



SEPTEMBER 2023

ISSUE 23-9

# The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

## AT A GLANCE

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## PSALM 53: HEARTS OF UNBELIEF

From Pastor Mackay

*The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God...'  
-Psalm 53:1*

“What would tell me that something is wrong?” Don’t we ask that question all the time? When our doctor sends us test results that are a jumble of numbers, we want to know. When we are leaning over the engine of a car and it’s making a noise, that question runs through our mind. We need to know symptoms, so we can pursue a cure.

In Psalm 53, David reflects on the unbeliever. It is worth our time to consider his inspired thoughts in order to keep a close watch on ourselves. Hebrews tells us that Christians, secure in God’s hands, can nevertheless think, speak, and even act in ways that echo unbelief. It is unbelief that kept the Israelites from entering the promised land (Heb 3:19). Christians also can impinge our assurance, disquiet our souls, and falter in our witness if we are not diligent in rooting out unbelief.

From Psalm 53, let’s consider three symptoms of a heart of unbelief:

### 1. Saying there is no God

The most fundamental symptom of unbelief is the most fundamental lie: there is no God. Notice that the unbeliever says this “in his heart.” Before it leads to attitudes and actions, it is an inner mantra. Unbelief is not passive, but active. Paul notes similarly in Romans 1 that the unbeliever “suppresses the truth” (Rom 1:18). Just as a world class athlete must guide his training with mental determination driving him to success, so a heart of unbelief rehearses that God does not exist.

David notes that “there is none who does good, not even one.” (v. 3) This is an important verse on which we hang out doctrine of Total Depravity; that all have sinned. This applies to Christians, as well. If we say we have no sin, we lie (1 John 1:10). Christians enjoy the unspeakable gift of forgiveness from sin and freedom from its ultimate consequences. By

God’s grace, Christians have had the truth revealed to them. We are freed from this echo chamber of death. However, we can be tempted to cordon off parts of our lives and act as though they are not under God’s purview. When we knowingly sin, there is a small part of us attempting to convince our hearts that God is not real.

Striving against unbelief in this case means Christians should strive to hear God’s Word, “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” (Isa 45:22) Indeed, God is God, and he is not silent.

### 2. Misinterpreting Reality

Without the touchstone of God, a heart of unbelief does not assess truth correctly. David writes that they are, “in terror where there is no terror!” Similarly, elsewhere in Scripture God condemns false prophets for a message of peace, “where there is no peace” (e.g., Ezek. 13:10).

It is a sobering assessment. On one hand, hearts of unbelief bear the awful weight of their sin without recourse. Their own needs, weakness, and the surety of their death hound them constantly. The law is written on their hearts (Rom 2:15), under which they sense the guilt and shame of sin without relief. On the other hand, in a whiplash with which we are all too familiar, hearts of unbelief also whisper that, because God is not God, actually everything is just fine! We are *not* condemned.

Christians know to lean not on our own understanding, but in all our ways to acknowledge God, and he will make our paths straight. (Prov 3:5-6) In Jesus, God has made peace with us, and has assured that even though his providence may at times be mysterious, no hardship will pry us from his hand. Christians are free both from the fear of death and sin, and can face our neediness with confidence, knowing our loving Father has given us all that we need.

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### 3. Acting out sin

Out of unbelieving hearts flows wicked words, thoughts, and deeds. David enumerates that hearts of unbelief do wrong (v. 1), they partner in doing wrong (v. 3), and often it is the people of God who bear the brunt of their sin. Unbelievers “eat up [God’s] people like bread.” (v. 4)

Christians continue to sin, which harms one another. However, we know the truth of God’s

victory. As David foresaw, salvation has indeed come from Zion in the person of Jesus Christ.

So, we can boldly root out the echoes of unbelief that show in our hearts and lives. After all, we have *new* hearts by God’s grace. Let us then, not be dismayed or discouraged, but strive together to live in the light as he is in the light.

In Christ,  
Mackay ■

# FALL KICK OFF

**Combined Small Group following  
worship on September 10.**

Our new discipleship staff will highlight ministry in the coming year...

