



The Church Distributed by Gerrit Dawson, Senior Pastor

That's a great title for a book about how God sends his people throughout the world as leaven that causes the whole dough to rise. As the New Year begins, we rejoice in the Christmas celebrations we had and all the homecomings we enjoyed. And we also return our gaze outward to see what the Triune God of Grace is doing and hear how he calls us to be part of it.

January is our Global Missions Month. We give thanks that several missionaries were called from this congregation and are now serving throughout the world. Ashley and MacGregor Magruder didn't feel far enough away in Kenya: they've relocated to Malaysia! Their work continues in training indigenous leaders to share the gospel. Rebecca [Lunceford] and Nour Botros have been on the front lines of ministering to Syrian refugees in Beirut. They're home for rest right now, which means we will get to hear firsthand from them at our missions conference.

The young Jesus knew what it was to have to flee violence in the middle of the night; to seek refuge in another country, arriving with nothing more than the clothes on his back. Jesus' church sees the worldwide refugee crisis as an opportunity to extend the hospitality of gospel love. That's why your church session recently approved up to \$42,000 for medical mission trips to war-ravaged Syria. But here's the kicker: these mission trips will be conducted by our Egyptian partner church Kasr El-Dobara, enabling more work to be done at a fraction of the cost.

Meanwhile, we hear great reports from Brian Miller in Medellin, Colombia. A gift from our church contributed to his successful efforts to build a "safe house" for girls escaping sex trafficking.

Wycliffe missionaries we have supported for years, the Tolivers, this year presented the work of a lifetime: the Bible translated into a Peruvian dialect. For the first time thousands will hear God's Word in their native tongue!

Don't you love being connected to Christ's work around the world? You will love our Global Mission Conference February 2-3. We will hear from the Botroses and the Tolivers. And we will engage personally in Global Mission by doing what we do best: hosting a lunch for international students. Finally, we'll hear from one of the best young preachers I know as Scott Castleman from Ocean Springs preaches to us on "Bringing Peace Far and Near." As we look outward this month, we can see with wonder what God is doing.

Meanwhile back home, I'd like to highlight two hidden jewels of ministry. Every first Friday of the month a group of volunteers conducts reCess at our church: a night out for families of special needs kids. We keep the kids and their families enjoy an evening. And Threads of Love continues its quiet ministry of resurrection hope. These ladies sew garments for infants who have died, lending dignity and comfort to families who have lost children through miscarriage, still birth or infant illness. Both of these quiet ministries touch people deeply.

It astounds me to see all the ways our congregation serves and as a New Year begins I love, more than ever, being your pastor,

Gerrit



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

rEcess Jan 4
Women's Bible Studies Resume Jan 9

ONGOING EVENTS

"12 Steps with Christ Jesus"
Weds. at 12.15 pm

Sunday Evening Prayer at 5 pm

UPCOMING FEBRUAR EVENTS

Global Mission Conference Feb 2-3

BIRTHS:

December 17, 2018
Campbell Keyes Gray
Daughter of Sarah Lomax Gray and Paul Gray

BAPTISMS:

December 23, 2018
Caleb Daniel Dawson

MARRIAGES:

December 15, 2018
Katie Miley and Danny Myers
Hannah Cleveland and Aaron Populus

December 22, 2018

Shelby Quirk and Conner Miller

IN MEMORIAM:

November 25, 2018
Gladys Hullett-mother of Louis Hullett

November 27, 2018

Marnie Beste

December 3, 2018

Bill Adams

SANCTUARY FLOWERS:

Sanctuary flowers serve to honor a departed loved one or celebrate with thanksgiving cherished people or events.

The flowers are placed in the Sanctuary . . .

JAN 6 . . . to the glory of our Lord and Savior and in loving memory of Dana Baker Othmer, by Hans, Devan and Jacob Othmer.

JAN 13 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Frank L. Norwood, Jr. and Larry Charles Musgrove, Sr. by Chrystal Norwood Musgrove and family.

JAN 20 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Allison Poché Brumfield by her family.

