

Mission Study



First Presbyterian Church
Waco, Texas

Adopted by the Session
January 8, 2011



Welcome Home, Children of God!

First Presbyterian Church, Waco, Texas, has been welcoming home children of God since 1855. We take this theme of our church as a calling from Scripture:

See what love God has for us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are.
1st John 3:1

For in Him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring.'
Acts 17:28

Statement of Mission

First Presbyterian Church of Waco, Texas, welcomes all as children of God through our worship, outreach, Christian education and congregational life events. By the liberating and compelling grace of God, and in accord with our Reformed theological heritage, we follow Jesus Christ's example by reaching out to seekers and those in need, nurturing disciples, honoring diversity and seeking to reconcile the world to God through ministries of justice and mercy.

We are

An inclusive church, inviting and welcoming all as children of God;

A theologically diverse community of faith, firmly believing that as long as our hearts are one in Jesus Christ, our minds do not have to be;

Christians who believe in our thinking and think in our believing;

Proudly Presbyterian because it is how we choose to approach God, not because we believe we are superior to any other tradition or way.

Our Theological Foundation

Our ministers open worship by pouring water into the baptismal font and saying: “Grace and peace to you from our God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome home, children of God.” As Christians, we take seriously the call to welcome all as children of God, whether or not they are members of this church, this denomination, or even of the Christian faith.

Our theological roots are deep in the Reformed Tradition that unites yet encourages individual freedom of conscience. As a theologically diverse community of faith, we believe that as long as our hearts are one in Christ, our minds don’t have to be.

We uphold these traditions that are held in common with all Christians:

- The Trinitarian God.
- The incarnation of the eternal Word of God in the person of Jesus Christ whom we confess as our lord and savior and head of the church.

We uphold these hallmarks of the Reformed Tradition:

- Justification by grace through faith.
- Scripture as the written authority for salvation and the life of faith.
- The church is reformed and always to be reformed, according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit.

We uphold these beliefs particularly stressed by Presbyterian churches:

- God’s sovereignty.
- God’s choosing of people for salvation and service.
- Practicing together in covenant our life as a church so that we order our common life according to the Word of God.
- Being faithful stewards of all God’s creation and shunning ostentation.
- Believing in our human tendency toward sinful idolatry that substitutes forms of self for worship rather than worshipping the Living God.
- Understanding that the Christian life together demands we seek justice and mercy in the transformation of society.

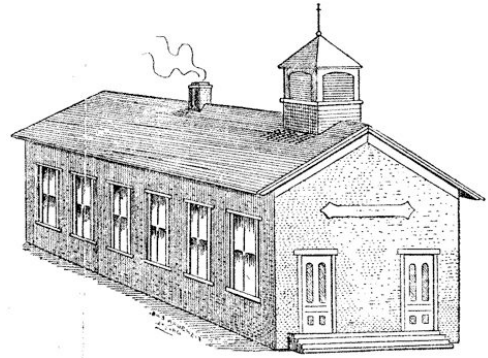
We believe the Presbyterian name refers more to our form of church government than to theology and that one need not be a Presbyterian to be a member of our church; however, we believe one must pledge allegiance to Presbyterian governance to serve as an ordained elder, deacon or minister of word and sacrament.

We believe that through God’s compelling grace, there is more mercy in God than sin in us. We seek to respond to God’s grace by living out our baptism as expressed in these New Testament verses given as a charge at the close of worship:

Go out into the world in peace;
Have courage;
Hold on to what is good;
Return no person evil for evil;
Strengthen the fainthearted;
Support the weak, help the suffering;
Honor all people;
Love and serve the Lord,
Rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Our History

First Presbyterian Church of Waco began with 17 members and two elders in 1855, when Waco Village was a 6-year-old frontier town, and the church has evolved with its community in continuous Presbyterian witness. “Waco Church” originally shared meeting space with other churches in the village, then later built and outgrew two of its own facilities before erecting the current sanctuary in 1912. First Presbyterian was already a strong congregation in 1885 when a popular soft drink, Dr Pepper, was invented in Waco, and a year later when a small but promising college, Baylor, moved to the city. Today, with 661 active members, First Presbyterian Waco remains committed to its role as a downtown church, serving its growing, changing central Texas community.



First building, shared with other churches in 1850s frontier Waco

Continuity of pastoral leadership has been a hallmark, with the church having only six senior pastors in its 155 years. The first pastor served the congregation for 44 years and the second for 34 years, with only one senior pastor serving fewer than 13 years. The current senior pastor will complete a 30-year-ministry at First Presbyterian when he retires in 2012.

Through the years, First Presbyterian has adjusted its programs to meet changing local needs. When a massive Army camp sprang up in Waco during World War I, the church became a home away from home for its soldiers, reprising that role a generation later when another base was built at the start of World War II. The Red Cross made the church its headquarters when a killer tornado devastated Waco in 1953, with the church providing food and clothing to those left homeless. More recently, this church has been the birthplace both for the Caritas interfaith agency for the poor and for the local Meals on Wheels.

First Presbyterian has also been active far beyond its local congregation. Our first pastor served as Moderator of the General Assembly in 1892. At the dawn of the 20th century, we led the Synod in giving to foreign missions. And we were first in our Synod to sponsor our own missionary, funding a mission effort in Korea. We have fostered the birth of several other area Presbyterian churches, two of which continue today: Youngblood Memorial in Robinson and El Calvario, a Spanish language congregation in Waco.



From its start, First Presbyterian has been a downtown church. Our congregation is more geographically dispersed today, but membership remains strong—both in numbers and in spirit.

First Presbyterian continues the vibrant, enduring Presbyterian presence it has provided Waco throughout its 155 years.

