

Equipping for the Journey



VOLUME 71, ISSUE 10

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WACO



Letter from a Pastor

The Eyes Have It

For so many people, there is nothing like eye contact. It can be meaningful, intense, and overwhelming. We can engage in eye contact often or rarely. But when we are with trusted people, there is nothing like eye contact to connect us. You've heard how intentional eye contact releases oxytocin and allows us to bond more soundly with one another. The military understands this and encourages eye contact between military members, understanding it to be a strong indicator of confidence, honesty, accountability, and respect. When we are not ready to communicate, matters of shyness or shame affect eye contact. When we are sleep-deprived or hungry, eye contact can take a back seat. Eye contact is a high-ranking gift from one creature to another.

The eyes have it in church, too. And this is not just about the contact that we make with each other, but what we are willing to perceive is going on in the world. We do not want to fail to perceive, and so the experiences of worship are meant to take us through introspection and observation of other human beings so that we might perceive God well.

As I write this article on the 9th of September 2026, I cannot help but have on my mind, the events of September 11, 2001. I have always been particularly drawn to the incidents of Flight 93 and the revolt of the passengers. Through cell phone calls, they had learned that the Twin Towers had already been struck, and the passengers made the decision, "let's roll", at least in part because, I imagine, they had made eye contact with each other and were able to mobilize their energy.

Hijackings like 9/11 are an extreme and important part of our national history. Even so, hijackings of lesser degrees can happen each day of our lives. We can be hijacked away from hope or best practices. We can be hijacked by a world that pulls our eyes to screens rather than to the eyes of others. The church has many irreplaceable roles, but one of them is in its cultivation of an intimacy that allows for eye contact....deep bonding and appropriate mobilization to strengthen the world around us in God's name.

Faithfully,
Leslie King

October Calendar

Friday, October 2

6:00 p.m. Reel Spirituality – Pinewood
Movie: "Good Morning Vietnam"

Sunday, October 4 – *Leslie King Preaching*

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

8:30 a.m. Early Service, Communion
9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30 a.m. Morning Worship, Communion
11:30 a.m. Stewardship Luncheon– Fellowship Hall

Monday, October 5

5:30 p.m. Diaconate Meeting – Hybrid

Tuesday, October 6

5:30 p.m. Congregational Life Meeting

Sunday, October 11 – *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. Young Adults Luncheon
5:00 p.m. Our Hybrid House – Zoom

Monday, October 12

1:00 p.m. Presbyterian Women – Hybrid
5:30 p.m. Food Distribution with Calvary

Tuesday, October 13

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

Celebration of Life & Faith

of Cole Risinger

09/26/1997 – 9/1/2026



Thursday, October 15

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

Friday, October 16

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

Sunday, October 18 – *Sudderth Sunday, 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, October 19

5:30 p.m. Session Meeting – Hybrid

Sunday, October 25 – *Leslie King Preaching*

REFORMATION SUNDAY

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. Annual Congregational Meeting – Hybrid

Monday, October 26

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

Tuesday, October 27

5:30 p.m. Christian Formation & YAB – Zoom

Wednesday, October 28

12:00 p.m. Facilities Committee Meeting

Weekly Events

Bell Choir Practice Every Wednesday 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.

Grief, Loss, and Planning Conversations: October 21st, 28th, and November 4th

Birthdays and Anniversaries

1 Diane Tisdale 2 Ben Hicks, Kate Goodman 3 Avery Kerley 5 Abby Jacobson, John & Michelle Plaskett 6 George & Pam Holmes 8 David George 9 Madison Wagner 10 Jerry Barrett, Sharon Stern 11 Jacob Cox 12 Gabrielle Wagner 15 Noel Lacy, Brenda Fox 16 B.G. Coulter 18 Jay Black 19 Katherine Ehlers 20 Jason Aimone 21 Julianne Boss Hopkins, Jim & Carolyn Maxwell 22 Cathy Walker, Ronnie Moore 23 Dick Kannwischer, Hailey Tucker, Scott DuPuy, Paul Ehlers 24 Jeanne Barrett 26 Claire Grant 29 Katie King, Kenneth Bauer, Christine Miller, Sheryle Carini, Leah Davitashvilli, Kevin & Ashley Bartley



Congregational Life

DuPuy Pool Party

We had a great time closing out the summer with a Pool Party at the DuPuy's. Many thanks to LaRaine and Carr for hosting us. Guests of all ages enjoyed diving in!



