



How I Went from Worry to Hope by Gerrit Dawson, Senior Pastor

Anxiety. I had it. When our isolation first began, we had to pivot everything. I worried. Would the congregation hold together or fragment? Would people drift apart? Would people decide they don't really need a church after all? Personally, I had to wrestle with the question, "What exactly is the point of a pastor anyway?"

Staying-at-home offered more time. God led me deeper into his Word. I felt his presence more in prayer. When my sense of self and worry for the church started to wash out with the tide of worry, the Spirit of Christ Jesus flowed in through these times of reflective prayer and study. That, after all, is what our beliefs have told us all along: the Spirit is the glue who keeps us joined to Christ and to one another. He is the magnetic force of our communion. He is the skin and sinew of the body of Christ, keeping us whole.

How wonderful it has been to see the Spirit cohering our church. You didn't drift away or apart! If the stats are correct, more people, not fewer, are entering the worship we offer. Your beautiful video testimonies have linked us across all ages and stages. Hundreds of you have been checking on hundreds of you! Hundreds of boxes of food have been shared with the community. People continue to meet through Zoom or by phone. Giving continues. The staff pivoted to engage our members and produce our worship and communication, learning more and updating every week. In all, our church has proved herself dedicated, agile and energetic. I'm so thankful, and I'm so proud of you! I'm filled with hope.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

The session has called for a special offering to be collected during May to offer relief to our members and neighbors during the pandemic. The first \$10,000 will go to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, as we've tragically seen how hunger is a real need in our city. The second \$10,000 will assist the Christian Outreach Center in their work resettling the homeless population (the pandemic led to the clearing of several "tent villages" in the city). Further gifts will go to our church's Helping Hands fund to assist church members, partner ministries and neighbors affected by this crisis. We know there will be personal needs when the ripple of government support runs out. We will be offering "grace grants" to church members, who can apply discretely through Barry Phillips. We'd love to help our members over a rough patch, trusting that in years to come, as they are able, they will give back to this same Helping Hands fund. You can give online or through checks marked "Neighbors Fund."

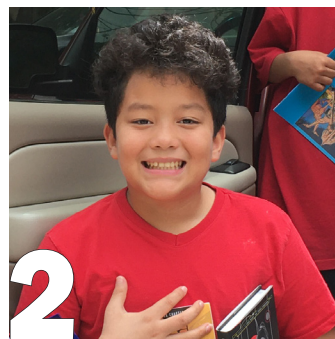
Emerging: May 17?!

In an unprecedented crisis, everything is always subject to change. But in hope, we plan using the best information we have. Our hope is that limited gathered worship will resume Sunday, May 17. That looks like two Sanctuary services, 9 am and 11 am, with capacity for 200 worshipers. We will have 50 to 60 sections marked off for family groups or singles to sit while maintaining distance. We will offer sign up online or by phone so we hopefully won't have to turn anyone away. We will still offer "up close" livestreaming for those at home. Other precautions

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Blood Drive MAY 3
 Mother's Day MAY 10
 On-site Worship Resumes MAY 17
 Confirmation Sunday MAY 17
 Senior Sunday MAY 31

Stay tuned for upcoming event information.

BIRTHS:

February 29, 2020
 Charles Rex McGinnis
 Parents are Maddie and Alan McGinnis

March 7, 2020
 Angus David Craig
 Parents are Amy and David Craig

March 25, 2020
 Seven Danger deVeer
 Parents are Melissa and Jeff deVeer

WEDDINGS:

March 14, 2020
 Mary Michael McDuff to Alex McDonald

IN MEMORIAM:

March 2, 2020
 Ginger Ingram

March 24, 2020
 Janice Pullen Hunter
 Mother of Marsha Dyess

Jeanita Darlene Howell
 Mother of Shannon Scott

Francis Kelly
 Father of Steve Kelly

March 26, 2020
 Margaret Wagenecht
 Mother of Marianne Theriot

April 14, 2020
 Ed Cailleteau

Nusrat Naqvi
 Mother of Rick Naqvi

April 24, 2020
 Peggy Tucker
 Mother of Cheryl Harrell

SANCTUARY FLOWERS

The flowers are placed . . .

MAY 17 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of John W. Wheeler by his family.

MAY 24 . . . on this Memorial Day weekend by Dr. and Mrs. Louis Cenac, Jr. who want to especially give thanks to all our servicemen and women who have kept and are keeping our country safe.

MAY 31 . . . to the glory of God and in memory of our parents, Paul and Hazel Peters and Ned and Jerry Hickel.