Myers McKinney, Associate Minister for Family Discipleship - Adult Small Groups and Rock on Wednesday

Walker Kirkpatrick, Director of Student Ministry - Ministry efforts for middle and high school students and their families.

Stewardship and Finance will present a preview of the 2024 Budget. Come learn how we can join together in ministry.

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday (usually). The following are highlights from the meeting on August 22.

- Shepherd lists were confirmed by the session, with elders sent out to begin their quarterly contact work.
- A time of prayer was offered to God for many of our congregation.
- Myers McKinney reported on his early work and short term goals. He is beginning a multi-week rotation around the adult small groups to learn our ministries.
- Elder chairmen reported on the work of their various committees.
- An ad hoc committee has completed its work, recommending additional money in the 2024 budget that will be saved for major maintenance reserve.
- Stewardship and Finance reported that as of July 31, budgeted income is at 50% of the annual budget. The general operating balance is \$159,760.
- Walker Kirkpatrick reported on three avenues of ministry for middle and high school students in the coming year. Sunday morning Sunday school, Sunday night youth group, and twice weekly youth Bible study.
- Evangelism and Outreach committee reported their support for a pickle ball outreach program.
- The session approved a Fall Kickoff for Sunday, September 10th.

## PRAYER FOCUS

**SEPT 3** - Faith City church plant,  
St. Cloud, MN

**SEPT 10** - Fall Kickoff: Discipleship  
Ministries and 2024 Budget

**SEPT 17** - Children and Youth  
(worldly pressure)

**SEPT 24** - Persecuted Church

# Discipleship

**NO GREATER LOVE.  
NO GREATER FRIEND.**

**From Pastor Myers**

*I have called you friends  
-John 15:15*

We are in the midst of a profoundly deep identity crisis.

This is, of course, painfully obvious. I don't have to tell you. All you have to do is to try following current events, politics or culture without getting sucked into so-called "identity politics." You will not get very far. On the one hand, no generation has been more obsessed with identity than our generation (the millennial and Gen Z generations). And yet, ironically, no generation has been more confused about identity, than our generation. We are simultaneously the most identity focused people and yet also the least identity secure people perhaps in history.

This insecurity leads to a pervasive anxiety. That is why the 20th century poet W.H. Auden penned his 1948 Pulitzer prize winning poem *The Age of Anxiety*, a poem which beautifully captures the angst of modern man as he struggles with a scientific and industrial world which leads to secularism, a secularism which, inevitably, leads to nihilism.

What is nihilism? It is the throwing up of one's hands in despair and declaring that "everything is meaningless!" (Ecclesiastes 1:2) that "nothing really matters" (Freddie Mercury) that life is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing" (Macbeth).

And the sick joke of secularism and the Godless world it leaves us with is that when that nihilism starts to close in, when the emptiness starts to take its toll, all the "solutions" which modern man invents to try to remedy the situation only make his situation worse.

This is also, of course, painfully obvious. I don't

have to tell you. Social media has made us more anti-social. Greater platforms given to more cultural and political viewpoints has made us more polarized. Globalism has made us more tribal and we could go on. Great.

But as anxious as our world seems to be now, as close to despair as we seem to be now, it could be worse. Think of Jesus' disciples as they faced the fact that their master would soon endure a cruel, slow death? Were they anxious? Were they on the verge of despair? Surely their situation must have been at least comparable to ours, if not far worse than ours.

In John's account of this final night, Jesus himself picks up on his disciples' anxiety. He can sense that his disciples are "troubled" (John 14:1, 27), that sorrow has filled their hearts (John 15:6) and that they are filled with the anguish of a mother in labor (John 16:21).



What does Jesus say to his troubled disciples, lonely, soon to be scattered disciples? What he says is simple but important "No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends"

There's no need to overthink this.

