The November Tower

Priestly Service



VOLUME 72, ISSUE 11

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WACO

Letter from a Pastor

The Priesthood of All Believers

As we move through the end of October and into the month of November, we may feel particular gratitude for the Christian tradition that we are part of. The final week of October is Reformation Sunday. We will remember some of the events and persons that gave rise to what has become Presbyterianism. Reformation Sunday is quickly followed by All Saints on November 1st. On this day we will remember the lives of those faithful saints that have gone before us.

This is a natural time to pause and consider some of what we most appreciate about our religious heritage and journey. We think about the traditions, histories, and the special people who have intersected with our lives and shaped the community we are today.

One of the principles articulated and embraced by Protestant traditions is the priesthood of all believers. The basic idea is that, while we may ordain individuals to special service in the church – e.g., minister, elders, and deacons – no individual has special access to God by virtue of their office. Nor is any one individual or group responsible for the ministry of the church. Rather, the priesthood of all believers recognizes the priestly service that all are called to as part of our corporate identity and mission.

Similarly, when we think about saints in our tradition, we think not only of highly regarded individuals with well-known stories of faith, but also of the simple (yet no less profound!) faithfulness that each of us strive for daily. We celebrate all the ways, known and unknown, that God enables each life to embody sainthood.

In this light, I am especially grateful during this season for the many lay-led ministries that are part of the life of First Presbyterian Church. It is dangerous to begin naming names because there are far too many faithful servants to mention. Nevertheless, alongside the devoted service of our elders and deacons, I am mindful of the young adults Bible study recently begun and led by Kyle Plaskett; the diligent work of Presbyterian Women; Helen Kovac's generous presence among members of our community at St. Catherine Center; the volunteers who assist in the church office each week; Charlotte Henderson's leadership of Meals on Wheels; and the many of you who faithfully serve alongside her. These are only a few examples among many.

Every congregation is shaped by countless acts of faithfulness that often go unnoticed. A phone call to a friend, a meal delivered to a neighbor, a prayer offered for someone in need, a committee meeting attended, a lesson taught, a child encouraged, a visitor welcomed. These ordinary acts become the means through which God sustains and strengthens the church.

As November turns our attention toward gratitude, I am thankful for all the saints of First Presbyterian Church; for the ministries you undertake, the gifts you share, and the ways you embody Christ's love in our community. May God continue to strengthen us for the work of ministry and help us recognize the priestly service of all God's saints.

Most gratefully, Taylor

November Calendar

Sunday, November 1 – *Leslie King Preaching*
All Saint's Sunday
8:30 a.m. Early Service, Communion
9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30 a.m. Morning Worship, Communion

Wednesday, November 4
5:30 p.m. Grief, Loss, and Planning Conversation

Friday, November 6 – November 8
Church Retreat - Mo Ranch

Sunday, November 8 – *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, Communion
5:30 p.m. Our Hybrid House - Zoom

Monday, November 9
1:00 p.m. Presbyterian Women - Hybrid
5:30 p.m. Outreach Meeting - Zoom

Tuesday, November 10
6:00 p.m. Faith on Tap - Woodway Slowrise

Wednesday, November 11
5:30 p.m. Grief, Loss, & Planning Conversation

Thursday, November 12
9:00 a.m. Personnel Committee Meeting
12:00 p.m. Finance Committee Meeting

Friday, November 13
6:00 p.m. Reel Spirituality - Pinewood

Sunday, November 15 – *Leslie King Preaching*
Children's Sunday, Stewardship Sunday, & Sudderth Sunday
8:30 a.m. Early Service, Communion
9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

Monday, November 16
5:30 p.m. Session Meeting - Hybrid

Tuesday, November 17
5:30 p.m. Christian Formation & YAB - Zoom

Friday, November 20
7:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast - Fellowship Hall

Sunday, November 22 – *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
11:30 a.m. Hanging of the Greens

Monday, November 23
2:00 p.m. Worship Committee Meeting - Zoom
7:00 p.m. Power of the Pen - Zoom

Wednesday, November 25
Office Holiday starting at 12:00 p.m.