JAN 27 . . . to the glory of God and in gratitude for my family by Louise Kinney.

Preaching Peace Far and Near by Wendi Couvillion French

The world cries for peace. Restorative peace. Personal peace. Spiritual peace.

Daily our peace is challenged by economic conditions, shifting social dynamics, medical conditions, family and political strife. These challenges similarly plague families across the globe. Ultimately peace is a gift from God. It can only truly be sustained through our relationship with the Prince of Peace.

First Presbyterian has a long history of supporting our congregational members spreading God's peace far and near. On February 2-3, Rebecca and Nour Botros will host FPC's 2019 Global Mission Conference. The conference will transport us to the ministry of peace and reconciliation

among the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, among the Ambo-Pasco Quechuas in Peru and with our international students here in Baton Rouge.

Here at home, we are blessed to bring our disagreements and discord to God in prayer to sustain our peace. But, we often find ourselves in conversations with others resistant to God's peace because of disappointment. Nour and Rebecca will kick off a Saturday morning session on February 2. Learn from the Botroses how they minister in an aggressively discouraging



environment leading Syrian refugees into relationship with the Prince of Peace. Don't let your children miss out on an "adventure in missions" activity tract on Saturday morning. International themed activities will be provided including passport travel activities, food, games and songs from foreign lands. Let us plant a seed in your child's heart for international Christian peace.

Saturday morning will conclude with an International Friendship Partners lunch at noon. LSU International Students will join us for conversation and ministry. The International Friendship Program mentors international students here in Baton Rouge. International mission efforts can start here at home by extending God's friendship and peace to these interested students before they return home.

Wycliffe missionaries Ralph and Marilyn Toliver will transport us to the mountains of Peru to the Ambo-Pasco Quechua people group during our combined Sunday school hour. We will celebrate the completed translation of the New Testament into the Ambo-Pasco language; God's word in their own language for the very first time!

Sunday morning, February 3, our guest preacher Pastor Scott Castleman of Ocean Springs, MS will join us and share about his missionary work. As we learn of the struggles of ministering afar, God will encourage us to overcome our own struggles to be more effective here at home.

Get your passports ready! Prepare your hearts through prayer! Please make plans to join us for the 2019 Global Mission Conference and celebrate those dedicated to Preaching Peace Far and Near.

Come on First Presbyterian!

We need five more Encouragers for our teachers at Buchanan!

We've had so many folks step up to adopt a teacher at Buchanan Elementary. There are five more left who do not have an Encourager and keep asking if they will get one. Stop by the Connection Center and choose one of these five ladies who have been patiently waiting for an Encourager or e-mail laura@fpcbr.org.

Walking the Talk by Jim Solomon

Although I grew up in a very religious home, I became agnostic during my high school and college years. Eventually, as I entered the business world upon college graduation in 1989, through the guidance of an older, wiser and more educated sister, I took some steps toward having not so much a religion about God but a relationship with God. Elizabeth was there for me when I needed her most, bringing joy out of sorrow during a difficult time in my life. Although a few people I knew believed in miracles, I didn't. I had suffered from many unanswered prayers in seeking peace in the midst of many problems that caused me lots of pain along my path. Nevertheless, many years later, following more spiritual growth, I found myself serving as a former businessman turned Protestant minister in a role as an Associate Pastor for a very large church in Connecticut. I had already been married to a wonderful woman with whom I had been blessed to become a dad of two beautiful daughters, affectionately known as my "princesses."

One day in early spring 2003, someone in the church brought to my attention another man who was also married to a beautiful wife with whom he had two wonderful girls. Described as a "man's man," William Cox was not only rough and tough but also very hard working and capable in his role as a custodian. Unfortunately, he was very seriously injured while moving furniture. His prognosis was sobering. At best, he would spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair, most likely paralyzed from the waist down, never to walk again. At worst, he would die.

William's wife, Joanne, invited me to join her and some other believers in praying for William at the ICU of Danbury Hospital. This dear woman of faith recently revealed to me that she felt God had given her a list of those he wanted there that night.

