

# FPC NEWSLETTER

*Deeper in Christ, Further into the World*



## SO MUCH STILL AHEAD

**By Gerrit Dawson**  
Senior Pastor

I have to tell you, it's been really hard for me making a decision to announce my retirement so far in advance. It feels like something that in reality it is not, like a break-up, or a dying, or a leave-taking. Worst of all, I dread the possibility of our relationship changing before it actually changes. My heart for you has not changed! The pastoral position itself creates a magnetic connection between the minister and the congregation. Personal affection between us only makes that stronger. When I do retire, that "force field" between pastor and flock will switch to a new shepherd. That pains me. But it also gives me great hope. It's the very reason why I've undertaken this transition plan. Now, while I still have passion for this ministry and while our congregation pulses with energy and faith, is the time to plan a smooth hand-off.

But that doesn't mean I'm quitting! That doesn't mean we are not bonded together by the Spirit in this wonderful relationship. That doesn't mean we stop pressing deeper into Christ together and reaching with his love further into the world. It's just the realization that church is about the work of God among a group of people through generations of leadership and growth. Our current elders are very excited and passionate about welcoming and raising up the next wave of leaders to carry us forward. That has been a focus of mine for the last twenty years!

The process of discerning and calling the next senior pastor takes a long time! We have lots left to do together. I'm energized to preach through Revelation, to finish preparing our next Lent study, to engage a team to create a master plan for our facilities and campus, to secure leadership for our mission endeavors, and to

cheerlead all the surging ministries in Bible study, prayer, children, youth and outreach. Let's all stay at it, serving and worshiping Christ through this amazing church on North Boulevard!

With you always in Christ,

### PASTORAL TRANSITION MEETINGS

**SEPTEMBER 1:** *Gerrit invites you to a Pastoral Transition Informational Gathering on Sunday, September 1 at 11.30 am after worship. This is an opportunity for the congregation to ask questions regarding the process of his transition to retirement in 2026 and the search for an Associate Pastor for Teaching and Leadership. Questions may be submitted in advance to Jaci Gaspard (jaci@fpcbr.org). This informal meeting will be livestreamed and recorded for those traveling.*

**SEPTEMBER 8:** *The session has called for a congregational meeting for Sunday, September 8 at 10.15 am to elect the members of the Associate Pastor for Teaching and Leadership Search Committee. Nominated search committee members are Will Adams (c.), Gerry Arnold, Cheryl Brodnax, Jennifer Cagley, Jamy Comeaux, Robert Davis, Brett Furr, David Kozan and Laurie Lemoine. Gerrit will participate in the search process in an advisory role.*

2 DIVORCE CARE GROUP

2 GRAB YOUR BOOTS! HABITAT BUILD

3 WHAT IS YOUR TESTIMONY?

3 MEN'S MINISTRY BBQ

5 REVELATION COMMUNITY GROUPS

5 LET'S PRAY TOGETHER

**SEPTEMBER CALENDAR**

- 1 10.30 am Worship
- 1 Pastoral Transition Gathering
- 3 Fall Community Groups Begin
- 5-7 Habitat for Humanity Build
- 6 rEcess
- 8 Congregational Meeting
- 8 Family Night @ First Starts
- 12-14 Habitat for Humanity Build
- 15 Train Up! Parenting Class Starts
- 19 Night of Testimony & Fellowship
- 22 DivorceCare® Starts
- 26 Men's Ministry Kick Off
- 26-28 Habitat for Humanity Build
- 29 Kids' Communion Training
- 29 Experiential Prayer

**IN MEMORIAM**

August 16, 2024: Louis Stirling

August 24, 2024: Jeanne Daniel  
Mother of Rhonda Dawson

**BAPTISMS**

August 11, 2024  
Thomas and Carol Mae Hair  
Parents are Brianna and Charles

**CHAPEL AND SANCTUARY FLOWERS**

*The Chapel and Sanctuary flowers are given . . .*

*Sept. 1 . . . in loving memory and with thanksgiving for Van Andrew Wilson on his birthday by his parents, Claire & Steve Wilson.*

*Sept. 8 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Jerry Johnson, by his wife LaNelle Johnson, and their daughters Debra Matthews, Joy Pennington, and Jeri J. Cochran.*

*Sept. 15 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Will Dixon by Shea & Tim Firnberg and Sharon Dixon.*

*Sept. 22 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Henry G. McKowen II, Mr. and Mrs. Alex C. McKowen Sr, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Woodford, Jolie Thuneman Peel, and Jolie Berry by Jeanie McKowen Thuneman, Wayne McKowen, Ann McKowen Gerald, and Allie McKowen.*

*Sept. 29 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mary Ogle by Pat Canfield, Brittany & Jamy Comeaux and family.*

**HEALING FROM THE PAIN OF DIVORCE**



For the first time, FPCBR is offering DivorceCare®, a place where caring people come alongside you as you find healing from the pain of separation or divorce. At this 13-week, video-based support group program, you'll find helpful counsel as you manage the emotional turmoil as well as learn practical tools for decision-making.

