



2023

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SYLVA

Rev. Blake Daniel, Pastor
office@sylvapres.org

OFFICE HOURS: Monday - Friday, 9:00am to 12:00pm

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,

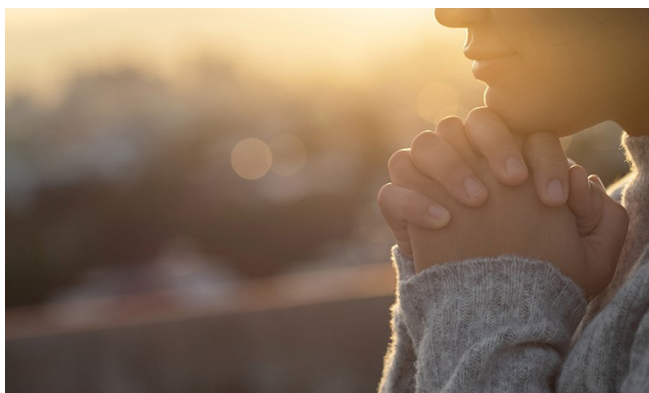
Three years ago – March of 2020 – I invited you to pray.

We were in the midst of a sermon series on prayer (starting with some famous Old Testament prayers, then moving into the Lord's Prayer in the New Testament). We were planning a prayer retreat for the congregation during the season of Lent. I was reading books on prayer and trying to go deeper into the practice of prayer, myself. But then covid hit, and everything changed.

Yet the invitation to prayer remains, for me and for you. In fact, I think prayer is needed more than ever, as we continue to feel the shockwaves from the pandemic, politics, and personal struggles – we can't afford not to pray. Indeed, as I wrote in my newsletter three years back, *"prayer is our entryway to the mighty river of God who always leads us further up and further into life with him and life with each other. Sometimes we tip-toe in the shallows; other times, we plunge into the pools. But as long as we're in the water, we're in the right place."*

To help us heed this invitation to prayer, I will soon be leading a **Lenten Prayer Group**. Lent began with Ash Wednesday on Feb. 22, and Family Night Supper will take place on Wednesday, March 1. So, we will begin our Prayer Group on March 8, starting at 6:00pm in the Fellowship Hall.

(Continued on next page)



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

The goals for the group are simple: *We will learn about prayer, and we will pray.* No preparation is necessary, other than a heart that's open to the Lord and to your brothers and sisters in Christ. There is, however, a podcast series that I will use to help me lead this group. It's called "*Rule of Life: Prayer,*" and you can find it on Spotify or Apple Podcasts. (Let me know if you have trouble and hopefully I can point you in the right direction.) Listening to the podcast is not mandatory, but it might help enrich and deepen our time together – so check it out if you can.

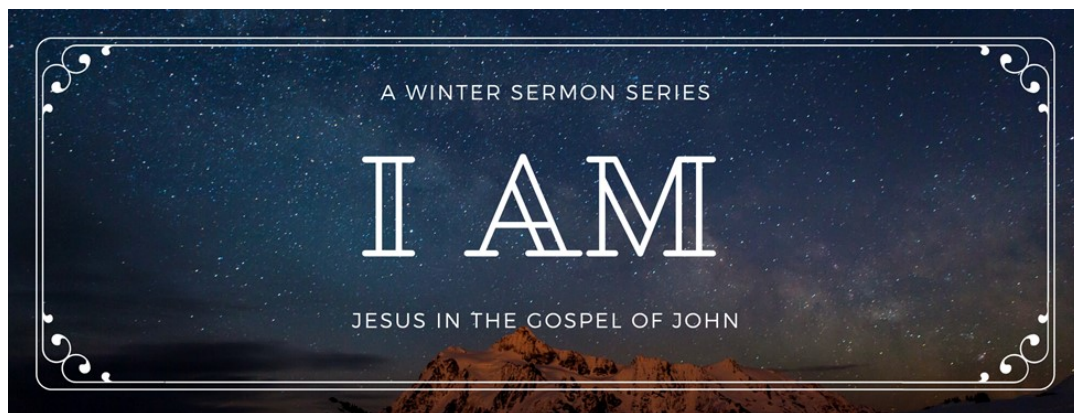
As we move through the end of wintertime and continue to reflect on the life of Jesus on Sunday mornings, let's recommit ourselves to prayer. Not because we *have* to – prayer is never about legalistic obligation – but because we *get* to. Because we *desire* to. Because we *long* to spend time with Jesus and his Father and their Spirit, in the Love for which we were made. Because, as P.T. Forsyth put it, "*Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us.*" Amen!

