



VOLUME 68, ISSUE 11

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WACO

THE NOVEMBER TOWER



We, on the staff at First Presbyterian, really admire the follow-through of this congregation. In fact...this fall is hallmarked by follow-through on matters of Christian Formation, Fellowship, Stewardship of resources, time and talent, and robust worship attendance. We feel the loft and the drive. Thank you as we round the corner into the holy season of Advent. We are most grateful to be your church staff!

LETTER FROM A PASTOR

'Fall'owing through

The ebbs and flows of church life tend to coincide with the rhythms of the academic calendar. As such, August is as much the start to a new year as January. At the beginning of the fall term, we celebrate New Beginnings Sunday, rolling out new programming for youth and children, and restarting adult formation classes.

August to December is also the time of year when annual reports come in from our committees, stewardship campaigns kick off, budgeting takes place, new officers are appointed, and some of our biggest events occur (e.g., Ice Cream Social, Pig Roast, Church Retreat, Children's Sunday). All this activity builds energy that supports the life and ministry of the Church over the next year.

There is much to be thankful for in this season. Among other things, we are celebrating recent baptisms, new members, growing attendance for youth and children's activities, and (selfishly) the hire of a Director of Congregational Life.

As we head into November, fall has fully arrived – even if the Texas weather is hesitant to admit it – and the 'falling' we experience transcends the activity of leaves. Our clocks will fall back, plans may fall through, and the busyness of the season will cause some of us to fall behind. I pray that the strength of Christ and the support of the congregation will help to sustain you if you feel ready to fall down under the weight of your circumstances in the coming months.

Cognizant of the busy season we are entering and the 'fallings' we experience, First Presbyterian is committed to 'Fall'owing through with the momentum we have built (if you can excuse the autumnal pun). We invite you to consider the ways you can contribute to the energy we are carrying into the next year, or to let us know how we can support you through the ebbs and flows of this season.

Most gratefully,

Taylor Holleyman, Ph.D.

Director of Congregational Life



NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Sunday, November 2nd (All Saints)

Worship, 8:30am – Hybrid
Christian Formation, 9:15am
Worship, 10:30am – Hybrid

Wednesday, November 5th

Into the Heart Wednesdays, 6:00pm
Bell Choir Rehearsal, 6:00pm
Choir Rehearsal, 7:00pm

Thursday, November 6th

Classic Voice Ensemble, 9:00am – Choir Room

Friday, November 7th–9th

FPC Church Retreat – Mo Ranch

Sunday, November 9th

Worship, 8:30am – Hybrid
Christian Formation, 9:15am
Worship, 10:30am – Hybrid
Our Hybrid House, 5:00pm – Zoom

Monday, November 10th

Presbyterian Women, 1:00pm – Fellowship Hall
Administration Meeting, 5:30pm

Tuesday, November 11th

Faith on Tap, 6:00pm – One Day Bar
618 Columbus Ave STE B, Waco, TX 76701

Wednesday, November 12th

Into the Heart Wednesdays, 6:00pm
Bell Choir Rehearsal, 6:00pm
Choir Rehearsal, 7:00pm

Thursday, November 13th

Classic Voice Ensemble, 9:00am – Choir Room

Saturday, November 15th

Service Saturday, 9:00am – 12:00pm – Naomi House
7900 Renewal Way, Waco, TX 76712

Sunday, November 16th

Worship, 8:30am – Hybrid
Christian Formation, 9:15am
Worship, 10:30am – Hybrid

Monday, November 17th

Session Meeting, 5:30pm – Hybrid

Wednesday, November 19th

This is First Pres, 5:30pm
Into the Heart Wednesdays, 6:00pm
Bell Choir Rehearsal, 6:00pm
Choir Rehearsal, 7:00pm

Thursday, November 20th

Classic Voice Ensemble, 9:00am – Choir Room

Friday, November 21st

Men's Breakfast, 7:30am – Fellowship Hall

Sunday, November 23rd

Worship, 8:30am – Hybrid
Christian Formation, 9:15am
Worship, 10:30am – Hybrid
Hanging of the Greens, 11:30am

