



A NEW SONG

VOLUME 69, ISSUE 8

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WACO



# LETTER FROM A PASTOR



**FPC Choir, 1920**

**Photo Credit: Fred Gildersleeve**

## **Psalm 98 (so worth the read)**

**The work of singing a new song is ever before us. The environment shifts its alignments. The rhythm of culture changes. The capacity of our mind and lungs has/have variances. A community's imagination slips into cages.**

**The work of singing a new song is ever important. The environment might slow to a dirge. Rhythm can slip and slide toward disorganization. The lungs can carry more CO2 than oxygen. The key can be thrown away from a passive imagination.**

**The work of singing a new song is a congregation's creative act of love back to God and the world. New songs need a loving relationship with the past, wherein we draw from compositions and arrangements from the prior communities, recognizing their bold work. New songs emerge from the future. They put us on the edge of our understanding and experience. New songs....the best of them... are corporate compositions, arrangements, and lyricizations.**

**Being a historic church is a unique challenge in the new song business. We carry so much of the past, and we feel others accelerate toward a future they have already decided about. Acceleration can raise the anxiety of any project. Being a historic church that intends to sing a new song requires a range of perception. Perceiving over-our-shoulders helps us catch the flash of essentials from our past. Perceiving the energies of the present moment that go deep for us allows us to be grounded in our work. Perceiving the illuminating glimmers of a far horizon keeps us curious and investigative.**

**Thank you for the work of composition, arrangement, and lyricization....your tone is beautiful and compelling. What a privilege to serve a historic church with new songs. It is foundational work that strengthens our ministry alongside others.**

**Faithfully, Leslie**

# AUGUST CALENDAR

## Sunday, August 2

*Taylor Holleyman Preaching*

8:30 a.m. Early Service, Communion

9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship, Communion

## Monday, August 3

5:30 p.m. Diaconate Meeting

## Tuesday, August 4

5:30 p.m. Congregational Life Meeting

## Friday, August 7

6:00 p.m. Reel Spirituality – Pinewood

## Sunday, August 9

*Leslie King Preaching*

8:30 a.m. Early Service, Communion

9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

5:00 p.m. Our Hybrid House – Zoom

## Monday, August 10

All Day – Office Holiday– Staff Retreat

## Tuesday, August 11

6:00 p.m. Faith on Tap – Woodway Slowrise

## Thursday, August 13

12:00 p.m. Finance Committee meeting – Zoom

## Sunday, August 16

*Taylor Holleyman Preaching*

8:30 a.m. Early Service, Communion

9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

## Monday, August 17

5:30 p.m. Session Meeting – Hybrid

## Friday, August 21

7:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast – Fellowship Hall

## Sunday, August 23

*Leslie King Preaching*

8:30 a.m. Early Service, Communion

9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

## Monday, August 24

2:00 p.m. Worship Committee Meeting – Zoom

7:00 p.m. Power of the Pen – Zoom

## Wednesday, August 26

12:00 p.m. Facilities Committee Meeting

## Saturday, August 29

4 p.m. Pool Party – Carr & LaRaine's Home

## Sunday, August 30

*Leslie King Preaching*

8:30 a.m. Early Service, Communion

9:15 a.m. Summer Christian Formation Kickoff – Fellowship Hall

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

Taco Tuesdays:  
End August 11



Choir Practice:  
every Wednesday  
7:00 p.m.



## BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

**4** Michael Muehlenbein **8** Linda Reed, John Stephens **9** Mary Henderson **10** Carr & LaRaine DuPuy **12** Pete Patrick, Karter McNair, Hollyn McNair, Mabry McNair **14** Paul & Beth Hicks **15** Fuller Drew, Drew & Nancy Risinger, Jason & Lauren Aimone **16** Karl & Emily Stottlemire, Zdzislaw & Gretchen Wieckowski **17** Deane Johnson, Ian Odajima **18** Sam Lott, Austin Ingalls **19** Cary & Mandi DuPuy **20** Jackie Lott, Ella Harper **21** Scott Wagner **23** Charlotte Henderson, Jeremy Goodman **24** Jennifer Ferretter, Clara Rue **25** Debbie Christensen **26** Mary Helen and David George **27** J.P Davis **29** Beverly Durrett, Keri and Dan Knight **31** Marilyn Harren

# OUTREACH

## Blood Drive

On July 25th, we hosted our second blood drive of the year with Carter Blood Care. We are thankful to everyone who was able to donate. This is a wonderful way to support health care in our community. Look out for a report on the total number of pints collected!