In line with guidance found in the New Testament book of James, we anointed William with oil and prayer in the name of Jesus, the ultimate Wounded Healer, who stated that "with God all things are possible." When I laid my hand on William's head, I felt compelled to ask for what seemed to be the impossible. I was certain that as crazy as it may have seemed given this man's current medical condition, I was to swallow all pride when it came to man-

aging the perception of others and simply ask God to completely heal William. At that very moment, I felt a strange heat sensation I had never previously experienced running through my hand, which I had placed on William's head.

My foremost concern in that moment was learning William's wife and daughters had accepted Christ but he had not. Yet, like me, they wanted him with them—not only temporally on earth but eternally in heaven.

While laying my hand on William's head, before I could even think, the following words came out of my mouth: "Lord Jesus, you've created the universe and blessed it with William who lies here not yet knowing you and your love for him. Please do not let him leave this earth without making a conscious decision as you have requested of all to accept you as his Savior and follow you as his Leader. Your Word tells us that with God all things are possible. Though these good earthly physicians have done all they can, we know that you, the great Heavenly Physician, can do what they can't. We beg you to go beyond medicine in fully healing William not only physically but also spiritually so that he can one day enjoy you eternally. We ask this in Your Name. Amen."

Several weeks later, William WALKED into my office! He looked at me and smiled. I was simultaneously astonished, excited and amazed! Goose bumps, which I have since called "God bumps," ran up and down my arms while the hair on my arms and the back of my neck stood up. His only question for me, even though he had never previously spoken to me, was this: "What do I need to do to know God? I'm ready." As you can imagine, I ran with that! William understood that God gave him a second chance at life—and he took it! A man who at times had been bitter and resentful soon miraculously became better and peaceful. The peace that replaced his anxiety inwardly continues to shine through his life outwardly.

Although many years have passed since I've last seen William, not a day has passed when I don't believe in miracles, as he is a walking one.

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SUNDAY WORSHIP

7.45 Chapel Communion
9 am Contemporary
11 am Classic Reformed

JANUARY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Texts are subject to change.

JANUARY 6, 2019
John 2: 1-12

JANUARY 13, 2019
John 2: 13-22

JANUARY 20, 2019
Luke 7: 1-10

JANUARY 27, 2019
Luke 7: 11-17

PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON
Senior Pastor

WHITNEY ALEXANDER
Associate Pastor of Missions

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A Special Thanks from the Creative Arts Director by Nancy Spiller

I just want to say a very special thank you to so many of you who helped behind the scenes with the many creative arts and music programs we hosted this past Christmas season. I can't name you, as I might forget someone, but I wanted you and the whole church body to know that it makes my heart melt to think of all the people in this church who do so many things to help the church staff and never expect recognition or even a thanks. But a thanks is important anyway. You help because you see a need and that is fulfilling enough for you! And hopefully fun, too.

I do know that when people see me at Christmas time, they know I will be asking for something! I even had children who showed up early

for Festival of Lights Live Nativity unloading bales of hay. They seemed to be having fun, so I hope the parents are not upset with me!

God bless you in this new year. My prayer for all of you is from Hebrews 4: 16: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Thank you again for meeting my need and may you look to Jesus to meet all of yours this year.



Godspell Tryouts

Tryouts for our exciting spring musical "Godspell" are Saturday, January 12 from 10 am to noon in the choir room (Sanctuary Building, 2nd floor). Call backs will be Sunday, January 13 from 12.30 to 3 pm. Ten minute auditions! Please come prepared to sing 16 measures from a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical or similar style song. We are looking for people ages 8th grade to young adults! Very physically active production! Co-directors are Terry Byars and Ray Gaspard. Musical performances are April 5, 6 and 7. You will receive the rehearsal schedule at auditions. Come be a part of this story of the Gospel of Matthew!

Care to Share? FPC is collecting art to display for one year in our Art Gallery on the 1st floor of the Education Building. Contact Meagan Greene (meagan@fpcbr.org) with any questions.