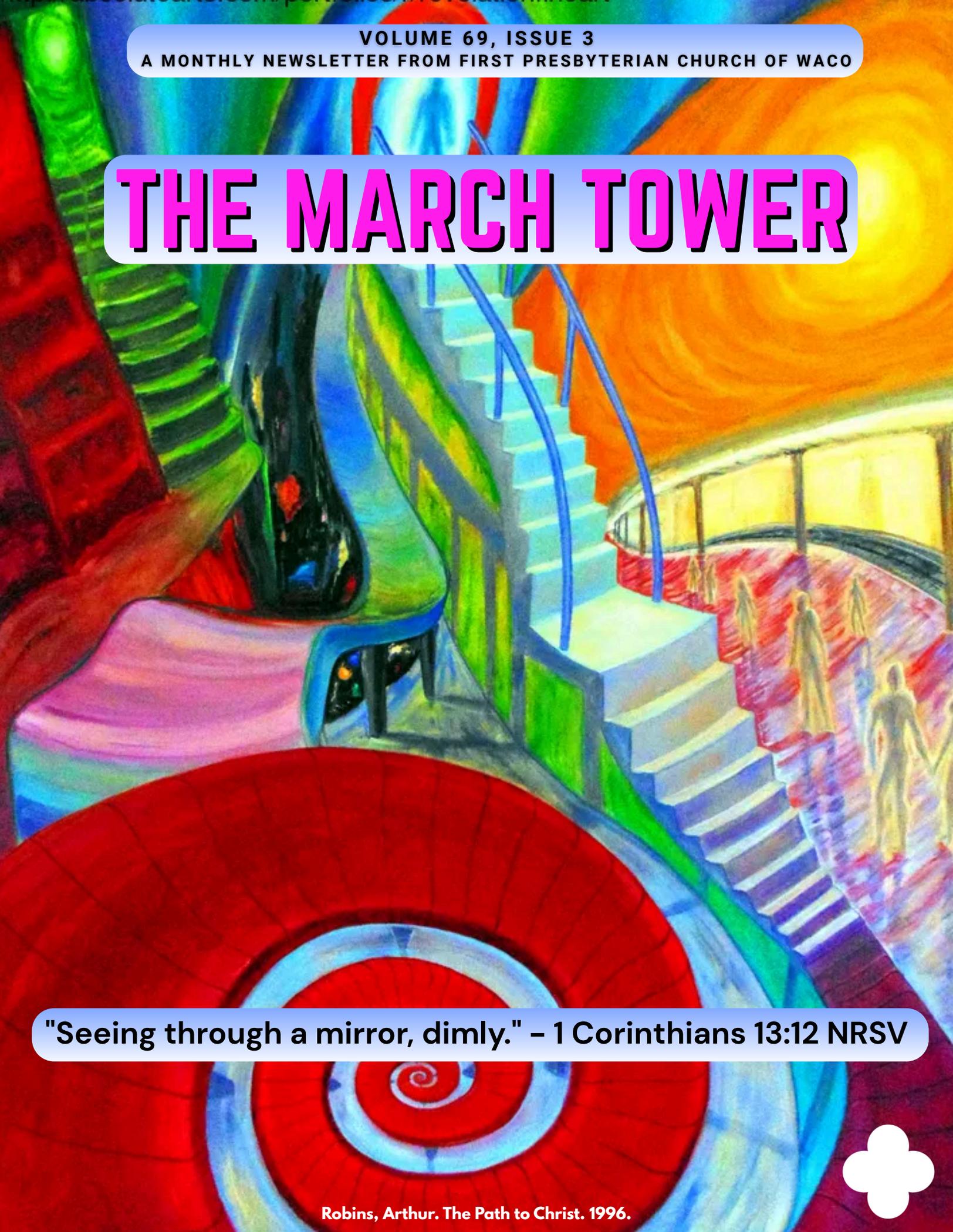


VOLUME 69, ISSUE 3
A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WACO

THE MARCH TOWER



"Seeing through a mirror, dimly." – 1 Corinthians 13:12 NRSV



LETTER FROM A PASTOR

In a Mirror, Dimly

Dear Friends,

The season of Lent has arrived. We mark its beginning on Ash Wednesday, where we are reminded of our temporal human condition: “From ashes we all come, and it is to ashes that we shall return.”