## Sudderth Sunday Giving

The third Sunday of each month is Sudderth Sunday at First Pres. The funds raised through Sudderth Sunday giving goes to support the Christian Medical Institute of Kasai (IMCK). Our goal for 2026 is \$2,500, and we have raised \$1,971.20 to date. Thank you for all your support. Visit the Outreach page on our website, check out the slide show on the Fellowship Hall level television, or see the bulletin board outside the Franklin wing first-floor elevator to learn more about the Sudderth fund and our partnership with IMCK.



## Benevolence Requests

We receive requests for various kinds of assistance from both church and community members. As of June, we are logging each request. This practice will help us understand the needs around us and consider the kinds of assistance that we offer. Over the past month, we have received ten requests for assistance (2-3 per week). Many of our community members know that we have food bags available, and the majority of requests (6) were from individuals and families picking up food bags. The other most common requests are related to housing insecurity (hotel stay, rent, utilities, etc.). We are unable to meet many of the requests we receive. However, the Outreach Committee is working hard to consider how we manage our resources and work with our community partners to best serve our neighbors.

## August Project

The Outreach Committee is hosting a collection drive for Compassion Waco during August. Compassion is one of our partners that receives our financial support each quarter.

Compassion provides services that meet the needs of families facing housing insecurity, including providing transitional housing.

Follow the QR code for the list of donation items. Printed copies and a drop-off point are available in the Narthex.



# CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

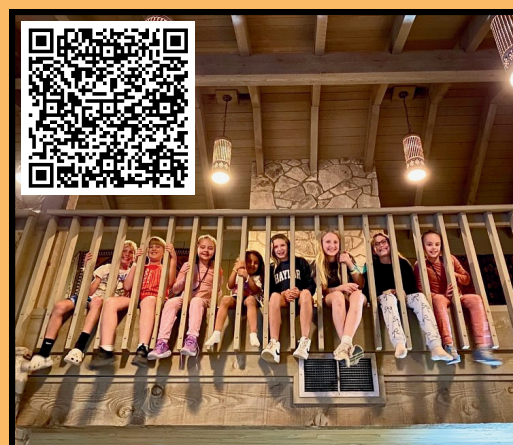


## Breakfast at Wimbledon

Our July congregational life event was Breakfast at Wimbledon, hosted by the Joyner family and featuring a lovely brunch "served" up by Marsha Alvarado. The event was a real "Grand Slam" as we enjoyed watching tennis alongside yard games and festive treats. Thank you to everyone who joined for this summer "rally" and helped make for a wonderful event.

## Church Retreat

Now is the time to finalize your plans for the Church Retreat, November 6–8 at Mo Ranch. Sign-ups close August 6! We are excited to have Austin Dickson join us as our guest speaker. Austin is the CEO of the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country, the organization that has led the Rebuild Kerr efforts following last year's devastating floods. We'll look forward to spending time together in the Hill Country this November.



## Summer Celebration

We had a group of about 25 participants in our Summer Celebration at Bledsoe–Miller Park on June 18th. We enjoyed playing on the new STEAM center playground and had Snow Cones provided by Kona Ice. The greatest joy of our gathering was that we pre-purchased more Snow Cones than our group was able to consume (although we gave a good effort!) We turned our excess into a blessing, passing out more than 20 tickets to other guests at the park so they could enjoy a snow cone courtesy of First Pres. It is always a treat to bless our neighbors in ways big and small!



## Presbyterian Women

The PW will begin their new year on Monday, September 14, at 1:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Women of FPC are invited to participate (in person or on Zoom) in a monthly Bible study led by Leslie and Taylor, hear about and support the wider PW mission, and enjoy the fellowship of FPC friends. This year's study is "United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other: Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians." Also be on the lookout for other opportunities to gather during the year!

