

THE Penn Street Letter

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FORT WORTH

JULY 2024 / VOLUME 24, NUMBER 7



Help us start stocking up for First Presbyterian Church's annual Christmas Toy Store with the Christmas in July Toy Drive!

The store will be open for our friends and neighbors from Community Crossroads on December 7. This annual outreach event provides parents and guardians the opportunity to "shop" through a donation-provided store of new children's toys. The store benefits people connected to First Pres ministries via Community Crossroads, and offers these parents and guardians both dignity and choice as they pre-pay (with significant discount) for the gifts they will select for their children. Each year, over 300 children are served!

ITEMS NEEDED IN JULY

(suitable for ages 0 – 8 years, brand new items, maximum spend of \$50 per toy, please):

- Remote-controlled vehicles, etc.
- 18-inch dolls
- Razor (or other brand) kick scooter
- Monetary donations (gift cards to toy retailers, or checks made payable to First Presbyterian Church Fort Worth with "Christmas Store" noted in the memo line)

Please bring unwrapped donations to the tables outside the Great Hall or Sanctuary on Sundays, July 7, 14, 21, and 28. Your donations this summer will help us prepare for our December event.

Thank you for helping us kick off another great year of the First Pres Christmas Toy Store.

Pastor's Letter



Dear friends,

In John 10, Jesus our Good Shepherd tells his disciples a thing or two about life. "The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy," he

teaches, "But I came so that they can have life and have it abundantly!" What does it mean to have life abundantly—in all its fullness? How does one live abundantly in the midst of non-stop schedules and never-ending commitments? In the middle of the busy summer season, where should we go to listen to God speaking to us?

I ran across this great piece of writing from Frederick Buechner recently, and hope it speaks to you too: "All the absurd little meetings, decisions, inner skirmishes that go to make up our days. It all adds up to very little, and yet it all adds up to very much. Our days are full of nonsense, and yet not, because it is precisely into the nonsense of our days that God speaks to us words of great significance - not words that are written in the stars but words that are written into the raw stuff and nonsense of our days, which are not nonsense just because God speaks into the midst of them. And the words that God says, to each

of us differently, are "Be brave...be merciful...feed my lambs...press on toward the goal.""

Perhaps, there is an important connection between the Good Shepherd's idea of abundant life and the courage and bravery to make a positive impact in this world. Speaking of positive impacts, hope you'll enjoy looking at some pics from recent happenings at First Pres...especially, I'd like to highlight the pics from our recent Youth Cuba Partner Mission Trip last month - our group had an unforgettable, eye-opening adventure in Cuba! (By the way, if you want to hear more about our trip, save this date for our Cuba Trip Reflection Meeting & Slideshow: Sunday, September 29 at 12:15 in the Youth Center.) I think Helen Keller was exactly right when she said, "Life is either a daring experience or nothing at all." Together as the body of Christ, let's continue to look for daring experiences in our daily lives.

Be brave...be merciful...feed my lambs...press on toward the goal.

Keep on keepin' on,

Rev. Dr. Josh Stewart
Associate Pastor - Youth

Submissions

Submissions for the next issue of the Penn Street Letter are due Wednesday, July 24. Submissions for the weekly Penn Street Online emailed newsletters are due the Wednesday prior to each week's issue. Please send to Pam Burkholder at pamb@fpcf.org.

Follow Us

Do you follow First Presbyterian on social media? If not, find us on the following sites and follow along for photos, reminders, encouragement, and more.



@firstpresfw



@firstpres_fw



@fpcf

Publisher Info

The Penn Street Letter is published monthly by First Presbyterian Church, 1000 Penn Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-3496. Periodicals postage is paid at Fort Worth, TX and at additional offices.

Editor: Pam Burkholder

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Penn Street Letter at 1000 Penn Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-3496.

