

FPC NEWSLETTER

Deeper in Christ, Further into the World



SO MUCH LOVE!

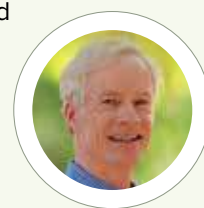
By **GERRIT DAWSON**

Senior Pastor

I'm a word guy, but I don't have the words. The love, the joy, the faith, the interconnectedness in Sunday's worship was indescribably wondrous. Thank you. From the deepest places to the end of our conscious days, gratitude for a day that fulfilled two decades. The music. The sound of a packed house singing out. The relief sculpture of our unrepeatable Sanctuary. The yearbook of overflowing words. The video (oh, my the video). The gift of a trip. You know us so well and poured out such affection. And all of us singing to each other "The Blessing." Nothing will ever be like this congregation. FPC will always be our home church and we will be your biggest cheerleaders. Much love and thanks dear ones.

Many of you have asked what I will be doing (besides taking that amazing trip to the British Isles). I feel very

peaceful that God will bring to us what the next phase of ministry is to be. But first, we will be taking a good breath in the woods. There are long waiting reading projects to get to. From reading comes writing. I know that will happen, but we're not in a hurry. We've got a new grandbaby to greet later this month. We've got old friends and family to see. Paths to tend and prayers to say. There's an EPC church in Brevard we plan to attend and serve in some informal way. We're keeping our same phone numbers, and the same email for a while. The church office will have our mailing address if you want to drop a line. Meanwhile, Rhonda and I will be praying for you often, always thankful that for 22 years I loved being your pastor.



Gerrit

Where Elegance Met Joy: [Photos from the "Generation to Generation" Gala](#)



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MAY EVENTS

- 3 Senior Sunday
- 3 Confirmation Service
- 16 Returning Hearts Celebration
- 24 10.30 am Worship

JUNE/JULY EVENTS

- 8–11 Vacation Bible School

BAPTISMS

April 12, 2026:

John-Redmond Underwood
Parents are Rachel & Colton

Jackson Toler Hogue Jr.
Parents are Lauren & Jackson

Ashley Franklin Shoptaugh
Evelyn Anna-Marie Shoptaugh

Vivienne Grace Kollmeyer
Parents are Rachel & Josiah

CHAPEL AND SANCTUARY FLOWERS

The Chapel and Sanctuary flowers are given . . .

May 3 . . . to the glory of God in loving memory of Mary Crosby McDuff by Ann and Michael McDuff.

May 10 . . . 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; Kristen’s mother, Becky Richardson, by the children of Jackie Lee Airhart.

May 17 . . . Giving God all the glory for the blessings he has placed upon this church, our family and friends by the Robert S. Miller family.

May 24 & May 31 Open dates.

Please contact Kathy Mullins if you would like to donate flowers (603.4735).

GREETINGS FROM YOUR MISSIONS COORDINATOR! By Lindsay Stratman



It’s been a joy to serve in this role over the past few months as your Missions Coordinator. I had no idea how much it would expand my heart—not just for our church, but for our city, our world, and the gospel. God has reminded me that missions truly matter.

I grew up in Baton Rouge and was impacted by the youth group at First Presbyterian during the days of Mac McCoy. I went on my first mission trip to Jamaica with the church—an experience that planted a seed that has remained. Now, years later, raising my family here and encouraging others toward missions feels like a full-circle moment.

I’ve spent much of my life in ministry, including several years with CRU in New York City, but this role has given me a front-row seat to what God is doing through his church. Missions at First Presbyterian is not an afterthought—it’s central to who we are.

Our church supports over twenty-five local missions through prayer, giving, and service—serving those experiencing homelessness, caring for women in crisis pregnancies, investing in schools, and supporting families. These are just a few ways we serve as we share the hope of the gospel.

Recently, our Local Missions Committee toured the new Front Yard Bikes facility. As we prayed over the building, we had the idea to restore the stained-glass windows—each representing those who support the ministry. Through a collaboration with our church plant, The Sanctuary, we sponsored one window helping create a space where youth hear the gospel.

God is at work here in Baton Rouge and across the world through our 20+ global partners. One story that stood out was of a Lebanese student who connected with a believer here through International Friendship Partners and was later ministered to by one of our missionaries when she returned home—a reminder that we can reach the world right here.

God is teaching me that missions are not just for a select few—they are for all of us. Recently, my 8-year-old daughter asked, “If people don’t know about Jesus, how will they ever know?” That question captures why we do what we do.

Thank you for the ways you pray, give, and serve. If you’ve ever wondered how to get involved, I would love to connect. Let’s go deeper in Christ and further into the world together.

UPCOMING MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Returning Hearts Returns!

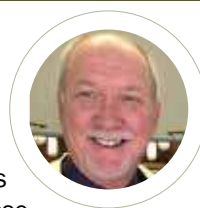
Saturday, May 16 is the Returning Hearts Celebration at Angola, a powerful one-day event where incarcerated fathers reconnect with their children in a Christ-centered, joy-filled environment. Volunteers help create a welcoming space through games, activities, and encouragement. An optional volunteer training and Malachi Dads Graduation will take place on Friday, May 15, but volunteers are welcome to serve either day. Contact Lindsay for further information (lindsay@fpcbr.org).

