DECEMBER 2026

FPC NEWSLETTER

Deeper in Christ, Further into the World

GOD'S WRAPPING PAPER

By Scott Graham
Interim Senior Pastor

As a tween in Sunday school, I clearly remember answering a nervous new teacher's question, "What is the most important part of Christmas?" with a quick, "Getting presents!" Little wonder that I learned years later that my nickname among the youth department leaders was "the little heathen."

That being admitted, presents are certainly an exciting part of this time of year! With most presents, of course, comes wrapping paper. In my family, I am known as the one famously challenged in wrapping skills (or lack thereof), so I pay special attention to the "presentation."

There is the thick, shiny, perfectly tucked paper that communicates, "the giver was willing to spend an extra $15 to bring me to you via a professional."

Then we have the thinner, bulk wrapping for the home-made jobs. Often these have creatively presented bows and ribbons with homemade "to and from" tags – usually more precious than the actual gift if they have been written with loving care by a child.

In my young parenting days, when the most terrifying three words on Christmas Eve were "some assembly required," I'd usually run out of gift paper around 2 am and shift to Sunday comics paper. All kinds of gifts – all kinds of wrapping paper.

There's one other kind of wrapping that we use, particularly when we are giving something valuable or delicate – tissue. Items wrapped in tissue are wrapped with care and grace. Tissue can cover up a basket of puppies, a jewelry box, or an antique heirloom.

God's gift to us at Christmas is wrapped in tissue – human tissue. John tells us that Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). A contemporary paraphrase declares "the Word became flesh and blood and moved into our neighborhood." What does it look like for God's present, wrapped in human tissue, to come to us?

John tells us that this present is full of grace, something completely undeserved. God didn't give us a gift because we had gotten him something and he felt obligated. The best gift we can give God is like filthy rags compared to his goodness and holiness. Yet despite our shortcomings and our utter disregard for the things of God, he offers us Jesus, even when we weren't thinking of him; even when we were running away from him (John 1:5, 10–13). Jesus is the greatest, most precious gift ever offered. Why? Because God's gift to us in Jesus is also the gift of truth. "For the law was given through Moses – grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16).

Unfortunately, we don't know how to handle God's gift very well. Tissue tears easily. God's wrapping paper – human flesh – chased after by Herod, was eventually torn on the cross. And yet in that moment, the Bible tells us that the

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WORSHIP, WONDER, AND JOY: ADVENT AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN



Mid-Week Advent Worship

Wednesday, December 2, 9 & 16 at 12 pm

Take a peaceful pause from the busyness of the Christmas season and prepare your heart for the coming of Christ. Join us for special Wednesday Advent services at noon on December 2, 9 and 16 in Dunham Chapel. Each service will include special music and an opportunity to step away from the holiday rush to reflect on the hope, peace, joy and love we celebrate during Advent. Come experience a time of quiet joy, meaningful worship and fellowship with your family of faith as we prepare to celebrate our Savior's birth.



Live Nativity

Saturday, December 5 at 5.30 and 6.30 pm

Experience the wonder of Christmas as the story of Jesus' birth, recorded in the Gospels, comes to life before your eyes! Meet shepherds, angels and wise men as we celebrate the miraculous night our Savior was born. And the fun doesn't stop there! Children (and the young at heart!) will delight in visiting the petting zoo and creating their very own Chrismon ornaments on the lawn. Bring your family, invite your friends and join us for this special Christmas tradition as we celebrate the greatest gift of all—Jesus Christ!



Women's Ministry Advent Brunch

Saturday, December 12
11 am to 1 pm

When the wise men came to worship Jesus, they brought three precious gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But these weren't just ordinary gifts! Each has a beautiful significance that points us to something extraordinary about the child in the manger. Join us for our Women's Advent Brunch as we reflect on Jesus as our King who reigns, our High Priest who brings us near to God, and our Savior who gave his life for us. Our devotion will be led by Kelly Wood, Barat Travis, and Kristina Graham. Register using the code or visit *fpcbr.org*. $10 per person.