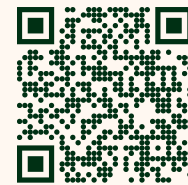
Ice Cream Social and The Golden Scoop

Thank you to everyone who gathered on Sunday, September 13th for our annual Ice Cream Social! We are especially grateful to everyone who provided ice cream and to the members of Our Hybrid House who joined us via Zoom. Congratulations to Hunter Harren for his "Golden Scoop" winning ice cream flavor: Cinnamon Apple Pie!

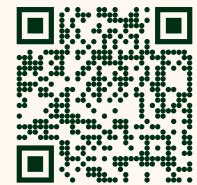


GroupMe and First Pres

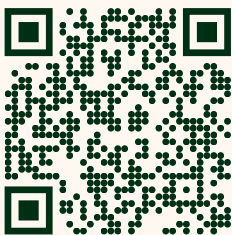
GroupMe is a messaging app that we use to manage some of our communications. There is a designated GroupMe for our Church Retreat attendees and, recently created, a GroupMe for our Young Adults. We would love for you to download the app and join either group to stay up-to-date and connected.



Church Retreat



Young Adults



Young Adults Lunch

Calling all young adults! Join Taylor for lunch in the fellowship hall following the 10:30 service on October 11th. Use the QR code to place your order with Jason's Deli. We look forward to enjoying time together and learning how we can help build community for our young Adults.

Pig Roast Update

Due to the persistence of dry weather, we will need to postpone the Pig Roast that was originally planned for October 10th. We will look ahead for a suitable date and better weather conditions in the Spring. Many thanks to Kris and Charlie Olson for their continued hospitality with this event.



Outreach

August Compassion Collection

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our August collection for Compassion Waco. Compassion is one of our outreach partners who provides support and services for families facing housing insecurity. Brenda and John Stephens delivered a car-full of items that Compassion was very grateful to receive.



October Food Distribution

On Monday, October 12, from 5:30-7:30, the Outreach Committee invites you to join us for food distribution with Calvary Baptist Church. Calvary distributes food, provided by a local food bank, to families in need on the second Monday of every month. They have served between 200-300 families in recent months. We look forward to serving the community and supporting their efforts in October. Scan the QR code to sign up.



Mission Waco Service Saturday

On Saturday, September 26th, we spent the morning volunteering with Mission Waco. Our assignment kept us in the neighborhood repainting the chapel room at My Brother's Keeper. Be on the lookout for pictures of our work!



Partnership Applications 2027 Update

The Outreach Committee is preparing to receive applications for 2027 Outreach partners. We support our partners throughout the year with financial contributions and other forms of service. Be on the lookout in November for an announcement of our 2027 outreach theme.



Caregiving, Caretaking, Caring

Caregiving in Loss and Grief: After the Funeral and Life Goes On...But Nothing is the Same

A chaplain I respected a great deal told me once that for most of us, even when we are prepared and the death of a loved one is expected, death always comes as a shock. In so many ways, it can feel unreal. We can wonder how the rest of the world continues as though nothing happened when so much of our world has changed.

There is nothing about grief that is quick or easy. Grief is our response to loss, and loss is hard. It means change, often really painful change and almost always irrevocable change. We discover that with the passage of time two very different things happen: We discover that after the funeral, when we resume our responsibilities and routines, the rest of the world moves on. And then something touches that point of pain in us, and we are in the middle of our grief again. The first year after a loss, birthdays and anniversaries and holidays can be particularly painful. We begin to prepare for the next one, learning what works for us, what lets us remember without falling apart. We figure out how to get through the hard days, and even more important, how to celebrate the positive memories without succumbing to the desperation of forever. When possible, we establish our ways of comfort and acknowledge that it is ok to be different. Some of us visit the gravesite on special occasions. Others do activities we used to share with them, or look at old photos, or write a poem or song. We discover, over time, that part of them has survived in us, and we honor that.