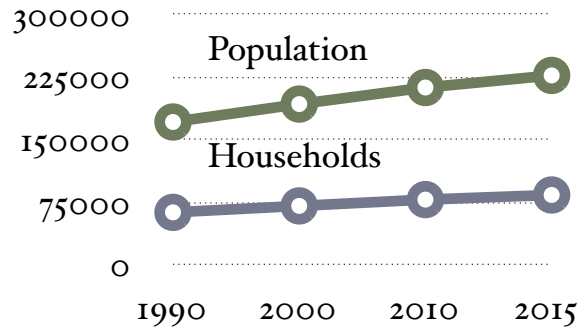
First Presbyterian Church, Waco, today

Our Community

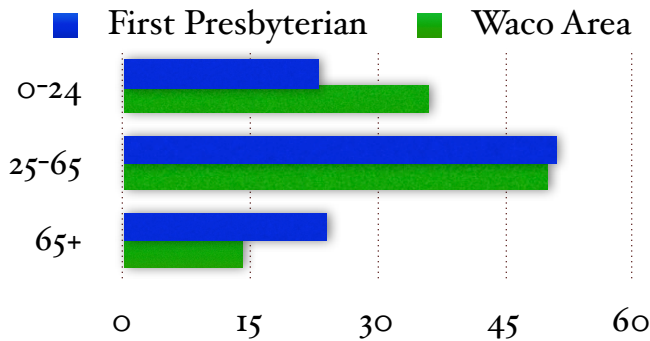
Waco and its suburbs have 225,000 residents, a cost of living 88.2% of the U.S. average, mild weather, and a prime location on an interstate highway halfway between Dallas/Ft Worth and Austin. The industrial base is diverse with more than 4,200 businesses, a labor force of over 115,000, and unemployment well below the national average. The city is home to three colleges: Baylor University, Texas State Technical College, and McLennan County Community College.

Population

Within a 15-mile radius, of First Presbyterian's downtown Waco location, population has grown slowly but consistently over the past two decades, reaching 213,217 by 2010 and projected to reach 227,689 by 2015. There are currently 79,080 households, a number that is projected to grow to 84,600 by 2015.



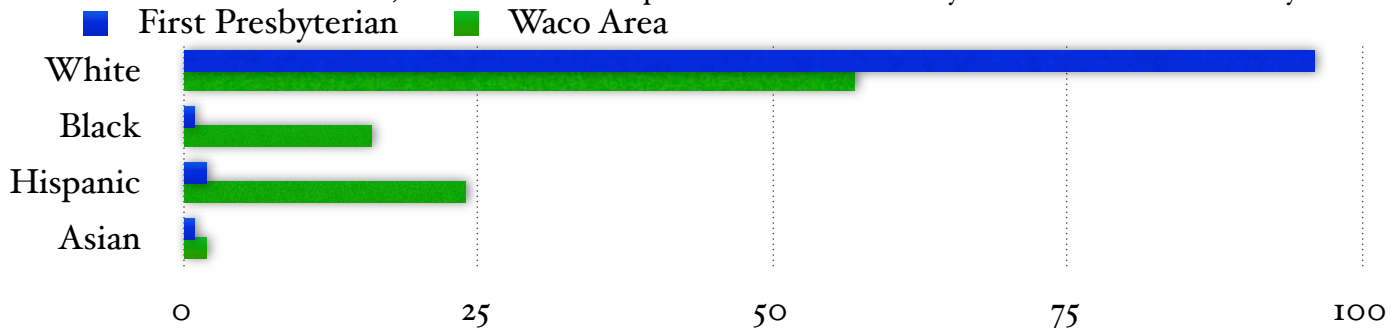
Age Distribution (%)



The age of our members is similar to that of the surrounding community. We are almost exactly the same in the 25-65 age group (51% v 50%), slightly higher in those 65 or above (24% v 14%), and a little below in 24 and younger (23% v 31%).

Racial Diversity (%)

The Hispanic population in Waco has grown significantly in recent years, from 19 percent in 1990 to 24 percent today. Blacks comprise 16 percent of the population and Asians 2 percent. We strive to be an inclusive church, but our membership does not reflect the city's full racial/ethnic diversity.



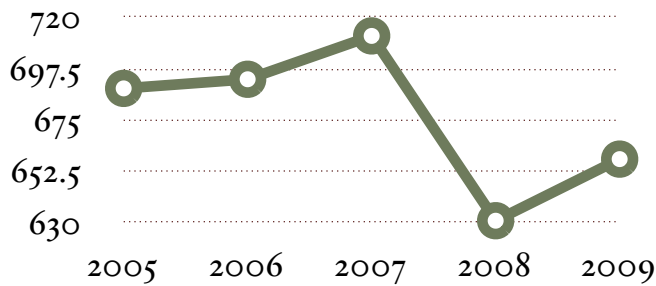
Economically Disadvantaged

Waco's poverty rate is high. It grew from 20.5 percent in 2008 to 23.2 percent in 2009, and food stamp enrollment has risen 41 percent in the past four years. This year, 64 percent of students countywide qualified for free or reduced school lunch programs. Clearly, poverty is a problem for Waco and McLennan County. Our church members cover a wide economic spectrum, but our congregation does not, overall, suffer the severe economic hardship that is felt community-wide.

Our Congregation

First Presbyterian's active membership is stable.

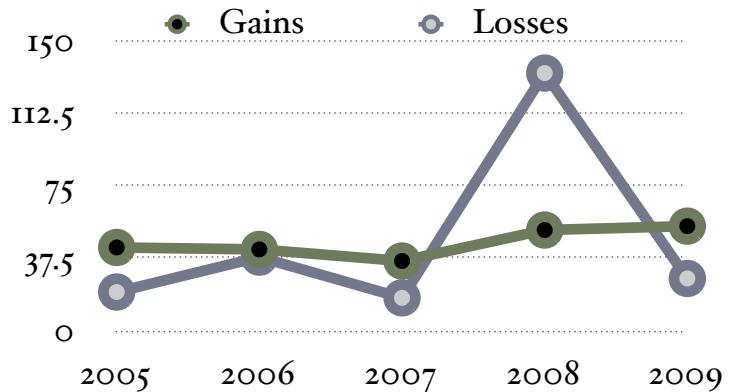
Active Baptized Members



The 2008 drop in Active Members was purely administrative, when the Session adjusted the membership rolls to include as "Active Members" only those who were truly active. Actual membership remained approximately the same. There are currently 661 Active Members.

