

Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church

March 23, 2025



Slow Growth

There's a vine in the South that covers everything.
It chokes out the light. Grows up to twelve inches per day.
In a matter of years, it will blanket a forest.
If you saw it from space, you'd marvel at its reach.
If you saw it from the passenger seat, you'd weep at what it covers.
Those looking for fast shade plant this invasive vine.
Who can blame them? We're all impatient.
But if it's fruit you want-
the tart cherry,
the sticky sweet kumquat,
the soft side of a peach,
the crisp bite of an apple-
then bless the rain.
Thank the sun.
Put your hands in the dirt,
and wait.

-Sarah Are Speed/A Sanctified Art LLC/sanctifiedart.org

Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church

SERVICE OF WORSHIP

3rd Sunday in Lent

March 23, 2025 11:00 AM

GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE “Einsame Blumen (Lonely Flowers)” Robert Schumann
Brea Cypbert, oboe

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (responsive) Dennis Riley

Worship is a place to rest. We breathe deeply here.

We still our aching bones. We sit in the quiet.

We surround ourselves with music. Worship is a place to rest.

Worship is a place to grow.

We listen for God’s word. We invite it to challenge us.

We lean in with curiosity. We ask questions.

Worship is a place to grow.

So come into this space. Come rest and grow here.

For where two or more are gathered, God is always there.

Let us worship our gracious God.

***HYMN 395** “Blessed Jesus, at Your Word”

LIEBSTER JESU

1 Blessed Jesus, at your word
we have come again to hear you;
let our thoughts and hearts be stirred
and in glowing faith be near you.
By your gospel true and holy,
teach us, Lord, to love you solely.

2 All our knowledge, sense, and sight
lie in deepest darkness shrouded,
till your Spirit breaks our night,
filling us with light unclouded.
All good thoughts and all good living
come but by your gracious giving.

3 Glorious Lord, yourself impart,
Light of Light, from God proceeding.
Touch our lips and ears and heart;
help us by your Spirit's pleading.
Hear the cry your church now raises;
hear, and bless our prayers and praises.

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

Holy God, there are days when we fail to rest. We stretch ourselves too thin. We run a million miles a minute. We ignore your command to rest. There are also days when we fail to act. We wait for someone else. We take the easy road. We find excuses and justify our inaction. God, forgive our imbalance. Remind us that birds rest, and they also fly. Show us how to do the same. Amen.

*RESPONSE TO CONFESSION

“You Are My Refuge, Faithful God” #214 stanzas 1 & 5

*You are my refuge, faithful God;
you shelter me from shame.
I put my spirit in your hands
and call upon your name.*

*And yet I trust in you, O God;
your covenant still stands.
Redeem me, in your faithful love:
my life is in your hands.*

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS (responsive)

Family of faith, I have good news! Our God does not keep score. Our God does not hold grudges. Our God does not assume the worst about us. No, our God offers grace, and endless second chances, and boundless love. So join me in proclaiming the good news of the gospel:

God’s grace is deeper than the ocean. God’s love is wider than the sky. We are seen. We are claimed. We are forgiven. May God’s vast love change and inspire us. Thanks be to God.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

A TIME FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

Children and youth of all ages are invited to come forward.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 55:1-9

ANTHEM

“Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving hearts”

James Neff

Beth Meriwether, flute

See Hymn #494 (Stanzas 1, 2 and 5) for text reference and meditation.

SECOND LESSON

Luke 13:6-9

SERMON

“everything (in)between rest & growth”

Rev. Dr. Laurie Furr-Vancini

1 Sometime a light surprises
the child of God who sings;
it is the Lord who rises
with healing in his wings;
when comforts are declining,
he grants the soul again
a season of clear shining
to cheer it after rain.

2 In holy contemplation
we sweetly then pursue
the theme of God's salvation
and find it ever new;
set free from present sorrow,
we cheerfully can say,
"Let the unknown tomorrow
bring with it what it may."

