

Glacier Camp on Flathead Lake

Five Presbyterian Women Attend the August PW Retreat!



Story and Photos by Marla Wilckens

First Presbyterian Church members: Ann Marie Miller, Paula Jackson, Karen Grindeland, Marlys Ridgeley and Marla Wilckens joined other Presbyterian Women from around the state at the annual Presbyterian Women retreat, August 15-17 at Glacier Camp on Flathead lake.

There were 32 attendees who enjoyed art, food, music, and lecture activities over the three-day retreat. This year's theme "Partnering in Solidarity" focused on the challenges our Salish-Kootenai neighbors face on reservation lands.

Several women worked on stuffing "Cuddle Buddies" provided by the Helena group. The small dolls will be donated to social and law enforcement agencies to provide comfort to children in stressful situations.

Speakers were Jody Perez (Salish-Kootenai Housing Authority) and her husband Juan Perez (Director of Admissions, Salish-Kootenai College, Pablo, MT). They gave an overview of their duties, successes, and challenges they are facing.

Don Roberts (Never Alone Support Services) gave a moving testimony on his own addiction recovery and how his organization is helping others in their addiction journey.

The retreat culminated in a Sunday morning church service with a sermon by camp director and pastor Tim Lanham.

With Hebrews 11:8-12:2 as a guide, Pastor Tim reminded us to remember our Christian faith heritage and to look to Jesus for direction and guidance.

Next year's Presbyterian Women's retreat will be August 7-8, 2026 at the Glacier Camp.

We are still going strong!



Standing Together Through Life's Ups and Downs

By Starfish Scholar Rhizza A. Valderama

Back in 2015, when we were new to the ministry and had just become Church Workers, I had no close friends to turn to and felt discouraged as we adjusted to our new environment. We faced financial difficulties because we had chosen to be full-time workers, and with Hanna being so young at that time, we struggled to provide for her needs. Although I had friends, I felt they wouldn't understand me. I tried seeking help online but found nothing until I discovered a group for Pastors in 2015. Since no one there knew me, I felt comfortable sharing my feelings openly.

I began posting about my hardships and current situation in the ministry in 2015. Eventually, I noticed a comment from someone with a name similar to mine, Risa Paul. Over the months that followed, we became friends and shared our experiences in our respective churches. We realized we were going through similar struggles even though we were in different time zones—when it was morning for me, it was night for her, and vice versa. It was a huge relief to have someone who understood my feelings and could pray for me from the other side of the world. I am grateful for the free internet and for finding someone to support me as I continued serving the Lord.

I thank the Lord because, at that time, I was praying just for a friend, but He gave me even more; someone who became my spiritual mother from those early years in ministry to this day. Over the years, we have shared many milestones, including birthdays and both happy and sad moments. We have exchanged good morning and good night messages every day, and when we miss it, something feels missing.

Nanay Risa has helped us continue dreaming and strengthened our faith, especially when people discriminated against us for not attending formal school or Bible School. Whenever something bad happened over the years, we would talk and encourage each other that everything would be alright. When good things happened, we celebrated and remembered that God's faithfulness was greater than hard times. Since meeting her in 2015, I have never felt alone. I know Nanay Risa, though not related by blood, is truly the mother I longed for.

It has now been 10 years since 2015, yet we have not met in person. I have always dreamed of the day we would finally meet and wondered what it would feel

like when that day comes. I imagine us having coffee together and talking about our days in person, not just online as we have been doing for years. In 2020, we tried to meet, but the pandemic disrupted our plans.

Now, in 2024, I am hoping this will finally be the year I meet Nanay Risa. My kids are very excited, and I know when we finally see each other, we will both laugh and cry with mixed emotions.

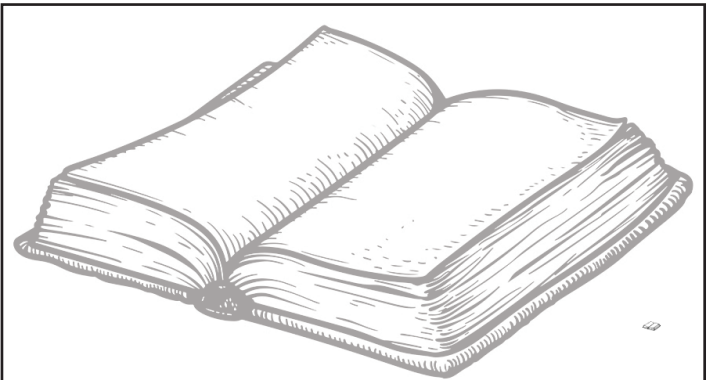
When I tell my friends about Nanay Risa, they are always amazed because even though we have only met online since 2015, she has become more than a friend; she has become a mother to me. She watched over me during my studies and stayed up late at night to watch my practical preaching for school—even though she didn't understand our language—just to support my studies.

