

FPC NEWSLETTER

DEEPER IN CHRIST, FURTHER INTO THE WORLD

Seriously: Let's Be Jolly! by Gerrit Dawson, Senior Pastor

The Italians seemed so subdued. In previous years, I felt so *Anglo*, talking quietly across the table while all around me the Romans were inches from each other's faces, gesturing with their hands, laughing and interacting exuberantly. But this year when I visited my brother, people seemed so glum. Why?

The Covid years were hard. There's a war in Europe. Inflation. Western culture ruthlessly shredding itself. There's a lot prompting us all to be somber. Lots of people are frustrated and angry most of the time.

But is that the way it should be for those united to Jesus as Christmas approaches?

Have we, have I, forgotten the treasures in our storehouse of faith? Couldn't we open the jewel box and pull out some of these lovely strands: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. Unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given. His name is Immanuel, God with us. For he shall save his people. You, child, shall be a light to enlighten all people. And of his

kingdom, there shall be no end. What if we composed our thoughts with these shining verses every day this month?

The world is certainly no worse than it was the year Jesus was born. We have a Redeemer. We know the truth. We know how the story will end. Seriously, people, it's time to get jolly and let the world see its hope.

A Festive Eve, A Quiet Day

As usual, we will have three services on Christmas Eve: 11 am, 4 and 6 pm. Though the music varies slightly, each will feature *Silent Night*, *Joy to the World*, candlelight and communion. My message is called "Home Calling." Christmas Day is a Sunday and we decided to offer a 5 pm service in the Chapel. This will be "A Quiet Christmas," with time to reflect and pray after all the festivities have wound down.

Our congregation keeps Christmas with devoted faith, many signs of giving to others, good cheer and a true joy in belonging to Christ. I love to keep Christmas with you!

Gerrit

2 : DECEMBER
ADVENT
EVENTS

3 : SABBATH
KEEPING,
PART 1

3 : MALACHI DADS,
XMAS OFFERING,
POINSETTIAS

4 : A VERY
FOND
FAREWELL

EVENTS

Live Nativity	DEC 2
Men's Skeet Shoot	DEC 3
Farewell Party for Paula Walker	DEC 4
rEcess	DEC 9
Women's Advent Brunch	DEC 10
Christmas Cantata	DEC 11
Downtown Pilgrimage	DEC 11
IFP Social	DEC 16
11 am, 4 and 6 pm Worship	DEC 24
5 pm Worship	DEC 25

UPCOMING EVENTS

10.30 am Worship	JAN 1
Stay-Treat	FEB 3 & 4

BIRTHS

November 24, 2022
 Matthias Paul Underwood
 Parents are Rachel and Colton Underwood

BAPTISMS

November 20, 2022
 Anna Adele "Addie" Mericas
 Parents are Laura and Chris Mericas
 Grandparents are Rene and Brett Furr

IN MEMORIAM

November 14, 2022
 Bob Rackley

November 18, 2022
 Gene Cline, father of Carol Cleveland

November 20, 2022
 Norma Sally Swinson Midgett
 Mother of Linda Otzenberger

FLOWERS

The Sanctuary 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 in 2023, please contact Kathy Mullins at 291.3095.

First Presbyterian Advent in December

2 Live Nativity: The Tradition Continues
 Friday, December 2, downtown Baton Rouge will be alive with the sights and sounds of Christmas. Plan to join us in the beautiful Terraced Garden at 5.30 or 6.30 pm to see the story of Jesus' birth as recorded in the Gospels come to life. Shepherds, Magi and Angels!



10 Women's Advent Brunch
 Ponder this: An angel of the Lord appears to you and tells you that God has chosen you to carry his own Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. How would you react to this news? What would you be feeling?



For Mary, it was fear, confusion, humility . . . but it was also much joy. She is so moved by this news that she breaks out in song; a song of praise that has come to be known as the Magnificat. "My soul magnifies the Lord," she says, "and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

Please join us for the Women's Ministry Advent Brunch where we will enjoy food, fellowship and a special devotion, led by Ashley Beck, that will focus on this powerful Song of Praise found in Luke 1. Lauren Honea will sing *Mary's Song of Praise* accompanied by Rachel Reese-Kollmeyer on the violin!

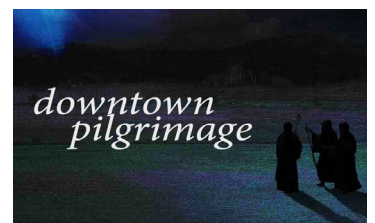
Saturday, December 10, 11 am to 1 pm at the home of Connie Miller. \$10 per person. Please register online at fpcbr.org.

11 Christmas Cantata
 A special kind of music was heard the night Jesus was born—the voices of angels announcing the arrival of the Savior of the world. To this day, we continue singing that heavenly song, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to those on whom his favor rests." Please join First Presbyterian Church Music Ministry—choir, orchestra, and band—for a joyful celebration of the first Christmas carol. Join us at one of two performances (9 or 11 am) that will make up our worship on December 11. There will not be a 7.45 am service and no adult Sunday school.



Downtown Pilgrimage

The First Presbyterian Church Music Ministry is excited to be a part of the annual Downtown Christmas Pilgrimage. The journey begins at 5.30 pm at Mount Zion Baptist Church and arrives at FPC at approximately 6.30 pm. We'll walk together to several beautiful downtown churches and hear wonderful Christmas music. Free and open to the public.