"Magnify!" Cantata

Sunday, December 13 at 9 and 11 am

Creative Arts Ministry will present *Magnify!,* a multimedia worship experience that ponders the world-changing song sung by a young, Judean girl. Join us in worship at 9 and 11 am. There will be no 7.45 am worship.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
11 am, 4 pm and 6 pm

"Magnify!" Pilgrimage
Sunday, December 13 at 6.30 pm



Join us back at church on Sunday, December 13, at 6.30 pm for another opportunity to enjoy portions of the morning's *Magnify!* Cantata, performed as part of the annual Downtown Baton Rouge Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage begins at Mt. Zion at 5.30 pm and arrives at First Presbyterian at 6.30 pm. We hope you'll return for this special evening of music and celebration!

Christmas Offering
Sunday, December 20–27



First Presbyterian Church is pleased to receive a special Christmas Offering in the spirit of the greatest gift ever given—the gift of the Son of God to redeem unworthy sinners and restore them to life. Gifts to the Christmas Offering will be given to The Christian Outreach Center and Gardere Community Christian School. Contributions may be made using the "Give Online" form, by mail or by using the offering baskets. Please make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church and designate "Christmas Offering."

Advent Poinsettia Donations
Orders due by Monday, December 14



Help fill our Chapel and Sanctuary with the beauty of Christmas by purchasing a white poinsettia in memory of or in celebration of someone special. These beautiful flowers will adorn our worship spaces throughout the Christmas season, serving as a meaningful tribute to loved ones while adding to the joy of our celebration of Christ's birth. Poinsettias are $35 each and may be ordered by completing a form at the Connection Center or scanning the QR code. Please place your order by Monday, December 14. Purchased plants may be taken home following the 6 pm Christmas Eve service.

Malachi Dads Christmas Donations
Collections Taken at the Connection Center



Items are being collected for Christmas bags to be distributed to the Malachi Dads (prisoners) at both Hunt Correctional and Angola State Penitentiary. Please consider making a donation and dropping your items off in the bin next to the Connection Center. Items desired by the prisoners: Irish Spring bar soap, antiperspirant (not deodorant), white socks, and Gold Bond powder, or generic body powder. Please do not donate any liquids or aerosols. Cash or check donations are also welcome. Rest assured that the prisoners look forward to the day we come and distribute these items. It makes a huge difference to them. They feel the ***love***!

DECEMBER 27 WORSHIP
10 am

JANUARY 3 WORSHIP
10 am

TAMARISK BUILDING: MAKING ROOM *by Scott Bardwell, Master Plan Building Committee*

Advent is a season of making room. We clear space, we prepare, and we wait with expectation for what God is bringing. That is exactly what's happening on our block right now.

Plans are underway to demolish the old pink house and the garage on Convention Street clearing the way for new parking and signage that will welcome people to First Presbyterian for years to come. The ground has been tested, and the parking design is taking shape. Inside the Tamarisk Building, our architects are working with staff and ministry partners to imagine how it can become a home for our church offices and the work we do together.

And while the plans take shape, the building is already full of life. The ladies and youth of the church have gathered there to make Legacy Chrismons, white-and-gold ornaments bearing symbols of Christ, recreated from patterns rediscovered in our archives. Hands carrying a 200-year tradition forward, inside the building that represents our next chapter.

That is Rooted & Reaching in a single picture.

These are exciting days. Thank you for praying, giving, and dreaming with us as we make room to grow.







HAVE YOU SUBMITTED YOUR ESTIMATE OF GIVING?

As we prepare for another year of ministry at First Presbyterian Church, we are grateful for the faithfulness and generosity of our congregation. Your gifts make possible the worship, discipleship, fellowship, and mission work that God has called us to do together.

If you haven't yet submitted your **2027 Estimate of Giving**, we encourage you to do so soon. These estimates are an important tool in helping our church leadership plan responsibly for the coming year, providing a clearer picture of the resources available to support our ministries, staff, and mission partners.

An estimate of giving is not a binding commitment, but rather a prayerful expression of your intention to support the ministry of First Presbyterian Church in the year ahead.

Every estimate matters, regardless of the amount. Thank you for prayerfully considering how God is calling you to participate in the life and mission of our church. We are grateful to serve alongside you!

Commitments can be made by visiting *fpcbr.org/give*. Or scan the code for the online pledge form.

FINISHING STRONG!

As we approach the end of the year, let's commit to finishing strong! This is a wonderful time to reflect on God's goodness and continue supporting the mission and ministries of our church.