3 It can bring with it nothing
but he will bear us through;
who gives the lilies clothing
will clothe his people, too;
beneath the spreading heavens
no creature but is fed;
and he who feeds the ravens
will give his children bread.

4 Though vine nor fig tree neither
their longed-for fruit should bear,
though all the fields should wither,
nor flocks nor herds be there,
yet God the same abiding,
his praise shall tune my voice;
for while in him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (unison)

**We believe in a God who loves and tends to us like a gardener.
We believe that like the trees, some seasons are for growth,
and some seasons are for rest.
Some days require pruning, and some require planting.
Fortunately, we believe that our green-thumbed God
sees us and cultivates us.
So may we plant roots, reach for the sky, grow where we can,
and rest when we need,
for we believe there is holiness in the pruning
and in the planting.
And we do not grow alone.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

***HYMN 714**

”God of the Fertile Fields”

ITALIAN HYMN

1 God of the fertile fields,
shaper of earth that yields
our daily bread:
forth from your bounteous hand
come gifts your love has planned,
that all in every land
be clothed and fed.

2 We would be stewards true,
holding in trust from you
all that you give;
help us in love to share,
teach us like you to care
for people everywhere,
that all may live.

3 As grows the hidden seed
to fruit that serves our need,
so your reign grows.
Let all our toil be used,
no gift of yours abused,
no humble task refused
your love bestows.

4 God of the countryside,
dear to the Christ who died
to make us one:
we pledge our lives anew
in faithful love to you.
Guide all we say and do.
Your will be done.

***CHARGE AND BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE

*Please stand as you are able

CHURCH STAFF

Laurie Furr-Vancini, Transitional Pastor
Ted Stewart, Interim Director of Music
Andrew Tripp, Church Administrator
Leslie Sayyar and Brent Roberts, Treasurers
Barbara Escalante, Bookkeeper

Elder of the Day: Sharon Lytle
Sound/Video: Jim Storey
Liturgist: Dennis Riley
Coffee Hour Host: Anne Dale

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME VISITORS If you are worshipping here for the first time today, welcome! We are glad to have you with us. Please fill out a visitor information card, located on the right as you enter the chapel, and place it in the offering plate.

OFFERING Plates are available just inside the doors to the chapel as you enter and exit. Our gifts take many forms: open-hearted presence here, voices lifted in song, the prayers that rise in us, the material gifts we share with neighbors, and our willingness to live in a world as allies and advocates for those whose needs are overlooked. The monies we bring symbolize the offering of our lives in all circumstances. A separate labeled basket is available each week to receive Our Daily Change offerings, formerly known as Five Cents a Meal hunger offering.

COMMUNITY JOYS AND CONCERNS: If you would like to add or update a prayer request, please contact the church office.

We celebrate: much work and progress towards restoring **Andrew Tripp's** home, with gratitude for all the volunteers and professionals who are working to make that happen ◦ all those who contributed to the **Mission Study Plan** and its completion ◦ **Donna Eagle Joslin** has seen two different bald Eagles recently - this time, up close on her property!

We remember in prayer: **Joanne Lincoln** is recovering from an appendectomy on March 16 ◦ for our congregation as we proceed with selection of the Pastor Nomination Committee ◦ **Arden Starnes, her family, and her caregivers** ◦ all who continue to be affected by loss caused by recent storms. In our congregation, we remember especially **Andrew Tripp, Cindy and Dennis Riley, Jackie Wintle, Joyce Cucinella, and Bob, the father of Natalie's partner Jeff** ◦ **Susan Laney**, receiving therapy at home ◦ Ongoing prayers for the extended **Lytle family** ◦ **Jackie Ligon Cole** ◦ **Pat Crumpler** ◦ **Martha Dugger** ◦ **Rick Garrison** ◦ **Fran Roberts' sister-in-law, Linda Briggs** ◦ **Jon Hettrick and his family** ◦ **Marjorie Hettrick** ◦ **Shane Reece (Nancy Garrison's son)** ◦ **Pat Wilson's son, Kell**

COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICES The Swannanoa Valley Ministerial Alliance is having a community Lenten service every Wednesday at noon from March 5-April 16, with a Good Friday service on April 18. Each will be led by a different church (we are leading the April 2 service). All services will be hosted at Black Mountain UMC and will be followed by a free community meal provided by Open Table.