This season of prayer, fasting, and repentance invites us to embrace our limitations as integral to receiving God’s grace in Christ. We are reminded daily that, like our sanctification, clarity and understanding do not come all at once. They come gradually, and sometimes only partially.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul comments on our limited and partial condition: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” These words appear near the end of a passage many of us associate with weddings and celebrations of love. However, Paul’s concern is not romance or sentimentality. He is addressing a community deeply invested in spiritual achievement—wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, tongues—and he warns them that even the most impressive gifts are provisional.

Paul insists that love alone endures. Everything else, including our most faithful knowledge of God, is partial. We speak truthfully, but not exhaustively. We see, but never clearly enough to claim mastery. Lent trains us to live within this humility. It confronts our desire for certainty, control, and spiritual accomplishment, and instead calls us to patience, trust, and love.

To see “in a mirror, dimly” is not a failure of faith. It is the ordinary condition of creaturely life before God. Our language strains. Our understanding falters. Even when we speak rightly about God, we do not therefore comprehend God fully. Lent gives us permission to acknowledge these limits without despair. In fact, it teaches us to receive them as grace.

This season reminds us that the goal of faith is not perfect knowledge but faithful love. We are not saved by having the correct concepts, the strongest convictions, or the most eloquent prayers. We are formed by love—love that is patient and kind, love that endures when certainty fades, love that trusts God’s future even when the present remains unclear.

Lent is oriented toward a promise. The partial will give way to the full. The dim reflection will yield to face-to-face communion. Until then, we walk by faith, not by sight, practicing love as the true preparation for what is to come.

As we journey through this season, may we learn to live gently with our limits, honestly with our questions, and faithfully within the mystery of God. And may love—steadfast, costly, and enduring—be the light by which we walk, even now, seeing only in part.

Grace and peace to you in this holy season.

Taylor Holleyman

Director of Congregational Life

MARCH CALENDAR

Sunday, March 1

8:30a.m. Early Service
9:15a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30a.m. Morning Worship

Monday, March 2

5:30p.m. Diaconate Meeting - Hybrid

Wednesday, March 4

5:30p.m. Why Is There Suffering?

Friday, March 6

6:00p.m. Reel Spirituality (Pinewood)

Sunday, March 8

8:30a.m. Early Service
9:15a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30a.m. Morning Worship
5:00p.m. Our Hybrid House - Zoom

Monday, March 9

1:00p.m. Presbyterian Women (Hybrid)
5:30p.m. Outreach Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 10

6:00p.m. Faith on Tap

Wednesday, March 11

12:00p.m. Why Is There Suffering?
5:30p.m. Why Is There Suffering?

Thursday, March 12

9:00a.m. Personnel Committee Meeting (Zoom)
12:00p.m. Finance Committee Meeting (Zoom)

Sunday, March 15

8:30a.m. Early Service
9:15a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30a.m. Morning Worship

Every Wednesday

6:00p.m. In The Wings Youth Programming
6:00p.m. Bell Choir Practice
7:00p.m. Choir Practice

Monday, March 16

5:30p.m. Session Meeting (Hybrid)

Wednesday, March 18

12:00p.m. Why Is There Suffering?

Saturday, March 21

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

Sunday, March 22

8:30a.m. Early Service
9:15a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30a.m. Morning Worship

Monday, March 23

2:00p.m. Worship Committee Meeting
7:00p.m. Power of the Pen

Tuesday, March 24

5:30p.m. Christian Formation Committee / YAB Meeting (Zoom)

Wednesday, March 25

12:00p.m. Why Is There Suffering?
12:00p.m. Facilities Committee Meeting

Saturday, March 28

9:00p.m. Service Saturday - The Cove
524 W Waco Dr, Waco, TX 76701

Sunday, March 29 (Palm Sunday)

8:30a.m. Early Service
9:15a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30a.m. Morning Worship
12:30 p.m. Easter Egg Hunt- Whitehall Park
Whitehall Park, 7600 Fresno Rd, Woodway, TX

- Baptism of Luca Palm
Child of Greg & Meredith Palm
February 8, 2026
- Birth of Henry Ochel
February 11, 2026
- Birth of Cam Phillip Berndsen
February 20, 2026
- Life & Faith of Joe Sudderth
January 18, 1937 - February 13, 2026