Thursday, November 26 & 27
Office Holiday

Sunday, November 29 – *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

Weekly Events

Bell Choir Practice Every Wedneday at 6:00 p.m.
Choir Practice Every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.
Youth Every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Young Adult Gathering Every Sunday at 7:00 p.m.

Celebration of Life & Faith of David Young
02/06/1940 - 10/1/2026



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 Stottlemyre **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

Congregational Life



GroupMe

Church Retreat

We are looking forward to the Church retreat this month. 56 attendees will make the pilgrimage to Mo-Ranch, November 6-8. They will enjoy worship, recreation, and time together in the Hill Country. We are excited to welcome Austin Dickson, CEO of the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country, as our guest speaker on Saturday morning. If you are attending, be sure to join the retreat GroupMe, and look out for an information booklet coming soon.

Advent Events

Sunday, November 22nd
Hanging of the Greens - Join us after the 10:30 a.m. service to decorate the building for the Advent season.

Saturday, December 5th
Lessons & Carols - At 9:00 a.m. we'll enjoy music and lessons from the Christmas story, featuring our children's and adult music teams.

Friday, December 11th
Young Adult Christmas Party - Hosted by Taylor, come for light refreshments, white elephant gift exchange, and general merriment from 6-8 p.m.

Sunday, December 13th
Posada - At 5:30 p.m. join us for dinner in Fellowship Hall, then an interactive evening as we follow the journey of the holy family on the night of Jesus' birth.

Saturday, December 19th
Soup & Caroling - Join a team to sing carols for our homebound members, followed by soup together in Fellowship Hall.









Outreach

Christmas Offering

This year we will collect our Christmas offering for Isaiah 117 House. Isaiah 117 is a national organization with a Waco location. They offer spaces where children removed from their homes due to safety concerns can wait while child welfare staff can do the necessary paperwork and identify a good placement. They provide houses that are safe with friendly and loving volunteers who provide clean clothes, smiles, toys, and snuggly blankets. The mission of Isaiah 117 House is to reduce trauma for children awaiting placement, lighten the load for child welfare services, and ease the transition for foster families. Our goal is $5,000.

Isaiah 117
changing the way foster care begins

Scan the QR code to learn more.



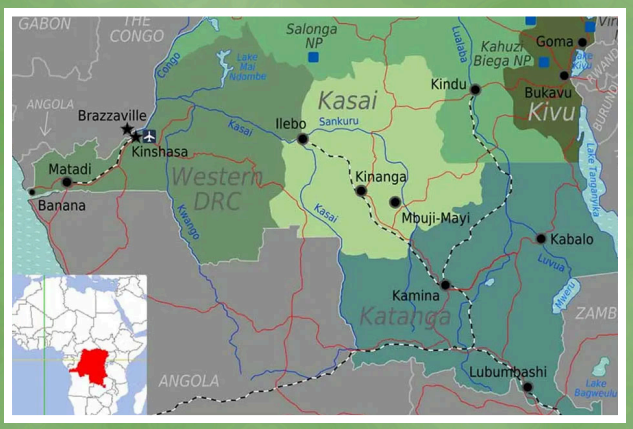


Food Distribution

Six of us from First Pres joined Calvary Baptist Church for their monthly food distribution on Monday, October 12th. Calvary is a food distribution site for the Central Texas Food Bank. On the second Monday of each month, hundreds of families line up to receive free groceries distributed from Calvary's parking lot. It was a privilege to serve with a fellow congregation.

Sudderth Fund Update

The third Sunday of each month is Sudderth Sunday at FPC. The funds raised through Sudderth Sunday giving go to support the Christian Medical Institute of Kasai (IMCK). Founded by Presbyterian missionaries in 1954, IMCK provides medical and educational services in the Kasai province of the Congo. IMCK is administered by board members representing Congo Presbyterian Church, Congo Mennonite Church, the PCUSA, and Congo DRC government staff. Our support for IMCK honors the ongoing Presbyterian missionary work in the region and the life of Amelia Sudderth, who was born in Luebo, Belgian Congo, in 1938 to Presbyterian medical missionaries.
Current total raised as of October: $2,537!