First Presbyterian Church's Session

2024 CLASS OF ELDERS

Mary
Elizabeth Austin
Sarah Clingman
Lillie Doze
Randall Johnson
Martha Newman
Ralph Reece
Claire Schmid
Dawn Shepard
Austin Stubblefield

2025 CLASS OF ELDERS

Brian Cunningham
Jimmy DeFoor
Mary Susan Farrar
Vic Letbetter
Linda Northern
Lynda Richey
Amy Ryan

2026 CLASS OF ELDERS

Julia Bradley
Al Comeaux
Emily Hadley
Jane Mathis
J.B. Smithson
Jay Stepp
Brian Wharry

How Presbyterians Make Decisions: Part Four

Over the last three weeks *The Penn Street Letter* and *The Penn Street Online* have featured articles on decision making within our denomination - the Presbyterian Church (USA). The Session is particularly interested that every member of First Presbyterian Church understands how we make decisions together. This final article focuses on the reality that even after decisions are made by majority decision following debate and discussion as presbyters have studied and interpreted scripture, sought guidance from the Book of Confessions, prayed, and dialoged with one another as they spiritually discern the will of Christ, Presbyterians still often disagree with decisions.

A hallmark for Presbyterians is the conviction that God alone is Lord of the conscience. Faithful women and men, as they seek to follow Jesus Christ, study and interpret scripture, and make decisions for the church, will and do disagree. Because God alone is Lord of the conscience, councils of the church cannot presume to speak for every member of the church. This is as true for sessions as it is for the General Assembly. Councils speak for themselves; their authority is limited to the constitutional powers and duties given to them.

Because faithful disagreement is a reality in churches, Presbyterians state that “there are truths and forms with respect to which men (sic) of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward one another.” (F-3.0105) In the application of mutual forbearance, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has offered helpful guidance through the resource *Guidelines for Presbyterians in Times of Disagreement*. You will find this document at: www.pcusa.org

First Presbyterian Church of Fort Worth continues to be a vibrant, engaged, and faithful congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as we live out healthy relationships with one another and our presbytery, synod and General Assembly. In a conflicted culture within which religious strife and division all too often diminish Christian engagement and mission, we can give thanks for God’s gift of unity we share as a congregation. Unity does not require uniformity. Worship and service unite us within our diversity. United in mission and ministry, we continue to be an effective witness to the love of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

While this article marks the final installment in the series on *How Presbyterians Make Decisions*, please feel free to speak with your pastors should you desire further information.



Calendar Highlights

Below are some highlights of special events happening in July. For a complete calendar, visit fpcf.org.

SUNDAYS IN JULY

- 8 a.m. Worship in the Chapel
- 9 a.m. Worship in the Great Hall
- 10 a.m. Summer Church School
- 10 a.m. Summer Choir Rehearsal
- 11 a.m. Worship in the Sanctuary & Livestream

MONDAYS IN JULY

- 6:30 a.m. Men's Bible Study
- 9 a.m. Formula & Diaper Ministry at Community Crossroads
- 10 a.m. Wellness: Tai Chi
- 3 p.m. Room in the Inn (begins July 8)

WEDNESDAYS IN JULY

- 11:30 a.m. Food & Clothing Ministry at Community Crossroads
- 11:30 a.m. Sack Lunch Distribution at Community Crossroads
- 5:30 p.m. WOW! Worship and Dinner at Community Crossroads
- 7 p.m. Summer Choir Rehearsal

THURSDAYS IN JULY

- 11:30 a.m. Food & Clothing Ministry at Community Crossroads
- 11:30 a.m. Sack Lunch Distribution at Community Crossroads

THURSDAY, JULY 4

All Day Church offices, Early Education Center, and Community Crossroads closed

FRIDAY, JULY 5

- 7 p.m. Young Adult Social Gathering @ Coyote Drive-In

SATURDAY, JULY 6

- 2 p.m. Youth Christmas in July Pool Party
- 2 p.m. *The Chosen* Watch Party

SATURDAY, JULY 13

- 9 a.m. Enneagram Workshop

SATURDAY, JULY 20

- 2 p.m. *The Chosen* Watch Party

SUNDAY, JULY 21

- 5 p.m. Post General Assembly Gathering

MONDAY-FRIDAY, JULY 22-26

- 9 a.m. Mission on the Move (through July 25)
- 9 a.m. Music & Arts Camp Jr.