Holy Week

- Maundy Thursday: April 2, 2026 @ 6:00p.m.
- Good Friday: April 3, 2026 @ 6:00p.m.
- Easter Sunday: April 5, 2026 @ 8:30a.m. & 10:30a.m.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

1 Melissa Boss, Caroline Hart 2 Austin Rue, Lucy Ferretter 4 Ethan Melton 5 Janet Kettler, Lauren Aimone, Billy Henderson, Craig & Kellie Clarkson 6 Earnie Giles 7 Lyndon Olson, Jr 8 Charlie Stern, Jeremy & Krystal Goodman 9 Berry Klingman, Chuck Weaver, George Holmes 10 Carol Miller 12 Jere & Barbara Neimer 14 Anita Karney, George Ahrens, Ella Wooten 15 Todd Ehlers, Harriet Davis 17 Beth Hicks, Kevin Bartley 18 Dan Francis, Ashley Bartley 19 Annslee Wagner, Donna Harmon 20 Jonah Williams 22 Andrew & Emily Cox 23 Betty Anderson 24 Ken Kuhns, Shane & Malorie Montoya 25 Suzanna Smith, Chip Somerville 27 Jamie & Kathryn Delk 28 Justin Percivill, Zdzislaw Wieckowski, Brenda Stephens 30 Larry Kinard

OUTREACH



Caritas Highlight

Caritas is a food pantry that also provides emergency assistance and case management services to those in need. It first began in the basement of First Pres and remains one of our longtime outreach partners. Throughout February, we collected a variety of donation items for Caritas. Thank you to everyone who generously contributed to this collection!



March Service Saturday

Our next Service Saturday is scheduled for March 28. We will be at the Cove from 9:00 a.m. to noon, helping clean their facilities. The Cove provides support and resources for teens experiencing homelessness. We hope you can join us for this meaningful morning of service!



Earth Care Certification

We're delighted to share that we have been re-certified as an Earth Care Congregation for the twelfth year. This certification reflects our ongoing commitment to creation care and faithful stewardship of God's creation. If you'd like to learn more or get involved in our Creation Care efforts, please contact Taylor at tholleyman@firstpreswaco.org.



New Sudderth Fund Slide Show

Sudderth Sunday donations support the Institute Médical Chrétien du Kasai (IMCK), founded in 1954 to provide medical and educational care in the Kasai province of the Congo. This support honors the mission work there and the life of Amelia Sudderth, born in Luebo in 1938 to medical missionaries. A new slideshow features images of IMCK staff responding to an Ebola outbreak in Bulape (September 2025) and photos from Lubondai, where Amelia attended school and where IMCK was founded.



Open Table

is a collegiate ministry and a Baylor University chapel credit program. Recognized as a PC(USA) 1001 New Worshiping Community and an emerging UKirk member, it operates in partnership with First Presbyterian, Seventh & James, DaySpring, and Calvary Baptist. Under the leadership of Director Rev. Karen Zimmerman, the ministry continues to grow and welcome students.

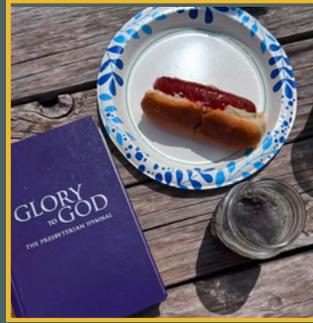
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Beer & Hymns



Save the date: Sunday, April 26th
12:30-2:30 p.m.

Join us for Beer, Brats, and Hymns at Brotherwell Brewery after church on April 26th.



Build-a-Mug

In February, some of our college and graduate students gathered for a build-a-mug workshop at Black Oak Arts. We have a healthy group of students who do not always have the opportunity to connect on Sunday mornings because they are each involved in the congregation in different ways. We were grateful for a chance to build pottery and relationships! We look forward to finding more ways to support our scholars.



Bill & Judy Annual Art Show is on Display!