Yours in Christ,

Blake



WORSHIP UPDATES



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:

- 3/5/2023 - John 11:1-27 - *I Am the Resurrection and the Life*
- 3/12/2023 - John 8:12-20 - *I Am the Light of the World*
- 3/19/2023 - John 14:1-14 - *I Am the Way*
- 3/26/2023 - John 15:1-8 - *I Am the True Vine*

WORSHIP UPDATES

COMING IN APRIL *Holy Week Worship*

April 2—Palm Sunday Worship at 11:00am in the Sanctuary

April 6—Maundy Thursday Dinner at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall (worship to follow)

April 9—Easter Sunrise Worship at 7:00am at Bridge Park

April 9—Easter Worship at 11:00am in the Sanctuary



JOIN THE CHOIR!



Courtney holds rehearsals on **Wednesdays at 7:00pm** for the main choir, and again on **Sundays from 9:30-10:00am** for children's music. Singers of all abilities are welcome to attend! We are also looking for more bell choir participants. Bell choir rehearsals take place **every other Thursday from 4:30-5:15pm** at Sylva First United Methodist Church.

Questions? Contact courtney@sylvapres.org.

PRAYER GROUP

Lenten Prayer Group

*Wednesday nights at 6:00pm
Starting March 8
FPC Fellowship Hall*

Join us as we go deeper in the practice of prayer during the season of Lent!

Starting at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall

Week 1—March 8—*Talking to God*

Week 2—March 15—*Talking with God*

Week 3—March 22—*Listening to God*

Week 4—March 29—*Being with God*

Week 5—April 5—*Following God's Direction*

Notify the Church Office if you need childcare.

Pastor Blake is basing this group off the *Rule of Life*: Prayer podcast. It's not required to listen to it, but check it out if you can! Click here for [Spotify](#) or [Apple Podcasts](#).

Season 2
Prayer



Rule of Life
BY PRACTICING THE WAY

PRAYER RESOURCES



Podcast: “Rule of Life: Prayer” – available on [Spotify](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#).

Prayer Room: Our church Prayer Room is available for you to use anytime the church is open. It is located across the hall from the Sanctuary.

Books about Prayer

There are more books on prayer than anyone could ever read! Where should you begin? Here are some resources that I (Blake) have found helpful in my journey.

For a general introduction to prayer: **Richard Foster**, **Prayer**

Richard Foster is the founder and former president of Renovaré, an interdenominational Christian ministry that focuses on spiritual formation. I read through this book when I was first ordained in Raleigh and found Foster’s wisdom and insights to be profoundly helpful, especially for a beginner in the school of prayer.

For a guide to praying with Scripture, especially Psalms: **E. Peterson**, **Answering God**

Eugene Peterson is one of my favorite writers and thinkers. In this book he not only explores the importance of prayer for the Christian life, but he opens up the Psalms as the prayer-book of the Bible. In these cries of joy and lament (and everything in between), we see every human emotion laid bare before the face of God.

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PRAYER RESOURCES

For a study of prayer through a Reformed lens: **P.T. Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer***

Forsyth was a titan of late-19th/early-20th century Scottish theology, and this book bears witness to that fact. Short but chock-full of rich theology and pastoral reflections, this is a must-read for anyone who hopes to recover the practice of prayer in our Presbyterian tradition.

For a study of prayer through an ancient lens: **Gabriel Bunge, *Earthen Vessels***

I read through this book in 2016, during my first Lenten season in Sylva, and it quickly became one of my favorites. Bunge began as a Catholic priest and monk and later converted to Orthodoxy, and his writing represents his commitment to both the church and the Great Tradition of the Christian faith. Read this book for a look at how the communion of saints have prayed through the ages, and be encouraged to go and do likewise.

Devotionals

These books are meant to be read slowly and contemplatively – more for the “heart” than for the “head” – and often in conjunction with Scripture.

For a short, grace-filled devotional: **Brennan Manning, *Reflections for Ragamuffins***

This was my daily devotional during my first year of marriage to Erin, and I can still picture the kitchen table in Costa Rica where I would sit each morning and drink my coffee and read this book. Manning was a master teacher of the gospel of grace, and this book — full of insights from his various other books — does not disappoint. Read a page each day and be challenged and encouraged by the goodness of God.