Our DivorceCare® facilitators have been where you are, are at a place of healing and recovery, and want to show you how to get there. They have a heart to help people in the same way they've been helped. Everyone's story is different, and you'll be accepted right where you are, in a safe place. Each week, you'll watch a 30-minute video filled with practical suggestions from counselors and other experts on divorce recovery. Plus you'll hear from people who've experienced a marriage breakup and share what's helped them. Their insights will help you make wise decisions as you move forward.

Our meetings will be at the church, 5-7 pm, on Sunday evenings beginning September 22. Space is limited, but we want you to join us, so email Laura Shaw today ([laura@fpcbr.org](mailto:laura@fpcbr.org)). Also, let Laura know if you require childcare.

**GRAB YOUR WORK BOOTS!**



Our Habitat for Humanity build will be here before we know it. Building skills are welcome but not necessary to volunteer at our 8th(!) build. Visit [fpcbr.org](http://fpcbr.org) to sign up. You can also help with food by contacting Emily Viguerie ([emily@fpcbr.org](mailto:emily@fpcbr.org)). Build dates are September 5-7, September 12-14, September 26-28.

**LABOR DAY WEEKEND WORSHIP**

On Sunday, September 1, First Presbyterian will have just one 10.30 am worship service in the Sanctuary. This will be a blended service combining the worship styles of the Chapel Communion, Contemporary and Classic Reformed services. There will be no Sunday school.

**ADDITIONAL PARKING**

The Old Governor's Mansion parking lot across North Blvd. is just a two-minute walk and is now available to First Presbyterian churchgoers on Sunday mornings.

**STAFF MEMBER BIO**



**DJ DAVIS**  
*Administrative Executive*

DJ is the Administrative Executive at FPC. In this role, he is responsible for the administration and direction of the budget and finance, payroll, facilities, media, and personnel. He graduated from Louisiana State University where he met his wife Paige. They made FPC their church home just after they married more than 35 years ago. They have three grown children and four grand kids. Throughout the years, DJ has served at FPC in a variety of roles from Deacon, Elder, Chair of the 2010 Sanctuary Renovations Campaign, Board of Trustee member, and President of the FPC Foundation.

DJ worked in Baton Rouge as a consultant and small business owner. Most recently, he owned and operated a business that provided outsourced human resources and benefit administration services. He is passionate about FPC and excited to serve the Lord in this position.

## WHAT IS YOUR TESTIMONY?

*Fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you (1 Samuel 12:24).*



What is your testimony? That's a loaded question, and somewhat difficult (or intimidating) to answer. We often connect our "testimony" to how we first came to faith in Christ.

But many of us can't pinpoint that exact moment. It's more of a gradual awareness of our belonging to Him. The truth is, your testimony is the entire journey of your faith as a whole, from cradle to grave: how he's shaped you, convicted you, opened your eyes to his goodness and grace, and continues to grow you closer to him. These are stories we should be sharing with each other!

Join Women's Ministry this fall for our Testimony & Fellowship Night as some of our beloved sisters-in-Christ (including Bonnie Adams, Kate Castle, Lisa Head, Kaci Treadaway, and more) share the ways the Lord has worked personally and powerfully in their lives.

### 2024 NIGHT OF TESTIMONY & FELLOWSHIP

Thursday, September 19

6–8.30 pm

At the home of Chelsea Smith  
(2776 McCarroll Drive)

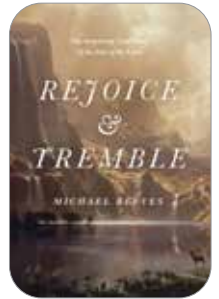
\$15 (Increases to \$20 at midnight on Sunday, September 15).

Register online at [fpcbr.org](http://fpcbr.org).

Dinner & dessert included.

## WHAT IS A HEALTHY FEAR OF GOD?

In *Rejoice & Tremble*, Michael Reeves differentiates a sinful fear of the Lord with a godly one. A good, godly fear of the Lord is a familial fear; one that is utterly safe, one that moves us to awestruck reverence, one full of wondrous and trembling delight in our Creator and Redeemer. Turns out, a good, godly fear of the Lord is surprising, good news for us!