The friendship of Jesus is the only way out of our anxiety and emptiness, not just "out there" in the culture but "in here" in our families and in our own hearts. Why? It is because it is in Him, in Jesus, that we will find every spiritual blessing corresponding to our every spiritual need (Eph 3:1). It is in Christ Jesus that all of God's promises to us find their 'yes' and 'amen' (2 Cor 1:20).

In the midst of a world that is scarce on true friendship, Christ himself is the greatest friend we could ever have. Whereas the foundation of most friendships is shared blood (Prov 18:24), the foundation of the greatest friendship is shed blood (1 Pet 3:18). Jesus sticks closer than any brother or sister; closer than any husband or wife; closer than any father or mother. It is union with Christ by the Spirit which Christ has poured out that we have a friend in our destitution, a hope for our anxiety, and fullness in our emptiness (Eph 3:19). ■

# ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

**Begins Wednesday, September 6**  
**Potluck meal**

**FIRST WEDNESDAYS** - Potluck and Fellowship

**SECOND WEDNESDAYS** - Breakout Night

- "Unbreakably His: Part A" Led by Pastor Myers  
Pastor Myers will teach on bible narratives that illustrate tenants of Reformed Theology
- Women's Study led by Rachel Smith
- Children's program, "The Biggest Story"
- Middle and High School, "The Bible Project"

**THIRD WEDNESDAYS** - Prayer Meeting and Hymn Sing

**FOURTH WEDNESDAYS** - Lesson Series

- "Unbreakably His: Part B" by Pastor Mackay  
Pastor Mackay will teach on the confessional/theological perspective of Reformed Theology
- Children's program, "The Biggest Story"
- Middle and High School, "The Bible Project"

**FIFTH WEDNESDAYS** - Break

**Want to help?**

**Contact Scott Crews**

(Discipleship Committee chair)

if you'd like to help with...

- Kitchen crew/clean-up
- Children's programming
- Fellowship Night programs

BEGINNING WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 5-6PM

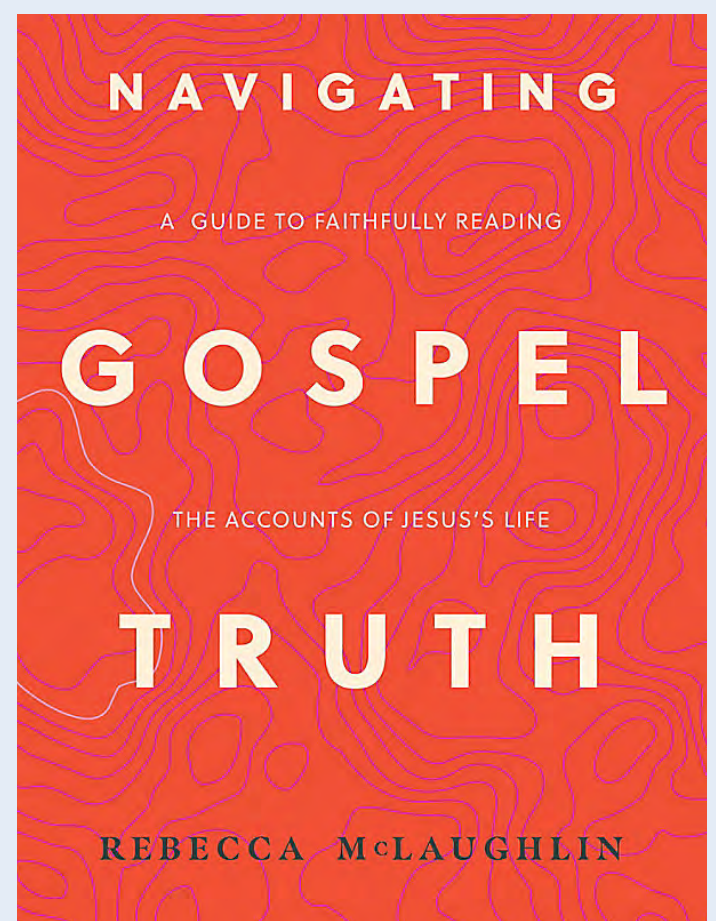
*Even If*  
A STUDY OF HABBAKUK

A TIME OF FELLOWSHIP, DISCUSSION, AND SPIRITUAL CARE SPECIFICALLY FOR MOTHERS

CHILD CARE PROVIDED FOR BABIES TO AGE 6

LOCATED IN THE CLASSROOM OFF THE BREEZEWAY. THERE WILL BE A SIGN :)