For the past 10 years, I have prayed that the Lord would allow us to meet at the perfect time. When that meeting finally takes place, I plan to write an article documenting everything we accomplish together.

I thank the Lord for all the opportunities He has given me through my relationship with Nanay Risa, starting from when we met online in 2015.

A friend loves at all times

Proverbs 17:17a



Let's Meet in Graham Parlor

The next all-church prayer session will be September 21 after the regular church service in the Graham Parlor at 11:30. Greet your friends in the Social Hall, grab a snack and a cup of coffee, and come up to the Parlor. We will be praying for the church, our friends, and any other thing

“Living and Walking by the Spirit”: A Deep Dive into the Holy Spirit

So, I’ve never been much interested in the Holy Spirit. By the time I get through God and Jesus Christ, well, the Holy Spirit seems to be an add on.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and ... the Holy Spirit. We pray in the name of all three, but how often do we think, feel, believe with an awareness of only the first two?

As Jesus ascended into heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit—the Helper—so that we could be true and living witnesses for Christ. But by the time we get through God and Jesus Christ it seems there was no bandwidth left for the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gets one line in the Apostles’ Creed. “I believe in the Holy Spirit.” That’s it. That’s all.

In the Nicene Creed Holy Spirit gets a paragraph: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

But what does the Holy Spirit do? Is there a job description? How do we know if we can feel or hear the Holy Spirit?

Then, I found this book: “Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit” by Author Francis Chan.

The title grabbed me and wouldn’t let me go. After explaining all this to Pastor Risa, we decided to do a multipart series about the Holy Spirit. Titled “Living and Walking by the Spirit”

To give you all a head start here are the scriptures we will be studying by week:

Week 1: Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit

Galatians 5:25

Week 2: Who is This Holy Spirit?

John 4:125-21, 25 and 15:26

Week 3: Powered out at Pentecost

Joel 2 and Acts 2

Week 4: Taken, Quenched, Grieved

Ps 51:11,1 Thess 5:19,

Ephesians 4:30, Matthew 4:1

Week 5: Blows where he wills

John 3

Gifts of the Spirit

Corinthian 12:4-11, Romans 12:6-8

Isaiah 11:2-3

Week 6: Produces Fruit

Galatians 5:22-25

Paul Synder is turning 90

You are all invited to the party!

Dear Friends, Paul is celebrating his 90th birthday and you are all invited!

Where: **The History Museum**

When: **Saturday, September 13th, 2025**

Time: **2:30-4:30 p.m.**

Your friendship and presence will mean the world to Paul, and that will be the greatest gift of all (no gifts please). We hope you can come and share in the joy of this milestone day.

Warmly, Paul and family



Town Pump has again selected FISH to be part of the 2025 Town Pump Foundation Campaign. Town Pump will match every donation that adds up to the total \$25,000.00 from September 1st through November 28th. What a way to double our money.

Please send your donation to

FISH P.O. Box 662 Great Falls, MT 59403

Thank you for your support of FISH

FISH Directors

PW meets Sept 20

Check out Sunday bulletins and e-blasts for Further details

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

From Ann Marie Miller, Fellowship Moderator

Country/Western Potluck: Join us after Worship on Sunday, September 7, 2025, in the Social Hall. Round up your favorite cowboy bunkhouse recipes, like campfire beans or some other grub to share.

A cart will be inside the Sanctuary door for deliveries to the kitchen via the elevator, if needed.

Should your dish require something other than being placed on the serving table, please join us in the kitchen to finalize your fixings.

We'll provide beverages, rolls, butter, and dessert. Cake and ice cream will be served in celebration of our two baptisms. I look forward to seeing y'all.

Coffee Hour: Much appreciation and a huge thank you to all who have contributed goodies to our Sunday Coffee Hour and to those who have helped with clean up. The fellowship in the room is heartwarming. Come join us, all are welcome.

Future dates for your calendar:

9/17/25 @ 6 PM - Dinner and a Movie
The Chosen, Season 5. Look for more information in our weekly bulletin. The sign-up sheet for dinner contributions will be in Social Hall. Dinner is served promptly at 6 PM.