Monday, November 24th

Power of the Pen, 7:00pm – Zoom

Wednesday, November 26th (Office Holiday)

Office Holiday – 12:30pm

Thursday, November 27th (Office Holiday)

Office Holiday – All Day

Friday, November 28th (Office Holiday)

Office Holiday – All Day

Sunday, November 30th (1st Sunday of Advent)

Worship, 8:30am – Hybrid
Christian Formation, 9:15am
Worship, 10:30am – Hybrid



BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

1 Neal Dupuy, Evan Cole 2 Mark & Marilyn Harren, Marla Jaynes 4 Mary Beth Duggar 7 Tom & Susan Leggott, Shannon Field, Ben Clarkson 11 Lisa Lacy, Mike Latimer 12 Carol Colgin 13 Wes Field 14 Emily Stottlemire 16 Leslie & DJ King, Jere Neimer 17 Charlie & Kris Olson, Diane Williams 19 David Lacy, Jordan & Sarah Ochel 20 Kay & Lyndon Olson, Jr & 21 Phil & Deedie Hering, Mark Jaynes, Merry Bruner 23 Lyn Petersen, Paige Guzman 26 Easton Wooten 30 Caleb Clarkson

OUTREACH

October Cove Collection

Thank you to everyone who donated items for the Cove during October. We had a great response from the congregation, and delivered a large selection of hygiene and self-care products that will be used to support youth experiencing homelessness.



2026 Outreach Theme & Partner Applications

The Outreach Committee has selected “displacement” as our 2026 theme—understood as any involuntary or coerced loss of place. This includes mental or physical experiences of being “out of place” or losing one’s “sense of place.” In the coming year, we look forward to learning how we can best support people and communities facing displacement.

Alongside this theme, we are accepting applications for 2026 outreach partners. At First Pres, we dedicate ten percent of annual giving to outreach, with a major portion directed to quarterly financial support for selected partners. Applications are open through November and available on the outreach page of the church website.

November Service Saturday

For our November Service Saturday, we are planning to volunteer with Naomi House on Saturday, November 15th from 9:00am - noon. Naomi House is a ministry of DaySpring Baptist Church that provides a temporary place of refuge for asylum seekers. We anticipate helping with some cleaning and yard maintenance.



Habitat Service Sat. 2025

2025 Christmas offering

This year's Christmas offering will go towards recovery and flood relief efforts in Kerr County. We will partner with the Kerr County Flood Relief Fund, organized through the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country, to support local organizations engaged in ongoing recovery efforts.



Kerr Co. Flooding

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Pig Roast

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Pig Roast. Special thanks to Charlie and Kris Olson for all their work to host this event. Great food, beautiful weather, and a good time was enjoyed by all.



Charlie Olson at Work



Church Retreat

We are excited to return to Mo-Ranch, Nov 7-9, for this year's Church Retreat. Dr. Jackson Griggs, CEO of Waco Family Medicine, will be with us as we consider the importance of mental well-being in our community, in our nation, and in relation to our Christian faith. We also look forward to enjoying our time together through art, recreation, and worship.



Mo Ranch Chapel on the Hill

Coffee Fellowship 2026

We are so grateful to everyone who hosted Coffee Fellowship during 2025. With a new year approaching, we are accepting sign-ups for 2026. Please consider hosting next year. Hosts provide snacks in Foundation Parlor following the 10:30 service on their chosen date. Watch for a sign-up sheet to be posted to Realm this month.



Hanging of the Greens

Help us prepare for the Advent season by participating in Hanging of the Greens on Sunday, November 23rd. Immediately after the 10:30 service, we will join together to complete our decorating.



ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION

We are excited to have a healthy community in our Adult Formation classes each Sunday. If you have not had a chance to attend, please be sure to visit one of our classes this month. Formation classes meet on Sunday mornings from 9:15 to 10:15.

Family Matters: Themed conversations based on weekly video topics – room F105. Family Matters will be getting into their new video series, *The Ridiculous Journey: Following a Nobody From Nowhere*.

