



Would You Make This Deal? by Gerrit Dawson, Senior Pastor

It's an insane trade. A ridiculous switcheroo. A crazy swap. Who would do this?! Trading places with a bum. Switching names with a scoundrel. Taking the stigma of a predator. Asking for the penalty of a felon. Yet the Son of God exchanged identities with us! If you were the righteous and holy One, would you give your place, your prerogatives and privileges to someone like the "you" who is reading this article? No, I wouldn't it. Not in a million billion years.

But Jesus did. He pulled the ultimate identity switch. God made him who knew no sin to be *sin*. Jesus embraced our lost and forsaken, condemned and hopeless identity as sinners. All the way to death and hell. So that we could *become* the righteousness of God. He gives us his identity as beloved Son of God.

This is the heart of the gospel. There is nothing like this anywhere in all the thought and religion of the world. God exchanges identities with us.

Beloved, dive into your Lenten guides for week 3 and 4 with all your focus and all your heart. Even if you got behind or didn't even start, pick up your guide now. (It's all on our website.) Don't miss church. There is nothing more important than this truth for you, your children, your grandchildren, your parents or your friends. Christ Jesus takes our place and gives us his. The swap of all swaps. Get in on it!

News and Notes

Your elders recently gathered for a "stay-treat" at the church. We spent nine hours together working through the challenges and opportunities on the horizon for our church. We discussed new procedures and facility changes to enhance safety and security. We discussed the distinctives of our worship services and the kind of leadership we need to exalt Christ and make disciples more effectively. We reviewed the effectiveness of the mission priorities we set in regard to the Gardere Community Christian School and Church of the Resurrection in New Orleans. We rejoiced in the unity of our congregation and drank deep from passages from God's Word. You have elected some consecrated, joyful and committed leaders. Great things are ahead.

"Give Meaning to Your Spring Cleaning" is the theme for the Purple Cow this month. These thrift stores on Perkins Road and Jones Creek fund the ministry of the Christian Outreach Center downtown. The dresser I give to Purple Cow translates to training people to get Jobs for Life. The stack of winter sweaters I donate translates to a course in financial literacy for people coming out of addiction treatment or prison terms. The housewares I drop off become food bags for the poor. Like the gospel, that's a great swap!

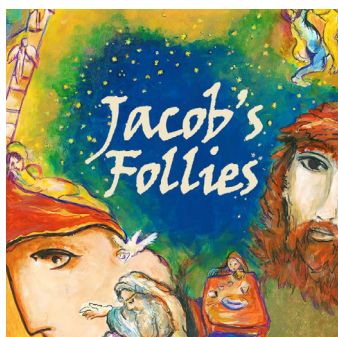
I love to be your pastor,

Gerrit



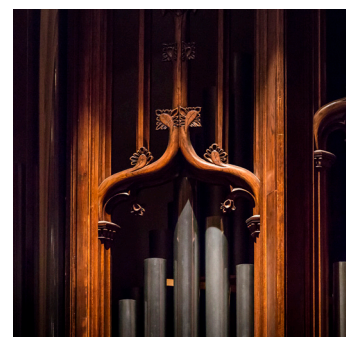
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BAKER'S DOZEN

13 facts about
your church



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

rEcess	Mar 2
Daylight Savings	Mar 11
Jacob's Follies Musical	Mar 16-18
Final Lenten Noon Worship	Mar 21
BRSO Chamber Concert	Mar 22
Ex•plore Forgiveness	Mar 24
Palm Sunday	Mar 25
Service of Shadows	Mar 29
Good Friday—Offices Closed	Mar 30

UPCOMING EVENTS

Easter Sunday	Apr 1
Security Training	Apr 7
Women's Spring Picnic	Apr 14
Discover First Dinner	Apr 22
FPC Hosts Presbytery Meeting	Apr 27-28

MARRIAGES:

February 24, 2018
Tim Slater and Courtney Hunsicker

IN MEMORIAM:

February 5, 2018
Doyle Berry - brother of Gene Berry

February 7, 2018
Ruth Williams - mother of David Williams

February 12, 2018
Andrea Bennett

February 12, 2018
William "Parker" Frisbie - father of Erin McKowen

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 . . .

MAR 4 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of our parents, Hazel and Paul Peters and Ned and Jerry Hickel, by Cherie and Bill Peters.

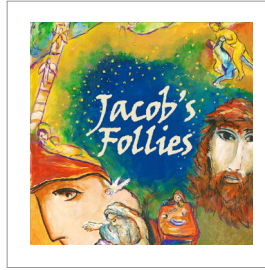
MAR 11 . . . to the glory of God in loving memory of Samuel Eugene Field III given by Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Eugene Field, Jr.