Be Inspired



You are invited to participate in an End of Life Planning Workshop on Wednesday, July 17 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (lunch provided) in Room 102. The workshop will cover end of life pastoral care and worship planning led by the Rev. Dr. Michael Waschevski and the Rev. Ashley Drake Mertz. You will also learn about the First Presbyterian Memorial Garden and Columbarium from Michelle Goodwin, Director of Operations. Learn more and register at fpcfw.org/careandsupport.

Summer Adult Church School continues through August 11

The Summer session of Adult Church School continues through Sunday, August 11. Classes meet from 10–10:45 a.m. Three weekly options engage adults in on-going faith formation.

- **Bible Study: Acts** - Led by Matt McGraw in Room 236
- **Faith and Music** - Led by Laura Collins, Dr. Beverly Howard, and Rev. Dr. Michael Waschevski in Room 237
- **Faith and Film: *The Chosen*** - Led by Dr. Steve Brotherton and Eric Varnon in the Youth Center (This class is open to adults, as well as Middle and High School Youth).

First Pres is offering several watch parties (free popcorn!) to catch up on *The Chosen*. We'll watch episodes 5-6 on Saturday and Sunday, July 6-7, and episodes 7-8 on Saturday and Sunday, July 20-21. All watch parties are from 2-4 p.m. in the Youth Center (enter through Gym door on Texas Street).

First Pres Wellness Together Committee is hosting an ALL CHURCH POOL PARTY to help us fight the Texas heat!

**Friday, August 9 from 7-9 p.m.
Forest Park Pool
(2850 Park Place, Fort Worth 76110)**

This event is free for the First Pres community, and all are invited.

Reflections on Presbyterian Worship

The Rev. Dr. Michael Waschevski will lead this summer series in which participants will engage the history of Presbyterian worship, the theology of our worship and sacraments, and contemporary worship practices in both the Presbyterian Church (USA) and American denominations in general. In addition to selections from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order, chapters from *Rhythms of Worship* by Stevens and Waschevski will frame each week's reflections. The class will meet on Monday evenings from 7-8 p.m. on July 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29 in Room 237. Learn more and register at fpcfw.org/upcomingevents.

General Assembly Conversation

On Sunday, July 21, at 5 p.m., the Rev. Dr. Michael Waschevski will host a post-General Assembly gathering to learn of business that will be before the presbyteries for vote following their approval by the General Assembly. Young Adult Advisory Delegate (and First Pres FW elder) Lauren Stark will be joining us so that we can hear her insights into the deliberations and decisions, as well as her experience of the General Assembly.

A graphic with a teal and orange background featuring a stylized plant. The text "SUMMER ENNEAGRAM WORKSHOP" is in large white letters. Below it, "Growing Home: The Spirituality of the Enneagram" is in smaller white letters, followed by "Saturday, July 13 9 a.m. to 3 p.m." and the website "fpcfw.org/spiritualformation" in white on an orange background.

SUMMER ENNEAGRAM WORKSHOP

Growing Home:
The Spirituality of the Enneagram
Saturday, July 13
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

fpcfw.org/spiritualformation

Engage the World



From June 4-11, our group of 21 youth and adults embarked on an enriching partner mission trip to Cuba, deepening friendships with our partners in Cuba. Highlights included a retreat with Cuban youth at El Fuerte, gatherings with our partner congregations, shared worship, a quick trip to Varadero beach, a day in Havana, and (of course) Cuban coffee! Our group had a wonderful time, forging lasting connections and creating unforgettable memories.



Community Crossroads Fact Sheet

*This month we served...



1,510 Households groceries

251 Individual's clothing

696 Sack lunches

361 Households pet food

295 Hygiene & cleaning supplies

144 Cans of formula

447 Packages of diapers & wipes

211 New Neighbors

346

Volunteers

1,204

Hours Served

*These statistics reflect May 1-31, 2024



people first at First Pres

Each month we'll highlight First Pres staff team updates, including new hires, anniversaries, and more.

WELCOME, NEW EMPLOYEES!



We are pleased to share **Mari Aguilar** became the new morning Assistant Teacher in Ms. Melin's 3-year-old class. With her transition to mornings, we are excited to announce **Jocelyn Willis**, pictured at left, joined the First Pres team as the new **afternoon Assistant Teacher** for Tony Campbell's 1-year-old class.

