



MAY 2023
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SYLVA

Rev. Blake Daniel, Pastor

Jean Chance, Administrative Assistant

office@sylvapres.org

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00am 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,

Spring is an active time in Sylva. It always is! Ask almost anybody in our community – landscapers, college students, rafting or fishing guides, or families with young children – how they are doing these days and the answer will likely be, “busy.” Busy with work, study, soccer games, or social events. Busy with chores or doctor’s appointments. Busy with keeping up with the Joneses or keeping up with the world.

And, of course, not all of the spring shuffle is bad. I can certainly relate to the satisfaction that comes at the end of a full day. But there *is* a difference between work and toil, between God-ordained service and stewardship, and sin-distorted labor and drudgery. The challenge is determining which is which – even in the church. Because congregations are not immune to busyness. If anything, we pride ourselves on bustling gatherings and packed calendars just like any other organization, only we do it in the name of Jesus.

Thankfully, we have a Lord who is patient with us, a God who walks at three miles per hour. When we’re prone to hurry our way through things, I imagine he says, “Slow down and take your time.” When we fuss and stress over our many duties and obligations, I picture him smiling and saying, “Look at the birds of the air and the flowers of the field.” When we worry that we’re not relevant or successful enough, I wonder if he simply gives us an invitation: “Remain in my love.” Take some time this month to think about what the Lord might be saying to you.



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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

One of the best books I've read on this topic is John Mark Comer's *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*. We have a copy in our church library, if you'd like to take a look. In page after page, Comer makes the case for a less hurried and more mindful, thoughtful, and prayerful life, and he offers many helpful steps for putting this into practice. Here is one of my favorite lines: *"The solution to an overbusy life is not more time. It's to slow down and simplify our lives around what really matters."*

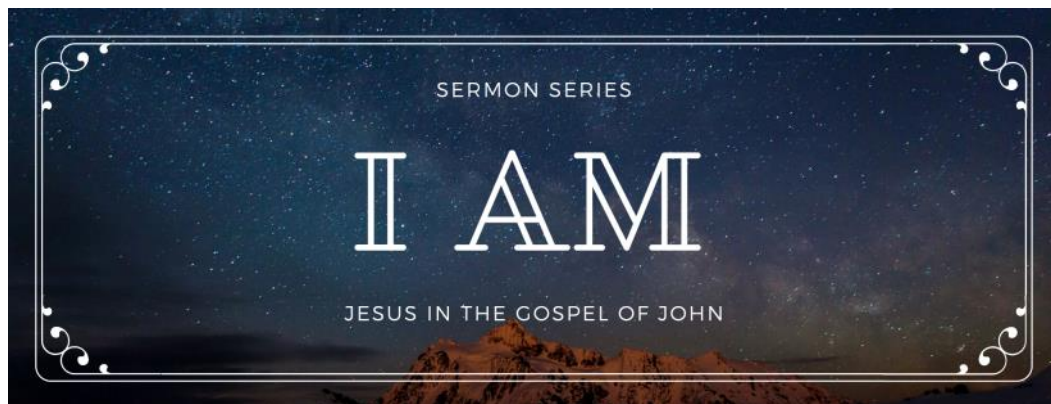
And what really matters? Perhaps our congregation's mission statement says it best: loving Jesus, loving his church, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Can we slow down and simplify ourselves around that?

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:

- 5/07/2023 - John 14:15-31 - *Jesus Prays for the Holy Spirit*
- 5/14/2023 - John 17:20-26 - *Jesus Prays for Unity*
- 5/21/2023 - Acts 1:1-11 - *Jesus Ascends*
- 5/28/2023 - Acts 2 - *Come, Holy Spirit*

CHURCH UPDATES

DOLLARS AND CENTS

As Judy mentioned in the April newsletter, the Session, in conjunction with the Finance Committee, is taking a deeper look at our church's finances. More specifically, our General Fund.

In the coming weeks, you will receive a packet in the mail. This packet will include a letter addressing the current state of our General Fund, a list of Frequently Asked Questions that will clarify what the General Fund pays for, what we need from our members, resources on stewardship, etc. It will also include the findings from a 2021 study conducted by Church Treasurer, Judy Henderson, and former Chair of the Session Finance Committee, David Noland: "Giving Statistics by Age."