MAR 18 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of my parents, Jeanne and Marlin Drake, Jr. of Shreveport, by Lauren Drake Phillips.

MAR 25 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Bart Bennett from Ruth Anne, Claire, Adriane and Sarah.

"Jacob's Follies" by Nancy Spiller and Lauren Honea

"Jacob's Follies" presents the Biblical accounting of Jacob in a fun and quirky light. The show begins with an older Jacob pondering his past when, suddenly, a chorus erupts behind him in praise of the great "Prince of God." Unexpectedly, the hero is called out for what he really is, and we are transported back in time to the beginning of Jacob's story. Jacob, which means "deceiver," is the second born son of Isaac. Though Jacob is smart and quick on his feet, he has been overlooked by his father in favor of his older brother, Esau. Desperate to prove his worth, Jacob, along with his mother Rebekah and others, steal Esau's blessing and birthright. Esau is enraged and, fearful for his life, Jacob is forced to run away from home.



In Act 2 of the musical, Jacob runs into the colorful Bedouin King and his motley crew. The King threatens Jacob's life. Jacob narrowly escapes. However, in the exchange, he loses all of his possessions. Despondent, Jacob dreams of an encounter with God. He receives God's peaceful presence. In the morning, with nowhere else to go, Jacob seeks shelter from his Uncle Laban and falls in love with the beautiful Rachael. Again, desperate to prove his worth and to succeed, he makes a deal with Laban to work seven years in exchange

for Rachael as his bride. Finally his wedding day arrives. Jacob discovers after the ceremony that he is not married to Rachael, but her weird sister Leah. Angry and confused that he has been fooled, Jacob rages at God.

Years pass and having been richly blessed, Jacob decides to leave his Uncle Laban and return home. The way home is suddenly full of peril with the arrival of Esau. Jacob's tent is once again in turmoil. Jacob again cries out and wrestles with God. God reaches down, touches his heart, and leaves him face to face with his older brother, Esau. Facing his brother, Jacob accepts his fate and is ready to die. Surprisingly, Esau forgives Jacob. The show closes as Jacob realizes how loved he truly is and that he is the apple of God's eye.

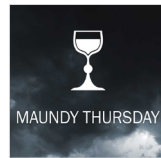
"Jacob's Follies" is an original musical play by Terry Byars, directed by Terry, and presented by First Presbyterian Church on March 16 and 17 at 7 pm, and March 18 at 3 pm.

Invite your friends and family to this very comical look at the Biblical characters of Genesis 25, plus some humorous "invented" characters they meet along their journey! Free admission and great entertainment for the entire family!



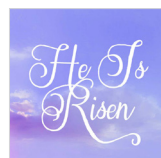
Palm Sunday, March 25: Combined 10 am Worship

Our annual Palm Sunday festival is March 25, beginning at 9.50 am with our procession around North Boulevard. A jam-packed combined worship service occurs after the procession. Egg hunts, pony rides, face painting, a balloon artist, a fajita bar and quesadillas for the children, will follow worship. You'll want to dress casual. Save your fancy attire for Easter. Lunch is \$5 per person (\$20 max/family). No Sunday school.



Service of Shadows, Maundy Thursday, March 29

On Thursday, March 29 at 7 pm, join us in the Sanctuary as we enter into the passion of Christ from the book of Matthew, recounting his arrest, trial and death through the Service of Shadows. We end the service in silence in the terraced garden where the stone is rolled over. Elementary children are welcome to this moving service. Childcare available for ages 5 and under due to the dramatic nature of the passion reading.



Easter Sunday, April 1

Join us as we celebrate the risen Lord at one of our three worship services: 6.30 am Sunrise in the terraced garden followed by light breakfast; 9 am Contemporary service in the Sanctuary and 11 am Classic Reformed service in the Sanctuary.

Baker's Dozen: Things to Know About Your Church by Barry Phillips, ME

1. ME stands for Ministry Executive.
2. 37% of our giving arrives in November & December. Our fiscal year ends December 31.
3. The average annual pledge is \$6,657!
4. Almost 70 of us who pledged last year have not 'yet' pledged this year.
5. Our utility expense this year will exceed \$108,000.
6. Our comprehensive insurance costs \$81,500.
7. Our Missions budget is well over a half a million dollars.
8. We have secured our Mother's Day Out/Childhood hallway and entrances with magnetic locks and card readers, significantly increasing our ability to protect our children.
9. We hired security consultants to assist us in developing a campus-wide security plan which the Session has approved in principle.
10. The Session also approved a Safety and Security Committee to continue our efforts to substantially improve our ability to respond to emergencies of all kinds.
11. We hired an architect to design portions of this plan as part of a Master Campus Plan.
12. We have increased the presence of Baton Rouge police officers on our campus during Sunday worship.
13. When you give to your church you are part of all of this and so much more.