Bridge Building

The Outreach Committee has chosen "Bridge Building" as our 2027 Outreach Theme. People of diverse needs often struggle to access vital resources. We look forward to supporting organizations that "bridge" the gap of accessibility for the neighbors they serve. We are currently receiving applications from potential Outreach Partners. Those applications will be assessed, and 2027 partners will be chosen in early December.

Caregiving, Holidays, and Dolly's Gift

The month of October brings with it awareness of change. Even in the weeks before the eventual drops in temperature and rainy weather, we begin to see the falling leaves and feel (or imagine) a crispness in the air. Schools and universities celebrate the homecoming of graduates. We begin our planning for Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. We take stock of the losses and wonder how to celebrate when so much feels different.

There is an opportunity this time each year to consider our neighbors whose holidays are different this year. Caregiving in these months includes care for those who have an empty chair at the holiday table. Let us acknowledge in our planning, cards, gifts, and celebrations for those grieving as well. Halloween is an honoring of those who died this year and a recognition that they continue to live in our memories, our traditions, and our hearts. Thanksgiving is not just a great meal and family gathering, as we remember those who live in our memories, tell family stories, and perhaps each share a special memory of the person(s) present now in our memories. Let us remember the fundamental importance of the work of caregivers for whom every day is both opportunity and challenge: a card to someone you know who is a caregiver to brighten the entire holiday; a phone call to acknowledge that caregiving brings strength and validation; and, when we can, sending a pie, other dessert, or flowers to brighten the holiday experience.

I was struck by the news coverage this year of Dolly Parton's death and learning that in the weeks before her death, she was actively caring for her husband through his illness. For Dolly, being present with him as a caregiver was a gift to each of them at the end of their lives. Caregiving is both hard work and meaningful connection.

In these days of approaching holidays, let us communicate caring and support for the caregivers in our congregation. For those who are caregivers, may you know the gratitude and appreciation of your church family, and may you feel the joy in caregiving and being cared for.

- Helen Harris

Neurodiversity Event

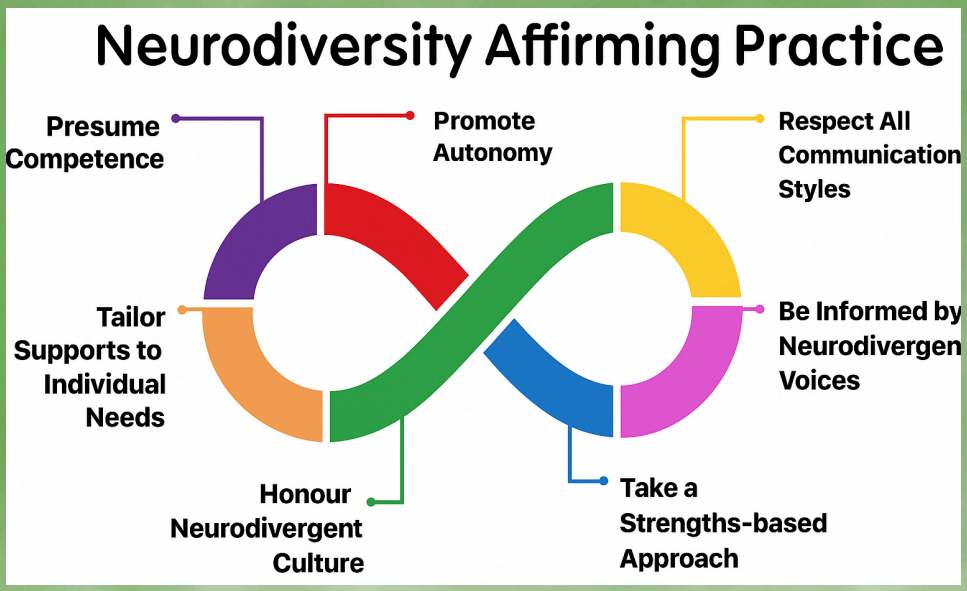
We are grateful for the early adoption cohort of Grace Presbytery's Renewed Grace Program that completed a year of work in August. Encouraged by their efforts and recommendations, we continue to seek to make worship a more accessible experience for all people.

