

# FPC NEWSLETTER

DEEPER IN CHRIST, FURTHER INTO THE WORLD

## CHURCH PLANTING, STAFF CHANGES AND CELEBRATIONS

**By Gerrit Dawson**

Senior Pastor

May is the time we joyfully witness about 25 6<sup>th</sup> graders make their public profession of faith. We also send off our high school seniors with blessing prayers. And we get ready to say goodbye to several long-time, faithful staff members.

One of the hallmarks of a healthy church is the tenure of the professionals who work there. Longevity signals loyalty, effectiveness, spiritual vitality and harmonious personality. In the coming year three key retirements are scheduled.

Carol Pruitt will retire as bookkeeper at the end of July. Carol has grown with our church finances. She handles all the financial gifts and expenditures, keeps up with staff medical and retirement benefits, and works cheerfully and confidentially.

Barry Phillips has been my right hand man in his capacity as ministry executive for 18 years. "Papa Barry" develops the budgeting process, oversees employee relations and supervises care of building and grounds. His anchoring work has freed me to focus on preaching, teaching and vision. Though he will serve in a consulting capacity through year's end, Barry's retirement as a full-time staffer occurs August 15.

Our longest tenured pastor, Whitney Alexander will retire January 31 after 26 years on our team. Whitney led our youth ministry for years, then seamlessly transitioned to overseeing city and global ministry. He has connected us to Christ's work throughout Baton Rouge and around the

world. Somehow, he always shows up just where we need him most.

That's a lot of change! But your leaders have been planning strategically. Church member Courtney Hilton takes over as bookkeeper this summer after a brief period of overlap with Carol. Courtney brings years of corporate accounting experience along with her deep faith, consistent commitment to church and winsome personality. We will be in good hands.

Meanwhile, we've realized that the scope of ministry executive has grown beyond what one person will do. Kelly Wood will step into the role of ministry executive. Her experience as an Exxon project manager has given her the skills to turn vision into action. (We saw that during the Stewarding God's Grace campaign which she oversaw last fall). Her focus will be on executing the plan of the session through the work of the staff and committees. She'll be sure everything we do aligns with the overall vision and strategic plan. Long-time elder and trustee DJ Davis will take a part-time role as administrative executive. His purview will be personnel, finances and facilities. Thanks be to God, we will be in good hands.

That leaves us some time to consider how we will continue pressing forward in mission and best utilize that associate pastor position. Stay tuned, and please stay prayerful!

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EXPANSION

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WHAT A GIFT!

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THE MIDDLE EAST

**MAY EVENTS**

- MAY 3 rEcess
- MAY 5 High School Senior Sunday
- MAY 5 Confirmation Worship
- MAY 10 High School Lock-In
- MAY 15 Ladies' 60s+ Luau
- MAY 19 Youth Year End Parents' Mtg.
- MAY 26 Combined 10.30 am Worship

**UPCOMING JUNE EVENTS**

- JUNE 1 VBS Volunteer Training
- JUNE 10-14 VBS

**BIRTHS**

April 16, 2024  
Marguerite Jane McBride  
Parents are Sally & Nathan

**BAPTISMS**

April 14, 2024  
Matthew Harvey Jenkins  
Parents are Rebecca & Allen

**IN MEMORIAM**

April 9, 2024  
Martha Ann Cunningham

April 9, 2024  
Norman Goebel Jr.

**CHAPEL AND SANCTUARY FLOWERS**

The Chapel and Sanctuary flowers are given . . .

MAY 5 . . . to the glory of God in loving memory of Mary Crosby McDuff and Martha Ann Ellison Cunningham by Ann & Michael McDuff.

MAY 12 . . . with love and thanksgiving as we are blessed with the birth of Martha Jane Miller by the Miller families.

MAY 19 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of three mothers, all very special to our family: our mother, Jackie Lee Airhart, her mother, Claudia Lee Tisdale, and Kristen's mother, Becky Richardson by the children of Jackie Lee Airhart.

MAY 26 Open date.

**FLOWERS**

Sanctuary and Chapel Sunday flower donations can be arranged by contacting **Kathy Mullins** (603.4735).