PHOTO REQUEST In preparation for the centennial celebration, we want your old pictures of the church. The older the better! Please find any photos of the church or church activities in the current chapel, Williams building, Sunderland, or before and give them to Kay Stockdale. We can scan and print them if you'd like to keep the original. Please put your name and any info you have on the back of the photo.

HABITAT MOMENT FOR MISSION On March 30 **Wayne Thomas**, a future owner of Habitat for Humanity House of Faith #4, will visit us for a Moment for Mission at the start of service. We will also receive a special offering to help with materials for the house - any donation will help. Options for giving: 1) through our church website (click Give Online button - top right), 2) by check with Habitat offering written on the memo line, or 3) by Qualified Charitable Distribution from an IRA or check from a Donor Advised Gift Fund sent to the Church, marked Habitat Offering.

TOGETHER We meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month through May at 1:30 PM in the chapel parlor. This is a time where all are welcome to build and strengthen relationships, spend some time in quiet reflection and prayer, learn and practice calming and relaxation skills, and share resources. This is an open group; feel free to come whenever you are able. Contact Beth Meriwether (828-777-2867) for more information.

ADULT EDUCATION CLASS We meet **Sundays at 9:30 in the Adult Ed room**. In March are reading and discussing the book, Pause: Spending Lent with the Psalms, by Elizabeth F. Caldwell. **All are welcome** at any time, even if you haven't read the book. Please contact Beth Meriwether at 828-777-2867 or bethmeriwether@gmail.com for more information.

SVCM Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministry is in need of: small mens' jeans, mens' small/medium underwear (unopened packs), childrens' 4T-5T clothing (especially girls), queen and king sheet sets, queen and king blankets, towels, hand towels, and washcloths. Deliver to SVCM at 101 N Ridgeway Ave, Black Mountain.

Artist Statement:

Fig Leafing by Hannah Garrity Inspired by Luke 13:6-9

Paper lace and watercolor

“At our church retreat a few months ago, we offered a session on eco-spirituality. Our instructor led an exercise that focused our attention on a single, natural object. I selected a wilted flower. We were to draw it, then tell its narrative. We were to refer to it as a 'one.' This one. We were to affirm the one and be affirmed by the one.

“That exercise resonates with me here as I revisit the parable of the fig tree. In this circular image, two figures lean in over the tree; their heads are full of ideas for fruiting, their bodies are full of dead fig leaf patterns. Their ideas and dreams have not born fruit. They converse about how to cultivate growth. Then one pushes back against the other and creates tension, discord. From that tension comes an opening, letting the fig tree have its time and space to thrive. In this paper lace piece, the fig tree is full of life, representing its potential when given the time and space to grow.

“As I wonder about God’s presence here in the parable, I see that the God figure could be the fig tree. 'Let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it,' the vineyard keeper



**Warren Wilson
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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 WarrenWilsonPC  WarrenWilsonPresbyterianChurch  @WarrenWilsonPC

***At Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church we are mothers and fathers,
single and married, gay and straight, young and old, black and white,
prosperous and poor, uncertain and sure, broken and whole – and
everything in between. Together we are the many faces of humanity,
yet as a joyful, caring, and loving community of faith,
we are one in Christ!***

replies. As I breathe into the gift of another day, where do I see potential in need of my honor, my care, and the space and time to grow? Or perhaps the God figure here is in the space between them all, between the three. The fig tree, this one, begins its leafing in the in-between.” —Hannah Garrity