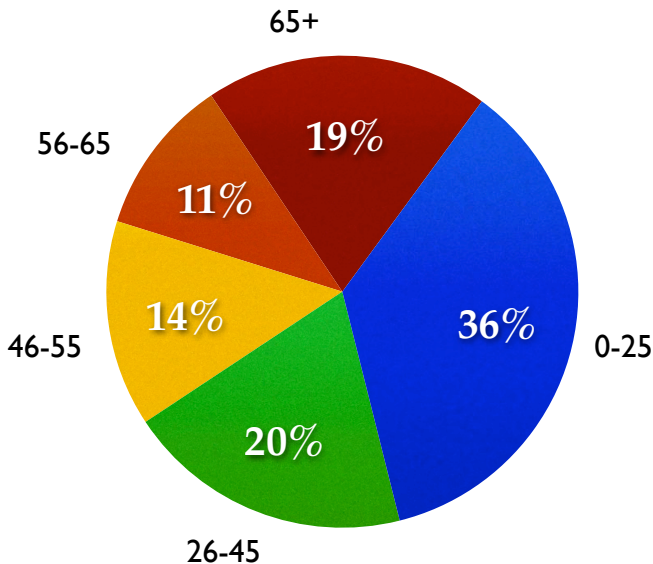
We strive to be an inclusive church but are not, in actuality, racially diverse; however, our number does include 7 Black, 3 Asian, 13 Hispanic, and 1 Native American members. We believe that as long as our hearts are one our minds don't have to be, with members reflecting all sides of the political spectrum, a diversity in economic means, and a variety of theological points of view.

Membership Gains and Losses



Membership gains have exceeded losses for most years over the past decade. As noted above, the 2008 loss figure reflects the administrative move of inactive members from the Active to the Inactive rolls. There are currently 190 Inactive Members.

Age Distribution



For a 155 year-old downtown church, we are surprisingly young, with 56 percent of our members 45 years of age or younger, and only 19 percent older than 65. These are significant figures, and they are consistent with the overall demographics of the population in a 15-mile radius of the church.

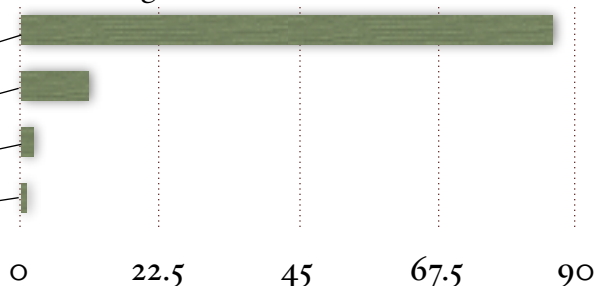
Significant, too, is the fact that the church has 118 baptized-but-not-yet-confirmed children.

Our Financial Status

First Presbyterian, Waco, has no debt and operates within its budget.

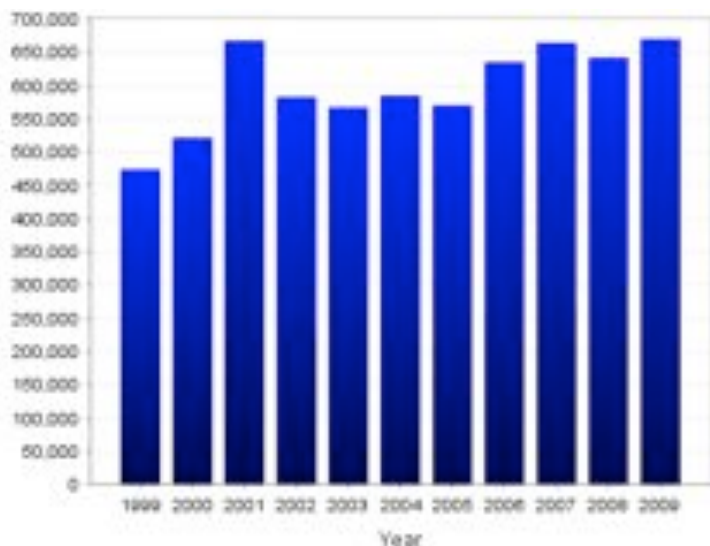
Sources of our income:

- Pledged Gifts - 85.9 %
- Unpledged Gifts - 11 %
- Misc. Income - 2.1 %
- Plate Offerings - 1 %



We are a pledging church with about 275 potential pledging units in the congregation, and more than 90 percent of pledged gifts have been fulfilled in recent years. Unpledged Gifts mainly represent giving members who, for one reason or another, choose not to sign a pledge.