**MEMORIAL GARDEN EXPANSION** by Barry Phillips, Ministry Executive



Several years ago my daughter, Molly, and I were driving down to the Purple Cow on Jones Creek Road. As we were about to pass Resthaven Cemetery, where both my mom and dad were buried, I suggested we turn in and visit their grave sites for a brief prayer time. To my disappointment (and frustration), it took us over 20 minutes to find them. We'd not been to Resthaven for almost nine years!

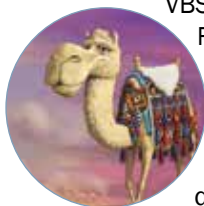
Becky and I have plans to be cremated and our remains placed in our church's very own Memorial Garden. It's becoming a "high demand" bit of real estate. It is a beautiful, quiet, even reverent place to visit. We first opened it ten years ago. The initial banks of niches (the holding place for the urns) is already almost filled with the urns of First Presbyterian family members. It is so easy to visit and spend quiet "remembrance" time. And it is less expensive than a traditional cemetery plot. It is intentionally accessible so that one can visit a loved one's burial niche at any time.

Our session approved the addition of a second phase of niches which were completed a couple of months ago; a good thing since there is but one niche remaining available in the original site. So we have 80 "homes" in the original phase. We have 78 available now remaining in phase two.

If you've not yet visited our Memorial Garden or considered this an option to traditional cemetery burial, you owe it to yourself to take a look. You'll be impressed. For more information contact Sherry Tucker ([sherry@fpcbr.org](mailto:sherry@fpcbr.org) or 225.387.0617). She would love to send you a packet.

**VBS REGISTRATION IS OPEN!**

VBS Dates: Monday, June 10–Thursday, June 13, 2024  
Registration Closes Thursday, June 6, 2024 at midnight



Come hear Bible stories from a seasoned storyteller, learn to make amazing crafts as apprentices of master craftsmen, interact with the kinds of people Jesus did when he walked the streets of Jerusalem and bring your tough questions when you visit the synagogue to learn Biblical truth from a local rabbi.

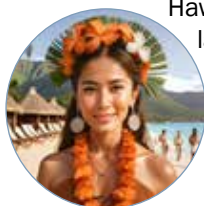
We will worship together, eat together and have fun together! Come join us! There is a \$10 charge for each camper to attend. Volunteer positions are available for 7th through 12th graders and adults. Further details and registrations are online at [fpcbr.org](http://fpcbr.org).

**COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE NOW ONLINE**

The FPC Women's Ministry College Scholarship Fund is a unique fund established in 1955 for all students who wish to further their education. Its purpose is to offer financial assistance to church members who anticipate having difficulty meeting the obligations of continued education. The administration of the fund is the responsibility of the Memorial Scholarship Committee and honors particular need-based guidelines. Aid is intended to be a helpful supplement in the student's pursuit of higher education. The application deadline is July 15, 2024. Please visit [fpcbr.org](http://fpcbr.org) for an application.

**ALOHA!**

Join us for our next Women's Ministry Social, a 60s+ Ladies' Luau! Let's kick off summer Hawaiian-style with leis, laughter, food and fellowship. This social is intended for ladies 60 and older, but truly anyone is welcome, so feel free to bring a friend!



Wednesday, May 15 from 5.30 to 7.30 pm at the home of Cate Heroman (3904 Blecker Dr.). Hawaiian-inspired appetizers provided but feel free to bring a dessert or beverage of your choice. \*Please RSVP to [jaimie@fpcbr.org](mailto:jaimie@fpcbr.org).

**WHAT A GIFT!** by Darin Travis, Associate Pastor for Discipleship

After 7 years serving at First Presbyterian, and 27 years of full-time ministry, the session has blessed me with a much-appreciated sabbatical. I am thankful and eager for the time to reflect, rest and prepare for the upcoming seasons of church life. Some have asked me what I'm going to do with the time. Some have asked how my responsibilities will be covered while I'm gone. To the first, I'm looking forward to vacation with family and friends, reading, reviewing my favorite subjects from seminary and doing some professional development. To the second, we have gifted church leaders who are ready to serve. For those with questions about community groups during the summer, contact Kelly Wood ([kelly@fpabr.org](mailto:kelly@fpabr.org)). For those with questions about men's ministry or to plug into a weekly men's group, contact Blake Fowler ([blake@exitrealtybr.com](mailto:blake@exitrealtybr.com)). Sunday school will continue as normal for the next few months with our gifted leaders. As usual, we will not have Sunday school the month of July.