One question for us at First Pres is really “How do we support our church family members when they are walking the path of loss and grief?” When are our questions or condolences helpful and when do they wound? I remember calling my friend whose son had died several years earlier and inviting her to lunch on his birthday week. When we got our food, I said that I had been thinking about John. My friend began to weep, and I felt awful and apologized for hurting her. Through her tears, she admonished me: “Oh Helen, I’ve been thinking about him all day, and the worst part of this for me is that no one ever mentions his name. I want to remember him, even when it hurts.” We agreed together to honor the times when it is too painful to speak of him and those when it is painful not to.

The truth is that for a period of time, every birthday and holiday and special occasion can feel like one loss after another. The first Easter without him; the first birthday without her; the first Christmas without them. There are no rules for managing those times except to talk together about what helps and what does not. That is how we honor each other’s pain. For some, that will mean not bringing it up. For others, it will mean looking at photo albums and football trophies together as we share favorite foods or songs or stories, because grief is real, and individual, and private, and relational....and so is caregiving.

Next month, let’s take a look at the gift and challenge of caregiving in loss...I might call it “Dolly’s gift.”

- Helen Harris



Bridges to Belonging with Baylor

The Bridges to Belonging project is equipping churches to pursue and embrace young people (aged 13-25) with disabilities, including mental health challenges and chronic illnesses, and their families in new ways that lead to spiritual growth, holistic well-being, belonging, and mutual thriving through accessible Christian practices. Young people with disabilities can experience unique barriers to participation and flourishing in the local church. We are learning together how to engage creatively with young people with disabilities, reflect theologically on disability and ministry, and adapt and apply practices in accessible, enriching, and spiritually formative ways.

This exciting project is a collaboration among George W. Truett Seminary, the Baylor Center for Disability and Flourishing, and the Baylor Center for Church and Community Impact. We are funded through the Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Thriving Congregations Initiative.

(<https://disability.research.baylor.edu/bridgestobelonging/clc>)

The Bridges to Belonging project will run until December 2027. The team is currently in phase 1 of the program, "Stories of Belonging." During this phase, each of the core team members will be listening to stories from members of the congregation. We will be gathering information through storytelling and listening. The team is especially interested in hearing stories from those aged 13-25 years.

Our church is part of a learning pod with three other local churches: Mighty Wind, Mosaic, and St. John UCC. During the project, each church will host a pod gathering where we will support and learn from one another. We will be hosting the first pod gathering here at First Pres on Tuesday, October 20.

Core team members include Malorie Montoya, Taylor Holleyman, Kirk Evetts, Helen Harris, and Jamie Delk.



Kirk, Jamie, and Malorie

The team at Baylor for the first of three in-person gatherings, along with the ten congregations participating in the B2B project.



Jamie, Malorie, and Taylor

Save the Date

In January 2027, we will be hosting an educational congregation and community event for worship and neurodiversity.

Be on the lookout for more information!



Christian Formation



October Sermon Series *Pacing for the Journey, A People's Story*

October 4: Flattening Out and Rising Up, *Leslie King*
October 11: Down By the Riverside, *Leslie King*
October 18: Manna-facturing Rest, *Taylor Holleyman*
October 25: Writing on Stone, *Leslie King*
November 1st : The Waiting Game, *Leslie King*

Conversations on Grief, Loss and Memorial Planning

An opportunity to gather with Leslie and Taylor over 3 weeks, on Wednesday evenings, October 21st, 28th, and November 4th, from 5:30 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. Text Leslie at (254) 214-5999 if you are interested in this opportunity. A similar opportunity will be coming up for youth TBA!

Books of the Bible Challenges

Join us for some fun, "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, "magnetic" connections, and Biblical fun for all ages!