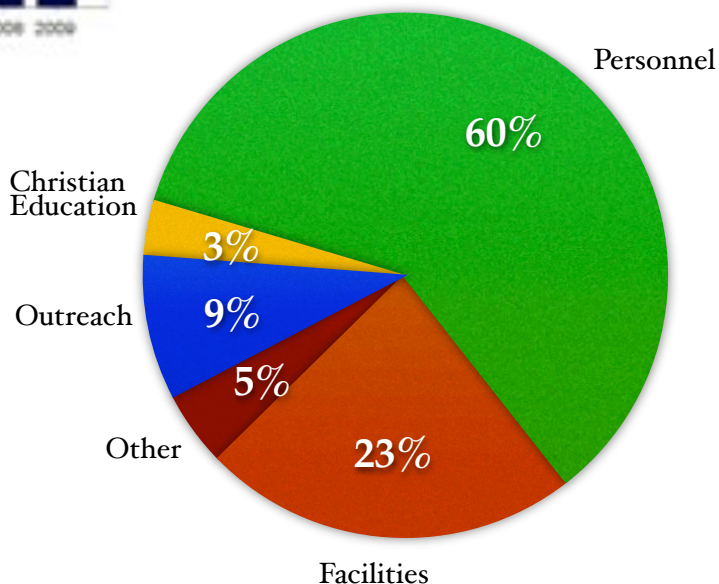
Included in Miscellaneous Income is annual interest paid by our First Presbyterian Foundation which is currently capitalized at \$1.69 million and is managed by the Texas Presbyterian Foundation.



Our income over the past 10 years:

Cost increases and programmatic needs have resulted in budget increases over the past decade, but contributions have kept pace, with income exceeding expenses each year.

Distribution of 2010 Budget



Our spending:

In 2010, our cost of staff represented 59.9 percent of our operating budget, above the 54 percent PCUSA average but reflecting the church's support of full staffing and programming. About one-third of the budget is devoted to program and facilities expenses, and we attempt to devote 10 percent of the budget (8.8 percent in 2010) to Mission Outreach locally and beyond.

The church's operating budget for 2010 was \$689,198.

Our Facilities

The facilities at First Presbyterian Church, Waco, are ample for current and anticipated near-term needs, are in excellent condition, and are debt-free. The three-story building provides 35,365 square feet of worship, educational, fellowship and administrative space.

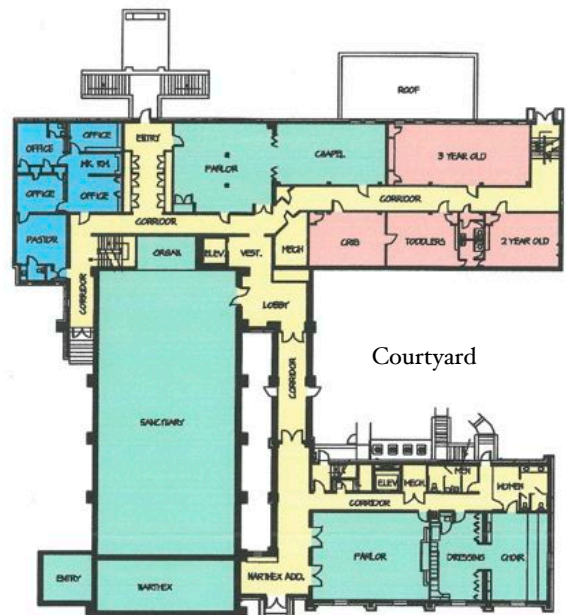
The sanctuary and first educational wing were built in 1912 at Austin Avenue and 11th Street in Waco, at what was then the edge of the downtown business district. An additional three-story educational wing, including a fellowship hall and kitchen, was completed in 1950. A third wing was added in 1993, providing a parlor adjacent to the narthex, choir rooms, a Session room and more educational space.

The most recent construction also created an atrium walkway and an outdoor courtyard where a Columbarium was added in 2008.

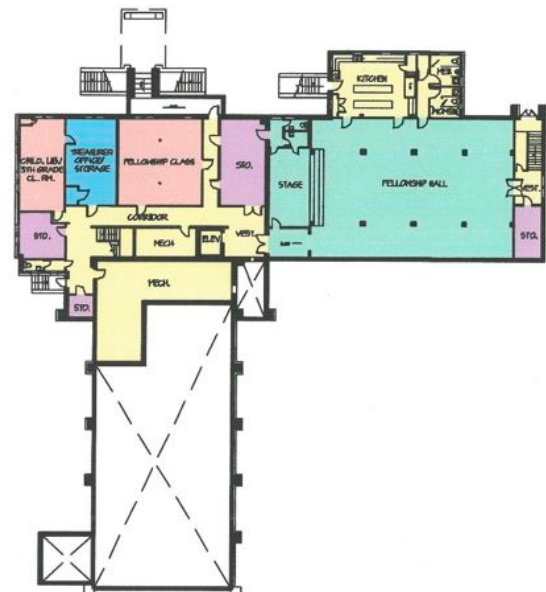
All of the facilities have been periodically updated, including a complete kitchen overhaul in 2008 and hand-painted murals throughout the children's classroom areas in 2004. All stained glass, some of which pre-dates the present sanctuary, was cleaned and repaired in 2010, and the sanctuary itself is being refurbished to be in peak condition for its 100th anniversary in 2012.

The last building debt was retired in 2003, and succeeding renovations and repairs have been funded through the regular church budget. The church's annual budget sets aside funds for facilities replenishment, precluding the need for special fund-raising to cover routine renovation and repair.

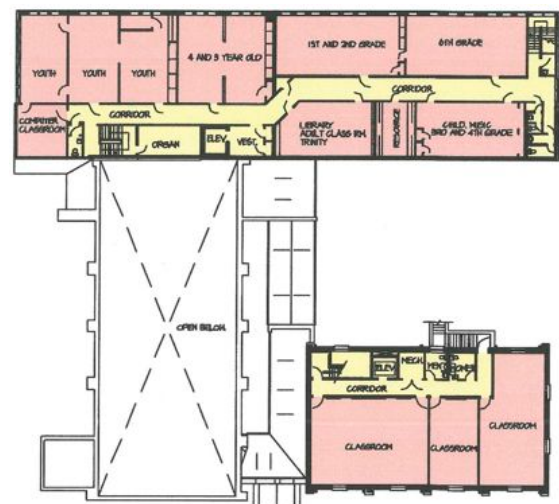
Several downtown Waco churches moved to the city's growing suburbs in the 1980s, but First Presbyterian made a commitment to remain a downtown church. As the community now envisions a resurgence of residential and business growth in the downtown area, First Presbyterian's facilities are well positioned for continued leadership in ministries ranging from Meals on Wheels to interfaith reconciliation.