A native of Fort Worth, Jocelyn has worked in early childhood education for 14 years, including previously working here at our Early Education Center several years ago. In her spare time, Jocelyn enjoys writing, poetry, and music. Italian food is her favorite and she is passionate about encouraging others.



We want to thank **Shasa Thomas** for her time as First Pres morning floater and wish her the best in her future endeavors. While her shoes are tough to fill, we are excited to welcome Fort Worth native **Kim Lee** as the new morning **Assistant Teacher** to help support all classrooms as needed. Kim has been an Assistant and Lead Teacher for preschools for 13 years and has a heart for neurodivergent children (ADHD, Autism, etc.).

Kim's 3 daughters are the joy of her life and her youngest, Annable, recently joined Ms. Bee's classroom. She and her daughters love to make crafts and Kim also enjoys reading, designing jewelry, and practicing ASL (American Sign Language).



Susana Leon joined the First Pres team on Wednesday, June 19, as the **Accounting and Purchasing Specialist**. This new role will support the Administrative office and will help streamline the church's purchasing processes.

Susana joins us from the business office of Arborlawn United Methodist Church.

She moved to Fort Worth from Miami, Florida, about a year and a half ago, and lives with her husband, Enrique, and her rescue dog, Wednesday. Susana began her finance career in Miami working for a Christian Academy, and fell in love with the accounting world. She hopes to continue her education and eventually get her MBA and CPA certification. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, walking, and watching historical dramas (currently watching *Downton Abbey*).



Tristan Medina joined First Pres on June 20 as the **Event Audio/Video Technician**.

Tristan, a Fort Worth native, is a graduate of Southwest High School and an 8-year veteran of the United States Marine Corps. During his time in the military, he was stationed in California, was deployed to Afghanistan, and was stationed in Okinawa, Japan. He returned to Fort Worth at the end of his military service in 2015 and attended the University of North Texas to focus on Marketing. After becoming involved in a local church in 2015, he began his journey of faith and continues working in ministry utilizing a variety of skills involving his knowledge of live production. He currently resides with his family in southwest Fort Worth.

CONGRATULATIONS!



Congratulations to **Celeste Falter**, who was recently promoted to Business Office Manager. In August 2000, Celeste was hired as the Ministry Assistant to the Volunteer Coordinator & Associate Pastor of Mission. Over the decades, she has supported various groups, committees, and locations.

Celeste contributed to the formation of Faith Presbyterian Church in Aledo and received the Presbyterian Women's Honorary Life Membership award for her work with PW from 2012-2022. Two years ago, Celeste became a valuable asset to the business office.

Celeste was married at First Pres and her two amazing kids, Corissa and AJ (Alex Jr.), went through the Early Education Center Day School. Over her tenure, the most significant impact she has witnessed "is the positive culture and growth of the staff" and the significant impact First Pres has on our community.

JULY SERVICE ANNIVERSARY

We celebrate the following member of our team on her years of faithful service with First Pres:

July 31: Olivia Gutierrez, Lead Teacher (2s), 6 years

Want to join a fantastic team?

Know someone who does?

First Pres is hiring!

[FPCFW.ORG/CAREERS](https://www.fpcf.org/careers)



Joys & Concerns

The following prayer concerns are those we have received as of June 19. In an effort to respect the privacy of those listed below, names are only printed once permission from the individual is obtained. Are you in the hospital or dealing with an illness? Let us know by contacting Parish Associate for Pastoral Care Rev. Ashley Drake Mertz or Parish Visitors Matt McGraw or Rev. Lynda Dinsdale. Let us keep the following persons in our thoughts and prayers this month...

With Joy, we Celebrate...

The 13 youth and 8 adults from First Pres who participated in the Youth Cuba Partnership Trip from June 4 – June 11.

Our Loving Sympathy to...

Todd and Veronica Cowan and his family and friends following the death of his father Joe Cowan.

Lamar and Pam Voight and his family and friends following the death of his brother.

Bryan and Lenora Reece and his family and friends following the death of his mother.

