



The September Tower

Keeping up the Good Work

VOLUME 70, ISSUE 9



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WACO

Letter from a Pastor

A Church Worth Working For

As Presbyterians, we belong to a tradition that has a somewhat complicated relationship with good works. To be fair, we can place some of the blame on Paul. Paul encouraged Jews and gentiles to unite as one body in Christ. This required him to honor the Jewish traditions of Jesus while also making space for non-Jewish arrivals into early Christianity. In managing these dynamics, Paul frequently juxtaposed faith with works of the law. Galatians 2:16 exemplifies the pattern: "we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ..."

While Paul wanted to ensure a full reliance on Jesus for justification, his language about works must be understood within the context of the religious practices of ancient Judaism – practices that were barriers to entry for gentiles. The same Paul who warned against trusting in works of the law also urged Christians to "never grow weary in doing what is right" and to "work for the good of all" whenever the opportunity arises (Gal 6:9–10).

Centuries later, debates about faith and works became central to the Protestant Reformation. Among their complaints against late medieval Catholicism, reformers accused the church of prescribing acts of faith as necessary for salvation and thereby undermining Paul's message. Sola fide – salvation by faith alone and not by good works or religious deeds – became a slogan of Protestantism.

At the same time, Presbyterians have been associated with sociologist Max Weber's notion of the "Protestant Work Ethic." Weber identified certain strains of Protestantism with a tradition of diligence, discipline, and faithful labor. Apparently, we have spent centuries both defending ourselves against works and being known for them.

I wager that the balance between these understandings of work is not overly complicated though. In my experience, most of you manage it faithfully and intuitively, without much complication.

The grace of Christ you have received and the love of God you have experienced are extended as gifts to others. This shows up in your work at home, professionally, at church, in the community, and in every space where your actions are opportunities to practice love and justice.

Our disposition towards the world and others is so colored by the language and commitments of our faith that the boundaries between religious duties and the work of everyday life become porous. Interestingly, First Pres has a staff comprised almost entirely of church members. This is not the case in many congregations, but it is one more testament to the closeness of our work and faith.

In my role, I get to see the innumerable ways you each work to build our community, carry out our ministry, and extend our mission. It's a lot of good work! And maybe your good work is infectious... At least, it seems that you are a church worth working for.

**Taylor Holleyman
Director of Congregational Life**

September Calendar

Friday, September 4

6:00 p.m. Reel Spirituality – Pinewood

Sunday, September 6

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

Monday, September 7

Office Holiday

Tuesday, September 8

5:30 p.m. Diaconate Meeting – Hybrid

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

Thursday, September 10

9:00 a.m. Personnel Committee Meeting – Zoom

Sunday, September 13

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. Ice Cream Social – Fellowship Hall

5:00 p.m. Our Hybrid House – Zoom (joining Ice Cream Social at 5:30 for trivia)

Monday, September 14

1:00 p.m. – Presbyterian Women – Hybrid

5:30 p.m. – Outreach Meeting – Zoom

Thursday, September 17

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

Bell Choir Practice Every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m.

Choir Practice Every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.

Youth Every Wednesday 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Friday, September 18

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

Sunday, September 20

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, September 21

5:30 p.m. Session Meeting – Hybrid

Tuesday, September 22

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

Wednesday, September 23

12:00 p.m. Facilities Committee Meeting

Saturday, September 26

10:00 a.m. Service Saturday – Mission Waco

Sunday, September 27

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, September 28

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

7:00 p.m. Power of the Pen – Zoom

**Celebration of Life & Faith
of Cynthia Perry**

05/21/1947 – 8/6/2026



Birthdays and Anniversaries

2 Sue Jacobson, Riley Redmer **3** LaRaine DuPuy **5** Charlie & Sharon Stern, Katie Turner, Mike Harper, Cooper Lacy **6** Mike Jacobson, Larry & Sandra LeFevre **7** Steve & Staci Dalton, Joe Riley **8** Pete & Sue Patrick, John Plaskett, Rachel Parven, Malorie Montoya **9** Jack Hicks, Don Howe, Daniel Swenke **10** Juanita Dubowsky **11** Piper Percivill, Steven Field **12** Staci Dalton, Maddie Odajima **13** Roane Lacy, Finley Gingles **14** Charles Metz, Karl Stottlemire, Monica Anderson, Jameson Joyner **16** Connie Watkins **18** Sophia Swenke **19** Carrie Muehlenbein, Kathy Jones **22** Michael & Carrie Muehlenbein, Lee & Toni Percivill, Paige DuPuy **23** Rock & Heather McNair, Steve Swenke **25** Marvin Lamaak, Barbara Lamaak, Jacklen Smith **26** Cole Risinger, Amy Goodman, Esther Lee **28** Luke & Jennifer Ferretter, Kathryn Delk **29** Kyle Plaskett, Alisandra Becerra **30** John & Brenda Stephens, Nancy Morrison, Elijah Becerra

Congregational Life

POOL PARTY

On August 29th we enjoyed a pool party at the DuPuy's. Many thanks to LaRaine and Carr for hosting us! We are so grateful to everyone who joined us for the fun and fellowship.



ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Our annual Ice Cream Social is back on Sunday, September 13th at 5:00 p.m.. Anyone who brings a homemade option will be entered to win the coveted golden scoop - chosen by popular vote. For entertainment, we will divide attendees into teams for pub-style trivia. We look forward to having a virtual team from "Our Hybrid House" join us via Zoom.

Scan the QR code
to sign-up to bring
ice cream



Charlie Olson preparing the pig!

PIG ROAST

Save the date for this year's pig roast. Charlie and Kris Olson will have us back out to their ranch on Saturday, October 10th. We hope you can join us for food and fun on the banks of the North Bosque river.

Outreach

COMPASSION WACO COLLECTION

Thank you to everyone who contributed items or financial gifts to our collection for Compassion Waco. The items we donated and purchased will support families working toward finding stable housing. An impressive car load of items will be delivered in the first week of September. Look out for pictures and a report on our final collection.

SERVICE PROJECTS

SEPTEMBER

Our next Service Saturday will be September 26th. We will be volunteering with Mission Waco from 10 a.m. - noon. We will meet in the Franklin parking lot at 9:45 a.m.



OCTOBER

For our October outreach project, we will assist Calvary Baptist Church (1001 N. 18th Street) with their food distribution program on Monday, October 12th from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

For more information on volunteering or our outreach programs, contact Taylor.

Caregiving, Caretaking, Caring

CAREGIVING IN LOSS AND GRIEF PT. 1

As part of First Pres, I see first-hand and benefit from the deep commitment to caregiving. Caregiving begins with all the ways we show up for each other and provide support in difficult times. As a church family, we check on each other, we help in times of stress and distress, we respond to those experiencing illness themselves, or the illness of loved ones and we reach out with calls, meals, cards, and prayers.

I think about those times and seasons of loss and times when the prayer list includes many in our church family with needs. These are times of intensity. Some of our losses and changes are the result of moves and other life events. Some of our losses are the result of deaths, in some cases of friends who have been members of First Pres for many years. We also experience change and loss when some among us experience illness that impacts attendance and presence with us. While our grief response or experience may be affected by the kind of loss, grief always includes change in our circumstances, often challenging and painful. The grief experts tell us that even the leaving/moving of those dear to us involves significant change and that change results in grief.

First, caregiving begins with awareness. Let's pay attention to our grief when illness prevents presence. We can respond with awareness and avoid the awkwardness of not saying anything, which can multiply the pain. May we learn to trust our hearts and be able to say, "I miss you, thinking of you, and am here for you." This includes trusting one another enough to say: "Is it ok if I check in with you and see how things are going?" It can even help to admit that even when we don't know how to help, we stand ready to try.

We live in a culture that does a fairly good job of acknowledging loss through death soon after it occurs. We send flowers and cards and provide hugs, handshakes, and condolences at church. For many of us, we then return to the busyness of our lives. But the truth is that the pain of loss and grief may continue to deepen over time. This column and in September, I'll provide a few caregiving tips for when we care for those who are grieving losses of different kinds, and those who experience loss in the wake of the absence that comes with death.

Sharing positive memories and stories about a friend who is ill or a loved one who has died can be a real gift. Recalling special times...funny times...helpful times can be a real comfort. "I remember when we....". "When I think of that time we..." "One of the things I always admired about her was...." "I remember a time after my surgery when he came to the house with his mower and mowed my lawn. "What a gift that was." "I'll always remember his laugh."

– Helen Harris





Our Place in the Story

Fall 2026

FALL ADULT CLASSES

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. Meeting in room C203 and Zoom.

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. Meeting in room F105.

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. Meeting in room C202 and Zoom.

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," a source of the interdependence of religion and science. Meeting in room C201 and Zoom.

CHILDREN

PreK/K and 1st-3rd Classes: Biblical literacy this fall promises for a fun experience with hands-on activities/crafts, stories, games, children's music and so much more!

All children arrive to 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.

PRETEEN AND YOUTH

Preteen and Youth Classes: The preteens and youth will also be exploring biblical literacy with scripture readings, meaningful conversations, games/trivia, and relationship building with friends and leaders!

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.



Our Place in the Story

Fall 2026

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!