11/30/2025 Advent begins

11/30/2025 Sunday - Decorating the church
following worship service

1/04/2026 Sunday - Undecorate the church
following worship service



Lord, send the gift of your Spirit

To fill this place and myself and the world.

Touch me with truth that burns like fire
With beauty that moves me like the wind;

And set me free, Lord,
Free to try new ways of living
Free to forgive myself and others
Free to love and laugh and sing
Free to lay aside my burden of security
Free to join the battle for justice and peace
Free to see and listen and wonder again
At the gracious mystery of things and
persons

Free to be to give to receive
To rejoice as a child of your Spirit.

And, Lord,
Teach me how to dance
To turn around
And come down where I want to be
In the arms and heart of your people
And in you,
That I may praise and enjoy you forever.

Ted Loder

Habakkuk is Focus of September 2025 Tim Talks at Glacier Camp by Flathead Lake



"Yet I in the Lord rejoice. I will exult in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength and he makes me feet as a deer. Upon his heights he makes me tread."

-- Habakkuk 3.18, 19a

The September TIM Talks (September 14-16) will

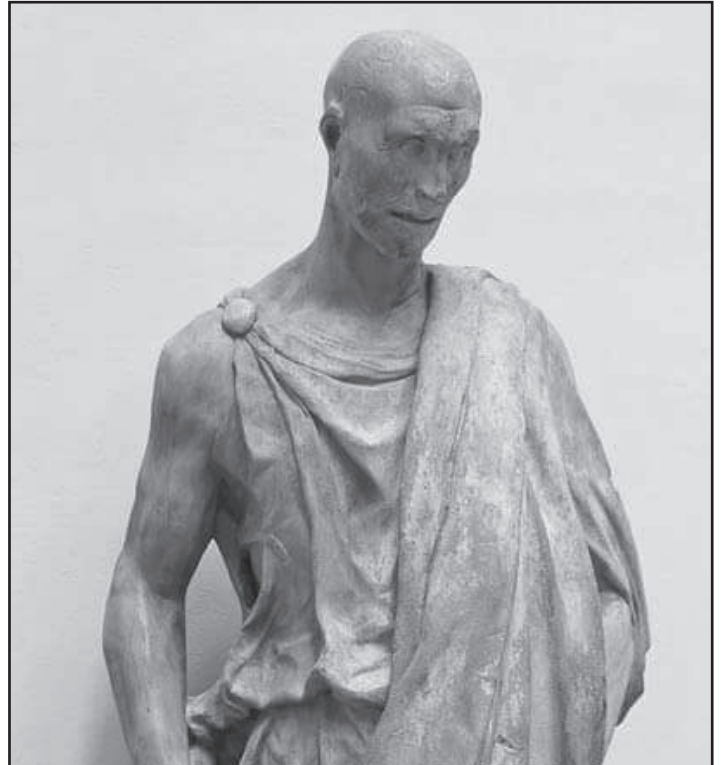
explore the book of Habakkuk -- which was the study focus of my sabbatical last Winter. In explaining to people that I would be working on a translation and commentary of this text, the most common responses expressed incredulity. "You're going to work on what???" The eighth book of twelve volumes in the so-called "Minor" Prophets (minor being a reference to their length not to their content),

Habakkuk is not particularly well known -- even by people of committed Christian faith. Habakkuk's witness is short and suffers from a tendency to get lost in the midst of longer and better known books of Scripture.

Its destiny involves the fate of the Bible's other short books like Jude, Philemon, Obadiah, and Nahum. Despite its short length (only 56 verses long) and relative obscurity, Habakkuk has a vital and relevant message for people of faith. Have you ever looked at the world situation and wondered why things seem so out of balance?

Have you ever questioned the existence and problem of evil? Have you looked at human suffering and wondered why the God you believe in could allow such terrible things to happen? Has God's silence in the face of evil ever troubled you? Habakkuk wondered about these things too.

Though the prophet's words are ancient (my research concludes that they come from around 2600 years ago), the concerns Habakkuk gave voice to are timeless. "How long," the prophet wondered, "shall I cry and you will not hear?" The world around him is falling apart. And Habakkuk wants to know where God is in the midst of all the violence and destruction. Why



does a good God allow evil to happen? Or, to quote Habakkuk: "Why do you cause me to see wickedness and look upon trouble?"

The short book of Habakkuk captures emotions of doubt, despair, trust, and hope. Its ancient witness offers relevant and meaningful guidance to people of faith even today who struggle with a broken world and the persistent, enduring problem of evil.