Recurring Gifts: We've made giving easier than ever! Recurring giving is available in our Church Center Giving portal. It's simple, secure, and helps us steward our resources well as we enter the new year.

Stocks Up? This is a great time to realize the full tax benefits of giving appreciated stocks. What's more, the Rooted & Reaching Campus Campaign Fund is open. If you're interested in making a gift, just contact Carter Stone, campaign chair (*carterrosestone@gmail.com*).

QCDs: Did you know that First Presbyterian can accept various forms of giving? Additional ways to give include gifts of Appreciated Securities or Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs). Your tax advisor will be able to assist you in determining if either of these fits your personal situation.

Let's finish the year faithfully, joyfully, and strong! Contact Courtney Hilton if you have any questions (*courtney@fpcbr.org* or 620.0231).

NEW STAFF MEMBER

AMY AGOSTA
Program Staff Support



"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? . . . You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-14).

Amy was born in Texas (but will never claim it publicly in Louisiana) and considers herself a native of the Baton Rouge area. She was raised in the Methodist Church, grew up in St. Francisville, and graduated from LSU's College of Art and Design.

Amy has served other congregations as Associate Youth Director and Director of Communications, and strives to use her time, talent and gifts God has given her to serve and glorify him. In 2021, she and her husband Gabe, found their church home, and considers it a privilege to now worship and serve at First Presbyterian. They have three boys, and a dachshund named Mac, who has taken it upon himself to keep them all in line and crumb-free by serving as the household "Mac-uum."

Amy is an artist at heart with a passion for stained glass, drawing and ceramics. When she grows up, she wants to be a carpenter, farmer, amateur geologist and a professional late-night theologian. She enjoys hanging out with all her boys, and together they try to encourage others to be salty and let their light shine!

HURRICANE ISAIAS CLEAN UP!

Gulf South Presbytery is teaming up with Samaritan's Purse for a three day cleanup in Pensacola December 2–5. We will primarily be cutting up trees. Samaritan's Purse will take care of food, lodging, and materials. Contact Whitney Alexander if you are interested in helping (225.810.2607).

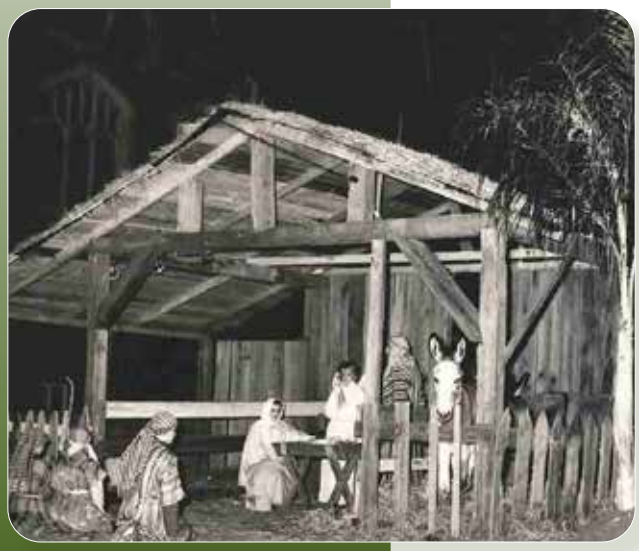
DECEMBER EVENTS

2, 9 & 16 Mid-Week Worship
2 Middle School Party
2 Young Adult Worship
4 Prime Time Club Lunch
4 rEcess
5 Live Nativity
12 Women's Advent Brunch
13 "Magnify!" Cantata
13 "Magnify!" Pilgrimage
24 11 am, 4 & 6 pm Worship
27 10 am Worship

UPCOMING JANUARY EVENTS

3 10 am Worship
3 GriefShare Series Begins

LIVE NATIVITY, PAST AND PRESENT *By Zora Olsson and Jill Garner*



Live Nativity, c. 1960, with the crèche designed by A. Hays Town.

Have you ever wondered when and how First Presbyterian Church's Live Nativity began? We'll share that story and many more in the coming months.

It was 1957 when renowned Louisiana architect A. Hays Town designed an outdoor Nativity display for First Presbyterian Church. Constructed with individually numbered timbers that fit together like a puzzle, the crèche was designed to be dismantled and rebuilt each Christmas. It all began with a pencil drawing on drafting paper.