The Franklin Art Show is in Full Swing. Thank you to everyone who contributed artwork, and to Esther Lee and Ben McNamee for helping organize the event. Art will be on display until March 22nd. Be sure to stop by the artwork in the atrium hallway this month.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION



Sign Up Here



Palm Sunday Easter Egg Hunt

Please join us for our annual Palm Sunday Easter egg hunt at Whitehall Park on March 29th. We'll meet at Whitehall at 12:30 p.m. following the 10:30 service. Hot dogs and Hamburgers will be available for lunch, provided by Dubl-R Burgers. Sign-up on Realm to reserve your lunch or to provide a side or dessert. Meal is generously sponsored again this year.

Formation Quotes & Testimonials

We are so grateful for all the adults and children who participate in our Formation Hour on Sunday mornings. Kyle Plaskett, member of the Young Adults Formation Class, shared that he enjoys attending because "asking questions and sharing ideas is welcome."

Sunday Bookends a Meaningful Day

On Sunday morning, a Sunday school class listens to the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Their teacher reminds them, "*Our neighbor can be anyone!*"

The children begin imagining how this works in their own lives.

That same teacher sits down Sunday evening to watch the Super Bowl halftime show... as a student.

She reflects:

"I can see and hear my neighbor."

(In honor of Sarah Patterson, PreK-K Christian Formation teacher, who posted her church experience to social media.)

Welcome, Nancy Risinger!

We're delighted to welcome Nancy as one of our PreK-K facilitators. We appreciate the time and talent all our leaders generously share!

Suffering is a timeless question.

But have you ever held that question in a way that honors where you are and allows you to chart your own path forward? That is exactly what **Bethany N. Sollere**'s book invites us to do.

We are offering two sections of this class:

- **Wednesdays, Feb 25th, March 4th & 11th at Noon**
- **Wednesdays, March 11th, 18th, 25th at 5:30 P.M.**

We look forward to sharing this meaningful time together during the Lenten season.

Midday Class
Sign Up



Evening Class
Sign Up



CHRISTIAN FORMATION

KidQuake 2026 – April 10–12, 2026

Gilmont Camp & Conference Center | 6075 State Hwy 155, Gilmer, TX

KidQuake 2026 is a fun, faith-filled retreat for children in kindergarten through 5th/6th grade. This year's sessions are April 10–12 and April 24–26 at Gilmont. (No KidQuake at Glen Lake this year.)

Cost is \$170 per child. Registration deadlines: March 25 for April 10–12 and April 8 for April 24–26. Sign-up & Info forms are listed in the QR codes on the right.

Sign Up



More Info



Junior High Jubilee

A week-long conference where students ages 6th–8th grade can come out and worship, make friends, and spend time doing fun recreational activities! Additional important planning info is listed in the QR code.

More Info



Youth Celebration | June 21–25, 2026

Youth Celebration is a week-long conference for high school students who have completed grades 9–12, beginning Sunday evening with the “Big Hello” and ending Friday morning with the “Big Goodbye.” The week is filled with worship, keynote speakers, music, recreation, small groups, and meaningful time to explore faith, build friendships, and grow in a Christ-centered community.

Small groups are a central part of the experience, giving youth the opportunity to connect with peers from other churches while engaging in Bible study and conversations about faith and life.

More information can be found on the right side via the QR code.

More Info



Camp scholarships are available. Please reach out to Malorie Montoya for applications. Her email is dcf@firstpreswaco.org.

CAREGIVING, CARETAKING, CARING

Caregiving is personal; Caregiving is also Community

Giving care, what we often call caregiving, matters at First Pres. The giving of care shows up in our church life and our home lives. Our cultural understanding of caregiving is generally a micro perspective, i.e., caregiving is a personal act which one person provides for another. Direct care for a person can include physical care and/or emotional care, including securing or providing for needs. I have seen this caregiving in so many ways at First Pres. I saw it in the fist bumps welcoming Leonard Slamcik during his cancer journey as he worshiped in the back row of the 8:30 service. I saw it more recently in the Youth Sunday programming, including so many youth contributions to the service. I see it every week in the front seating of Jamie Delk and his wheelchair in the 10:30 service. I experience it every week when Jack waves at the Zoom camera and says "hi" to Miss Helen, and in the many meetings and activities I can participate in while on Zoom.