During our time together, we will explore the prophet's witness and how his words both speak to our lived experience in 2025 and also articulate reasons for hope in God's sometimes hidden but always gracious providence. Join us for lively discussion and debate, nurturing Christian fellowship, and great conversation.

Full and partial scholarships are available. Email timothy@glaciercamp.org to register or for more information.

TIM Talks 2025 Rates:

Commuters \$ 90/person
Single Room \$250/person
Double Room \$125/person
(all meals included)

SEPTEMBER PENSAMIENTOS Pastor Risa Paul

One of the biggest helps I received when I returned to the pastorate in 2014 after a hiatus to keep bees (and kids) was finding a community of pastors online. This group was all pastors, and all of us from small churches. (Did you know that most churches in the US have fewer than 100 people in worship?) This group was so diverse. There were Catholic priests, Presbyterians, and Pentecostals, and Baptists and - well, just like Baskin-Robbins, all the flavors you can imagine.

And every once in a while one would try to convince everyone else that they were theologically wrong - and that pastor was the one who was right. But the rules of the group discouraged that and encouraged us to focus on what we felt and needed from a group that understood the very special challenges of our call.

I loved it, and still do.

In 2015, I began noticing a few posts from a pastor named Rhizza. And because of the similarity of our names, I began watching for her posts. It was clear she and her husband were called to ministry, and it was also clear that they were just starting out in ministry. In March, she asked for a mentor from the group, and because of the similarity of our names, I offered. Then, as we began talking, I learned that although I am in Montana and she is in the Philippines, we knew some of the same people! And that her husband's name, Paulo, was the same as my last name.

And we greeted as the time difference allowed - a practice we still do morning and evening. And the church in Hot Springs helped her husband attend school even as we are helping her.

I watched Hanna and Jafet grow up and we celebrated birthdays and victories and cried together with both personal and ministry problems and failures. She has become truly a daughter of my heart. We pray for each other and discuss struggles, joys and victories. I planned to go to the Philippines in 2020 to see Paulo graduate, but the pandemic stopped me. Now we are looking forward to finally meeting in person, probably later this year.

So why am I telling you all this. This story, our story, is about community, and about taking risk for community. And it is about being the body of Christ together. And shared in a hope that we can continue to build our community both inside and outside of our walls. Take the risk. Someone told me once that online friends were not truly friends. True - and definitely NOT true. As our story shows.

***By this will all people know that you are My disciples,
that you have love one for another! John 13:35***

***Embracing Grace,
Embracing Community***

Happy Birthday

SEPTEMBER

Bob Lindeman	1
Gene Thayer	4
Barb Flaherty	8
Denise Mort	9
Tom Hazen	10
Adam Ronholdt	13
Paula Jackson	13
Paul Lindstrom	14
Rebecca Hannant	14
Ken Nordquist	20
Pearl Hansen	20
Rees Davies	22
William Bronson	22
Jan Gorman	23
Ed Austin	25
Ramona Rognaldson	25
Lynn Bloemendaal	27
Tracy Bratcher	28

The [Pressbyterian](#) is a monthly publication of First Presbyterian Church of Great Falls
Deadline for submissions: 20th of each month

Send pictures or story ideas our way
Email articles, ideas and/or pictures to:

secretary@firstpresgfmt.org

Subject: NEWSLETTER

For images, please include the name of
photographer and any information you'd
like added to the newsletter.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GREAT FALLS

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EMAIL: secretary@firstpresgfmt.org

OFFICE HOURS:

MONDAY - THURSDAY 8 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

FRIDAY 8 A.M. TO NOON

SUNDAY SERVICE: 10 A.M.

FELLOWSHIP FOLLOWING SERVICE

ALL ARE WELCOME

Calendar for September:

- 2: Tuesday**
4 p.m. Property Committee
- 3: Wednesday**
11:30 a.m. My One Word/lunch
- 4: Thursday**
8:30 a.m. Coffee w/Risa
- 7: Communion Sunday**
- 9: Tuesday**
10 a.m. Iris Visitation
3 p.m. Finance Committee
- 11: Thursday**
8:30 a.m. Coffee w/Risa
10:30 a.m. Grandview Visitation
6:30 p.m. Session
- 14: Sunday Personal Prayer**
11:30 Individual Prayer Sanctuary
- 19: Friday**
5 p.m. DEADLINE: PRESSBYTERIAN
- 20: Saturday**
10 a.m. PW meets
- 21: Sunday**
11:30 a.m. Prayer Graham Parlor
- 25: Thursday**
8:30 a.m. Coffee w/Risa
10 a.m. Mail newsletter