WE WILL USE "EVEN IF: A STUDY OF HABBAKUK" BY DAILY GRACE CO. TO GUIDE US



**ROW Women's  
Bible Study**

**Every 2nd Wednesday**

This year we will be using *Navigating Gospel Truth: A Guide to Faithfully reading the Accounts of Jesus's Life* by Rebecca McLaughlin

Led by Rachel Smith

## “I CAN’T SING!”

**From Vince Treadway**

Many people have made the statement to me, "I can't sing!" The translation of this statement can be one of many, but here are a few:

*"I was told as a child that I couldn't sing, so therefore I don't"*

*"I was rejected from the choir as a child and told I should not sing, so I don't"*

*"I don't like the sound of my voice, and I'm self-conscious about it, so I just keep quiet"*

*"I have been told that I'm singing the wrong notes, and I can't tell one from another, so I just don't sing"*

*"My heart is so heavy that I can't summon the emotional energy to sing, so I don't"*

*"I was told by my spouse that I had a lousy voice, so I don't sing"*

The list goes on and on! I am deeply grieved by these statements because they are based on hurts and untruths and are depriving the person of one of the greatest joys on earth—singing praise to God!

One true story that comes to mind is about a lady in one of the churches I served who came up to me and said,

"You said you can help anybody sing, and I have always been told that I shouldn't, but I want to! Can you help me?"

I told her, "Yes! I can help you find your voice and begin to enjoy singing."

She did come to me, and I was able to help her understand that she was trying to sing in a range that was outside of her physical capability; she was actually a tenor!

She said to me, "But I sound like a man! Aren't women supposed to sing high notes?"

I told her that male and female voices differ greatly, and that there are women who can sing very low notes, and men who can sing very high notes, and it does not make them any less of a woman or a man, it is simply the voice that they have. Once she realized that she needed to sing much lower than she had been attempting to, she was indeed able to find the right notes and sing in church with great joy!

I will never forget her coming to me a few weeks later and giving me a big hug and with a great smile saying,

"You helped me to sing! Now I can sing in church! Praise the Lord!"

The truth is, most, if not all, people can sing, and it is not that hard to learn how. I would encourage everyone who has made the statement, "I can't sing," to come to me and let me help you find your voice and enjoy the pleasure of praising God with it in worship and at home! I promise I will not embarrass or ridicule you in any way, as I have helped many find their voices.

If you are unwilling or unable to come to me and get some vocal coaching, be willing to "make a joyful noise to the Lord" and sing for the pleasure of the Lord, if for no one else. If you think about it, the Lord gave you your voice, and He knows what it sounds like, and He still wants to hear you sing His praise!

*Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob!*

*Psalm 81:1*

*Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.*

*James 5:13*

*Sing to God, sing praises to His name; lift up a song to Him who rides through the deserts; his name is the Lord, exult before Him!*

*Psalm 68:4 ■*



# Family Ministry

## WORDS FROM WALKER

From Walker Kirkpatrick

Hi All!

Thank you for making this summer a great one! We had lots of events, food, games, fun, and fellowship. Everything from lake days to board games helped make this summer a blast!

It was truly a blessing, but just because the school year is upon us doesn't mean we are going to slow down! Trust me when I say there will be many events, Youth Group meetings, bible studies, and more ahead of us. Mainly want you to know the three main avenues youth can be involved in ministry at FPCLW.

### **YOUTH GROUP**

First is Youth Group. It is taking place weekly on Sunday nights from 4:30 – 6:30pm. This is where all youth in Middle and High School can gather together to hear a

lesson, worship, play games, and get a little snack too. I will be lead through different lesson series. Over the summer we studied Philipians, for example.