Once received, we ask that you set aside some focused time to read it and prayerfully consider the role you can play in growing our church's fiscal strength. If you don't receive this packet by the end of the month, please let me know and I'll be sure to get you one.

In His Service,

Alisha Thomas



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 or in worship.

CHURCH UPDATES

SESSION UPDATE

Although there were not many formal motions approved at the April meeting of the session, it was a lively gathering. James McManus led the devotion based on the book we are reading, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. The chapter we read focused on how our family legacies may negatively influence our spiritual health. Unhealthy interactions with family early in our lives can distort our understanding of the Gospel and our ongoing relationships with God, our families, and our neighbors. Clearer awareness of those influences can help us take issues before the Lord thoughtfully and prayerfully.

Alisha Thomas and the Finance Committee brought concerns about the stability of our general fund. I have always been amazed at how our congregation steps up in time of need, strongly supporting building funds (mortgages always paid off early) and missions. The general fund pays our staff and the light bill. It is best supported by giving that can be counted on month to month, year to year. The Finance Committee presented a letter you may have already received detailing these concerns. The Session discussed the letter at length and approved its distribution. While we are confident our faith-based system will continue to work, we see churches closed at many Presbytery meetings, and it is important for us to continue to monitor our church's financial health.

Roger Murajda and Kelder Monar gave a report from the Landscaping Task Force. The church grounds are being transformed. Volunteers will do flower planting at the workday on the first Saturday in May. Those of you who have a green thumb should help out while those of us who do not do less skilled work.

Bruce Henderson

Clerk of Session

CHURCH UPDATES

PERSONNEL

The Session approved the hiring of Jean Chance for the position of Administrative Assistant. The Personnel Committee wants to welcome Jean. She started work April 11.

Jean has experience as an Administrative Assistant in various churches. She and her husband just moved to Sylva. Introduce yourself to her if you see her. Her hours are 8:00 am to 12:00 pm Monday through Friday.

Kathy Grace

Thank you for the warm welcome you've given me. I am so happy to be here and I look forward to meeting all of you. My husband, Arnie, and I moved here in March from Warsaw, Indiana. We lived there for three years. We are both from Chipley, Florida and lived there for the first 40 years of our lives. We have lived in Georgia, Virginia, Michigan, Iowa and Indiana. We had planned to retire in Sylva, but not for another 10 years. God had other plans. He blessed us by providing Arnie a job offer in Andrews that allowed us to move here earlier than planned. What a blessing!

I have worked as an administrative assistant for churches for 30 years. My career adventures have found me at Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Brethren, and now Presbyterian, churches. To top that off, Arnie and I are both Southern Baptist.

I look forward to meeting you.

Jean Chance



WORSHIP UPDATES

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

“Lift Up Your Hearts” Hymnal Dedication May 21

The Worship Committee is very excited to announce that our new, “Lift Up Your Hearts” hymnals have arrived! Over the next couple of weeks, we will be adding bookplates to them and getting ready for the big switch. Sunday, May 21 will be our first worship service using the new hymnals. We really hope you will be there for the dedication of “Lift Up Your Hearts” during our worship service.

We know that some of you may have a special attachment to one of our current hymnals because it was donated by or given in honor or memory of a family member or friend. If you would like to have a particular hymnal, please notify the church office by Friday, May 12 so that we can set it aside for you. Make sure we have your name and the name of the family member or friend printed on the bookmark. You can call the office at 828-586-4256 or email office @sylvapres.org with this information.

After we have set aside special request copies of the current hymnals, the rest will be available to church members to take home for personal use. You may pick up your copy in the Fellowship Hall beginning after the dedication service on May 21.

Steve Baxley



CHURCH UPDATES

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

We are excited and looking forward to some spring and summer events coming up soon.

I am still looking for volunteers for Vacation Bible School. This year it will be held June 12-June 16 from 9 am-12 pm at Bridge Park. Our church has been assigned to the registration table, so we need volunteers who can help check campers in and out each day. We also need volunteers to be group leaders. Group leaders help walk the campers from station to station. We will have groups ranging from pre-k to 5th grade. Please let me know if you are interested in volunteering, or want to know more about it. This has been such a wonderful community event, and we need your help to make sure our campers have another great year of VBS!