Join a Women's Ministry Circle as we come to fear God not as slaves, but as his beloved daughters. Circles resume in September and meet monthly (see list of meeting days and times below or visit [fpcbr.org](http://fpcbr.org)). Circle books may be picked up at the Connection Center. Email [jaime@fpcbr.org](mailto:jaime@fpcbr.org) for more information.

- CIRCLE 1** First Tuesday @ 9.45 am
- CIRCLE 2** First Tuesday @ 9.45 am
- CIRCLE 4** Third Tuesday @ 6.30 pm
- CIRCLE 5** First Tuesday @ 6.30 pm
- CIRCLE 6** Second Tuesday @ 10 am
- CIRCLE 9** Second Tuesday @ 6 pm
- CIRCLE 10** Third Wednesday @ 5 pm
- CIRCLE 11** First Thursday @ Noon
- CIRCLE 12** Second Tuesday @ 6 pm
- CIRCLE 14** Second Tuesday @ 9.30 am
- CIRCLE 15** Second Monday @ 6.30 pm
- CIRCLE 16** Second Tuesday @ 7 pm

## MEN'S MINISTRY BBQ

Our fall Men's Ministry kick off is right around the corner! We're having BBQ and fellowship on Thursday, September 26 at the home of Calvin Fabré (5700 Sandalwood Drive).

With such busy schedules, it's hard to find time to just hang out. Let that not be the case at First Presbyterian. Our BBQ will feature members sharing how they've prioritized wives, children and connecting with friends, and the different ways that balance has enriched various seasons of their lives.

Then there will be BBQ. The ribs will be hot off the grill and plenty of delicious sides. Feel free to bring your favorite bourbon/whiskey/gin. You'll certainly find a fellow enthusiast to share it with! Please RSVP to Blake Fowler ([blake@fpcbr.org](mailto:blake@fpcbr.org)).



## TRAIN UP! A NEW LIMITED SERIES PARENTING CLASS

Today's parents (and grandparents) have lots of questions. That's good! Bring them to our "Train Up" series beginning Sunday, September 15 at 10.10 am in Dunham Chapel. Topics will be presented by various speaker.

As the body of Christ, we can learn from one another as we "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

- SEPTEMBER 15 Serving As a Role Model
- SEPTEMBER 22 Fostering Empathy
- SEPTEMBER 29 Break for Annual Communion Class
- OCTOBER 6 When and When Not to Helicopter
- OCTOBER 13 Social Media Smarts
- OCTOBER 20 Spiritual Leadership
- OCTOBER 27 Break for Annual Kirkin' O the Tartans
- NOVEMBER 3 Standing Firm in Parenting Convictions

## COMMUNION TRAINING FOR ELEMENTARY KIDS

Each year, Gerrit offers a Communion training class for elementary-age children. Kindergartners through 5th graders and their parents are invited Sunday, September 29 at 10.10 am in Dunham Chapel.

## FAMILY NIGHT FIRST

First Presbyterian is the place to be on Sunday nights! Food, family and fun from 5 to 7 pm.

### "THE ART OF MARRIAGE" COMMUNITY GROUP

Barat and Darin Travis will lead a community group on the "Art of Marriage" using a curriculum developed by Family Life. The groups starts on Sunday, September 8. A one-time registration is required and includes a \$25 fee which covers the cost of two workbooks: one for wives and one for husbands. Please let us know if you need childcare (ages birth-5th grade) when you register. Childcare is free.



### CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Children's choir resumes on Sunday, September 8. All children in kindergarten through 5th grade are welcome. A one-time registration is required.




### YOUTH GROUP


Middle school meets in the church Gym and high school meets in various member homes. Registration is not required but please contact Colton ([colton@fpabr.org](mailto:colton@fpabr.org)) if you have questions.

Middle School meets in the Gym

High School meets in various locations



**Serving As a Role Model**  
September 15



**Fostering Empathy**  
September 22



**When and When Not to Helicopter**  
October 6



**Social Media Smarts**  
October 13



**Spiritual Leadership**  
October 20



**Standing Firm in Convictions**  
November 3

## REVELATION COMMUNITY GROUPS

Our journey into the book of Revelation on Sunday mornings has been impactful. John begins his introduction by saying, “Blessed is the one who reads . . . hears . . . and keeps what is written.” We might only be a few weeks into the series, but many have already found themselves tremendously blessed. We hear the weekly sermons from the pew, but how do we live out the exhortations from this dramatic Scripture in our daily lives? The answer is to journey through the book of Revelation *in community!* Come be a part of our fall community groups as we discuss the Book of Revelation. Groups meet throughout the Baton Rouge area at various times. Contact Blake Fowler ([blake@fpcbr.org](mailto:blake@fpcbr.org)) to get connected.