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Second is Sunday School. This takes place weekly on Sunday mornings right after church. Lessons from Great Commission Ministries guide us and we enjoy fellowship over a small breakfast.

### **ROCK ON WEDNESDAY (ROW)**

Third is ROW. This is our church wide Wednesday night program. This takes place weekly from 6:00 – 7:30pm. Our youth will follow the rotation as described in the Discipleship section in this Diligent issue. Each week we will have supper together. On the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month our youth will gather after dinner for a bible study using The Bible Project series.

Please, feel free to reach out to me via text or email with any questions, comments, or concerns. Also, please reach out if you would like to help volunteer or even potentially open your home to host a youth program!

Thanks so much and God Bless!

Walker ■

SAVE  
THE  
DATE

**Youth Sunday School, 11:00-12:00**

Every Sunday in the Game Room after worship

**ROW, 6:00-7:30pm**

Every Wednesday in the Fellowship Hall  
(Youth Bible Study on 2nd & 4th Wednesdays)

**September 3<sup>rd</sup>**

No Youth Group

**September 10<sup>th</sup>, 5:00-8:00pm**

Dodgeball, Dinner, and Devotion

**September 17<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-6:30pm**

Parent and Student Meeting & Youth Group

**September 24<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-6:30pm**

Youth Group





Late night pizza and fellowship with High School

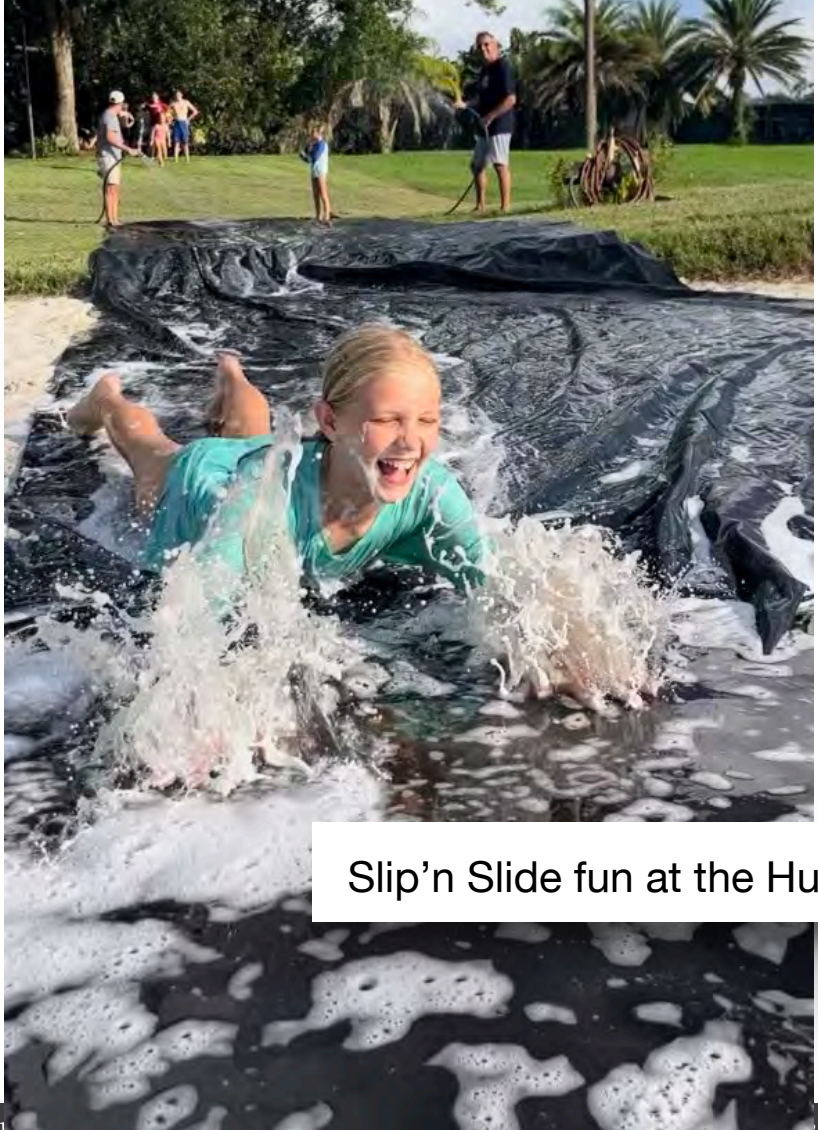
Joint Youth Group with Frostproof ARP hosted by Michelle & Stewart Hurst



Water balloon fights, relay races, and more at the Hursts!



