

MARCH 2025

FPC NEWSLETTER

Deeper in Christ, Further into the World



STITCHED INTO *THE* STORY

By Gerrit Dawson
Senior Pastor

Incredibly strong steel cords lie inside the concrete of major highways, buildings and dams. We don't see these cords, but they bear up under great pressure and hold everything together. What if there are such cords in the Bible? And what if we could lift out and see these cords, these *golden threads*, that tie together the whole story of God's plan for our world? Think with me about this for a moment.

The Bible is one book. But it actually contains 66 *separate* books. These were written by at least 35 different authors across 1500 years. Yet, mysteriously, the Bible still has a deep underlying unity. It all holds together. Scripture has a storyline simple enough to teach a young child, but deep enough to occupy our minds for the rest of our lives. As one of the church fathers said, "The Bible grows with the reader." The more you read the more you find. The deeper you mine, the more treasure you excavate. Like no other literature, the Bible contains history, poetry, stories, prophecies, theology, doxology, personal letters and visions of the world's end. Yet through it all the one God reveals a consistent long-term mission to redeem his creation which went astray.

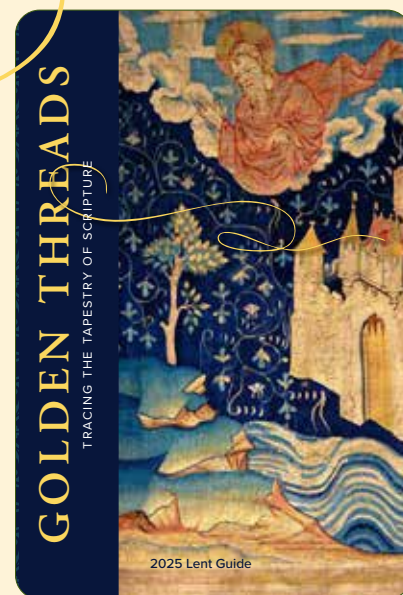
Even with the Bible's complex diversity, there are, astoundingly, themes, phrases, and images which recur from beginning to end. I call them golden threads. This Lent, we'll be lifting up six of these shimmering cords that tie together the story of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. We will see how each one gives us a unique way to tell the whole story of

the Bible. The golden threads will reveal to us what God is really up to in our lives and in the world. We will get stitched into the magnificent tapestry that is God's Word.

During Lent, we focus together as a congregation. The program operates on multiple levels. The whole goal is being *formed* more deeply by the Holy Spirit.

We read one key verse every day for 42 days, so that it becomes part of us. We follow a golden thread each day for a week. We lift up that thread from the early stories of God's people through the life of Jesus and into the mission of Christ's people. Above all we pray. The suggested prayers offer a way to launch your own prayers and be stitched into God's great story.

Golden Threads gets delivered in multiple formats. There's a printed book filled with gorgeous full color art and laid out for ease of reading. We offer a daily email of the printed content for those who like to read on



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LENT
WORSHIP

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CHURCH
HISTORY, PT. 2

4 WOMEN'S
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4 MEN'S
SKEET
SHOOT

MARCH CALENDAR

2	Youth Boys Hike & Girls' Movie
3 & 4	Church Office Closed
5	Ash Wednesday
5	Lent Community Groups Begin
7	rEcess
9	First Lent Sermon
9	Daylight Savings Begins
15 & 16	Mirabelle Opera
16	Congregational Meeting
22	Women's Spring Picnic
24	Prime Time Club Lunch
29	Men's Skeet Shoot

SAVE THE DATE: UPCOMING APRIL EVENTS

4	Donkey Tales
13	Palm Sunday
17	Maundy Thursday
20	Easter Sunday

FLOWERS

The Chapel and Sanctuary flowers are given . . .

March 2 . . . to the glory of God and in the loving memory of Linda and Wayne Barker's parents, Helen & Wayne Barker, and Christine & Sam Orwin, as well as Wayne's sister, Kitty Barker.

March 9 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Bart Bennett by Ruth Anne, Claire, Adriane and Sarah.

March 16 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Martha Ann & Don Cunningham by their grandchildren, Mary Michael and Robert McDuff.

March 23 Open date.

March 30 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Harvard Bardwell and Scott Wheaton by Dadie & Princeton Bardwell.

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MID-WEEK LENT WORSHIP

By Scott Graham, Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care and Prayer

Join us on Wednesday afternoons at noon for an opportunity to worship and commune with the Lord in a shorter midweek setting. Our meditations will use the Scriptural *Golden Thread* theme from each week of Gerrit's Lenten book, but with a message and a Scripture passage that will provide additional insight for the theme of the week. Services will be held in Dunham Chapel, except for the March 5 Ash Wednesday service, which will be held in the Sanctuary. Communion will be offered at each service. On March 19, we plan to have experiential prayer stations set up for use following the service. Come and be blessed by this beautiful time of music, prayer and devotion.