The flowers serve to honor a departed loved one or celebrate with thanksgiving cherished people or events. If you would like to donate flowers for a particular Sunday, please contact Kathy Mullins at 291.3095.

What a Joy It's Been! by Audra Cato, Children's Ministry Director

It has been a true joy and honor to serve as your Children's Ministry Director for nearly a decade. The children at First Presbyterian are absolutely amazing. I am blessed by the opportunity to see children come to Jesus, to hunger for him, ask questions about him and get excited at the sound of his name. I have enjoyed walking alongside parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers. Serving as your leader in Children's Ministry has been a privilege. Now it is time to take the next step of our journey. *Life is journey after all isn't it?*



Kinch has been blessed with a wonderful opportunity to advance his career in Ft. Worth, TX. Our children, Robert and Helen, will begin 4th and 6th grade come fall at Ft. Worth Christian School. We are all very excited about this new adventure and will be moving in the next couple of months. First Presbyterian has been home for 12 years and is truly what has made Baton Rouge special to us. I have always said it is the people that makes living in Baton Rouge great. You are those people!

Thank you for letting me teach your children about Jesus. Thank you for helping me to grow. Thank you for loving my family and me so well. Thank you for being you.

I hope the waters of isolation will be parted soon so we can bid you a formal farewell. Or at least give you an air-hug. If not, trust that we will return to you when time allows.



City Ministry Immediate Needs by Whitney Alexander, Associate Pastor of Missions

During the pandemic, our primary City Ministry partners have been extremely busy. I would like to give you a brief update on each.

Christian Outreach Center is in need of large quantities of supplies for men, women and children of socks, underwear, hygiene products (soap, toothpaste, razors, deodorants, shaving cream, toothbrushes and feminine hygiene products) and diapers for ages infant to pull-ups. Please drop off at the church on Tuesdays or Thursdays near the 8th Street kitchen door from 10 am to 2 pm. We need volunteers immediately to help sort all these items.

Gardere Community Christian School is very grateful for the food that has been donated the past five weeks to make large boxes of non-perishable items for families. To date, we have delivered 150 boxes to the families of GCCS from March 23 to April 30. A big thank you to Nancy Zito, Julia Keblani, Lisa Head, Hans Othmer, Annette Lamond and Chelsea and Luke Haskew for their help in organizing this food drive! Please continue bringing non-perishable food items to the 8th Street kitchen door Tuesdays or Thursdays from 10 am to 2

pm through May 31. Items needed: red beans, long grain rice, peanut butter, grape jelly, green beans, peas, corn, black beans, baked beans, mixed vegetables, mac and cheese, thin spaghetti, spaghetti sauce, chicken noodle soup, canned tuna, cereal (corn flakes, frosted flakes, rice crisps), mashed potato packs, grits packs, applesauce, chocolate drink, paper towels and toilet tissue.



Open Air Ministry under the leadership of Pastor Joseph Moore has continued to provide bags of food for the homeless and poor of our community every Sunday from 12 noon-1.30 pm. First Presbyterian has been to their ministry site behind St. Vincent de Paul for the past four Sundays and has delivered 50 boxes of food. As of April 30, First Presbyterian Church had provided boxes of food for a total of 200 families.

God Paved a Path for Me by Jaime Carnaggio, Director of Women's Ministry

I am beyond honored and humbled to step into this important role as your Women's Ministry Director. In some ways, I'm an unlikely choice! I'm just your average small-town Louisiana girl with a business degree from Alabama (the horror!), a wife and a mom of three busy kids. But as I reflect on these past several years, I can see how, in God's great sovereignty, he has been paving this path for me; leading me to this place. I feel certain I am exactly where he wants me.

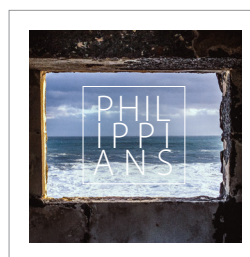


It's been such a joy to serve voluntarily and on staff, and this opportunity is a wildly unexpected answered prayer. So despite my (many!) shortcomings, I promise to continue to work passionately for you and more importantly, for the Lord, always seeking his wisdom and guidance. I have been an expository Bible teacher for several years and love to help others encounter the Scriptures in a way that conforms us to the incarnate Jesus. More than that, I am an ever-eager student of the Word, ready to learn and grow alongside of you.

I love this church and the women of this church more than I can put into words, and I pray that together, we grow deeper in our individual and collective relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ and encourage each other as ambassadors of the gospel.