Main Level (2nd Floor)



Lower Level (1st Floor)



Upper Level (3rd Floor)



Our Church Staff

First Presbyterian, Waco, is blessed with a stable, highly qualified, and dedicated staff. The full and part-time staff supplement a strong volunteer infrastructure, with a Session of active elders working through efficient committees, a Diaconate of active deacons providing a ministry of care to the congregation, and members who share their talents in all aspects of the church's programs.

Our Paid Staff

CLERGY

- Senior Pastor
- Associate Pastor

SPECIALISTS

- Director of Christian Education (part time)
- Director of Church Music (part time)
- Organist (part time) and a Pianist for the early worship service

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Office Manager (full time)
- Receptionist (full time)
- Nursery Director (part time) and Nursery Staff

Our Unpaid Staff

CLERGY

- Parish Associate for Homebound Communion
- Parish Associate for Dementia/Alzheimer's Ministry
- Parish Associate for Interfaith Relations and Peacemaking

SPECIALISTS

- Treasurer (an elder who is a CPA)
- Parish Nurse, (an RN member who assists hospitalized and homebound)
- Archivist (a member trained in historical preservation)

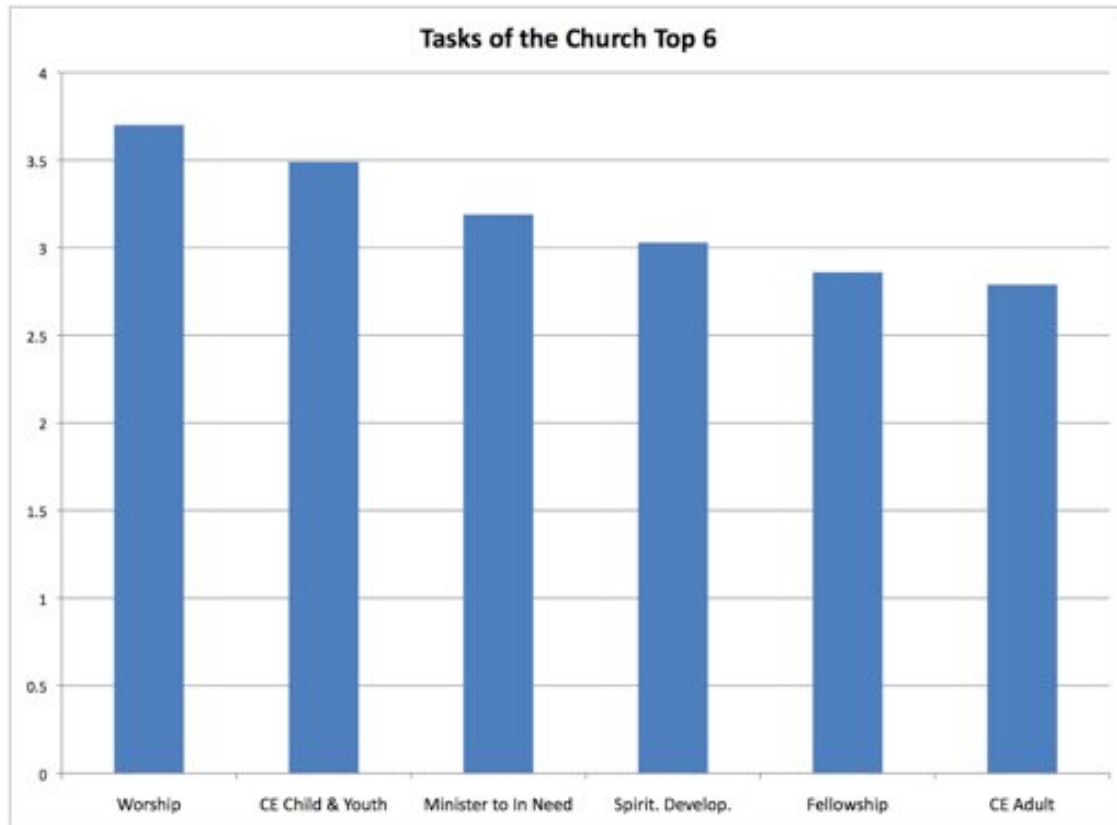
ADMINISTRATIVE

- Volunteer office assistants who each work several hours weekly

We also have college students serve as interns each summer, and from time to time potential seminary students now attending Baylor University serve as interns during the academic year.

Our Priorities

A November 2010 survey of the congregation showed what the congregation views as the top tasks of First Presbyterian Church, Waco.



These top tasks can be more succinctly grouped as three top priorities:

Worship

Church Family

Outreach

These priorities are addressed on the following three pages.



Priority: Worship

Worship is at the heart of the First Presbyterian experience, as a 2010 congregation-wide survey vividly pointed out:

—Number 1 Task of the Church:
Worship

—Number 1 role of a Senior Pastor:
Plan and Lead Worship

Our worship services are traditional in liturgy, with lectionary-based preaching to ensure we celebrate the whole of God's story.

Our two services each Sunday morning are essentially the same except that Communion is served weekly at the early service but only monthly at the later service. The early service is smaller and less formal, and it is held in the Chapel at 8:30. The later service at 10:30 is more formal and is held in the Sanctuary.

We view music as an important element in worship, not as performance but as meaningful interpretation of the Christian message and expression of praise. Our pipe organ is one of the finest in central Texas, and it is supplemented by a variety of instrumental music from an unusually large and diverse array of talented musicians within the congregation. Our Sanctuary Choir sings each Sunday; two handbell choirs periodically play in worship services; and children's choirs sing on occasion.