Families, there are some community camp opportunities coming up this spring and summer. Please let me know if your children have any interest in these! Camp Patton Springs will be held the weekend of May 19-21 at Camp Tekoa in Hendersonville, NC. This camp is open to ages pre-k through high school, with an overnight camp for rising 2nd graders through high school. Families, please let me know if you are interested in this camp, or camp opportunities in general. If we can get a group of our children together to attend camps I believe it would create a lasting impact on them. And it would be great fun!

We are going to take a break from our traditional Sunday School for children and youth this summer. This will give our dedicated teachers a well-deserved break, and allow for some new opportunities for our children and youth. Our last day of traditional Sunday School will be Sunday, June 4th, and we will then resume traditional Sunday School on our Rally Day in August. Families, I will keep you updated with any specific plans for our children and youth over the summer.

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CHURCH UPDATES

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY, CONT.

Our children and youth program is growing, in a good way! With that our needs for Sunday School are changing. We are in need of new Sunday School teachers to accommodate our growing youth. Anyone can be a Sunday School teacher and make a huge impact on our children's faith development. If you'd like to learn more about what being a Sunday School teacher means, or what the commitment might look like, please let me know. Helping shape our children's and youth's faith is crucial for the future of our church. Please, I ask you to prayerfully consider if you can become a Sunday School teacher.

Warmly,

Heather Monar

Children & Youth Ministry Director

CHURCH UPDATES

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

During the month of April the Hospitality Committee continued their mission of making visits, sending cards and being in touch by phone as needs and concerns arose. The committee hosted the covered dish dinner which preceded the always-meaningful Maundy Thursday service on April 6th.

On Sat., May 20 at 2PM, a memorial service for Dr. Will Nash will be held, followed by a reception in the Fellowship Hall.

The committee is working on a tea for all the women in the church in June and an Asheville Tourist Game Day in July, dates to be announced.

Beth Baxley



CHURCH UPDATES

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

Cove Cleanup (Roadside Trash Pickup):

Our next Cove Cleanup will take place on Saturday, June 3 from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us in cleaning up our little corner of God's creation. Wear sturdy shoes, work gloves, a hat to shield you from the sun and bring long-handled grabbers if you have them. We now have more grabbers for you to use if you need them, thanks to Tom Tabor! We will provide you with reflective safety vests and trash bags.

United Christian Ministries Donations for May:

Infant and toddler sized disposable diapers and adult incontinence products

UCM Diaper Day is on Mother's Day, May 14:

Sunday, May 14 is Mother's Day and it is also FPC's "Diaper Day" for UCM. In honor of mothers throughout our community, we are collecting infant and adult diapers to provide for those unable to afford them. Diapers (and incontinence products) are essential but their costs are not supported by any government aid programs and they are quite expensive. Please plan to bring your donations throughout the month of May (*but especially on Mother's Day*) and place them on the UCM Giving Tree in the Fellowship Hall. Infant/toddler size 3, 4 and 5 diapers are especially appreciated as are adult male and female incontinence products.

God's Creatures and Creation, continued:

Saturday, April 22nd was Earth Day but every single day is the Lord's Day. Continuing from last month's article about pollution, this month we are featuring God's animals and human impact upon them.

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CHURCH UPDATES

MISSIONS COMMITTEE, CONT.

What's Happening to the Lord's Animals?

Monitored populations of vertebrates (mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish) **have seen a devastating 69% drop on average since 1970**, according to World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) [*Living Planet Report 2022*](#). Populations in Latin America and the Caribbean have fared worst, with an average decline of 94%. Global freshwater species have also been disproportionately impacted, declining 83% on average).

The report identifies several key drivers of biodiversity decline including habitat loss, species overexploitation, invasive species, pollution, climate change and diseases. It also calls on policymakers to transform economies so that natural resources are properly valued. As biodiversity loss and climate change share many of the same underlying causes, actions that transform food production and consumption, rapidly cut emissions, and invest in conservation can mitigate the twin crises.