- **November 2nd** – Personal Relationship
- **November 9th** – A Glimpse at Communion
- **November 16th** – Love Made Flesh
- **November 23rd** – The Way, Truth, Life
- **November 30th** – Thanksgiving



Covenant Class: Traditional Bible study with Zoom option available – room C203. Covenant Class will be studying Ezekiel and the Exile of Judah throughout November.



Weaving Science and Faith: Conversations on the intersection of Science and Faith lead by Leslie with Zoom option available – room C201.



- **November 2nd** – The Scientific Saint – Dr. Jane Goodall
- **November 9** – Native Science – Ecology of Native American Community
- **November 16** – Native Science – Animals
- **November 23** – Native Science – Place
- **November 30** – Native Science – Astronomy

Stuff you Missed in Sunday School Class:

Explores passages from Scripture and events from Church History that have been overlooked or misunderstood. Lead by Taylor with Zoom option available – room C202.

- **November 2nd:** Where did Satan come from?
- **November 9th:** All Church Retreat
- **November 16th:** The Cadaver Synod
- **November 23rd:** Class Holiday
- **November 30th:** Obadiah

This is First Pres

This is First Pres will meet on Wednesday, November 19, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Join Pastor Leslie for an engaging conversation about the history and mission of First Presbyterian Church, followed by a guided tour of the building. This is a great opportunity to learn more about our community and how you can get involved.



CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Youth are Returning!

We are so pleased with our Wednesday night programming and the arrival of a core team of youth. Here are upcoming events! If you have not yet done so, please mail in your survey for our Gaming and Faming Wall – text a selfie to Leslie at (254) 214-5999.

- **November 5:** Into the Heart of our Saints: Mapping Genealogy and Grace – Bring a list of grandparents and great grandparents as far back as you can go!
- **November 12:** Into the Heart of Relaxation – Pajama night....supportive and effortless yoga....essential oils and tricks for relaxing from stress.
- **November 19:** Into the Heart of our Homebound: Making Place and Space – customized placemats for their Thanksgiving Table
- **November 26** – Thanksgiving Holiday
- **December 3rd** – Youth Christmas Party

Children's Sunday

Thanks to all who participated in Children's Sunday. The children came out of the wings and created some life-size wings for stewardship fun. They inspired us with their written prayers, songs, and taking their place in the chancel to move us through the rituals of Sunday morning worship. Thanks to parents and volunteers who made this Sunday possible.



Children's Sunday Choir 2025

Christian Formation!

Our preteen and pre-k-K classes are leading the way in attendance! Come on youth and 1-3rd graders, we know you can do it! November begins a challenge to take the Christmas story in your own words. See Leslie or Taylor if your child is interested in taking up this challenge. A Barnes and Noble gift card for all who complete! Be sure to pick up your "heads up" Advent Calendar on November 23rd when we hang the greens. One for each child!



LETTER FROM A CAREGIVER

I have been a member of First Presbyterian Church of Waco for over 30 years, which is nothing compared to some in this congregation. I'm looking at you Bob and Jackie Lott, et.al..

Next month after their session meets I'm transferring my letter of membership to First Presbyterian Church of Dallas.

This was a more difficult decision than I would have thought. So much of my heart and soul belong to First church in Waco. Both of my children are now members at First in Dallas and I'm getting the amazing opportunity to watch my grandchildren embark on their faith journeys in Dallas and I feel compelled to be a part of that. So, my companion Susan and I are both embarking on new faith journeys at First Church in Dallas.

I am a fifth generation Presbyterian and this denomination has always been a safe place for my spirit. First Presbyterian of Waco has been home for my faith and spirit for a long time and the people of this congregation have given me hope in times of hopelessness and it has been a place of unmitigated joy and laughter for so many in my life.

I, like many, was not active in any church for a long time during my college years and the years post college. I was way too busy knowing everything all the time, why would I need help with knowing stuff when I knew it all.

Kids changed that rather narrow perspective. Unfortunately, we were not in great places for Presbyterian churches in Paris and Muenster so both were baptized in Methodist Churches. God's good with that, right?

We got back to the Presbyterian Church in Hillsboro. The minister there, a man named Bob Moon, who we called Bob "By Golly" Moon because of his consistent use of that epitaph. He taught me, he reminded me, about grace and that grace was free and often undeserved. Right up my alley, I was hooked. The kids got involved, Marty was in the choir and I taught Sunday School. We were home.