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PRAYER RESOURCES

For a longer devotional that focuses on morning, noontime, and evening prayer: **Phyllis Tickle, The Divine Hours**

To go deeper in prayer, many Christians take on the practice of praying “the hours,” which refers to praying three, five, or even seven times a day on a regularly-scheduled rhythm. These books (three in all) provide guidance for doing this. Tickle was an Episcopalian and draws heavily from the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, but this is a helpful resource for anyone desiring an ordered prayer life. It has been my guide for years, one that I read nearly every weekday morning.

For daily, household prayers: **McKelvey & Bustard, Every Moment Holy**

I confess that I haven’t read this book or prayed these prayers yet, but trusted friends rave about this as a beautiful resource for daily faithfulness – especially for those who have read Tish Harrison Warren’s *Liturgy of the Ordinary* and who want to take the next step.

Of course, these lists aren’t exhaustive: there are so many other resources for you to explore. Many of our church members have benefited from Oswald Chambers’ book *My Utmost for His Highest*. Many have enjoyed Philip Yancey and Timothy Keller’s books (both called *Prayer* and both in our church library). Many in our church have been blessed by the ministries of Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International and the Order of St. Luke.

Ask the Lord and your trusted friends to help you and to teach you as we go deeper in prayer together. And above all, don’t let your desire to learn get in the way of Jesus’ invitation for you to actually *pray*!

CHURCH UPDATES

DOLLARS & CENTS

When Rev. Royce Browder was leading worship in February, he said something interesting when it was time to collect the offering.

He asked us to give “God’s tithes and our offerings” to the Lord. When the Jewish nation was living under the law, tithes were a big thing. Everyone was to give 10% and it didn’t just mean money. It meant 10% of your crops and your herd and your wine. The offerings were over and above.

Now, we aren’t the Jewish nation, and with the coming of Christ, the spirit of the law supersedes the letter of the law, but 10% is definitely worth keeping in mind. And the season of Lent seems like a good time to pray about what we give of our time, talents and money. What do you think?

In His service,

Judy Henderson

Treasurer



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

SESSION UPDATE

At the February stated meeting, the Session began a book study of Peter Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Pastor Blake led the discussion of the first chapter. Reverend Scazzero argues that many Christians have less than satisfactory spiritual lives because they stay on the surface of their faith. We do so because we do not really know ourselves. Scazzero says that we must wed a thoughtful spirituality anchored in the person of Jesus Christ with a healthy, mature emotionality. The latter involves things like being able to deal with conflict and express our emotions in constructive ways. Perhaps most important, we need to learn to *be* with God in our everyday lives rather than trying to look good to God, to our fellow Christians, and to ourselves through our works.

The Session has authorized the Property Committee to develop a plan for remodeling the balcony. The seating and lighting will be updated. If you have ideas about how the balcony can be made a more worshipful space, contact James McManus or me. The Session also approved a Balcony Improvement Fund. Donations for that fund should be clearly marked on your check or directed to the online "Balcony Improvement Fund."

Bruce Henderson

Clerk of Session



Balcony Improvements

Our balcony needs to be updated to make seating more comfortable and the lighting brighter.

[Contribute now](#)

CHURCH UPDATES

DEACON UPDATE

Late winter and earliest spring: this is the time for red maple flowers. Our first flowers of the year, they put on a show. Thousands and thousands of little red blooms coat each tree, and soon coat every surface beneath them. At a distance, whole hillsides blush. Yet the red maple doesn't just live up to its name now. Its flowers, at least the female ones, will become little red-winged helicopter fruits. Its leaves will emerge red, to be born on red stems. In fall, the leaves will burn a perfect crimson. The tree will then rest, awaiting the next year with delicate red buds. The tree is consistent, is true to its word in a way not common in people, but which should instantly remind us of Christ.

We deacons are thinking of the ways in which we can be true to our word, our responsibility to care for the church and our community.

We devoted time at our last meeting to our prayer list, updating each other and reviewing the ways we can support those on the list in prayer. If you would like to add to the prayer list, please email pray@sylvapres.org or call the church office.

We also look ahead to our projects this spring, especially to the Easter baskets our church provides to children at the Black Mountain Home. Please stay tuned for updates, but this will be an opportunity for the whole church to get involved in showing these children they are loved.

The deacon of the month for March is Tom Tabor (828-226-9260) and the alternate is Kelder Monar (919-259-8480).

Kelder Monar

Red maple flower



CHURCH UPDATES

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

February was a busy month for children and youth.