S.T.A.R.S. Summer Camp

Abounding Love Ministry’s S.T.A.R.S. (“Students That Are Reaching Success”) is seeking both high school and adult volunteers during Sports Camp Week (June 29–July 2, 9–11.30 am). Volunteers will help teach the basics of soccer, volleyball, basketball, and flag football while building relationships with students. Register online at fpcbr.org or [Church Center Sign Ups](http://ChurchCenterSignUps).

See page 4 for more mission opportunities . . .

WELCOME, CHAN WILLIS



Retired Pastor and First Presbyterian member Chan Willis has joined First Presbyterian Church as an interim "Parish Visitor" offering compassionate pastoral care during this season of transition. In this role, Chan will extend the church's ministry by visiting members, offering prayer, and providing encouragement to those who are home bound, hospitalized, or in need of spiritual support. With a heart for listening and a steady, gracious spirit, Chan helps ensure that no one in our church family feels overlooked or alone.

A Parish Visitor serves as a vital bridge between the congregation and its pastoral leadership, embodying Christ's love through simple, faithful connection. Chan's presence strengthens our shared commitment to care for one another in tangible ways.

We are grateful for Chan's willingness to serve and for the gifts he brings to this ministry. Please join us in welcoming him and praying for his work among us.

Read Chan's bio on our staff listing webpage: fpcbr.org/about/pastors-and-staff/

WOMEN'S MINISTRY SUMMER NEWS

Women's Ministry Summer Testimony Luncheon

Our testimonies are so much more than merely faith stories, they are powerful tools through which we give witness to the real and tangible ways in which the Lord has met us, sustained us, and shaped us, and how he continues to draw us closer to him over time. And Scripture calls us not to keep God's faithfulness hidden, but to speak of it, to tell of his deliverance, and to make his love and goodness known.

Join Women's Ministry for a time of testimony and fellowship as four of our beloved sisters-in-Christ share how the Lord has worked personally and powerfully in their lives. Come and be encouraged as you hear what God has done, and what he is still doing in our family of faith.

Wednesday, June 24 from 11.30 am–1.30 pm in the FPC Reception Room

A variety of salads, sips, and sweets!

\$15 per person. [Register online](#). Childcare is available.

Women's Ministry Summer Study: Why These Women?

When we open Matthew's Gospel, we're immediately met with a genealogy, and if we're honest, it's a long list of names we're tempted to skip. But tucked into that list are the names of five women: Tamar. Rahab. Ruth. Bathsheba. Mary. Not the names you would expect. Not the stories you would choose. Women. Outsiders. Complicated stories intentionally placed by Matthew at the very opening of his Gospel. So, we are inclined to ask: Why these women?

This July, Women's Ministry will spend five weeks looking at these women's stories and what they reveal about our Savior, and how they powerfully and uniquely prepare us for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, July 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29

6–7.30 pm at the home of Suzie Thompson (13 Stones Throw)

Light refreshments will be provided.

SERMON TEXTS

Texts are subject to change.

MAY 3: Exodus 3:1–15

MAY 10: Exodus 7:14–18, 22–23,
10:21–29

MAY 17: Exodus 12:1–13, 28

MAY 24: Exodus 14:10–23, 26–31

May 31: Exodus 16:2–5, 27–35

DEATHS

March 22, 2026:

Fairy Marie Stone

Mother of Bruce Stone

March 25, 2026: Barbara Henry

April 7, 2026: Michael Glisson

April 20, 2026: Sue Harrell

Mother of Alan Harrell

PASTORAL STAFF

SCOTT GRAHAM

Interim Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor for

Pastoral Care and Prayer

DARIN TRAVIS

Associate Pastor for Discipleship

COLTON UNDERWOOD

Associate Pastor of Children,

Youth and Families

DANIEL CROSKREY

Pastoral Resident



CONTACT INFORMATION

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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

1828: Growth and Development Begins FPC Church History, Continued from April 2026 By Zora Olsson

First Presbyterian's early membership increased from 15 to 39 its first year, 1827. A stock company was formed to build a church which was to cost approximately \$3000. The stock was divided into sixty shares of \$50 each. Application was made to the State Legislature and a charter was granted March 24, 1827 as the "First Presbyterian Church and Congregation in the town of Baton Rouge and Parish of East Baton Rouge." Among the men named in this Act of Incorporation were the Pastor Mr. John Dorrance and elder Mr. Walker. In October 1827, the lot on the corner of Church and Florida Streets was purchased for \$400. Construction on the new church building was nearly complete by May 1828.



To be continued in next month's issue of FPC News.

Mission Opportunities, Cont.

Try a New Adventure: Smiles Foundation Mission Trip

On June 17–27 a team is headed to The Smiles Foundation in Romania. Try a new adventure. Learn about a new culture. Show God's love in action! Join us for a week of service. Contact Carol Lazar (clazar@cox.net) for information.

REGISTRATION STILL OPEN! VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Jerusalem Marketplace VBS is back! Dates are Monday, June 8 through Thursday, June 11. Visit fnchr.org or Church Center for volunteer and camper details.

