

TROLL

CHURCH UNDER THE BRIDGE
WACO

If you ever attend Church Under the Bridge in Waco, you will notice several folks wearing t-shirts that say “TROLL” on the front. In case you didn’t figure it out, we purposely chose that moniker many years ago when we first began meeting for worship under the Interstate 35 underpass. Remember the children’s story book called *Three Billy Goats Gruff*? It’s an old Norwegian tale about three goats seeking better grass to eat on the other side of bridge. But to get across the bridge meant overcoming a possible encounter with the troll that lived under it. The story ends with the troll being butted off the bridge by the larger billy goat, making safe passage for the animals to feast.

Trolls are usually depicted as ugly and often mean fairy tale creatures, who are feared and rejected by society. Since the homeless of Waco actually slept under the I-35/S. 4th Street bridge and they were often maligned and despised by drivers passing by, it just seemed like they fit the troll image, thus the name.

The Apostle Paul talks about being misunderstood and mistreated like trolls, even called “scum of the earth.” He says, *“when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.”* While many of the homeless, unemployed, mentally disabled, addicts, ex-offenders and morally corrupted are rejected in our society like the trolls, Church Under the Bridge believes God can make “all things new.” Jesus ate with the tax collector, shared water with the prostitute, healed those with mental illness, and even touched the lepers. How can the church do any differently and be faithful to his calling? When asked by the religious hypocrites why he hung out with the broken sinners, he reminded them “doctors are for the sick, not the healthy.”

So we not only hang out with “trolls” under our bridge, we identify with them. We are all trolls of a sort. Some may look pretty and have the world’s goods, but since even the outwardly religious are sinners, most all of us choose to acknowledge our “troll-like” nature and affirm that outward appearances don’t matter. So if you ever come down below where the goats travel above, we welcome you to join with all us trolls who recognize our unworthiness to be in the presence of a Holy God who loves and forgives. You may even want to grab a Troll t-shirt before you leave because you discover that you, too, are just another old troll, redeemed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to do his good will.