Children are definitely both seen and heard in our worship services. We are blessed with an abundance of children, and they participate in worship services not as curiosities or entertainment but as age-appropriate leaders. With the pastors, they lead the congregation in a Scripture verse and prayer at each 10:30 service before adjourning for Children's Church with the Director of Christian Education. Once each year the children 6th grade and below conduct the entire service, including preaching. Our older youth also conduct a full worship service once each year as part of our very active youth program.

Our predecessors bequeathed to us a remarkably beautiful sanctuary that inspires worship, and we welcome all who wish to join us there, whether for one service or for a lifetime. We strive for worship that makes each person feel that, as children of God, they are truly welcomed home each time they step into our sanctuary.

Priority: Church Family

We take seriously the concept of church family, and our programs are structured to nurture both individual growth and closeness in our relationships with one another.

Christian Education is a cornerstone of the church's family life. Led by our Director of Christian Education, our Sunday School operates year round for all ages. We have ample classroom space and fully fund new curriculum each year. Children and Youth classes emphasize developing a personal relationship with God, becoming involved in the community of faith and responding to the world around them. Adults choose from five classes that offer varied subjects and methods of participation.

Children have numerous activities other than Sunday School and their weekly role in worship services. There are two children's choirs, divided by ages, and a week of Vacation Bible School is a highlight of each summer. Nursery facilities are well-staffed and separated by age groups. The Director of Christian Education leads Children's Church each Sunday with a mix of learning and age-appropriate activities. Sixth-graders participate in a year-long Confirmation Class.



Youth activities are planned and led by the Associate Pastor. While that person is a full-range pastor who focuses on youth, rather than a "youth pastor," the 2010 church-wide survey showed that youth programs should be the Associate Pastor's top responsibility. In addition

to a variety of weekly activities centered on their Youth Suite in our educational building, our Youth attend Presbytery and Synod camps and conferences throughout the year. The Associate Pastor also leads a College Group, with mid-week gatherings and after-worship Sunday lunches as mainstays of its program.



Adult programs are varied, with something for virtually every age and interest. A Sunday evening series of speakers and discussion covers a wide range of subjects. A "brown bag lunch" each Wednesday lets members discuss the upcoming Sunday's lectionary passages with the Pastor. Presbyterian Women have both daytime and evening groups, and Men of the Church meet monthly for breakfast. Other groups

include a support group for mothers of young children and "Church Ladies" for older members.

Special Activities are spaced throughout the year: Dinners for Eight, an All-Church Picnic, Heritage Breakfast, Thanksgiving Dinner and an annual Ice Cream Social for examples.

All Church Retreat is an annual highlight, exemplifying the church's family focus. Our church takes over Mo-Ranch, a Presbyterian conference center in the Hill Country, for a weekend retreat as a church family. It is memorable and meaningful bonding for families—and for the church as a family.



First Presbyterian's Bell Tower

Priority: Outreach

We are a caring congregation, and we strive to show our caring through actions and monetary support for agencies that help those beyond our reach.

We annually set aside at least ten percent of our church budget for outreach, near and far.

Within Our Community

First Presbyterian has long been at the forefront of caring initiatives in the Waco area. We helped start and have continuously supported Caritas, an interfaith charity that helps the poor in a wide variety of ways. Waco's "Meals on Wheels" began in our church kitchen, and we continue to prepare and deliver meals each week. Presbyterian Women sponsor a room for temporarily homeless families at the nearby Compassion Ministries facility. And we reach out through special projects, like providing supplies and gifts for the Family Abuse Center each Christmas

Beyond Our Community

First Presbyterian was the first church in our Synod to sponsor its own foreign missionary almost a century ago, and that spirit of caring for those beyond our reach continues. In addition to financially supporting Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly outreach programs, we maintain a relationship with and send aid each year to India's Mission School of South Asia, and we periodically participate in other special outreach campaigns.

Within Our Denomination

We fully support Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly activities, and our members have served, and continue to serve, in a variety of roles within the Presbyterian Church USA. More than a century ago, our Pastor served as Moderator of the General Assembly, and within the past decade one of our Elders served as Moderator of Grace Presbytery. Several members serve on Presbytery and Synod committees, and our members will almost always be found among those attending meetings of the broader church, including youth who attend each PCUSA Presbyterian Youth Triennium.

Beyond Our Denomination

Our relationship with those of other faiths has been such that we were asked to host the city's first interfaith worship service in November 2010. We have periodically had pulpit exchanges with Waco's Jewish temple, have been a leader in the city's interfaith council, and recently added a Parish Associate with responsibility for interfaith dialogue and outreach.

Strengths, Weaknesses and Challenges

The Session evaluated the church's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities in late 2010 as part of the Mission Study process. Most of the findings have been integrated into other parts of this document, but a few key points are included here for emphasis.

Strengths

- An open-minded congregation that accepts diversity of thought;
- Deeply rooted in the Reformed Tradition, both theologically and liturgically;
- Blessed with talented, strong leaders throughout the congregation;
- Financially stable, with excellent facilities;
- Active programs for all ages;
- An abundance of children and youth;
- A spirit of caring that manifests itself in outreach.

Weaknesses

- Need for more and better “marketing” who and what we are;
- Need to be more welcoming and better at assimilating new members;
- Need to make better use of technology in reaching members and prospects;
- Location that is distant from some members and not seen by some as secure;
- Need more members to take on leadership roles.

Opportunities

- Waco's growing population of retired persons;
- Baylor University's student and faculty, both as members and resources;
- Waco's focus on revitalization of the downtown city core;
- The new beginnings that will come with new pastoral leadership.

Threats

- The growth of evangelical churches and the decrease in liturgical churches;
- Too rapid loss of older members and the financial support they have given;
- Lack of room for expansion;
- A perception that downtown Waco is less safe than other parts of the city.