## SIGNIFICANT TIMES IN THE LIFE OF OUR NATION, THE WORLD AND OUR CONGREGATION

Fall is a significant time in the life of our congregation, our nation and our world. Joining together in prayer before our Lord’s throne of grace is the most important work we can do in light of all of the needs and challenges that face us. On Sunday, September 29 from 6 to 7 pm in Dunham Chapel, we will have several stations set up for active and experiential prayer covering topics such as the upcoming elections, mission opportunities and healing for our city and nation. You can arrive and stay for any length of time you have available.

On Sunday, October 20 from 6 to 7 pm in the Sanctuary we will have a Concert of Prayer, a set of prayer and music that has a rich and long history in our nation. Concerts of prayer allow for a beautiful combination of individual, small group, and corporate prayer, interspersed with hymns and praise music. Oswald Chambers said, “prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.” Let’s come together to pray!

### FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART!

FPC is happy to launch the “Prime Time Club,” an opportunity for the young at heart (generally sixty-somethings and older) to get together for excursions, good food, laughter and other opportunities to enjoy the wonderful life God gives us. Our first gathering will be a BBQ lunch Thursday, October 3 from 11.30 am to 1 pm in the Reception Room. We plan to share news about our first outing, as well as get your ideas for what Prime Time can be! Make sure to sign up with Laura Shaw ([laura@fpcbr.org](mailto:laura@fpcbr.org) or 387.0617). We're looking forward to a wonderful afternoon!



### CLASS FOR PARKINSON'S PATIENTS AND SENIORS

Parkinson’s disease, the most common neurodegenerative disease of the elderly, is characterized by the progressive loss of muscle control. Dance is listed by the American Parkinson Disease Association as one of the best forms of physical activity. It provides exercises for balance, mobility, and gait but also aids in general cognition and response to external cueing. This class offers community and encouragement.

Classes are held each Friday, 9–11.30 am, in Sanctuary Building room 219 (mirrored classroom). It is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact the church office 225.387.0617.

### SERMON TEXTS

*Texts are subject to change.*

SEPTEMBER 1  
Single, 10.30 am Service

Revelation 2:1–7

SEPTEMBER 8  
Revelation 3:14–22

SEPTEMBER 15  
Revelation 4

SEPTEMBER 22  
Revelation 5:1–14

SEPTEMBER 29  
Revelation 6:1–17

### PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON  
Senior Pastor

WHITNEY ALEXANDER  
Associate Pastor of Missions

DARIN TRAVIS  
Associate Pastor for Discipleship

SCOTT GRAHAM  
Associate Pastor for  
Pastoral Care and Prayer

COLTON UNDERWOOD  
Associate Pastor of Children,  
Youth and Families



225.387.0617  
[fpcbr.org](http://fpcbr.org)

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](http://brchristiancounseling.com)

### THEY ASKED, YOU DELIVERED!

Our friends at McKinley Elementary asked if we could collect school supplies for families who are not able to provide everything their child may need. Thanks to everyone who took the time to donate and, with your efforts, we outdid the school's expectations. Your generosity was overwhelming! And special thanks to Anna High and Lucy Bea Wood who helped sort all the goodies. Check it out: 83 binders, 65 Kleenex, 63 disinfecting wipes, 56 packs of erasers, 69 packs of dry erase markers, 76 scissors, 161 plastic folders, 47 packs of pencils, 66 packs of marker, 49 packs of colored pencils, 73 marble notebooks, 44 boxes of Ziplocs, 133 boxes of crayons, 58 packs of glue, 3 packs of looseleaf paper, 46 clear backpacks.



### Storytime Readers, Teacher Encouragers and Reading Friends Needed.

We are ready to get busy at our adopted McKinley Elementary School! Located at 575 W. Roosevelt St., right off Highland Rd. near the Tiger Band practice facility, there are several opportunities available for our members to serve and make a difference for the students and staff. Please consider joining this ministry as a Reading Friend, Teacher Encourager or Classroom Storytime Reader. No previous experience is necessary—all you need is a love for children and a willing heart. The commitment is small but the rewards are great! Help us make a difference in the lives of our neighbors just over two miles from our church. For more information or to sign up, stop by the Connection Center or email Laura Shaw at [laura@fpcbr.org](mailto:laura@fpcbr.org).