"The world is waking up to the fact that our future depends on reversing the loss of nature just as much as it depends on addressing climate change. And you can't solve one without solving the other," says Carter Roberts, president and CEO of WWF-US. "Everyone has a role to play in reversing these trends, from individuals to companies to governments."

"These plunges in wildlife populations can have dire consequences for our health and economies," says Rebecca Shaw, global chief scientist of WWF. "When wildlife populations decline to this degree, it means dramatic changes are impacting their habitats and the food and water they rely on. We should care deeply about the unraveling of natural systems because these same resources sustain human life."

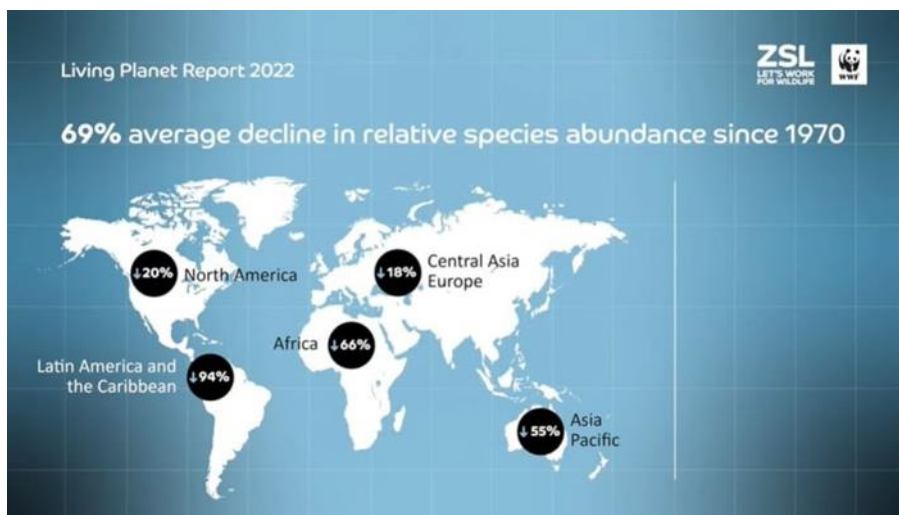
The biggest declines globally were seen in freshwater species, with populations down by an average of 83 per cent. The report says habitat loss and barriers to migration routes are to blame for about half of the decline in migratory fish species. [What we see here in Jackson County is the tremendous amount of trash and discarded materials that are entering

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CHURCH UPDATES

MISSIONS COMMITTEE, CONT.

our creeks, streams and the Tuckasegee River, impacting our own drinking water as well as the habitat for salamanders, trout, herons and many other species in and around our waterways.]



While North America and Western Europe did not see such dramatic declines as other parts of the world, its biodiversity strength was eroded by the development of farmland long before the 1970s — and although Europe and Central Asia had the smallest decline of the regions, prior to 1970, "many species were already in a depleted state," according to the report.

In the past 50 years nearly three billion birds have disappeared across North America and the European Union alone, a 2022 report noted. And experts are worried that it could be a bigger sign about the health of our ecosystems.

"In the 2018 report only 40 per cent of the bird species were found to be in decline while the 2022 report found 49 percent in decline. So in four years, we've had this huge jump in the

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CHURCH UPDATES

MISSIONS COMMITTEE, CONT.

number of birds that are at risk," said Sam Knight, a program manager at the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

"And they've shown that one in eight are actually threatened with extinction. So it's really concerning that in such a small time period this is what's happened, and the pressures these birds are facing, and biodiversity overall."

What Can Those of Us at FPC Do?

As the studies noted above, habitat loss is one of the leading causes of species decline today. All habitats, regardless of size, are essential to the survival of native wildlife. We can all take small steps in our daily lives to make a positive impact on our local environment. By providing natural foods, water, cover and places to raise young, you can help to restore and enhance wildlife habitat in your own backyard and community. With thoughtful planting and natural growth preservation, songbirds, butterflies, dragonflies and game species such as deer, quail and turkey can make their home on your property, or find refuge there during migration.

You can also pick up trash, conserve home energy, consolidate errands to drive less- decreasing automobile emissions, re-use and recycle packaging and products, and, be mindful of and reduce waste. It is particularly important to reduce food waste as much as possible since we tend to waste hundreds of pounds of food per family each year that costs our environment not only in the trash it produces but also in the harm to our environment through the cultivation and harvesting of the extensive food supplies in the first place. The efforts you make in your home and that of our community can truly make a difference to all of God's creation!