If you connect the dots on this baker's dozen, you'll note that we have a lot going on. Balancing our budget is mandatory. Our challenges in doing that are significant. Security and safety are increasing in priority. Yet our mission to be a loving, caring congregation remains our vision. We continue to base our faith and life on the Scriptures. Our desire to help others become devoted followers of Christ through prayer, friendship, invitation and witness has not changed, in fact, it has deepened.

God's will for us is to be thankful in everything, to pray without ceasing and to rejoice evermore. All of this we can do in Christ Jesus. So in our planning, in our doing, in our giving and in our worship let's pray and rejoice as we participate in God's economy. In this way we demonstrate our gratitude to him for his great gift to us.

Ways of Worship: Classic Reformed by Gerrit Dawson

I encourage all of our members to become multilingual in worship: to try each of our three services during the course of a year.

Classic Reformed worship draws upon the rich heritage of our Presbyterian faith as we sing the most vibrant hymns of our tradition, augmented by some of the newer worship songs written in a traditional style. Strings and horns create lush texturing to the majesty of the organ music, and our choir presents weekly anthems which adorn the week's Scripture passage. Classic Reformed follows the traditional pattern of gathering around the Word, hearing the Word and responding to the Word. This includes twice monthly communion. This service increasingly appeals to a younger generation longing for the depth of an ancient tradition.

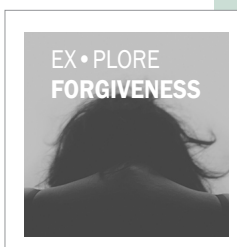
The 11 am service fulfills Psalm 145:

*One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.*

Explore Forgiveness Back for an Encore by Katie Forsthoff

The Ex•plore Forgiveness seminar is back for an encore!! If you couldn't be with us this fall, then please join us as we grapple with forgiveness in our relationships with others! Many of us have an incomplete view of what forgiveness is . . . what it isn't. . . and just how to go about it. Join Katie Forsthoff and Jim Solomon on Saturday, March 24 from 10 am to noon in the Reception Room for an in-depth discussion. To register please contact Laura Shaw (laura@fpcbr.org or 620.0222).

ex•plore = To travel in or through (an unfamiliar area) in order to familiarize oneself with it.



SUNDAY WORSHIP

7.45 Chapel Communion
9 am Contemporary
11 am Classic Reformed

MARCH SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Texts are subject to change.

MARCH 4
Psalm 51: 1-7

MARCH 11
To be determined

MARCH 18
Galatians 4: 1-7

MARCH 25
John 15: 4-11

PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON
Senior Pastor

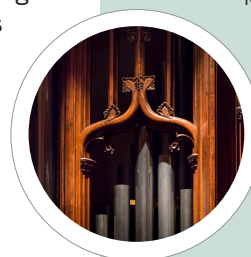
WHITNEY ALEXANDER
Associate Pastor of Missions

JOSH MADDIN
Assistant Pastor of Student Ministry

BARRY PHILLIPS
Ministry Executive

JIM SOLOMON
Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care & Prayer

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



☎ PH: 225.387.0617
FAX: 225.338.1010

🌐 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

I Truly Don't Have the Words by Jaci Gaspard

This phrase keeps coming to my mind as I think back on how absolutely beautifully you, as the body of Christ here at First Presbyterian Church, have shown God's love to Ray and me during my recent back surgery. After serving with you for 13 years, I knew that you were THE BEST, but personally witnessing how you have been the hands and feet of Christ has truly been humbling. From the unceasing prayers, scrumptious meals (so much for my husband's perpetual diet), to the flowers, visits, cards, phone calls, texts, emails, etc., I had NO DOUBT I was being cradled in the arms of our Heavenly Father. I wish I could personally hug each of your necks and say thank you but please know how much we love you and thank God for all of you.

Your tender care reminded me of one of the parables in Matthew:

Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me (Matthew 25: 37-40).

Thank you for bringing this Scripture to life for the Gaspards. May God continue to bless and keep you.

FOTO SISTERS, MARCH 18.

We are happy to announce that the Foto Sisters will be back to lead our worship at the 9 am and 11 am services on Sunday, March 18. These three beautiful sisters in Christ (truly they are all sisters), are not only talented musicians and singers, but have a beautiful heart for the Lord as well.

SESSION GRANTS.

The Session is accepting applications until March 26 for financial grants for those interested in seminary training for full time ministry. Please contact Jaci if you have questions (jaci@fpcbr.org or 620.0221).



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