These efforts include:

- **Providing and maintaining a space in the Narthex for fidget items, worship bags, and items geared towards improving accessibility.**
- **The change of the language in the bulletin for passing of the peace of Christ was approved by the Session, and has been updated (see the inside cover page)**
- **We are currently working on a version of the bulletin to include visual cues.**

Another part of these efforts will be to host a community-wide annual educational event on matters of neurodiversity and worship. We are currently planning toward our first event, which will take place in January of 2027.

Thank you for your patience, advocacy, and prayers as we work together to welcome all people as children of God. Be on the lookout for more information about the January event coming soon!



Christian Formation

Grief and Loss Series

An opportunity to gather with Leslie King, Taylor Holleyman, and Dr. Helen Harris for a three week series on managing grief, loss, and memorial planning. We hope you can be part of these conversations. Gatherings will take place Wednesday evenings, October 28th, November 4th, and November 11th, from 5:30 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. in Chapel Parlor. Scan the QR code to register to attend or sign up on Realm.

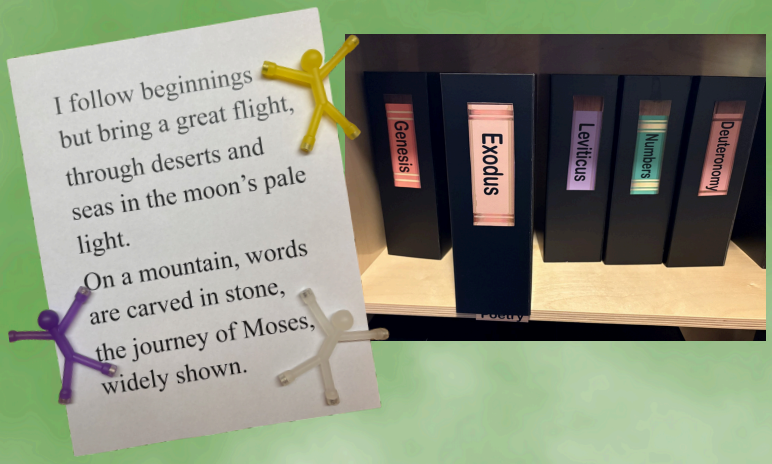
Advent Readings



Each November, Austin Presbyterian Seminary publishes an Advent Devotional. We look forward to this year's forthcoming devotional and will invite congregants to join us in the discipline of reading along together during the season of Advent. Digital copies will be published in November and made available. If you are interested in a physical copy, let the church office know.

Books of the Bible Challenges

Have you had a chance to engage in "Finding Our Place in the Story" challenges, with the books of the Bible located on the shelves in the Narthex hallway? Throughout the semester, be on the lookout for different challenge activities, instructions for how to play, surprises, and Biblical fun for all ages!





Have you found the new First Pres stickers?

Christian Formation

Youth Wednesday Nights

Youth continue to gather each week from 6-8p.m. in the Youth Suite, with guest speakers and programming the first hour, then pizza and studies the second. In October, the discussion theme was "Belonging to a Community." They had the opportunity to hear from the Outreach Committee and learn how we partner with local organizations for our outreach initiatives.

Be on the lookout for the November theme!





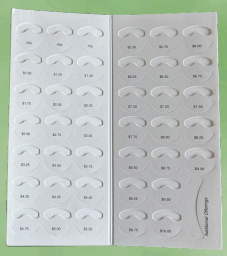


Save the Date

The annual Youth Christmas Party will be held on Wednesday, December 2nd. The annual white elephant gift exchange and dinner will be a part of the evening. Location and time TBA soon!

Coin for Christmas Offering

Children, youth, and anyone who would like to join us: we will be collecting coins as part of the contribution to the Christmas offering, which will be going to the Isaiah 117 House. Coin holders are available in the Narthex.



Children's Sunday 2026: "The Fruit of the Vine"

We will celebrate the leadership of our children (3 years - 5th grade) on Sunday, November 15th during the 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. services. Special music, prayer, and hands-on interactive experiences will be a part of the services. We are looking forward to the special morning!



Children and Youth Christian Formation Classes

Biblical literacy continues for children and youth throughout November. They will continue exploring historical books: 1st & 2nd Kings and 1st & 2nd Chronicles. Hands-on activities, meaningful discussions, and music for children will continue as part of the experience each Sunday.