NEW MEMBERS, STRATEGIC PLANS AND PASTORAL SEARCH NEWS CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SUNDAY, MARCH 16

The session has called a congregational meeting for Sunday, March 16 at 10.10 am in the Sanctuary. We'll receive new members, elect at-large members to the nominating committee, hear the 2025 budget, receive a report from the pastoral search team and more! There will be no adult Sunday school classes that day.

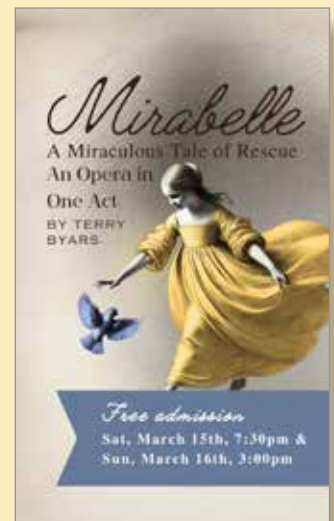
JUST FOR FUN!

"MIRABELLE," AN INSPIRING ONE-ACT OPERA BY TERRY BYARS!

SATURDAY, MARCH 15 AND SUNDAY, MARCH 16

The child Mirabelle and a cruel maid-servant have taken refuge in an isolated cave in the wake of a shipwreck. Mirabelle's miraculous rescue will warm your heart in this season of Eastertide, a season which brings to our remembrance that we are all, indeed, in need of rescue.

Join us for this one-act opera written by Terry Byars. Show times are Saturday, March 15 at 7.30 pm and Sunday, March 16 at 3 pm in our Sanctuary.



PICKLEBALL

SUNDAYS AT 1.30 PM

America's fastest growing sport and the game with the funny name, Pickleball, has come to our church. Ten to fifteen players, including several church members, gather every Sunday at 1.30 pm in the Gym to play mostly doubles and mixed doubles. Pickleball is played on a court the size of a badminton court with paddles, a tennis net and a heavy whiffle ball. A combination of tennis, badminton, and ping pong skills are beneficial, but the real skills needed are a willingness to just get out there, try something new and have fun. It's also a great way to exercise and keep fit!

Come out and give it a try. Contact Mike Glisson or Rick Spiller for more information:

Mike Glisson
225.936.8994

Rick Spiller
225.278.5760

RELIGION IN EARLY BATON ROUGE: CELEBRATING 200 YEARS OF FPC, PART 2

By Zora M. Olsson, First Presbyterian Church Historian

Last month, we talked about the early missionaries of the late 17th century who ministered in what was called the Mississippi Valley. Now we shift our attention to what was happening specifically in Louisiana in the early 18th century.

During the early years of its history, the inhabitants of the unique village of Baton Rouge (formerly called Red Stick) did not possess the right to religious freedom. Dominion over this rich and desirable area of the New World shifted from country to country through exploration or by treaty rights. France, England and Spain each claimed a portion of Louisiana which was referred to as the West Florida Parishes of which Baton Rouge was a part. Immediately after acquisition, each country made an attempt to colonize its new possession and impose its own set of rules and restrictions upon the settlers. The French required settlers to worship in the Catholic faith.

In 1720, Bernard and Pierre D'Artaguiette received a land grant settlement from France called Red Stick. In 1722, Diron D'Artaguiette held that this settlement was populated by "50 souls." On New Year's Day 1727, Father Pierre Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix celebrated the first mass in Baton Rouge. This was the first record of a religious service in Baton Rouge and probably the only one held for many years.

In 1763, the Treaty of Paris was signed in which England acquired from France all lands east of the Mississippi River

except the Isle of Orleans. This placed Baton Rouge, which was renamed New Richmond, under the English flag.

The British required all holders of French land grants to pledge allegiance to the King of England if they wished to retain their property, and worship God in the Catholic religion. This requirement had no effect on New Richmond, for at that time the Houma Indians appear to have been the only inhabitants of the bluff, and Catholic priests traveling up and down the river probably visited the tribes.

The English made numerous land grants along the bluffs of the Mississippi River (this former bluffs path along the river is now known as Highland Road) at New Richmond to Englishmen from New England and the England along with several Scotsmen. By 1775, between 10 and 15 men lived in New Richmond

engaged in stave making (wood or iron strips used in barrel making), slave trading and the sale of contraband goods.

Enter the Scotsman William Dunbar, descended from a long line of Presbyterians, who came to America in 1771.

To be continued next month.



Welcome Ron!