A special thank you to Sydney for organizing a Valentine's Night Out for our parents with young children, and Kathy Grace, Judy McManus, and Judy and Bruce Henderson for helping to watch the children. We had 16 children participate in the event! And our parents got a well-deserved night out.

We are also very proud of our children and youth for lending their voices to the anthem this past Sunday. Thank you to Ms. Courtney for providing an enriching music experience for all of our children. Children's music meets Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:00am.



Looking ahead to March, we are having a Holy Week event for our children and youth on Saturday, March 25 from 10am to 1pm in the Fellowship Hall. This will be the first Holy Week event for children and youth since the start of the pandemic, and we are excited to bring our children and youth together to make resurrection biscuits, palm leaf crosses, and a few other creative stations to learn about Holy Week. If you are interested in volunteering to help with this event, please let me know!

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CHURCH UPDATES

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY, CONT.

We have an exciting opportunity for all of our children and youth coming up in May that I wanted to get families thinking about now! Camp Patton Springs will be held May 19-21. This camp is designed to help children and youth get closer to God through nature. It will take place at Camp Tekoa in Hendersonville, NC. There are overnight camp options for rising 2nd graders through high school seniors, and a day camp for pre-k through rising 1st graders.

Our friends at Sylva United Methodist Church will be attending as well. Please reach out to me with any questions, and the link to register for camp is found at sylvafumc.org/childrenandyouth

I am looking forward to having some of our children and youth join in this unique experience!

Vacation Bible School is quickly approaching! It will take place June 12-16. If you are interested in being a volunteer in any capacity, please reach out to me! Soon, I will let our church know what our specific volunteer needs are.

Warmly,

Heather Monar

Children & Youth Ministry Director

CHURCH UPDATES

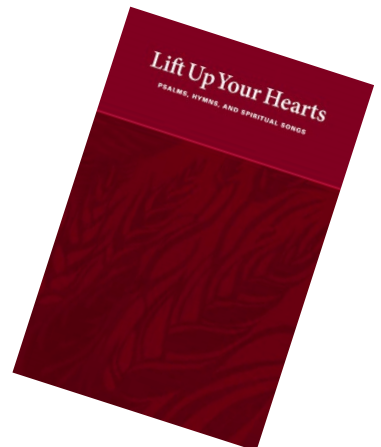
WORSHIP COMMITTEE



We are excited to announce that we have now reached our goal for purchasing our new hymnal, ***Lift Up Your Hearts!***

In the coming weeks we will be ordering the hymnals and preparing them for use in our sanctuary. Once we are ready to make the change, there will be an opportunity for members to receive a copy of our current hymnal. We will share more information about the distribution after Easter. We will also be holding a hymn sing and a Dedication Service once our new hymnals are in place. The Worship Committee is so thankful for everyone's support for this project and we look forward to lifting up our hearts together.

Steve Baxley



CHURCH UPDATES

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

The Hospitality Committee has been busy planning events for 2023. Most are still in the tentative stages at this point, so more information about them will be coming out later, but we are looking forward to returning to many of the joyful activities of years past and some new ones that will add to our fellowship.

By the time of this newsletter, we will have completed our CPR training class. Fifteen are signed up and will be prepared to help in emergencies wherever they find them.

On April 6 the committee members are looking forward to organizing the meal preceding the very meaningful Maundy Thursday service.

Our members continue to take meals, provide transportation, make visits (we've even done pet care!) whenever there is a need. Please let the church office know if you have a need and they will pass that along to us.

Stay tuned for upcoming fellowship events.

Beth Baxley



CHURCH UPDATES

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

Did you know that, as of the last count of homeless individuals in Jackson County, we had at least 3 families with children totaling 8 people and 10 adults experiencing homelessness? HERE in Jackson County endeavors to serve the homeless by accessing adequate shelter for them.

Did you know that United Christian Ministries provided over 76,000 pounds of food to families and individuals in 2021? Did you know that UCM (through volunteers including our congregation) provided school break food bags to about 500 Jackson County school children over the Christmas break? With approximately 3,600 children total in the school system, 500 children receiving food bags represents about 14% of the total JCPS student population. Food for thought.

As mentioned last month, FPC provides benevolences to these and a number of other organizations working to combat homelessness, poverty, child abuse and much more. With needs growing throughout our community, additional assistance is always welcome.