Analysis of these strengths and weaknesses identified two primary challenges the church will face in the immediate future. They will be covered in more depth on the next two pages:

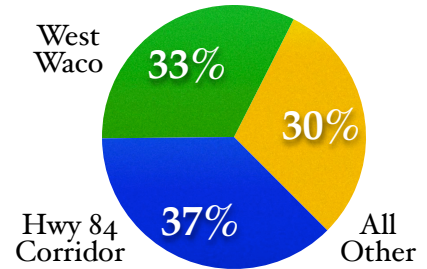
Challenge: Population Shifts

Challenge: Transition

Challenge: Population Shifts

We are a downtown church, and the evolution of the central city continues to present both opportunities and challenges. For the first half of the century at our current location, First Presbyterian was at the western edge of a bustling business district, very convenient for residents of the city's stable, more affluent neighborhoods. In the past half century, though, the downtown business district was eclipsed by suburban shopping centers, and formerly vibrant urban neighborhoods suffered decay while new ones flourished in more distant suburbs. Now it appears another shift may be on the horizon, as Waco envisions a rebirth of the city's core.

In recent years, the largest portion of our membership has shifted from neighborhoods near the church to the western suburbs locally referred to as the Highway 84 Corridor, with the second largest grouping in the city of Waco and the remainder scattered within the 15-mile radius.



Several downtown churches have chosen to relocate to the new suburban areas, and that provides many other church choices for residents of those areas, including other churches in the reformed tradition—Methodist, Lutheran and even Presbyterian. Thus far, this population shift has not significantly affected First Presbyterian's membership; however, it is imperative that the church continue offering programs, a worship experience, and a family atmosphere for which residents of those new areas will drive past other, closer churches.

While demographic trends of the past 50 years have not favored our location, demographics of the next half-century may be decidedly different. *ImagineWaco* is the name given to a public-private partnership that has been formed to revitalize downtown Waco, and First Presbyterian is in the middle of the area in which investment is being sought for new housing, businesses, mixed uses and infrastructure.

More than 100,000 residents are envisioned living in the downtown area by 2050, and evidence of that possibility is already being seen. New condos have been built in the center of the city; several old warehouses and office buildings have been converted to loft apartments and condos; and more than 350 Baylor University students have moved into a new off-campus housing complex across the street from City Hall.

Waco's opportunity for downtown revitalization is bolstered by a national trend for younger, smaller households to move into urban areas, by a picturesque river running through the city center, and by the presence of the beautiful and growing Baylor University campus downtown.

Both a young "Generation Y" cohort and older "Baby Boomers" who want to simplify their lifestyle are groups expected to participate in the repopulation of downtown Waco. For our church, this will require the flexibility to provide experiences designed to fit the needs of the new downtown residents while maintaining the programs that already meet the needs of our current membership.

First Presbyterian Church, which is centrally located in downtown Waco, is positioned to attract this new population of downtown residents.

Challenge: Transition

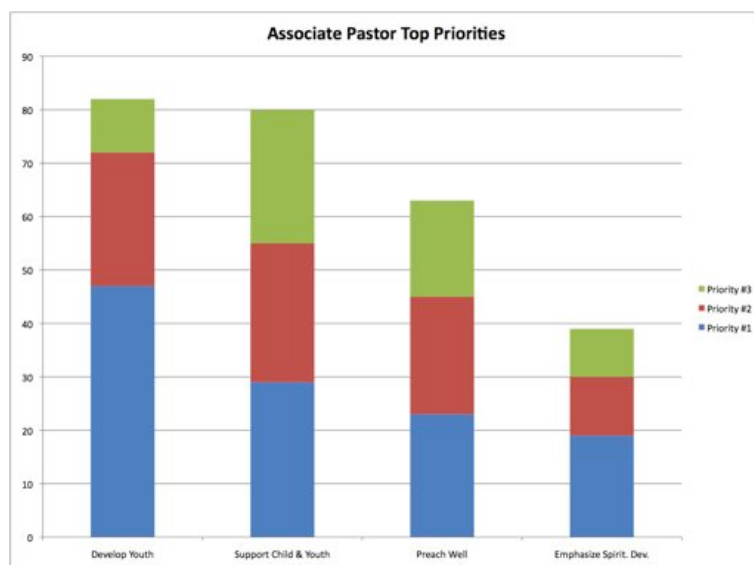
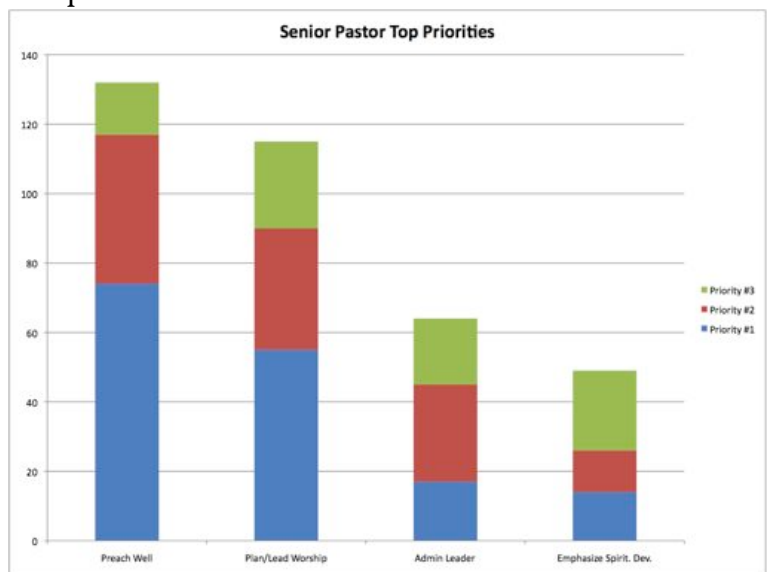
Having had only six Senior Pastors in 155 years, and having had the current Senior Pastor in place for almost 30 years, transition is clearly not routine for this church. The process is potentially even more difficult because the Associate Pastor will also soon leave after claiming a special place in the hearts of the congregation through seven years of ministry here.