PASTOR
RON HICKS

*Lead Pastor,
The Sanctuary*

Pastor Ron C. Hicks serves as the lead pastor of The Sanctuary of Baton Rouge, a new church plant in North Baton Rouge dedicated to restoring lives through the power of God's Word. With over 33 years of experience ministering to the incarcerated at Louisiana State Prison—Angola and Elayn Hunt Correctional Center—Pastor Hicks has developed a heart for those in transition back into society and formerly worked as Re-Entry Manager at the Louisiana Parole Project, helping formerly incarcerated individuals successfully reenter society and reconnect with family and friends. He is a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, holds a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry and a Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry and is currently pursuing his Doctor of Ministry degree. Pastor Hicks is also skilled as a sign language interpreter and braille transcriber, using these gifts to reach diverse communities with the gospel. Known for his compassionate leadership and practical teaching, Pastor Hicks remains committed to guiding others toward spiritual growth and renewed hope in Christ. He is the proud father of four kids, three daughters – Krystal, Ranette, Shekinah and one son, Ron Christopher Hicks, who is deceased. He is also super-excited about his marriage this coming April to his beautiful fiancée, Jehane Draper.



HOW CAN I PRAY FOR YOU? SATURDAY, MARCH 22

“How can I pray for you?” A seemingly simple, but game-changing question! Prayer is one of the most basic aspects of our life in Christ, but it’s also one of the most important gifts we give each other. It unites us in community and draws us into spiritual intimacy. It’s a powerful way we “carry each others burdens” (Galatians 6:2) and “encourage one another and build one another up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Join us at our annual Women’s Ministry Spring Picnic, where we will enjoy a sweet time of fellowship, prayer and picnic lunch. Come and be blessed by women of all ages and stages, as we seek to tighten the bonds of our union in Christ.

WOMEN’S MINISTRY SPRING PICNIC

Saturday, March 22

At the home of Ryn Jones
(2065 Ferndale Avenue)

11 am–1 pm

\$15 registration online at fpcbr.org



MARCH PRIME TIME CLUB MONDAY, MARCH 24

All FPC members over the age of 60 are invited to join the FPC Prime Time Club for our monthly luncheon at Café Americain on Monday, March 24. Following lunch, you are welcome to join us at Independence Park Botanic Gardens. We will stroll through the pleasant surroundings to observe nature in Baton Rouge. The 15-acre site was originally part of Goodwood Plantation. The master plan was updated in 2015 and the latest phase of construction, including the Parterre Garden, Southern Walkway and Butterfly Garden, was completed in 2018.

Please register online at fpcbr.org or at the Prime Time Club Table on Sunday, March 9 and March 16. If you miss those opportunities, please contact Brenda Salassi at 225.241.4916.

MARCH LUNCHEON

Monday, March 24

Café Americain (7521 Jefferson Hwy.)

11.30 am–1.30 pm

\$26 registration online at fpcbr.org

Registration deadline: Tuesday, March 18



MEN’S SKEET SHOOT SATURDAY, MARCH 29

What does good food, the smell of gun powder, and good-natured competition have in common? Yep. It’s the annual First Presbyterian Men’s Ministry Skeet Shoot! This year’s skeet shoot will be back in the rolling hills of Saint Francisville on Saturday, March 29.

No matter your skill level, this event is only partially about skeet. In addition to shooting, this is a great place to make some new friendships or deepen ones you already enjoy.

MEN’S MINISTRY SKEET SHOOT

Saturday, March 29

Starts at 8 am

\$65 for Shooters

\$20 for Non-Shooters

Register online at fpcbr.org

Contact Darin Travis if you have any questions (darin@fpcbr.org).



**Welcome
Mary Page!**

MARY PAGE
WOOD

So Loved
Team Leader

Mary Page graduated from LSU with a Bachelor’s in Public Relations and Psychology, and she is currently pursuing a Master’s in Social Work at LSU. Her focus is on children and families with a long-term goal of becoming a counselor after graduation. Above all, she seeks to serve the Lord through her work, trusting that he has a plan for her life.

Mary Page is blessed with a deep love for children, art, music and reading. She finds joy and peace in working with children and teaching them about the love of Jesus. Mary Page feels privileged to be part of the amazing Children’s Ministry in the So Loved Hall. Over the years, she has had the opportunity to work in the Butterfly Room on Sunday mornings and assist the director of Kids Hope USA. Now, she is excited to step into her role as the So Loved Team Leader, and can’t wait to continue growing in this ministry!