Walker presented the victory oar for FPCLW youth triumph over Frostproof ARP at the first annual Cardboard Regatta!



Slip'n Slide fun at the Hursts



# Children's Ministry

## CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Children's Sunday school has restarted for the school year!

We are always looking for volunteers to help raise up our covenant children! If you are interested in teaching, helping, or providing breakfast for our kids please let Ed Lamb, Katie Lippert or Angie Crews know!

**Sunday school will be held jointly in the Fellowship hall on September 10**

# The Biggest Story

Beginning this year ROW Kids (PK-5<sup>th</sup>) will use *The Biggest Story* curriculum to guide their lessons.

**Every 2nd Wednesday and Every 4th Wednesday**

**Teaching Team: Cindy Nelson, Faith Treadway, Joyce & Carl McCollum**

“God’s story is the most beautiful story ever told, full of wonder and scandalous grace. There is nothing more important for the younger generation than imparting to them a rich vision of the gospel. “The Biggest Story” includes teaching material that will help children understand God’s plan to redeem the world through his Son, Jesus.”



## MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

### BIRTHDAYS

September 1, Elaine Rawlings  
September 2, David Caldwell  
September 3, Maggie Hunt  
September 5, Ed Lamar  
September 5, Patty Mckeeman  
September 8, Kay Klinefelter  
September 8, Gerald Lippert  
September 8, Ger Lippert  
September 9, Golda Carson  
September 9, Kathleen Violette  
September 10, Donald Krpata  
September 10, Jaden Youmans  
September 11, Jan Lewis  
September 12, Samuel Wunker  
September 13, Debbie Pace  
September 14, Maija Baynes  
September 14, Tim Abele  
September 14, Karla Campbell  
September 14, Cecilia Smith  
September 16, Laura Lynn Berkau  
September 16, Dionne Kohl  
September 17, Joe Swanson  
September 20, Jill Smith  
September 21, Kerry Klinefelter  
September 22, Ed Lamb  
September 24, Colton Bass  
September 25, Alice Campbell  
September 25, Ron Campbell  
September 25, Hailey Hunt  
September 26, Jonaven Knepper  
September 27, Lorin Bice  
September 27, Vicki Flint  
September 28, Von Wilson  
September 30, Donna Carter

### ANNIVERSARIES

Carol & Dale Bourdette, September 1  
Georgianna & Steve Sorensen, September 6  
Alice & Roger Campbell, September 13  
Cindy & David Caldwell, September 18  
Nancy & Loren Furland, September 20  
Jan & Jimmy Kahler, September 22  
Cindy & Charlie Henry, September 23  
Trish & Tom Kohl, September 23

