

FPC NEWSLETTER

DEEPER IN CHRIST, FURTHER INTO THE WORLD



CATCH FIRE!

By Gerrit Dawson
Senior Pastor

I have a friend who got to carry the Olympic torch for a few minutes along its journey from Greece to Salt Lake City. Thousands of people, specially selected, take part in this massive relay. The torch catches fire in Olympia, site of the first ancient games, and then passes through thousands of persons to the location of the next Olympics. Sometimes the flame gets passed to an underwater torch; sometimes it flies in four lanterns on a plane. But so far, it has never failed to make it.

That's a lot like the story we tell at Christmas. The early believers came to learn what they probably did not know during Jesus' ministry. How he was born far from home and cradled in a feeding trough. How angels sang before shepherds. How wise men followed a unique star. These accounts caught fire. They became precious to those who have given their lives to Jesus. So the reports have passed across oceans, over mountains, through deserts and hundreds of languages. The true story of a Savior's birth.

This Advent, as we prepare for Christmas, our theme is *light*. We hope to catch fire from the birth of the Savior. The twist is that our flame does not begin on earth, not even from a place as cool as Mt. Olympus. This is a heavenly fire. Not from down here. A spiritual flame of life jumped the gap

and caught fire in the virgin's womb. The Spirit enabled Mary to conceive Jesus, the truly human, truly divine redeemer.

When our hearts catch fire with that miracle, our whole lives light up. I love keeping this season with you



and I hope you'll make it here every week as we catch fire from Scriptures full of light and songs that light up the heavens with Christ's glory. You especially don't want to miss the Cantata on December 10, featuring our combined choirs, an orchestra and music written and arranged by our own Chris Phillips. We'll have three services on December 24 and I'll preach "All Along the Watchtower" at each. Read on about all the ways we can catch fire with heavenly light this Christmas.

Christmas Offering

Every year, in a very understated way, we make available a special offering to undergird two ministries beloved to our church. Every year, quietly, you shatter giving records and send the ministry leaders soaring into the new year with hope.

The Christian Outreach Center, led by Brian Sleeth, helps thousands of people through the year with basic needs for food, clothing, shelter and electricity. But more, the COC offers effective programs in job readiness, financial literacy and even re-entry from prison to a contributing life.

The Gardere Community Christian School, led by Lauren Darden, educates 150 students from preschool to fifth grade. This multi-ethnic Christian school consistently sees dramatic improvement in students' test scores, outpacing both public and charter schools in its area. Most importantly, Gardere effectively forms these little ones in the love and story of Jesus. Both ministries light many flames of hope, and it's a joy to support them.

Gerrit

2 & 3 : ALL THINGS
ADVENT

4 : 5 TEACHER
ENCOURAGERS
WANTED

4 : NEW MIDDLE
SCHOOL GIRLS'
STUDY

DECEMBER EVENTS

Live Nativity	DEC 1
Youth Christmas Party	DEC 2
Mid-Week Advent Worship	DEC 6
Women's Advent Brunch	DEC 9
Cantata and Reception	DEC 10
Downtown Pilgrimage	DEC 10
Poinsettia Order Deadline	DEC 10
Mid-Week Advent Worship	DEC 13
Christmas Offering	DEC 17, 24
One 10.30 am Worship	DEC 31

BIRTHS

November 2, 2023
 Harrison Crawford Comeaux
 Parents are Brittany & Jamy Comeaux

November 15, 2023
 Piper Celeste Phillips
 Parents are Virginia & Chris Phillips

November 20, 2023
 Martha Jane Miller
 Parents are Shelby & Connor Miller

BAPTISMS

November 26, 2023
 Ollie & Andie Anderson
 Parents are Kalyn & Luke Anderson

Hudson Hollingsworth
 Parents are Kendall & Blake Hollingsworth

Hill Ortego
 Parents are Caroline & Town Ortego

Mazie & Ivy Smith
 Parents are Chelsea & Justin Smith

IN MEMORIAM

October 24, 2023
 Beau Atkinson
 Son of Susan Atkinson

November 16, 2023
 Cynthia Morris

November 27, 2023
 Reid Bateman

FLOWERS

The Chapel and Sanctuary flowers serve to honor a departed loved one or celebrate with thanksgiving cherished people or events. If you would like to donate flowers for a particular Sunday, please contact Kathy Mullins at 603.4735.

ADVENT CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND DETAILS

Daily Advent Readings



Many thanks to Mary and Emma Harper Blumentritt who developed this year's list of daily Advent readings and prayers. Readings began November 26 but continue to be available multiple ways. They are posted at 4 am daily on the church website (fpcbr.org/adventreadings), every church member will receive a weekly Sunday morning email with the list of readings (and links to Scripture passages!) for the week, and finally, the church app includes a link at the top of the Welcome Page that brings you directly to the website readings. Of course, for those of us who prefer an old-fashioned, printed version, copies are available at the Connection Center.

The Tradition Continues December 1



Friday, December 1, downtown Baton Rouge will be alive with the sights and sounds of Christmas for the Festival of Lights. Plan to join us in the beautiful Terraced Garden at 5.30 or 6.30 pm to see the story of Jesus' birth as recorded in the Gospels come to life. Shepherds, Angels, Wisemen!



Youth Combined Christmas Party



All youth are invited to a night of "ugly" sweaters, cookie decorating, games and a Christmas movie on the Terrace (weather permitting) complete with a hot chocolate bar! Meet us at 5 pm, Saturday, December 2.