Women's Ministry 5-Week Philippians Study

Women's Ministry is so excited about a new 5-week study of Philippians! In this joyful letter to a beloved congregation, Paul encourages believers to continue to grow in love and service to God and one another. The exuberance in this letter is surprising given the fact that Paul wrote it while under house arrest and awaiting a trial that would likely result in his execution. Why such a happy letter from jail? Paul's focus was on the advancement of the gospel which was happening despite, and even because of, his circumstances.



The same lesson is offered two times each week. You choose what works best for you: Tuesdays @ 7 pm or Thursdays @ 10 am. The study started April 28 but anyone is welcome to join at any time. Added bonus: The ladies of River Community Church are partnering with us and joining our Zoom calls! Contact Jaime Carnaggio (jaime@fpcbr.org) if you have questions or need the Zoom links.

Blood Drive, May 3

The LifeShare blood mobile will be in the church parking lot Sunday, May 3 from 1-5 pm. We ask that you please sign up in advance at fpcbr.org. Please be patient the day of the drive. You will wait in your car until you receive a text telling you it's your turn. Fun things to those who donate: free t-shirt plus you'll be entered in a drawing for gift cards to some FPC member affiliated businesses: CC's Coffeehouse, Jasmine's on the Bayou, Maxwell's Market, Mimosa Handcrafted Jewelry and Smoothie King.

12 Seconds for Mom!

Honor your Mom on Mother's Day by sending us a video in which you take 10 to 12 seconds to answer this question: "My mom is great because . . ." Just start your video with "She . . ." and go from there. Send to jay@fpcbr.org by noon on Tuesday, May 5. We'll show as many as we can.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Beginning May 17, First Presbyterian Church will have two Sanctuary services: 9 am and 11 am.

MAY SERMON TEXTS

Texts are subject to change.

MAY 3, 2020
Isaiah 56: 3-8

MAY 10, 2020
To be determined

MAY 17, 2020
Ezekiel 34: 11, 15
Isaiah 62: 10-12

MAY 24, 2020
Isaiah 49: 16
Isaiah 59: 15-16, 20
Isaiah 62: 12

MAY 31, 2020
Jeremiah 31: 3
Zephaniah 3: 14-18
Isaiah 62: 1-5

PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON
Senior Pastor

WHITNEY ALEXANDER
Associate Pastor of Missions

BARRY PHILLIPS
Ministry Executive

JIM SOLOMON
Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care & Prayer

DARIN TRAVIS
Director of Discipleship,
Men's Ministry & Young Adults



PH: 225.387.0617
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fpcbr.org

763 North Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Mother's Day Out and Preschool
225.620.0245

Baton Rouge Christian Counseling Center
225.387.2287
brchristiancounseling.com

Worry to Hope *continued from page 1*

related to sanitizing will be taken. More details to come the week of May 10. This means we will plan now to go ahead with our Confirmation service at 4 pm on May 17. If demand warrants, we may be able to add an afternoon service in the future. We'll all have to stay nimble and watch for updates.

Staff Changes

Happy news: welcome Jaime Carnaggio as our new Director of Women's Ministry. Jaime has served on our staff since 2015 as an assistant in Children's Ministry and then with our women. She's full of love for Christ, her family and our people. She's a deep, energetic and engaging Bible teacher. She connects to women of all ages and has a passion for sharing Jesus through his Word. While Jaime served 6 months as our interim director, it became clear that she was growing with the job, getting more effective as her responsibilities grew. The session has delightedly

endorsed her in this new position.

Sad news: the Cato family is moving to Texas in July. Kinch has taken a position as assistant head of a Christian school in Fort Worth. That means we will be losing Audra, who has worked so effectively for a decade. She began leading the renovation of our nursery ministry, turning it into one of our most successful programs.



Then we asked her to lead Childhood Ministry, and we've seen wonderful growth in the depth of ministry and in numbers of children. We're going to miss Kinch, Audra, Robert and Helen, but we pray a wonderful new life for them, knowing they will bless many wherever they are. Meanwhile, join us in prayer as we search for a new staff leader in Childhood.

Genit

Zoom Adult Bible Studies. The Lord has built in us a very strong need for community. Since the stay-at-home order of March 23, several First Presbyterian Bible studies and small groups continue to meet virtually via Zoom (including the Women's Ministry study mentioned on page 3). Some focus on a particular topic while others determine a new topic each week. Whatever your schedule, we offer several we hope you will consider connecting with. Visit fpcbr.org/small_groups for a list of studies.