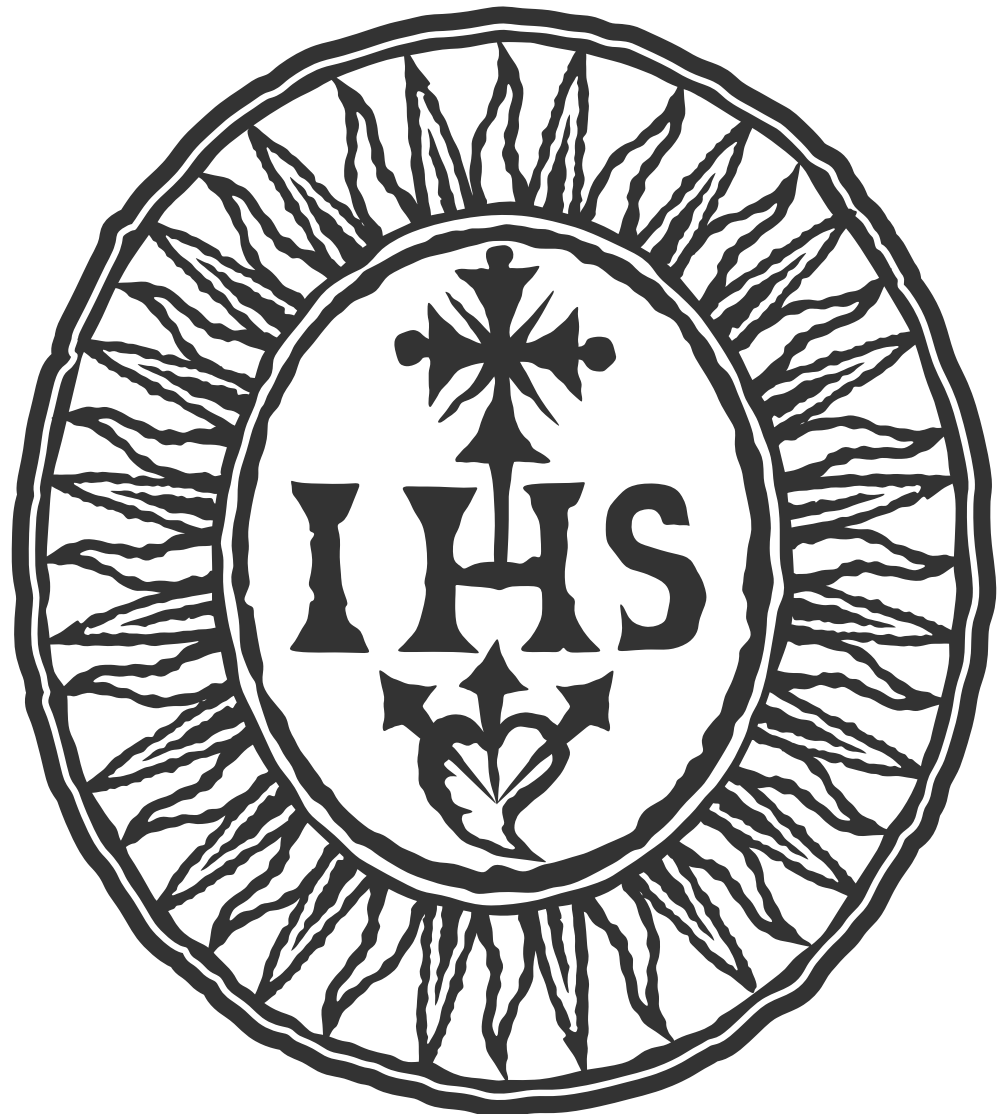
# Church Family

Thank you



I just want to thank  
all of our church family  
for their prayers and  
cards while I recuperate.

God Bless,  
Jim Ayers





First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales  
 16 N 3rd St, Lake Wales, FL 33853  
 Phone: 863.676.0711  
 fpclw.org

## CHURCH OFFICERS

### ELDERS

#### 2023

Scott Crews  
 Doug Pace  
 David Falk

#### 2025

Tony Woods  
 Jim Underwood

#### 2024

Daniel Hunt  
 David Nelson  
 Andy Hunt

#### 2026

Stewart Hurst  
 Ed Lamb  
 Jimmy Seay

### DEACONS

#### 2023

Susan Coyne  
 Bob Hulen  
 Michael Matteson  
 Karla Campbell

#### 2025

June Ullman  
 Cindy Turner

#### 2024

Leah Gibson  
 Dan Miller

**Moderator:** Rev. Mackay Smith  
**Clerk of Session:** David Nelson  
**Chairman of Deacons:** Karla Campbell  
**Deacon Secretary:** Lea Gibson  
**Chm. of the Congregation:** Jim Weaver  
**Treasurer:** Michelle Hurst  
**Asst. Treasurer:** Daniel Hunt