## Save the Dates for 2026

**August 29:** Pool Party at the DuPuy's – **September 13:** Ice Cream Social – **October 10:** Pig Roast  
**November 6–8:** All Church Retreat

# CAREGIVING, CARETAKING, CARING

## Caregiving at home, at First Pres, and with each other: Neurodiversity and so much more.

There are so many ways to give and receive care at First Pres. The prayer list provides an opportunity to reach out. The Prayer Committee and Power of the Pen faithfully send encouraging cards. The deacons usher on Sunday mornings and in special services.

Committees and cohorts serve regularly for their work of assessment and support throughout the year. Elders support the work of the church by managing the business.

Members provide beautiful flowers each Sunday, weekly coffee fellowship goodies, volunteer in the office, sponsor youth activities, provide church-wide fellowship events, and so much more.

All of this caregiving, and more, happens at First Pres even as church members and staff engage regularly in caregiving with community work, service, and agency volunteering from Meals on Wheels to the Cove. Folks take care of their own family members in need or distress, help one another, visit homebound folks, and do the day in and day out work of caring for others.

One significant caregiving focus for the Presbytery and Session this past year at FPC is exploring and addressing the needs of persons with neurodiversity. Directed and funded by the Renewed Grace program of the Presbytery, the Neurodiversity Cohort (led by Lauren Aimone) and the First Pres Worship Committee (led by Esther Lee and Meredith Palm) has been hard at work exploring how First Pres can best support members, particularly children, who experience neurodiversity. The groups have explored the needs of neurodiverse persons during worship, including sound management; inclusive methods of Passing the Peace or Peace of Christ and activity materials during services. As the work of the cohort comes to an end, please check out the two tables in the Narthex with available earmuffs, fidgets, coloring materials, and "worship bags" with supplies. Stay tuned for more information as we honor the needs and strengths of persons with neurodiversity, reduce stress, and enhance the worship experience. This caregiving process is covered in prayer that lifts up the needs and the strengths of persons with neurodiversity, seeks solutions that enhance their worship experience, and that of their caregivers.

As a number of our church family members are caregivers of children and/or adults who experience neurodiversity, let us tune in to the lived experience of persons who are caregivers every day, and beginning with awareness and learning, advocate for understanding and for the needs of persons who are differently abled. Our church library includes several new children's books that cover neurodiversity and care possibilities. There are also several books on neurodiversity which are strong references for adults who want to learn more about neurodiversity needs, resources, and possibilities.

In the meantime, know that our attention to neurodiversity is reaching and encouraging other persons, churches, and organizations to highlight and engage this work. In the past month, we have had 6 different engagements responding to our neurodiversity banners on Austin and Franklin Avenues.

Making a caregiving difference .... Together.  
– Helen Harris

# NEURODIVERSITY

## Neurodiversity Branching Out

Well, we have hung a lot of banners along Austin and Franklin Avenues over the years. None have gotten so much traffic as our most recent “Honoring Neurodiversity” banner. We have had six direct engagements from that banner alone.

First, a member, when sharing where they went to church with another person in a restaurant bar, was met with the “Are you the church with the cool Neurodiversity sign?” What followed was a meaningful conversation.

Secondly, a member of Harris Creek stopped to read the banner and asked for an appointment with church the staff.

Third, a graduate student from the Garland School of Social Work inquired about working with us based on driving by and seeing the banner out front.

Fourth, a social media post of this banner, in addition to being our most engaged post to date, received likes from Heart of Texas Autism Network (HOTAN) and then The Autism Society of Texas.

Fifth, during coffee fellowship, a social worker was visiting noticed the sign and the two tables set up with fidgets, and worship bags in the Narthex.

Lastly, perhaps most importantly, one of the leads of Baylor’s Bridges to Belonging program noticed the sign and has invited us to their next 18-month cohort experience beginning in August of 2026. As the Renewed Grace cohort, of Grace Presbytery, comes to a close this month, we look forward to the continued journey with a new team from First Pres.



## Renewed Grace Completes First Cohort Cycle

So many of you have noted the persistent changes as the Renewed Grace cohort has done its work over the last 12 months. Our cohort will now pass the baton on to the Worship Committee and Session to implement changes to worship that seek to honor the neurodiverse experience.