I appreciate your prayers during May and June. With our upcoming 200 year anniversary on my mind, I plan to spend a good bit of time reading about the history of the Presbyterian church. Personally, I'm looking forward to meeting with a counselor to process life and ministry. And though I will be around, I am eager to resume my responsibilities mid-July.

**GOD'S HAND WAS IN EVERYTHING! UGANDA, JORDAN, EGYPT AND LEBANON**

by Whitney Alexander, Associate Pastor for Missions

My most recent trip to Uganda, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon was truly one of the most encouraging mission trips of my life. I saw God's hand in everything; from the moment I landed in Entebbe to the walk into the classrooms of the new Bethany Centre School.

Every detail at the new Bethany Centre School has been carefully considered for the nearly 100 students attending high school and the 600 students in kindergarten through 8th grade attending the primary and middle schools. Upon arriving, Claire Wilson and Cheryl Tyler were welcomed with traditional African dances by the Bethany students. They in turn, presented the school with a beautiful giving quilt created by the children of First Presbyterian Church. The quilt's squares depict gifts God has given the children they can share with others. The ladies also delivered special gifts created by students of Gardere Community Christian School and planted much needed trees on the Bethany campus. It is a beautiful partnership between First Presbyterian and Peter Kiwanuka and his family.



The next opportunity was visiting Kevin and Jena Smith and their daughters, Lincie and Eden, in Jordan. It was a beautiful time as they shared how their Arabic studies have gone very well and they are excited to move to Lebanon in late summer continuing mission work with the Syrian refugees in Beirut. The highlight of my stop in Jordan was a trip to Petra, one of the modern wonders of the world. It was a beautiful experience to hike to the temple carved out of the mountain.

The Partnership and Prayer Conferences at the Beit el-Wadi in Egypt were the most inspiring I have ever been to. One hundred churches in Egypt were invited by Kasr el Dobra Evangelical Church to come pray together with more than six thousand people attending. It was truly an amazing privilege to participate in this time of prayer with Egyptians.

The final stop was to encourage our missionaries in Lebanon on the front lines sharing their faith with Syrian refugees. It was a powerful time to pray with them and be with them in their homes.

**SERMON TEXTS**

MAY 5  
Matthew 7:1-5

MAY 12  
Matthew 13:33-46

MAY 19  
Matthew 22:1-14

MAY 26  
Luke 11:5-13

**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  
Associate Pastor of Children,  
Youth and Families

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

PH: 225.387.0617

[fpabr.org](http://fpabr.org)

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Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Mother's Day Out and  
Preschool  
225.620.0245

Baton Rouge Christian  
Counseling Center  
225.387.2287  
[brchristiancounseling.com](http://brchristiancounseling.com)

**CHURCH PLANTING**, *continued from page 1*

**The Sanctuary**

We've been hinting at it for months, but our session made it official: God is calling us to plant a church in North Baton Rouge. The pastors of the church will be Ron Hicks, Daryl Waters and George Gillam. Former Angola inmates, these men have a passion for reaching at-risk youth, difficult communities and others formerly incarcerated. We've heard George preach twice from our pulpit. We'll get to hear Ron this summer. The new church will be called The Sanctuary and it will be overseen by a team of six elders, and underwritten by the church planting fund we established some years ago. For the rest of this year, they will be building a core leadership team, scoping out a physical site and gathering potential members. We envision an official launch next winter. More details to come. And once again, please offer your prayers for this endeavor. It's an exciting time to be your pastor, and to be in ministry with you.



*Geant*

**Memorial Weekend Worship.** We will have one combined service on May 26 at 10.30 am in celebration of Memorial Day. There will be no Sunday school.

**YOUTH NEWS**

**CONFIRMATION SUNDAY**

**MAY 5 at 4 pm**

Come support the 6th grade Confirmation students at a celebratory service! A reception follows.

**SENIOR SUNDAY**

**Sunday, May 5 at 9 and 11 am**

**HIGH SCHOOL LOCK-IN AND FIESTA  
MAY 10-MAY 11**

Dinner, games and a surprise midnight movie for 8-12 grade students! Drop off is at 6 pm. Bring a sleeping bag and pillow.

**PARENTS' YEAR END MEETING**

**Sunday, May 19 at 10.10 am**

A recap of our busy year as well as our plans for the rest of 2024. Meet us in Dunham Chapel.