On the plus side, both pastors are leaving for good reasons and with the congregation's love and blessings, the Senior Pastor for the well-deserved slower pace of retirement and the Associate for opportunities to share his matured gifts of ministry as a solo or Senior Pastor. With the full support of the Senior Pastor, the Session has adopted a plan that will allow for a pastor search process in advance of the incumbent's retirement so that we can have a brief Co-Pastor overlap of Senior Pastors and avoid a vacancy in that role.

With a strong congregation, a committed Session and a supportive Presbytery, the transition process should proceed smoothly; however, it will be hard to give up two pastors as beloved as our current Senior and Associate Pastors. Open and honest communication between the Session, the two Pastor Nominating Committees and the congregation will be essential during the transition. The Session is already creating a framework for that communication, and both pastors are helping by sharing openly the positive aspects for themselves and for the church.

As we look ahead, it is clear from the recent church-wide survey that the next Senior Pastor should be an effective worship leader, a strong staff leader and a compassionate minister.

The bar charts show the aggregate ratings from when congregation members were asked to prioritize what they saw as responsibilities numbers 1, 2, and 3 for each of the pastors.



For the next Associate Pastor, the survey showed a need for a minister who is strong in youth work but well-rounded and able to shoulder the full range of pastoral tasks—a pastor responsible for youth rather than a “youth pastor.”

The Session has “branded” this time of transition as **New Beginnings**, and that is what it should be, a time when both the pastors and the congregation move on to the opportunities and joys of the next phases of their lives.

Summary

After 155 years, the First Presbyterian Church, Waco, Texas, is stable and healthily focused on being a church home in which all children of God feel welcome.

The church is financially sound, meeting its annual budgets and fulfilling more than 90 percent of pledges annually.

The staff is well qualified and supported by an energetic, talented volunteer structure.

The facilities are sufficient for immediate and foreseen needs, are being kept in excellent condition, and are debt free.

Running counter to PCUSA denominational trends, membership has remained stable and the average age within the congregation has decreased in recent years.

With 118 children below the age of Confirmation and an abundance of older children and youth, the church has a strong focus on effective programs for children, youth and families.

The church is inclusive, with an open-minded congregation that welcomes diversity of thought, thinking in our believing and believing in our thinking.

Outreach is a high priority, with members leading many community outreach programs and the church supporting more distant efforts with at least 10 percent of annual budgets.

Population shifts have resulted in relatively few members living close to the church; however, effective programs and the church's unique atmosphere have ensured stability.

A rebirth of downtown Waco, with significant business and residential development already underway, has great potential for the church's future growth and ministry.

Members have visibly identified the church's three top priorities: effective worship, a healthy and active church family, and meaningful outreach.

Members have defined as top priorities for the Senior Pastor: effective worship leadership, administrative leadership, and compassionate ministry.

Members have defined effective leadership of youth programs as the Associate Pastor's top priority while specifying that he or she should be a full-range pastor, not a "youth pastor."

The Senior Pastor's pending 2012 retirement after 30 years and the Associate Pastor's openness to a new call after seven years pose potentially serious transition challenges.

The Session has adopted a proactive **New Beginnings** program and a temporary co-pastor plan to ease the transition and, hopefully, to avoid a gap between Senior Pastors.

The Session and congregation fully grasp their situation and near term challenges and are effectively planning to maintain the church's stability and spirit into the future.



Our Prayer As We Look Forward

May God give us grace enough not to sell ourselves too short: Grace enough to risk something big for something good, Grace enough to realize that the world is now too dangerous for anything but the truth and too small for anything but love.

So may God take our heads and think through them.

May God take our lips and speak through them.

May God take our hands and work through them.

May God take our hearts and set them on fire for the sake of God's peace and justice on this, God's good earth.

— *Rev. Dr. William Sloan Coffin Jr.*

Methodology of this Mission Study

The Session of First Presbyterian Church, Waco, Texas, began a Mission Study process in August 2010, anticipating a need to form two Pastor Nominating Committees early in 2011 due to the Associate Pastor's plans to seek a new call early in 2011 and the Senior Pastor's plans to retire in mid-2012.

The Session appointed a Mission Study Task Force composed of five Elders:

LaRaine DuPuy
Mike Farr
Jim Maxwell
Patsy Norman
Randy Preddy

Grace Presbytery appointed Rev. Fred H. Babb, Interim Pastor, Hillsboro (TX) Presbyterian Church, to assist the Task Force effort on behalf of the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry.

Neither of the pastors participated in the Mission Study process.

The Session met at least monthly during the five-month Mission Study process to develop key elements of the Mission Study and to guide the Task Force in its work.

The Session, working as a committee-of-the-whole, developed and adopted a new Mission Statement for the church.

The Mission Study Task Force then gathered and analyzed materials from a variety of sources, including:

- Previous studies, documents and statistical reports of the church;
- PCUSA denominational statistical reports and resources;
- Waco and McLennan County demographic and statistical reports;
- Imagine Waco, a Greater Waco Plan envisioning downtown revitalization.

The Session participated in a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) exercise to candidly evaluate all aspects of the church and its future direction.

A church-wide survey was administered, giving all members an opportunity for input, with the results then evaluated by the Task Force and then the Session.

The Task Force analyzed input from all the above sources and constructed a document reflecting the major findings of the entire Mission Study process.

The proposed Mission Study was circulated among the Session for evaluation, suggestions and corrections prior to being finalized by the Task Force.

The Mission Study was approved by the Session in a special meeting, January 8, 2011.