Then came Waco where we met the right reverend Jimmie Johnson and so many of the amazing people who are still pillars of this church in Waco. It was a hard transition because we were so attached to the congregation in Hillsboro. But we soon discovered we were home again.

Marty and I both served as Elders with FPC. I served on the diaconate a couple of times. Marty headed the Christian Education committee and we both worked with the youth of the church for a number of years. I taught adult Sunday School for a while with the great Helen Benedict. I think Helen was a bit surprised I could form a cogent sentence about the bible, so was I. I then taught Senior High Sunday School for more years than I will admit. The key to teaching high school Sunday School, donuts.

I have seen my kids sing in children's choirs, I have been a groupie and erstwhile roadie for a group of amazing woman singers, the Common Souls, led by the late great Tabita Green. My children were confirmed in this church, they gave their senior sermons there and learned to love Mo Ranch and one found love at Mo because of this church.

My daughter got married in this church, this church cared for Marty and me during her illness and brought joy and The Lord's Supper to our home and finally I buried my bride of 43 years at this church. This church, the congregation in this church, the amazing people in this church, have been a central part of my life and have made me a better human being.

I have supported people in this church and been supported by this church. I have seen it fall and I continue to see it rise. I saw the new pastor, Leslie King, come to the hospital and feed my wife spaghetti when she couldn't do it herself. I have heard the choir and the organ and heard Victor sing Oh Holy Night and felt the spirit flow through the people as he did it. And I have never been so happy to be a part of a congregation when Leslie and friends brought together disparate voices in our very own sanctuary to remind us of the blessings of love and unity.

I am and will always be this church, just like you are today. I will carry the faith from this congregation the rest of my life. Thank you for letting me be part of this amazing group of people. You have inspired me to greater things because of your love and your faith in God and each other.

You are all, each, and everyone, amazing. Remember a couple of things. You can do the hard things, you are capable of doing the hard things. Life can be crushing but you have the capacity and the support to do those hard things. You will find your path and your way through the hard. It is within us all.

Do love, don't hate and find some kindness to give to others.

I leave you with this...the charge....the words I say everyday: Go out into the world in Peace. Have Courage. Hold on to what is Good. Return no person evil for evil. Strengthen the faint hearted. Support the weak. Honor all people. Always.

Larry Kinard, Deacon

SACRED SUNDAY / OUTREACH OVERFLOW

All Saint's Sunday

On November 2nd, we will celebrate All Saints' Sunday. On this day, we will honor the life and faith of those saints who have gone before us. They are a reminder that holiness is all around us in both ordinary and extraordinary ways.

Lives Celebrated in 2025:

- Jane Abbott-Kirk
- William Bogusch
- John Hawes
- Dee Blinka
- Lou Christian-Armstrong
- Harriet Wacker
- Delores Horne
- Walter Smith



First Pres Columbarium

Advent

The Advent season begins Sunday, November 30th. Please save the date for the following events to make the most of this special season.

- **Hanging of the Greens - Sunday, Nov 23rd, following the 10:30 service**
- **Lessons and Carols - Saturday, Dec 6th, 7pm**
- **Posada - Sunday, Dec 14th, 5:30pm**
- **Soup and Caroling - Saturday, Dec 20th, 3pm**
- **Christmas Eve Services - Wednesday, Dec 24th, 5pm and 7pm**



Posada 2024

Flood Relief Update: Black Mountain Presbyterian Church

When Hurricane Helene struck western North Carolina, Black Mountain Presbyterian Church became a hub for relief—feeding thousands, housing first responders, and distributing supplies—just days after unveiling its mission question: “Has everyone been fed?”

The church has since received over \$2.8 million from 4,558 donors nationwide. Under the leadership of the Rev. Mary Katherine Robinson and the Rev. David Carter Florence, its efforts have grown to include rent, utility, and medical aid, as well as support for local schools and businesses. A Young Adult Service Corps now contributes 150 hours of recovery work each week.