Mid-Week Advent Worship Continues December 6 & 13



First Presbyterian is offering Wednesday noon Advent services. Worship, which includes communion, will be 12 to 12.45 pm December 6 and 13. Our Scriptural focus will be on Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55 as a marvelous preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. The services are held in Dunham Chapel and include music fitting for the season. Join us for a time of quiet joy with our family of faith!

December 9: Women's Advent Brunch



"All who heard [the news of Jesus' birth] were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:18-19).



Mary may not have fully understood the magnitude of the events that unfolded that glorious night, but she knew they were worth preserving deep in her heart to remember always. Perhaps we've become a bit complacent in celebrating Jesus' birth. Do we treasure it in our hearts like Mary?

You are invited to the Women's Ministry Advent Brunch where Lauren Fowler will lead us in a devotion based on Luke 2:15-20. We will also enjoy special music by our beloved Kristina Graham and Rachel Reese-Kollmeyer. May we meditate on the beauty and wonder of Jesus' birth this Christmas.

Join us Saturday, December 9 at 11 am at the home of Stephanie Bennett. Register online at fpcbr.org. \$10 per person.

ADVENT CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND DETAILS

DEC 10 O Lux Beata (O Blessed Light) Christmas Cantata

Light is a unifying thread throughout Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Come experience these theological and aesthetic concepts of light and color at “O Lux Beata” (*O Blessed Light*) Christmas Cantata. Our Cantata will be incorporated into worship at both our 9 and 11 am worship with a reception between services. The 7.45 am Chapel Communion service will not meet December 10.



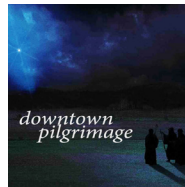
DEC 10 Poinsettia Orders Due December 10

All are invited to help decorate the Chapel and Sanctuary by purchasing a poinsettia in memory or celebration of a loved one. The cost is \$35 per plant. Please place your order by Sunday, December 10. Order forms are located outside the Chapel, at the Connection Center or online (fpcbr.org). Those who purchase a poinsettia are welcome to take it home after the 6 pm Christmas Eve service.



DEC 10 Annual Downtown Pilgrimage

The music ministry at First Presbyterian is excited to be a part of the annual Downtown Christmas Pilgrimage. The journey begins at 5.30 pm at Mount Zion Baptist Church and typically arrives at First Presbyterian by 6.30 pm. We'll walk together to several beautiful downtown churches and hear wonderful Christmas music. You'll also get in your steps for that day. Invite a friend or neighbor to join you!



DEC 17 Last Day for Malachi Dads Donations, December 17

Items are being collected for Christmas bags to be distributed to the Malachi Dads (prisoners) at Angola and Hunt Penitentiaries. Please consider making a donation and dropping it off at the Connection Center by Sunday, December 17. Items needed: Irish Spring soap, anti-perspirant, toothpaste/toothbrush, shampoo, lotion, body wash, white socks or baby powder. Cash donations also accepted.



DEC 24 Christmas Worship and Beyond December 24, Christmas Eve

Three festive Christmas Eve services of carols, candlelight and communion: 11 am, 4 and 6 pm in the Sanctuary.



December 25
No Worship

December 31
10.30 am Worship in the Sanctuary

SERMON TEXTS

December 3, 2023
Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 1:76-79

December 10, 2023
John 1:4-5

December 17, 2023
2 Corinthians 4:3-6

December 24, 2023
To be announced.

December 31, 2023
To be announced.

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



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Mother's Day Out and Preschool
225.620.0245

BR Christian Counseling Center
225.387.2287
brchristiancounseling.com

LAGNIAPPE

WOMEN'S THESSALONIANS STUDY BEGINS JANUARY 15

Join Women's Ministry as we study two of Paul's most God-centered letters, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. These letters teach us how to remain grounded in the gospel in the midst of a fallen world. They emphasize the importance of walking consistently in the power of the Holy Spirit. And they encourage us to not grow weary in our relationship with the Lord or each other, but to live in the hope of eternity.

There are three options to participate:

Mondays at 7.30 am in the FPC Library
(*designed for ladies in their 20s/30s*)

Wednesdays at 6.30 pm (via ZOOM)

Thursdays at 9.30 am in Room 202
(*childcare available by request only*).

MDO FPC MEMBER REGISTRATION 2024-2025

Church member priority registration for the Mother's Day Out 2024-2025 school year is Monday, January 29. Contact Whitney Weiner at mdo@fpibr.org or 225.620.0245 for more information.

ALL THEY WANT FOR CHRISTMAS! TEACHER ENCOURAGERS

You have generously adopted the teachers at our ministry partner McKinley Elementary. But we still have five teachers who would love an Encourager! Consider adopting Rose Young, Sybil Thomas, Ann Bradford, Chantel Ridley or Azure Toney and being a blessing to them this school year. Contact Laura Shaw at 387.0617 or laura@fpibr.org for more information.

FOUR-PART GIRLS BIBLE STUDY STARTS SATURDAY, JANUARY 6

All middle and high school girls are invited to a four-part series through *Remade*, a devotional by Paul Tautges. The purpose of this study is to better understand our identity as image bearers and daughters of our God. Together, we will discuss what it means to live out our transformed identity in a world with competing messages that vie for our affections and attention. We meet starting January 6 from 9 to 10 am at Bonnie and Will Adams' (8460 Columbia Court). Contact Rachel Underwood for further details (reunderwood2016@gmail.com). We will meet January 6, 20, 27 and February 3.