It is also clear to me that caregiving is not only a one-to-one experience. There are so many examples of group and programmatic caregiving at First Pres. I heard in a conversation recently that First Pres was instrumental in the work of Caritas from their very beginning. This 50+ year old organization was founded by the Diocese of Austin and originally housed in donated space in the basement of First Pres. This is the same Caritas for which we are currently collecting donations and for which several members volunteer regularly. This corporate caregiving is not new to us. One church member shared with me a pastor's mantra: "We gather to worship; We scatter to serve." It is not possible to share here all the good work generated by the First Pres family! In my short time as a member of First Pres, I have been struck many times by the intensity and commitment to care for others through group projects, family investments, and individual volunteer commitments. I'll just mention a few here.

Presbyterian Women discussed the work of Talitha Koum and of the Cove in a recent meeting. Talitha Koum focuses on addressing the mental health and cognitive needs of children from eight weeks to five years of age, providing rocking, holding, reading with, and providing nutrition, and physical needs, all part of love and care, for the littlest. Dr. Helen Benedict Kovacs has provided significant expertise and volunteer support for programming at Talitha Koum through the years. The Cove provides programming for adolescents (ages 14-18) who may be currently unhoused and experiencing life challenges; the mission is to end youth homelessness. Kris Olson, Candy Swenke, and others have provided significant volunteer support for the Cove, where caring and support services are difference making in student health and mental health and improved graduation rates. These are just two programs of giving care (caregiving) to vulnerable populations in our city. And there is so much more.

A number of First Pres members contribute to and support the work of Mission Waco with programming for persons of all ages, ranging from youth engagement to basic needs for unhoused persons. Our own Lory Latimer is working with the "Tiny Homes" program for unhoused persons. Others volunteer with World Hunger Relief Farm, a program committed to addressing hunger through research on food systems, strategies like "Food is Medicine," and internships to address food insecurity.

Through the years, First Pres members have served as volunteers in local schools as reading partners, pen pals, and faculty and staff encouragers. Another example is the Perrys' work with literacy programs and with persons navigating probation requirements. Other church members continue to support local schools and students with homework help, encouragement, and celebration of success. Members at First Pres are deeply involved in Meals on Wheels, a program that provides meals to adults 60 years or older who are homebound. Charlotte Henderson leads that work with First Pres volunteers.

I think about my own experience with First Pres members like Delores Horne, who visited and sat with hospice patients in their last hours of life and gave love and support to grieving families. I think about Nancy Grayson, whose creativity and innovation in East Waco included work with Rapoport Academy and building community at Lulu Janes. Other church members and staff continue to discuss gaps in service in the community and how First Pres might make a difference in areas like adult education, English as a second language education, and the needs of local agencies and populations.

We know that one of the challenges and opportunities of the church is to grow both numerically and relationally. While the pandemic challenged both, at First Pres, we are part of a church that prioritizes growing relationally, not just with each other, but in caregiving that touches lives across the community. These are but a few of the many ways First Pres gives care. Let us continue to embrace community caregiving even as so many are also individual caregivers.

Special thanks to Milly Walker and Cathy McPhee for your consultation, church history, and treasured conversation about First Pres and these programs. As others of you are reading and thinking about others who, through the years and now, are making a difference in caregiving through First Pres, I would love to hear from you.

With pen in hand and gratitude for you and for the opportunity to continue highlighting the giving of care that is First Pres.

Helen Wilson Harris

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION



On Tuesday, February 17, the First Pres staff had the opportunity to host church volunteers for an annual luncheon.

It was great to introduce our volunteers to each other, learn about what tasks they take on, and why they choose to volunteer.

The First Pres volunteers make anything possible. From fixing things, sending reminders, getting things ready for worship, every ounce of work completed by a volunteer makes a difference.

Are you interested in learning about ways that you can volunteer at the church?

Please contact the church office at (254)752-1665 or email office@firstpreswaco.org.

Not Pictured: Earnie Giles, Margaret Hawes, Paige Guzman, Brenda Fox, James Hill, Eve Riley, and Rock McNair.

JESUS & JOHN WAYNE REPORT

A small group of 3 men and 7 women met over four weeks to discuss the book *Jesus and John Wayne* by Kristin Kobes Du Mez (2021). Du Mez explores the rise of a demographic now commonly called “evangelical.” Here are some highlights from our group discussion.