A big thank you to the team who represented First Pres as a part of the early adoption cohort for Grace Presbytery’s Renewed Grace program: Lauren Aimone, Devan Stahl, Malorie Montoya, and Leslie King. Thanks also to the depth on our bench: Saralynn McKinnon Crowley, Helen Harris, Peggy Graham, and Anita Karney.

Grace Presbytery’s Renewed Grace staff will have a celebration luncheon for all 10 teams of cohort 1, at the Grace Presbytery Mission Center in Irving, Texas, on September 12.

# CHRISTIAN FORMATION

## The flow of summer Christian Formation in August

### Adult Formation

Thank you to everyone who has participated in the summer series, "Finding Our Place." In August, the series will feature Rev. Karen Zimmerman, Open Table Director, on August 2nd, and we will wrap up on August 16th, featuring guests from Baylor University's Center for Disability and Flourishing.

### Children and Youth

Children and youth will wrap up their series, "Character in Characters" on August 16th.

- August 2: Gideon – Trustworthiness
- August 9: Adam & Eve – Creativity
- August 16: Philip & the Ethiopian eunuch – Freedom

### Junior High Jubilee

JHJ was an incredibly fun experience at Mo Ranch for 3 of our middle schoolers. They spent the week exploring "Belonging as Me and We" in 1 Corinthians 12:4-31. They braved the outdoors, ropes course, energizers, and connected with new friends. Thank you to Jen Ferretter for sponsoring and being with the group for the week!



Arriving at Mo!



Back to FPC!



### Character Camp Thank You

Thank you to the planning team, Amy Goodman, and April Wagner, for working behind the scenes over the past few months to ensure a fun-filled week! This summer launched FPC's own version of VBS, Character Camp. Each day focused on a different character in the Bible with a craft, recreation, snack, music time, and tons of fellowship with new and old friends.

Thank you to the group of youth and adult volunteers for arriving each day to lead and have fun with the kiddos. The flow of energy, and to be known by our children, makes a big difference!



# New Beginning's Sunday

## A PART OF THE STORY

Join us for New Beginning's Sunday Breakfast in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, August 23, at 9:15 a.m.

New Beginning's Sunday features a great lineup for the Fall -

**A Part of the Story** is the educational theme for our children, youth, and adults. Highlights will feature the contribution of miniatures for the hidden stations around the Christian Formation rooms. There will also be an invitation for children and youth to participate in story memory challenges.

### Adult Formation

**Covenant Class:** A traditional Bible study that follows *The Present Word* curriculum. The fall theme is *The Soul of a Nation*, examining the books of Joshua, Judges, and 1 & 2 Samuel.

**Family Matters:** A conversational environment where folks of any age can gather to explore how their faith takes shape across each stage of life. Each week's conversation is guided by faith-based video resources.

**Exploring Christian Thought:** Led by Taylor, this class will utilize the book, *The Christian Intellectual Tradition: From the Reformation to the Modern Era*, to explore some of the great texts of the Christian intellectual tradition.

**Weaving Science and Faith:** Co-facilitated by Bob Lott and Leslie King, the class will lead the semester with an examination of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* and a source of the interdependence of religion and science.



### Children and Youth Formation

**PreK/K and 1st-3rd Classes:** The two classes will explore Bible literacy along with a hands-on activity or craft each Sunday. Music and movement will also be a part of the Sunday morning experience.

**Preteen and Youth Classes:** Both classes will also explore Bible literacy with in-depth discussion and relationship building with friends and leaders.

### Youth Wednesday Night

**Programming:** Returns August 26th, 6 - 8 p.m. each Wednesday with Cha & Chats to kick off the semester.

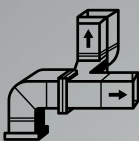


### A Part of the Story in Children's Leadership

Home Communion - Following church on Sunday, July 5, unbeknownst to those around her, Charlotte Ochel delivered a piece of communion bread to her dad Jordan, who was under the weather at home. Call her Deacon or Pastor Charlotte....we are so proud!



Wren Ochoa enters the Chancel and bravely turns the lights off in the Sanctuary each Sunday after the 10:30 service!



2026 has been a year of HVAC work! We first want to say thank you for bearing with us on the chilly or very warm Sundays throughout the year.