Bringing that drawing to life fell to program coordinator Don Phillips and 200 church members. Together, they presented two performances each evening during the week leading up to Christmas. Livestock, music, elaborate costumes, and a reenactment of Jesus' birth brought the Christmas story to life for our community. The tradition continued until the early 1970s.

Fast forward to 1994. We gathered on the first Friday in December for the "Hanging of the Greens," a time for our church family to decorate God's house for Christmas. As wreaths were hung on the North Boulevard doors, the Jingle Bell Runners passed by, signaling the beginning of the Christmas season in Baton Rouge.

Yet something was missing. The world was passing by while we celebrated among ourselves! The runners were a delight, but their passing prompted an important question. Christmas celebrates the birth of Christ, so why wasn't he part of our celebration? It was too late to change things that year.

The following December, we continued the "Hanging of the Greens" with one important addition. Supper and tree trimming were timed so everyone could gather on the church steps and sing carols as the Jingle Bell Runners passed. What happened that evening changed how our congregation would celebrate Christmas.

To everyone's surprise and delight, many runners returned after the race to thank us. Their appreciation was encouraging, but we knew we could do more. The time had come to bring back the Live Nativity!

During the following year, we consulted longtime members who had participated in the Nativity during the 1950s and 1960s. Extensive planning began to revive this beloved tradition.

The original drawings of the crèche were discovered in our archives. Les Bente, who grew up in our church and participated in the Nativity as a child, agreed to build the structure from the nearly 40-year-old plans. He and a group of men gave up a day of football games after Thanksgiving to construct the humble yet majestic stable. Palmetto leaves, harvested from a nearby plantation, were fastened to the roof by teenage boys. A platform was raised above the roof line so an angel could hover over the manger in the glow of the star.

In 1996, the first Friday in December arrived again. Goats, sheep, and other livestock grazed near the stable. Mary and Joseph took their places beside the manger, watching over baby Jesus. Shepherds waited for the star to signal their journey, while the Wise Men prepared to bring their gifts to the King.

This time, more than the jingling of bells filled the air. The familiar strains of "Away in a Manger" welcomed runners as they passed. After completing the race, many returned to experience the true meaning of Christmas, some for the first time. Schoolchildren came to see the animals and baby Jesus. Families gathered around the crèche to remember the reason for the season. The Live Nativity had finally returned!

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OUR JESSE TREE: THE LINEAGE OF CHRIST

An Advent Treasure Returns for Our Bicentennial



"It usually isn't proper to shout in church . . . unless you're trying to hang a 30-foot Christmas banner."

That memorable opening from a December 21, 1991 Baton Rouge Advocate article captures the challenge of displaying one of First Presbyterian Church's most remarkable Advent treasures: our Jesse Tree banner.

Handcrafted by women of the congregation, the towering banner illustrates the lineage of Christ. Its appliquéd symbols depict biblical stories, from Creation and Noah's Ark through the generations leading to Jesus' birth.

The Jesse Tree takes its name from Isaiah 11:1, which promises a shoot from the stump of Jesse. Each symbol invites us to remember how God's promises unfold throughout Scripture.

Hanging the banner required teamwork. Workers threaded ropes through openings in the Sanctuary attic and lowered them to helpers below. Shouted instructions helped them even the ropes before raising the banner above the choir. Nell McMullan, then Advent decorations chairwoman, explained its significance to the newspaper.

Now this treasured banner returns from the archives for a special Advent display as First Presbyterian prepares to celebrate 200 years of God's faithfulness. Order of worship inserts will help worshipers discover the biblical stories behind its symbols.

The Jesse Tree is more than a decoration. It reminds us that God's faithfulness spans generations—and that our congregation is part of the continuing story.

Explore Our Jesse Tree

Scan the code to explore *Our Jesse Tree: The Lineage of Christ*, including the biblical stories and Scripture references behind the appliqués.

STEP INTO OUR STORY: VISIT THE HERITAGE ROOM

Two hundred years of faith, fellowship, and service have left us with a treasure trove of stories—and many are waiting to be discovered in our Heritage Room!

As we celebrate First Presbyterian Church's 200th anniversary, the Heritage Room will feature changing displays of photographs, newspaper clippings, documents, and treasured artifacts from our church archives. Each display offers a glimpse into the people, traditions, and moments that have shaped our congregation across generations.