Our Next “Cove Cleanup” (Roadside Trash Pickup):

Our next roadside trash pickup along Grindstaff Cove Road will take place on Saturday, March 25 from 10:00 to noon. Please meet in the church parking lot at 10, wear sturdy shoes and yardwork clothes, bring work gloves, a hat, and long handled pinchers if you have them (we have a limited supply available if you don't have them).

United Christian Ministries needs for March: Canned Pastas (spaghetti-o's, ravioli, etc.) and oatmeal.

Lynda Parlett

CHURCH UPDATES

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mary Ferrick has resigned after 1.5 years of faithful service as our Administrative Assistant. Mary was a thoughtful, responsible, and gracious presence in the church office, and we will miss her. Our Personnel Committee (composed of Judy Henderson, Ali Large, Ben Pendry, Peg Shafer, and Kathy Grace, chair) is hard at work seeking a replacement. meeting soon to discuss this staff transition. If you know of anyone interested in this position, please invite them to visit www.sylvapres.org/jobs.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Terms of Employment: 20 hours/week: Monday through Friday, 9:00am to 1:00pm

Compensation: Hourly range of \$15-17, based on education and experience

Duties: Including, but not limited to: assisting Pastor and other staff members; taking and relaying messages with accuracy; greeting and assisting visitors; maintaining website and social media accounts; production of church publications; scheduling of church calendar; other duties as assigned.

Qualifications: High School graduate required; additional education and experience preferred; high level of computer proficiency required including email, Microsoft Office, Excel, and Publisher; ability to work with confidential information; good communication skills; organization; dependability, with good job attendance record with previous employers. This position also requires a background check.

Application information: Please complete an application, downloaded from the link above. You may submit your application via mail to the church office (P.O. Box 2152, Sylva, NC 28779) or via email to to Kathy Grace (kakieg9@gmail.com).

CHURCH UPDATES

LANDSCAPING TASK FORCE

We had fun digging up bushes in the rain on Feb. 25 to get ready for springtime! Thanks to Isaac Daniel, Judy Henderson, Robby Hess, James McManus, Kelder Monar, Roger Murajda, Billy Noell, and Tom Tabor (among others) for their hard work. Stay tuned for more information about a Spring Work Day in April or May!



CHURCH UPDATES



The Presbyterian Women's Circle met on Thursday, Feb. 16 for our monthly group meeting and fellowship. We were delighted to welcome three new members. We are continuing our in-depth look at what Sabbath means and how God calls us to celebrate and rest in Him on the Sabbath.

Donna Mason reviewed our finances and contributions with help from Betty White and Betty Foti. Members of the Circle regularly contribute to the church's mission fund, Jackson County Christmas Connection, and the Black Mountain Home.

We also began discussion about a mission project to assist the women of Malawi. Donna Mason will be sharing details in a meeting on Wed. March 1, at 5pm in the Garden Room, prior to our 6pm Family Night Supper. All the women of the church are invited to join us. We need women who can purchase fabric, sew a simple pattern, assemble the finished project for delivery or contribute money toward this very worthwhile effort. Help with any or all steps in this project are most welcome. The project must be completed by the end of March.

Our group regularly meets every third Thursday of the month in the Garden Room of the Fellowship Hall from 10-11:45am. Afterward, those who can, go out to lunch together. Please join us at our next meeting on March 16 at 10am! For more information, please call Donna Mason at 828 507-2210, Betty White at 828 586- 4641, or Beth Baxley at 828 399-0735.

CHURCH UPDATES

FUN & FELLOWSHIP



Join us for dinner in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, March 1st 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

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

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

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

PRAYER REQUESTS

**do you have a
prayer request?**

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

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

3/7 Drew Umphlett

3/8 Roger Murajda

3/8 Joan Yount

3/13 Karen Dean

3/14 Beth Baxley

3/18 Sydney Kugel-Humphrey

3/20 Jeff Pope

3/24 Robby Hess

3/25 Steve Baxley

3/26 Robin Porter

3/30 Branch Pendry

Anniversaries

3/28 Jim & Sylvia Smythe

If you would like your birthday or anniversary listed in future newsletters, please send the information to office@sylvapres.org.

If you would like a copy of the church directory, please notify the church office as well!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor: Blake Daniel

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:

Tom Tabor – (828) 226-9260; Kelder Monar (alt.) – (919) 259-8480

Church Office:

Phone: 828-586-4256

Email: office@sylvapres.org

www.sylvapres.org

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Sylva, NC 28779

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