We have officially, as of Friday, July 10, 2026, switched the controls that operate the chiller away from Johnson Controls to Capstone Mechanical. Capstone has been a long-time partner of First Pres on the mechanical side, and we warmly welcome them as a partner on the technical side.



What does this mean? First Pres can now operate our own controls alongside Capstone. We can receive alerts if something seems off. Because Capstone has improved the technology, there will now be more accurate readings. We will have a more user-friendly interface with a clear picture of our campus.



We thank the Facilities Committee and the Session for their tireless efforts on this project. We hope that you feel the comfort when you are in the building!

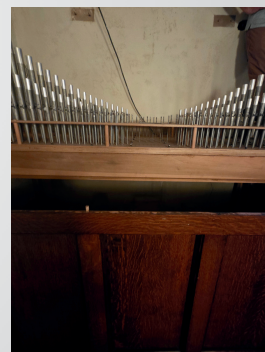
## The Organ Pipes & Walls

You may have noticed that the balcony facade pipes have been missing for a year now. We have heard from Alden Organ that they are projecting to be returned in August (we hope in time for New Beginnings Sunday!)

When the facade pipes were removed, we noticed that the flooring behind them needed repair, as did the walls. During the week of July 6, Alden came and removed the actual organ pipes and chimes to protect them from the paint. Dyer Painting then followed the next week to repair and repaint the walls.

We want to thank our long-time Organist, Becky Ward, for her act of stewardship. She decided to wait to have the actual balcony pipes reinstalled for two months as a cost saver to the church. They will be reinstalled when the facade pipes come back in.

We also want to thank our Building & Grounds Specialist, Dana Williams, for securing flooring and deep cleaning the balcony. We look forward to having all the pipes returned!



# STEWARDSHIP



Did you know that First Pres is a congregation that actualizes 98% of its pledges? As of the end of May, we have received 44.81% of pledged gifts, and 41.54% of projected unpledged gifts. The congregation is pacing well, and momentum is building.

Over the summer months, we welcome a new stewardship team: Kris Olson, John Stephens, Rebecca Melton, Chip Somerville, Katie Valenzuela, Mark Harren, Shane Montoya, Leslie King, and Mike Farr. They will be helping us understand the vision behind a new staff structure and the challenges of staying relevant in program and outreach.



FPC Venmo

Did you know, you can check where you are with your pledge on Realm, you can set up automatic giving, and you can now give on Venmo? You can also engage the “Joe Riley method” of hand-delivering your pledge to the office when you are out on any given Sunday. We love your surprise visits and are inspired by your generosity!

## Nominating Committee

Within the Presbyterian Church, there is a season of nominating individuals to serve on the Diaconate and the Session. Your 2026 Nominating Committee will receive, review, and recommend a list of nominees to be voted upon in our Annual Congregational Meeting in October. Look for more information on how to nominate a person to serve as a deacon (diaconate) or an elder (session) by using this QR code.

Your congregational reps on the nominating committee include: Kris Olson, James Karney, Sue Patrick, Diane Williams and Charlie Stern.



**The Tower**  
**1100 Austin Avenue**  
**Waco, TX 76701**  
**(254) 752-1665**  
**[www.firstpreswaco.org](http://www.firstpreswaco.org)**

**Office Hours**  
**Monday – Friday**  
**9 A.M. – 12 P.M. & 1 P.M. – 4 P.M.**



**Want to stay up-to-date with what's going on at First Pres from week to week? Sign up to receive "Ministry on Monday," our weekly newsletter. Each Monday afternoon, you'll receive a note from Leslie, or Taylor as well as updates about some events that are quickly approaching. Sign up using the QR code above!**

# WELCOME

We are excited to introduce our student intern for the 2026–27 school year, Kirk Evetts. Kirk was born and raised in Plano, TX, and is a Master of Social Work candidate at Baylor University. He also received his Bachelor's of Social Work from Baylor and looks forward to returning to Waco in August. Kirk enjoys reading, cooking, watching sports, taking care of dogs, and spending time outdoors. He is excited to join our church staff and would love to meet people in our congregation. Kirk will be supervised by Helen Harris and Leslie King.