December's theme, "Experiencing God's Faithfulness," invites us to look back and discover the many ways God has been at work in the life of our church. Throughout our Rooted & Reaching celebration, new exhibits will reflect our monthly themes, helping us connect the stories of yesterday with the faith we share today.

Stop by the Heritage Room, located just outside the Sanctuary at the entrance to the breezeway. Take a closer look! You may recognize a familiar face, recall a favorite tradition, or discover a story worth sharing.

Our history isn't just something to remember. It's a story we're still writing together.

WHEN THE RAIN COULDN'T STOP THE CHRISTMAS CAROLS *by Cate Heroman*



What do you do when rain threatens to wash out Christmas caroling? At First Presbyterian, you pick up the telephone!

One rainy Christmas season in the late 1960s, a group of young people faced a disappointing change of plans. Their evening of Christmas caroling was nearly canceled because of heavy rain.

But Ed Smith, the church's Minister of Music, had another idea. Instead of going door to door, the young carolers gathered around three telephones in the church office and began singing Christmas songs to church members over the phone!

The unexpected concerts brought some memorable responses. One woman who was hard of hearing exclaimed, "That is the first time I have really heard the songs." Another delighted listener joined in and sang along.

What might have been a washed-out evening became a wonderful example of creativity, connection, and Christmas joy.

Nearly sixty years later, the story reminds us that sharing God's love doesn't always go according to plan. Sometimes all it takes is a little imagination—and three telephones!

Source: By These Stones*, Chapter 3, "The Joyous Sound of Music."*



ROOTED & REACHING: 200TH ANNIVERSARY DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Official Kick Off of Our 200th Anniversary!

Celebrate 200 years of God's faithfulness with our Rooted & Reaching daily devotional, written by FPC members. The first of three volumes begins November 29 and continues through Lent. Copies are available at the Connection Center. Join us in God's Word as we reflect, grow, and look ahead to God's faithfulness.

GRIEFSHARE PROGRAM

Starts January 3

The death of a loved one is one of the greatest challenges we face in life. GriefShare is a Christian program used in thousands of churches over the past 25 years to provide expert counsel, alongside the love and gifts of God's people, to bring healing and help in the midst of loss.

We are forming a new group which will meet on Sunday evenings from 5.30–7 pm, starting January 3, 2027. Chris Phillips will facilitate the 13 sessions. A well-presented 30-minute video touching on topics such as difficult emotions, loneliness, questions for God, and moving forward while remembering loved ones, coupled with discussion, prayer, and support from others, is an important part of the time together.

Space is limited, so register soon using the code. For more information, call 225.387.0617.

MOTHER'S DAY OUT CHURCH MEMBER REGISTRATION

January 2027

Church member priority registration for the Mother's Day Out 2027–2028 school year is in January 2027. Contact Whitney Weiner at *mdo@fpcbr.org* or 225.620.0245 for more information.

UNCERTAIN YEARS: FAITHFULNESS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR *By Zora Olsson*

FPC Church History: Continued from the November 2026 Newsletter



When First Presbyterian Church reopened for worship on May 20, 1866, under acting pastor J. E. C. Doremus, the congregation faced a very different future from its prosperous years of the 1850s. The Civil War had changed Baton Rouge, and the church was no exception.

The years that followed brought uncertainty and frequent leadership changes. Session meetings were irregular, with only 50 pages of minutes recorded over the next 14 years. Without a permanent pastor, the congregation relied on various ministers to sustain its ministry.

In 1870, the Rev. E. P. Palmer, a professor of Hebrew and moral philosophy at the state university, began serving the congregation. He also served as the university's Protestant chaplain. Two years later, the Rev. W. H. Stratton was called, serving until his death in 1875. He was buried in Baton Rouge's Magnolia Cemetery.

Various ministers continued filling the pulpit until the Rev. R. F. Patterson began his four-year ministry in 1880. Though these years lacked the prosperity of earlier decades, they tell a story of perseverance. Through war, loss, and changing leadership, First Presbyterian remained faithful, laying the foundation for renewal and growth in the years ahead.

ANNIVERSARY ORNAMENTS!