Questions? Contact co-moderators:

Susan Somerville (512) 921-1732

Sherry Cragen (254) 644-1019

YOUTH WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Wednesday night programming for youth returned August 26th, with a visit to Waco Cha and conversation about our hopes for the new semester. Each week we will gather from 6-8p.m. with guest speakers/programming the first hour, then pizza and studies the second.

September 2nd we will discuss "Stories of Belonging" with Malorie Montoya. Be on the lookout for the remainder of September!



BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

44 children, youth, and adults gathered at Urban Air for jumping fun to celebrate the start to a new school year! Pizza and fellowship were also a highlight of the time together!



NEW BEGINNING'S SUNDAY

We kicked off our fall Christian Formation programming with a lovely morning of learning about classes, meeting teachers, and fellowship! We are looking forward to "Your Part in the Story" with us this fall. Thank you to volunteers that helped setup and clean up.





Our Place in the Story

Fall 2026



Reed, who is 4 ½ years old, was playing on the floor in front of the stereo, which was tuned to a classical station. Suddenly, he sat up and said, “We sing this at church, about the faces. Our friends sing this!” The music was Jupiter, from Holst’s “the Planets.” It’s the tune used for the Response Hymn “O God, Show Mercy to Us,” O God, show mercy to us, and bless us with your grace; and cause to shine upon us the brightness of your face.



Congratulations to Karter McNair on the completion of graduation from Baylor University!

New Membership

Meg Parrish was baptized into the First Presbyterian Church of Marlin, Texas. She graduated from Midway High School, the University of Texas at Austin, and Southern Methodist University. Meg sold cars at Brazos Valley Auto Sales, Inc. in Waco for almost two decades. Since retiring, she has served two years on the Appraisal Review Board, enjoyed volunteer work at the Waco-McLennan County Library and for the Friends of the Library, participated in Baylor’s annual 100 Days of Dante, and is currently at work on a research project involving items in the Royce-Darden Black Gospel Archive. In her spare time she doodles with colored pencils and plays with her cat Cornelius.



Stewardship

Your Session and Stewardship Committee have been hard at work. Preliminary budgets have been submitted, and are in process of being reviewed. The Stewardship Committee has been meeting, and here is what can be expected in the coming months.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

September: You will receive a stewardship card and letter in the mail. This will give you time to think what time, talents, and treasures you wish to share to the church.

KICK – OFF

October: During worship throughout the month, you will hear stories from members about why it is important to share those times, talents, and treasures. We will have lunch on October 4th, immediately following the 10:30 a.m. service – a potluck of sides and desserts with main dish provided.

DECISION AND DEDICATION

November: We will celebrate Stewardship Dedication Sunday, November 15th, and an opportunity for you to witness and join in the procession with your stewardship card.

NEW YEAR AND CELEBRATION

December: The Session will review the budget in light of the pledged gifts. First Pres always admires your generosity, and all the gifts you bring!

Faith and Work

Some reflection from First Pres staff members...

My work and faith are like peanut butter and jelly. It can get a little messy when you smash them together but overall they both taste better that way.

- Taylor Holleyman, Director of Congregational Life

I bring more of my membership to work, then I do my work to membership and worship on Sundays.

- Shane Montoya, Operations Manager

Work massages faith and faith massages work. I feel stronger for their partnership.

- Leslie King, Pastor

I believe I show my faith through my work. It may not be the best ever, but I give my best to God here in His house.

- Dana Williams, Handyman

My work and faith go hand-in-hand, my passion comes from the love I have for all people.

- Malorie Montoya, Director of Christian Formation

God's grace is like a handbell choir: each part matters, and together we create a beautiful harmony that none of us could accomplish alone.

- Amy Goodman, St. Cecilia Bell Choir Director

My faith helps me work and my work helps me practice my faith.

- Kyle Plaskett, Office Assistant



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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!

Organ Pipes

AR Schopps and Sons is the Ohio restoration company for our organ pipes. They estimated 12 months to restore the pipes. The pipes were removed on October 12, 2025. We were hoping for an early return but in fact, the company will have the pipes back 12 days past the 12 month estimate. Not bad given the backlog in the industry because of the shortage of pipe organ skilled workers and companies. See, the description of their work in italics below:

When the pipes arrived they were in bad shape/pipes missing and naturally the repair work took longer than anticipated. The pipes are repaired/missing pipes have been made and we have started to apply the primer coat to the pipes. Once the primer has adhered to the pipes we can start the final top coat color. The wood casing/supports and repair is complete. We are estimating delivery the week of October 12-19th.

David Schopp
A.R. Schopp's Sons Inc.

At this time, the Alden organ company will replace the functional pipes we removed in order to repair and repaint our sanctuary walls at the same time that the ornamental pipes, being restored by Schopps are estimated to arrive.