1. The book cover includes a subtitle, *How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, along with a statement from Cressy Stroop of the Boston Globe: “A book that America needs now.” While both the subtitle and statement promote the book, they also hint at the author’s cultural assumptions and potential biases. Reading the book helped me reflect on my own biases and responses, ultimately guiding me toward a more meaningful faith perspective.
2. At its core, this is a book about power and the misuse of power. Du Mez provides examples of power being misused in politics and religious life, often to the detriment of women. One group member noted that the book reminded her of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, where leaders are encouraged to “be lowly wise”—humble and prudent in their leadership.
3. The book also explores connections between the rise of militarism, masculinity, and religion.
4. Du Mez argues that evangelical churches and organizations have significantly shaped culture, influencing gender roles, authority, national identity, international relations, and the exercise of power. However, the book does not address the impact on the separation of church and state; the words “church,” “state,” or “separation” do not appear in the index.
5. Our discussion group was largely women. I appreciated the insights shared by the men who participated and felt we would have benefited from more male perspectives, especially given the book’s focus on militarism, masculinity, moral development, and identity.
6. The book raised questions for me about the role of the church in developing values and fostering community. Using religion to impose a single perspective is, in my view, consistent with John Wayne’s ethos but wholly inconsistent with the life and message of Jesus.
7. Our group reflected on the role of the church: What guardrails are appropriate to prevent the misuse of power within religious communities?

It’s an honor to offer this report.

Participants: Marilyn Harren, Helen Harris, Susan Johnson, Kathy Jones, Lory Latimer, Bob Lott, Shane Montoya, Sam Parler, Meg Parish, and Leslie King.

NEW OFFICER SPOTLIGHTS



Diaconate

I love First Pres because it feels like a second home to me. As soon as I walk through the doors, I feel welcomed, loved, and encouraged by people who genuinely care about one another. I also love how First Pres serves the community and creates opportunities to help others, which inspires me to live out my beliefs beyond Sunday mornings, and inspires me to become a better person.

Toni Percivill



Elder

I've been part of First Presbyterian for as long as I can remember, since birth. Some of my earliest memories are in those pews, learning the songs, the rhythms of worship, and what it meant to belong to a church family. Over the years, the building has changed in small ways, but the people and the feeling of home have never changed.

One of my favorite parts of the church has been growing up alongside the same families and now still worshipping beside them as adults. There's something special about being greeted by people who knew you as a child and still walk beside you in faith today. It turns church into more than a Sunday routine.

Hunter Harren



Diaconate

I've been a member for 10+ years. The thing I love most about the church is that they approach the world with curiosity and not judgment.

Jeremy Mercer



Elder

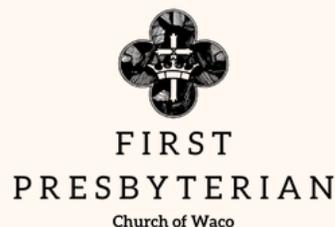
I have been a member at First Pres since the fall of 2014, when my family moved here from Florida. My husband, Jamie, and I wanted to find a welcoming church where we could share our gifts and our children could be involved. After our first visits, we were invited to the All-Church Retreat at Mo Ranch and have been involved ever since. We love the sense of family here and that we can ask questions and discuss difficult topics with no easy answers. While our two oldest (Sarah and Rachel) are now in college, our youngest (Josh) still participates in the youth program. We love it here and truly feel accepted for who we are—messiness and all.

Kathryn Delk

We would also like to welcome those officers that have not been featured in a newsletter: Drew Risinger, Marsha Alvarado, Donna Black and Roane Lacy.

The Tower
1100 Austin Avenue
Waco, TX 76701
(254) 752-1665
www.firstpreswaco.org

Office Hours
Monday - Friday
9 AM - 12 PM & 1 PM - 4 PM



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!

Changes to Our Website

[THE CHURCH](#) ▾

[WORSHIP SERVICES](#)

[CHURCH LIFE](#) ▾



[COMMUNITY PARTNERS](#)

[GET CONNECTED](#) ▾

[GIVE](#) ▾

We have been actively updating and refining the content on our website, with all changes expected to be complete by the end of March. In the meantime, we warmly welcome your suggestions for improvement. Our website is more than just an online presence—it is an extension of our hospitality and a way to reach out to the wider community. Your feedback will help us make it more welcoming, informative, and engaging for everyone who visits.

Check Out the Changes Here!