LOCAL AND GLOBAL MISSION NEWS

RETURNING HEARTS CELEBRATION

SAVE THE DATE FOR MAY 17

After an almost five year hiatus, LifeLine Global's Returning Hearts Celebration is back! This event is a key component of prison ministry that helps reconnect Angola prisoners with their families and most importantly, their children, for fun and activities. This is a special day of celebration for these men for two reasons: they have the rare opportunity to fellowship with their loved ones, and they have completed the Malachi Dads program necessary to participate in the Returning Hearts Celebration. Malachi Dads helps these men understand the issues of fatherlessness and generational incarceration by attacking the issue head on.

Volunteers are needed for the festivities on Saturday, May 17. Please visit fpcbr.org for a link to register as a volunteer.

ROMANIA MISSION OPPORTUNITIES 2025

We have two mission opportunities in Romania with The Smiles Foundation. A summer mission May 22–31 and a Christmas SOS (Sack of Smiles) mission December 11–20. Come along for a hands-on mission experience where we will assist families in need through community outreach, visit elder care residential homes, help with children's outreach, work in the Glasshouse and much more. There is something for everyone, whatever your interest or gift.

For more information contact Carol or Peter Lazar:

Carol Lazar
225.247.6938
clazar@cox.net

Peter Lazar
225-247-6935
plazar3@cox.net

"DONKEY TALES"

SUNDAY, APRIL 6

Joyful Noise invites you to a hee-hawing good time on Sunday, April 6 at 6 pm in the Gym for a presentation of *Donkey Tales*. Lots of stories in the Bible have donkeys in them, join Tex Arkana and her friends to see how God creatively communicates with us using donkeys, but most importantly, God's only begotten Son. A BBQ meal will be provided afterwards. It's fun for the whole family!



DEACONS ARE HERE TO HELP

The Diaconate has a growing passion to help the home bound and needy within our congregation. Perhaps you know of someone who could use a ride to Sunday worship; or an elderly member who could use occasional help with small household tasks like changing light bulbs or cleaning up their yard; or a single parent who could use a hand moving into a new house; or a home bound member who would appreciate a visit or phone call. These are examples of the kinds of small and often unspoken needs that exist within our church community and where we as deacons hope to help.

If you have a need, know of a need or would like to participate, please contact Laura Shaw (225.387.0617 or laura@fpcbr.org).

SERMON TEXTS

Texts are subject to change.

MARCH 2

Matthew 19:30–20:16

MARCH 9

Genesis 2:7; Psalm 139:13–14a;
John 1:3, 14a; Colossians 1:16;
2 Corinthians 5:17;
Ephesians 2:10; Revelation 21:5a

MARCH 16

Isaiah 53:7–12

MARCH 23

Ezekiel 37:21–28;
Zechariah 2:10–11

MARCH 30

Jeremiah 31:31–34

IN MEMORIAM

February 11, 2025

Gary Dawkins
Father of Sherry Kadair

February 14, 2025

Nancy Walter
Mother of Leslie Carver

February 17, 2024

Martha Davis
Mother of Rick Spiller

February 18, 2024

Sara Blankenstein

PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON
Senior Pastor

DARIN TRAVIS

Associate Pastor for Discipleship

SCOTT GRAHAM

Associate Pastor for
Pastoral Care and Prayer

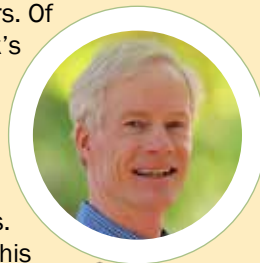
COLTON UNDERWOOD

Associate Pastor of Children,
Youth and Families

STITCHED, *continued from page 1*

devices. And, back by popular demand, a daily podcast delivers *Golden Threads* to those who enjoy content by audio. Plus, we offer 25 community groups meeting all over town at different of times so you can dive deep with others. Of course, the messages and music in worship lift up each week's golden thread.

One of the ways I seek to express my love for you is by offering you the very best of what I have found questing into Scripture. I think well enough of you to strive to bring you insights that will be challenging and fresh, yet grounded in our historic beliefs. I put heart and soul into the ten months it takes to prepare for this journey with you. I hope you will share books and podcasts with others even as we go together through these 42 days.



TWO MEMBER PORTALS

The Member Portal allows you to access the online church directory, update personal information and review your estimate of giving and donation history. The Online Giving Portal allows you to make a donation, update your bank or credit card information and make changes to your recurring gift schedule. Links to both portals can be found in the top right corner of fpcbr.org. Contact Laura Shaw (225.620.1222) if you have questions about setting up your account.

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CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

VBS REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

Vacation Bible School Jerusalem Marketplace 2025 registration is now open for campers, helpers (middle school and high school) and adult volunteers. Visit fpcbr.org to register. \$10 fee for all campers. VBS dates are June 9–12, 2025.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER RETREATS

RYM high school retreat registration to Panama City Beach is now open. Please visit fpcbr.org for information.

EPIC middle school retreat registration is coming soon.