Our Loving Thoughts and Prayers are with...

Kathryn Speight, Margo Dean, Betty Elliott, Pat Graham, Matt Miller, Martha Brooks, Nancy Gillis, Jo Ann Johnson, Elizabeth McCartney, Ronnie Sherwood, Capt. Rolf Tilley, Pat Richardson, Gail Davis, and Irene Howard, who are recovering from surgery or injury. We also pray for their caregivers.

Tad Delgado and parents **Emily and Bryan Delgado, Janelle Eklund, Liz Barber, John Patterson, Henrietta Bailey, Larry Kinard, Amanda Deitz, Levi Deitz, Ronnie Clinkscale, June Sprott, Fred Wilson, Frances Blake, Phyllis Propes, Chuck Sullivan, Susie Kuipers**, and **Karl Travis**, who are dealing with illness or undergoing treatment. We also pray for their caregivers.

Our Caring Prayers for Extended Family include...

Lonnie Goolsby (father of **Kelle Tillman**), Lucy Redrow (daughter of **Leigh Ann and Grant Redrow**), Katie Loudon (sister-in-law of **Jaci Travis**), Michael Kibby (friend of **Mary Brooks**), Anja Dangelimer (family friend of **Lauren Black**), Claudia Masser (daughter-in-law of **Carol Toombs**), Peggy Moore (sister of **Mary Brooks**), Cameron Parmelee (granddaughter of **Sally and Bob Parmelee**), Jack Barber (son of **Liz Barber**), Andy Hedrick (brother of **Patti Bradley**), Jolie Paprskar-Mozingo (daughter of **Joy Paprskar**), Walter Williams (husband of **Rachele Williams**), Caleb James Baker (great-grandson of **Betty Tillman**), Terry James (nephew of **Rachele Williams**), Tahji Hoffman (great-niece of **Rachele Williams**), Paula Perkins (sister of **Susie Kuipers**), Audrey Hart (great-granddaughter of **Bob and Jane Trask**), Ann Welch (sister of **Andrea Frankenfield**), Nancy Hatfield (mother of **Sarah Haddock**), Lynn Prater (daughter of **Harlene Satterfield**); Bill Neil (uncle of **Kenda, Nancy, and Ron Love**), and John DeMore (son-in-law of **June Sprott**)

Prayers for the safety of Pape Russell (grandson of **Barbara Russell**), who is serving in the US Navy. Prayers for the safety of **Diego A. Saldivar** (son of **Becky and Renee Saldivar**), who is serving in the US Navy. Prayers for the safety of Nathan Gunter (nephew of **Russell and Vivian Norment**), who is stationed in Korea.

We pray for safety and peace for those affected by conflict.

We pray for our mission coworkers: Cindy Corell in Haiti, Jed and Jenny Koball in Peru, Cathy Chang and Juan Lopez in Manilla. We pray for our partner congregations: Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist in Fort Worth and for the congregations of Buen Pastor, Resurrection, and Cidra Presbyterian Churches in Cuba.

Welcome, New Members!

Please join the Evangelism Work Group in welcoming these new members.



Emily Rutan and Ryan Gaunt joined First Pres on Sunday, May 26. Emily and Ryan are engaged to be married next April. Emily has been connected with First Pres Young Adults since her college years. She is a marketing coordinator for Ferris Manufacturing. Ryan is a pilot for Southwest Airlines.



David Willis joined by reaffirmation of faith on Sunday, June 16. David is the husband of First Pres member Jennifer Willis, father of Olivia, and son-in-law of First Pres member Gail Stewart. He is a sales manager for Accelerator Active Energy.

First Presbyterian Church

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WWW.FPCFW.ORG



During the month of June, we hosted our Vacation Bible School and Elementary Music and Arts Camp. At VBS we welcomed 161 kids each day as we danced, sang, and explored stories from the Bible about water. We learned a lot about the organization Living Waters for the World and how they provide communities all around the world with water purification systems to make sure all God's children have clean water to drink. In the afternoon, the elementary children stayed for Music and Arts Camp. All week they worked hard to prepare a Showcase that they shared with their family and friends at the end of the week based on *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad Day*.