Black Mt. NC

FALLING INTO LEADERSHIP

Name	Years in Church	Age Range	Occupation
Marsha Alvarado	37	66-75	High School Teacher
Donna Black	23	46-55	Accountant
Kathryn Delk	11	46-55	Audit Compliance Spec.
Hunter Harren	24	36-45	Sr. Imaging Systems Tech
Ryan Joyner	13	36-45	Theatre Professor
Roane Lacy	69	76-85	Retired Businessman
Chuck Weaver	36	56-65	Neuroscience Professor
Lenore Wright	24	46-55	Philosophy Professor
Arianna "YaYa" Patterson	2	14-18	Youth (Session)
Esther Lee	5		Anthropology Professor
Melanie Cook	16	56-65	Insurance
Marilyn Harren	40	56-65	Higher Education
Mike McPhee	17	76-85	Retired
Jeremy Mercer	10	36-45	Network Systems Admin.
Drew Risinger	46	56-65	Clinical Asst. Professor
Toni Percivill	34	56-65	Business Owner
Katie Valenzuela	1	26-35	Sr. Marketing Specialist
Scott Wagner	29	46-55	Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Pending (Y)			Youth (Diaconate)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE FOR 2026

- James Karney
- Kris Olson
- Sue Patrick
- Diane Williams
- Charlie Stern

By action of the congregation on October 19, we welcome our newest Elders, Deacons, and members of the Nominating Committee!

Sanctuary Guild & Sanctuary Flower Committee

We would like to thank our Sanctuary Flower Committee, made up of Brenda Stephens, Susan Somerville, and Kathy Jones. They reach out to individuals all year to ensure the sanctuary has meaningful flowers each week.

Also, our Sanctuary Guild, made up of many members ensure those flowers get delivered!

FPC Office Volunteers

Our office volunteers provide tremendous support to our staff. Their loving attention to the building, Sunday morning preparations and helping to sort and sift for a pristinely clean building change what is possible for our congregation. We know you will join us in thanking:

Monday – Open
Tuesday – Joyce Gray & Brenda Fox
Wednesday – Paige Guzman
Thursday – Open
Friday – Elouise Frazier & Rock McNair

NEURODIVERSITY & WORSHIP

First Pres 2025-2026 Neurodiversity Team for the Renewed Grace grant

Lauren Aimone (Team Lead), Leslie King, Malorie Montoya, Devan Stahl

At large members of the Team

Peggy Graham, Helen Harris, Taylor Holleyman, Austin Ingalls, Anita Karney, Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley, Peighton Pulley, Becky Ward

Neurodiversity Affirming Practice



Now that First Pres is a member of the 1st cohort of Grace Presbytery to study Neurodiversity and Worship, our team will begin its work.

Please note the arrival of fidget toys in the narthex. These toys are for children of all ages as we learn more about ourselves and each other in worship.

We will be keeping you apprised of our meetings and opportunities to think together about the subject of differences, uniqueness, and neurodiversity.

Additionally, we have received a generous gift of books on the subject. These books can be checked out of the adult or children's library here at the church:

Children's Books

Wonderfully Wired Brains: An Introduction to the World of Neurodiversity by Louise Gooding

Masterpiece by Alexandra Hoffman

Next Level: A Hymn in Gratitude for Neurodiversity by Samara Cole Doyon

Adult Resources

Blessed Minds: Breaking the Silence on Neurodiversity by Sarah Griffith Lund

Blessed Youth: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness with Children and Teens by Sarah Griffith Lund

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!

UNDERSTANDING STEWARDSHIP STEPS

Step 1

The Session Committees meet to request budget amounts. The Church Treasurer develops the budget, and it is submitted to the Session for a vote to approve a preliminary budget.

Step 2

The Stewardship Committee completes its summer work by developing a theme and composing an invitation for those who attend First Presbyterian Church of Waco.

Step 3

The stewardship mailing arrives at members' homes. Individuals think & pray carefully about the time, talents, and treasures they hope to give, sharing the wing to strengthen the church.



Step 4

Individuals decide to mail in their stewardship card, set up their pledge online through Realm, or process with their stewardship card on Stewardship Sunday, November 16. A final budget is presented at the joint Session and Diaconate meeting in December, with the hopes of being approved.