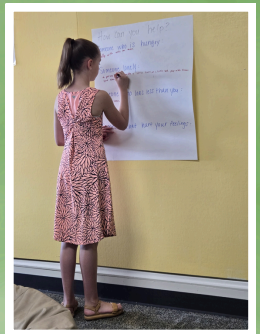
All children arrive at C306 at 9:15 a.m. After music, teachers will take them to their classrooms for the lesson. PreK/K's classroom is S201 and 1st-3rd's is C307.





All preteens and youth arrive at C303 (Youth Suite) at 9:15 a.m. to welcome and hang out. They will split into the 2 groups when it is time for the lesson.





Presbyterian Women

FPC Pendant

Wondering what special gift you can give your favorite Presbyterian for Christmas or any other special occasion? Presbyterian Women here at FPC have a unique and meaningful idea for you! A pendant that was designed for FPC's 150th anniversary is available again! It is a replica of the stained glass cross and crown that is above the chancel and has become a logo for our congregation. It is being cast by jeweler/designer Jim Morris in two sizes 34mm tall ($95) and 38mm tall ($105) and can be ordered to be worn as a necklace or as a pocket piece to be carried in a pocket. PW will be taking orders October 23-November 10, with distribution by December 15. Payment can be made through Realm, Venmo, check (payable to FPC), or cash. A preview of the pendant will be on display in the Narthex.



Questions? Contact Susan Somerville or Sherry Cragen, Co-Moderators, Presbyterian Women

New Membership

Chris Wright



Chris grew up in Michigan, spending his summers out on the lakes, before heading south to Nashville to pursue a career in music. It was in Nashville where he met his wife, Devan Stahl. He ended up taking a detour and picked up a mechanical engineering degree from Tennessee Tech.

He is still strumming, enjoys playing golf, and coaching youth soccer. You can twist his arm into watching football in the fall and college basketball in the winter. A trip to the beach is always welcome. But if he could be anywhere, it would be at home with Devan and their two sons, Theo and Miles.

Jay Rogers

Jay is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and truck driver. He was born in Waco and raised in Mexia, Texas.



Clinical Social Worker

Curious to learn more about the work of our Clinical Social Worker, Kirk Evetts? See below for the work he does within our congregation.

1. **What can congregants expect from meeting with Kirk? What services and types of assistance can he offer?**
   a. **Kirk is a listening ear and a non-judgmental presence who will validate feelings/concerns. He can help congregants who are managing difficult life transitions or are experiencing distress over responsibilities such as academic or work demands, caregiving for a loved one, family dynamics, or dealing with financial/resource strain. Kirk has experience in case management and can provide referrals to community resources.**

2. **What does Kirk enjoy about his work, and what kind of experience is he looking to gain from his internship?**
   a. **Kirk hopes to gain clinical experience through his internship at the church by building relationships with congregants. Kirk currently works with congregants who are homebound and helps relieve the loneliness/isolation that many of them can experience. Kirk also attends the Wednesday night youth group bi-weekly and hopes to continue developing his clinical skills for work in group settings. Kirk enjoys being a part of the core team for Bridges to Belonging and working with church staff and congregants to promote belonging, inclusion, and accessibility.**

3. **How does having a Clinical Social Work Intern benefit our church community?**
   a. **A clinical social work intern brings a unique perspective to the life of the church that can help strengthen the church's mission and sense of community. Kirk wants to help reduce the stigma of asking for help by being a resource in addition to the full-time staff and using his clinical practice skills to help congregants through their challenges and joys.**

For questions or to contact Kirk: kevetts@firstpreswaco.org

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

FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
Church of Waco

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!

Stewardship Dedication Sunday

November is the month when we will celebrate Stewardship Dedication Sunday on November 15 at both the 8:30 and 10:30 worship services. This will be in conjunction with Children's Sunday, so it should be a day of fun and celebration for a wide variety of ages.

Join in the opportunity for you to witness and process with your stewardship card at 8:30 and 10:30 worship services. Some have already mailed in their stewardship cards or completed it online. We welcome your stewardship cards in any way that works best for you!

On Monday, December 14, the Session will review the 2027 budget in light of the pledged gifts.

First Pres always admires your generosity and all the gifts you bring!