Lynda Parlett

CHURCH UPDATES



In our ongoing study of the Sabbath, this month we looked at “Sabbath and Justice”. The Lord tells us in Isaiah 58 that it isn’t enough to observe the Sabbath ON the Sabbath, or to merely go through the ritual of worship; we must LIVE the Sabbath embodying His spirit of Justice every day of the week in order to truly honor Him. How do we do that? By caring for the oppressed, feeding the hungry, sheltering and clothing the needy, and bringing justice where there is no justice. Our group explored how we honor this command as a group, as a church and as individuals.

Toward this end, the PWC will be providing Birthday Offering envelopes in the June 4th worship bulletins and will be hosting the Sunday Coffee Fellowship with a big birthday cake. This is the 100th year of the Birthday Offering by Presbyterian Women throughout the U.S. This annual offering has been used for grants to fund over 200 major mission projects that impact people in the U.S. and around the world. Please plan to give generously on June 4th and celebrate our 100th birthday mission tradition. You will be able to drop an offering in the designated envelopes during the offertory, or leave a donation in the Fellowship Hall.

Our next meeting of PWC is on Thursday, May 18 at 10 am, when we will discuss “Sabbath and Community”. All women of the church are warmly invited to attend.

Beth Baxley

CHURCH UPDATES



Our Spring Work Day will be on May 6 from 9am-12pm!

We will focus on planting flowers (and other plants),
spreading mulch, pressure washing, washing windows,
and tackling other chores.

Please sign up in the Fellowship Hall,
and bring any tools that you might need!



Join us for a Spring Hike on Saturday, May 13, at 10:00.

Meet at the trailhead on Shoal Creek Mountain Road, or meet at the church to carpool at 9:30. Bring a lunch for the trail. The hike is a moderate-difficulty, 4-mile round trip hike. Most of the hike is on dirt trails, but there's an optional section at the end that requires walking on boulders.

CHURCH UPDATES



We need volunteers to help with Vacation Bible School!

This year it will be held June 12-June 16 from 9 am-12 pm.

Our church has been assigned to the registration table, so we need volunteers who can help check campers in and out each day. We also need volunteers to be group leaders. Group leaders help walk the campers from station to station.

We will have groups ranging from pre-k to 5th grade.

Please let Heather Monar know if you are interested in volunteering, or want to know more about it.

If you are only able to commit to part of the week, that is okay!

Contact Heather at fpcsylvakids@gmail.com.

CHURCH UPDATES



Our Fall Church Campout will take place Sept. 8-10, 2023!
We will be camping at Standing Indian Campground, based in Loop 3, Site 33.
Even though this is months away, the campsite will be filling up fast,
so reserve your own site at www.recreation.gov.

You are Invited

Open House & Ice Cream Social

Sunday, June 4, 2023
2 to 4 pm



Whitewater Cove
3127 Hendersonville Hwy.
Disgah Forest, NC 28768



For your convenience, our Mountain Home Thrift Store donation truck will be on-site!



BLACK MOUNTAIN MOUNTAIN HOME
for Children, Youth and Families

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

Do you have a prayer request?

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

pray@sylvapres.org.

CELEBRATE!

Birthdays

5/3	Hawkins Gieser
5/7	Grace Reed
5/14	Barbara Boyer
5/18	Isaac Daniel
5/22	Sara Beth Foti
	Mary Gelbaugh
	Barry Woods
5/23	Heather Gregory
5/28	Aleah Marajda

Anniversaries

5/3	Anne & Bob Sylvester
5/7	Steve & Pat Mikula
5/14	Kelder & Heather Monar
5/17	William & Amanda Murajda
5/20	Gerald & Karen Lindsay
5/27	Hal & Gloria Stockton



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

Administrative Assistant: Jean Chance

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:

Beth Baxley (828-399-0735); alternate, Jenna Pendry (314-348-0115)

Church Office:

Phone: 828-586-4256

Email: office@sylvapres.org

www.sylvapres.org

Physical address:

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