTINGENCY FUND: \$ 275.00  
MISSIONS FUND: \$ 500.00  
ORGAN FUND: \$ 5,282.07  
PRAYER GARDEN: \$ 400.00

TOTAL DONATIONS: \$ 39,660.72



*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 our December session meeting, we recognized one outgoing member, James McManus, who finishes six consecutive years of service this week. James reflected on the church's accomplishments during his two terms. As chair of the Property Committee, James saw many improvements in our physical plant, especially the major remodeling of the Mary Jay Patten Center. He also remembered the difficulties of the COVID period when the leaders of our church had to make so many complex and difficult decisions. The problems of working with church property were on display later in the meeting as he de

“...he (James) described the work he and Blair Yount had been doing in tracking down the mysterious water leak that had sent our monthly bills soaring.”

scribed the work he and Blair Yount had been doing in tracking down

the mysterious water leak that had sent our monthly bills soaring. Those efforts were physically challenging for two men no longer in their twenties, but their more important contribution came from their persistence, experience, and practical intelligence. James also reflected on what he considers the grace extended by church members and staff when property matters like the leak (or heating and cooling issues, or having a building hit by a dump truck) occur. James will be missed. We also thanked Kathy Grace and Steve Baxley for their willingness to take on a second term. Our church has been blessed in many ways over the past year. Your session looks forward to the new year with a realistic expectation that the Lord will continue to provide.

**Bruce Henderson**

**Clerk of Session**

## **DEACONS**

Keep your eyes on the ground during your next winter walk through deciduous forest. Eventually you'll find the single, simple green leaf of the crane-fly orchid popping up through the crunchy copper carpet.

One of our native ground-dwelling orchids, this plant is full of surprises. For instance, flip the leaf over to reveal a rich purple underside. Or dig underground to see that all the plants in a patch are linked by the root. But to see the crane-fly orchid's greatest trick requires patience. In spring the leaf disappears, leaving no trace of the plant above ground. Then, in summer, a botanical miracle: a flower stalk emerges, growing 20 times the height of the leaf. The pale flowers resemble crane-flies, which give the plant its name.

A seemingly ordinary individual with hidden royal character, part of a larger whole, that dies and returns greater than before; this is a plant that points us toward Christ. And recognizing Christ, even in the woods, reminds us of our own obligation to be Christians, little Christs in our own little worlds.

We deacons approached this obligation in several ways in the past month. We provided college exam bags for 13 students in our congregation, personalized to each student. We also helped with the Christmas Eve service and arranged a group to sing Christmas carols for our homebound sister in Christ

Linda Nee. New deacons for 2024 joined the current diaconate for a transition meeting in early December. We look forward to next year.

As always, the deacons reviewed the prayer list. 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 Jeff Pope (828) 736-7867 and the alternate is Susan Gingerich (239) 634-2249.

### Kelder



Crane fly

Orchid Leaf

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Greetings!

December was a busy month for our children and youth. Our middle schoolers had a successful blanket and hate collection drive for HERE in Jackson County, and our high school youth helped organize a Christmas party for our families with young children. It was great fun!

We have started to incorporate aspects of Young Children and Worship into our traditional worship service. I look forward to more ways we can intertwine our children's worship experience with the traditional service in the new year.

Warmly,

**Heather**

## MISSIONS

**A very happy and blessed New Year to you all!**

**United Christian Ministries:** We continue to collect nonperishables and hygiene products as well as pet food for those struggling to feed themselves and their families. Pasta, pasta sauce, pop top canned foods, soap/body wash, hygiene products and toilet paper are in particular need.

“... please prayerfully consider joining the Mission Committee.”



**Committee members needed:** As you ponder the needs of our church family and community this New Year, please prayerfully consider joining the Mission Committee. We need helping hands to faithfully fulfill Jesus' command to serve others.

**Lynda Parlett**

## HOSPITALITY

The Hospitality Committee enjoyed being a part of our Christmas season of hospitality by hosting the pizza party welcome dinner for our missionary family, the Giesers, as well as the receptions following the Christmas music program and the Christmas Eve service. We are looking forward to January and planning for 2024. We welcome your ideas for providing hospitality in the form of caring for others and scheduling events for the upcoming year.

**Beth Baxley**

## PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

In our December meeting we studied about Jesus' healing of the woman who had been bleeding for many years. In total humility and faith, she reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed. We are learning that God's healing can come in many forms: physical, mental, emotional, relational, but with

each miracle His ultimate healing is of the spirit, for life eternal with Him.

Donna Mason reported that in addition to our regular budgeted giving to the Black Mountain Children's Home, we recently sent \$150 as a Thanksgiving offering. She was recently contacted by a staff person at BMCH who was very appreciative of the PWC's ongoing support and invited the group to come and tour the campus, which we hope to do in the spring. Also, from our monthly "least coin" offering, \$91 will be donated to UCM.

On **Thursday, January 18th at 10 AM** in the Youth Room in the Mary Jay Patten Center, we will study Lesson 5 in Sacred Encounters. This lesson is entitled "A person with leprosy encounters Jesus". All women are welcome to join us.

**Beth Baxley**

"All women are welcome to join us."

## COMMUNITY

# United Christian Ministries

Needed for the Month of January

pasta and pasta sauce, canned chicken,  
peanut butter, jelly

Always needed:

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



## UPCOMING EVENTS



YOU'RE INVITED!  
**FAMILY NIGHT  
SUPPER**

FIRST WEDNESDAYS  
OF THE MONTH  
AT 6:00PM


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!



## FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE



The church office will be closed on January 1st

## 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



# January

## Birthdays

January 1 - Blair Yount  
- David Porter

January 11 - Tom Crawford

January 13 - Dianne Scott

January 20 - Peg Shafer

January 24 - Jean Guilford

January 28 - Luke Daniel

## Anniversaries

No January anniversaries