24 25 Christmas Worship
 December 24: Our three festive services of carols, candlelight and communion will be in the Sanctuary. 11 am (Child-friendly worship with a shorter message), 4 and 6 pm. *Childcare is available at all three services.



December 25: One quiet service at 5 pm in the Chapel.

Sabbath Keeping, Part 1 by Whitney Alexander

Excerpts from Ruth Haley Barton's book, *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest* in chapter one that capture my imagination:

"I would not be alive today if it were not for God's gift of Sabbath."

"It is a gift that is both beautiful and functional, luxurious and essential all at the same time."

"Jewish folks had it right: the only way to even begin taking steps toward a Sabbath practice is to let yourself fall in love with this day."

"Sabbath communities do not happen by accident."

Wayne Muller's excerpt in chapter one was the one that hit home the hardest: "If we do not allow for a rhythm of rest in our overly busy lives, illness becomes our Sabbath—our pneumonia, our cancer, our heart attack, our

accidents create Sabbath for us."

I believe my car accident five years ago was because there was not a rhythm of rest in my life. I thought I was indestructible and could keep going at breakneck speed caring for my family in New Orleans after my Aunt Helen's death. Ten days after her death, God allowed me to graciously hit an 18-wheeler and survive this crash. It was the most painful thing in my life, yet God allowed me the opportunity to rest.

I did not want to acknowledge the possibility that it might be hard for God to get my attention, nor did I want to face the fact that for years I had been thumbing my nose at human limitations, behaving as though I was beyond needing a Sabbath. It was a nice idea for retired people or people who weren't in demand, but surely,

continues on page 4

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Christmas Bags for Malachi Dads

Items are being collected for Christmas bags to be distributed to the Malachi Dads (prisoners) at Angola Penitentiary. Please consider making a donation and dropping it off at the Connection Center: Irish Spring soap, anti-perspirant, toothpaste/toothbrush, shampoo, lotion, body wash, socks or baby powder. Cash donations also accepted.

2022 Christmas Offering

Our annual Christmas offering (December 11-25) goes directly to support The Downtown Christian Outreach Center and the daily operations of Gardere Community Christian School. Envelopes will be in the pew racks for check and cash donations, or you may make an offering online at fpcbr.org.

Christmas Poinsettia Orders

All are invited to help decorate the Chapel and Sanctuary by purchasing a poinsettia in memory or celebration of a loved one. The cost is \$35 per plant. Please place your order by Sunday, December 11 by using the order form outside the Chapel or at the Connection Center.

Mother's Day Out Registration

Spread the word about First Presbyterian MDO and Preschool registration! In January, we begin registration for the 2023–2024 school year. As always, we will register current families first, prior to church members, alumni and new families. More information will come following the Christmas holidays. Pre-kindergarten registration starts in mid-December. Contact Whitney Weiner at mdo@fpcbr.org or 225.620.0245 for more information.

SERMON TEXTS

December 4
Ruth 2: 5-13

December 11
Ruth 3: 6-13

December 18
Ruth 4: 1-6; 13-17

December 24
11 am, 4 and 6 pm Worship
Scripture to be determined

December 25
5 pm Worship in the Chapel
Scripture to be determined

PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON
Senior Pastor

WHITNEY ALEXANDER
Associate Pastor of Missions

BARRY PHILLIPS
Ministry Executive

DARIN TRAVIS
Associate Pastor for Discipleship

SCOTT GRAHAM
Associate Pastor for
Pastoral Care and Prayer

COLTON UNDERWOOD
Assistant Pastor of Children,
Youth and Families



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763 North Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Mother's Day Out and Preschool
225.620.0245

BR Christian Counseling Center
225.387.2287
brchristiancounseling.com

**Sabbath Keeping** *continued from page 3*

I was not one who needed a Sabbath. I had plenty of time to rest in heaven.

Healing in the hospital bed for two months gave me the opportunity to begin reading on rest and Sabbath. This was a foreign concept as my quiet times allowed me to rest and learn about true silence and solitude. God used my accident to stop me in my tracks and see the layers of exhaustion that were within me. Without a doubt, this accident was my fault for neglecting my Sabbath for years. I believe the accident on May 31, 2017 saved my life and the Heavenly Father used it to get my attention and draw me to himself.

Those interested in pursuing the practice of Sabbath keeping are invited to join me for a new monthly meeting beginning Thursday, January 12 in the library. The time is to be determined. Please contact me if you would like more information (225.810.2607).

A Very Fond Farewell

After several years of faithful service, God has laid it upon Paula Walker's heart to follow his leading into a new phase of life in Colorado. While no goodbye is an easy goodbye, we want to send Paula out with a night of food and fun before she makes her full transition at the end of December. As such, all middle and high school students are invited to join us in the FPC Gym from 5 to 7 pm December 4 dressed as Colorado snow skiers to enjoy dinner and to celebrate how much Paula has meant to us all during her time in Baton Rouge!

IFP Cookie Decorating Party

Please join International Friendship Partners for the easiest Christmas party ever: a cookie decorating party with a hot chocolate bar and light dinner options (think small sandwiches). The focus is on fellowship and creating fun memories. Children are welcome. Please bring your favorite sprinkles! Questions and RSVPs (appreciated but not required) may be emailed to leeannkozan@gmail.com. Friday, December 16 from 6–8 pm at David and LeeAnn Kozan's, 3565 Cole Dr.