Christian Formation

Youth Wednesday Nights

Each Wednesday, youth will gather from 6-8p.m. in the Youth Suite, with guest speakers/programming the first hour, then pizza and studies the second. Be on the lookout for the October discussion theme! October 21st we will walk over to Cha Community for a drink treat paid for by the church, then head back to the Youth Suite by 7.



Children and Youth Christian Formation Classes

Children and youth will continue biblical literacy throughout the month of October. They will be exploring the history books, starting with Joshua and Judges. 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 to 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.

Christian Formation
Questions?

Contact
Malorie Montoya

dcf@firstpreswaco.org
(254) 239-6442

Children's Sunday

Children's Sunday 2026 will be Sunday, November 15th. Children (3 years - 5th grade) will have the opportunity to lead parts of the 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services. It will be a meaningful morning with the theme, "The Fruit of the Vine," along with stewardship dedication during the services. Children will practice special music during Christian Formation from 9:25 - 9:45 a.m. each Sunday with our Children's Music Directors, John Jovich and Brian Rainosek.

Stewardship

Stewardship season is here! The Stewardship Committee has been meeting, and here is what can be expected in the coming months.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

The first full week of October, you should receive your 2027 stewardship letter and stewardship card in the mail. This budget will explain the church's vision for finance and ministry in 2027.

KICK – OFF

October: In addition to the letter, we hope that you can join us at our stewardship luncheon. This will be an opportunity to discuss financial needs for ministry. This will take place immediately following the 10:30 a.m. worship service on October 4, 2026, in Fellowship Hall. Lunch will be potluck style with the main dish provided. Look for more details soon.

DECISIONS AND DEDICATIONS

November: We will celebrate Stewardship Dedication Sunday, November 15. Join in the opportunity for you to witness and process with your stewardship card at 8:30 and 10:30 worship services.

SEASON OF GIFTS

December 14th: 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!

The 3rd Sunday of January 2027, we will celebrate the budget along with the Ordination and Installation of new officers.

Pathways to Membership

The membership process at First Pres is tailored to the needs and experiences of each individual and family. Apart from appropriate customization, these are typical steps that might be taken on the pathway to membership:

- Connecting with us in worship, formation classes, or congregational events
- Attending a “This is First Pres” evening
- Meeting with a member of the pastoral staff to share your interest and ask questions
- Filling out a new member form
- Attending a Session meeting, responding to membership questions, and receiving the commitment of our Ruling Elders to care for and support you
- Being welcomed as a new member on a Sunday morning and presented with a loaf of bread
- A bio and headshot is shared in the Tower for other members to begin to know you better



Keep in Mind

We honor all baptisms and do not re-baptize new members coming to us from other traditions. We practice an open table at communion. Membership is not a requirement to take the sacrament with us.

Practically, it means you can be called to serve as an officer of the Church (deacon or elder), and you can submit requests for use of our facilities. Personally, it means that you make a commitment to participate in and support the ministry of First Pres. Likewise, that First Presbyterian has made a commitment to know you, support you, and pray for you on your journey of faith.

What membership means

New Member



Harper Lee Crisp, 27, grew up in Bowie, Texas. She earned her Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and her Master of Social Work from Baylor University, where her studies focused on working with communities and organizations. For the past three years, Harper has been attending First Presbyterian Church of Waco and has especially enjoyed the friendships and community she has found at FPC.

Although she did not grow up in the Presbyterian tradition, Harper is honored to have been nominated to serve on the Diaconate and is excited about the opportunity to serve FPC in a new way. Through her social work education and experiences, she has developed an interest in how people and communities care for and support one another. She hopes to bring that perspective to the Diaconate and looks forward to learning alongside other members and serving the congregation.

The Tower
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Waco, TX 76701
(254) 752-1665
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!

All Saints' Sunday

Please join us on November 1st for All Saints' Sunday at 8:30 and 10:30 services. We will light candles of remembrance and have heirloom mums to share to the Columbarium in the Courtyard.



This year's saints include:

Joe Sudderth, Leonard Slamcik, Joyce McCall, Jimmie Jo Grogan, Bill Falco, John Davis, Cynthia Perry, and Cole Risinger