Celebrate First Presbyterian's 200th anniversary with a special Rooted & Reaching Christmas ornament! Designed by local artist John Marc Anderson, each ornament features our historic Sanctuary. Proceeds support anniversary publications and events. Ornaments are $35 each. Order at the Connection Center, scan the code, or *fpcbr.org*.

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*).

STAY INFORMED

FPC's Response to the EPC Ordination Standards Issue

We've created a unique communications group for members who wish to receive updates regarding our response to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church's ongoing discussions about ordination standards. Scan the QR code or email Kelly Wood to join (*kelly@fpcbr.org*).

SERMON TEXTS

Texts are subject to change.

DECEMBER 6
Luke 2:1–7

DECEMBER 13
"Magnify!" Cantata

DECEMBER 20
Luke 2:8–21

DECEMBER 27
Luke 2:39–52

DEATHS

October 30, 2026
Jared Williams

October 31, 2026
Sandy Floyd

November 11, 2026
Dale Weiner

BIRTHS

October 15, 2026
Andrew Nyman
Parents are Mollie & Drew

BAPTISMS

November 1, 2026
Wilson James Davis
Parents are Mary & Robert

November 15, 2026
Elanor Fay Hinson
Parents are Hannah & Andrew

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

NEW CHILDREN'S MINISTRY STAFF MEMBER

SARAH KEATING
Kingdom Kids Hall Coordinator

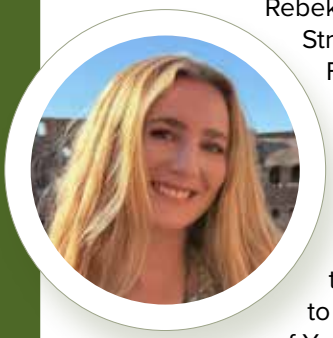


My name is Sarah Keating, and I am so excited to be joining our Children's Ministry team! I have been married to Aaron for 22 years, and together we have two boys, Anderson, a high school senior, and Harrison, a third grader.

Before becoming a stay-at-home mom three years ago, I worked as a registered nurse for 23 years. I am so excited for this new season and the opportunity to serve at a church that our family has been blessed to call "home" for so many years!

NEW YOUTH MINISTRY STAFF MEMBER

REBEKAH STRUPPECK
Assistant Director of Youth Ministry



Rebekah is the third-born of eight children raised by Bobby and Roxanne Struppeck. She grew up just north of Baton Rouge and has attended First Presbyterian her entire life. She was highly involved in the Youth Group from Confirmation to high school senior, and is so grateful to have had Youth Leadership pour into her spiritually and have a Christian community like First Presbyterian.

Rebekah has ***loved*** serving as a Discipleship Assistant. She joined the Youth Team in the fall of 2023 and couldn't think of a better team to work with! As of 2027 she will take on the title of Assistant Director of Youth Ministry and work full time as an administrator.

Over the years, Rebekah has enjoyed caring for girls with disabilities and continues to serve at our very own rEcess events once a month.

Rebekah loves travel, music, the outdoors, anything related to *Lord of the Rings*, and spending time with family and friends.

Her heart is to serve and bring others closer to Jesus, equipping and encouraging students with Scripture, and leading by example as she depends daily on God's grace and unwavering love!

CALLING ALL SENIORS AND SOON-TO-BE GRADUATES!

As we turn into 2027, mark down January 3, 10, 24, and 31 for our annual seniors-only Sunday school! Pastors Colton and Scott will be carrying on Gerrit's "world famous" studies and conversations, seeking to send each of you off confident and hopeful for what the Lord might do in the next chapter of your life.

Our first study will be on a combined service Sunday, so come up to the corner office on the second floor of the education building at 8.45 am on January 3 as we get things kicked off. See you there!

GLOBAL AND LOCAL MISSION PARTNERS

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING!

On October 30, God brought the nations to the Bealls' home. OK, we admit he didn't bring *every* nation, but it was close! International Friendship Partner's Harvest Festival brought people together from Afghanistan, Brazil, China, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Iran, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Taiwan, Turkey, and Vietnam who were welcomed by locals at First Presbyterian and Abounding Love. People were so busy in fellowship we had to cancel most of the planned activities. Wow!

Here is some feedback from the internationals . . .

"It was an honor to be there. Thank you for the invitation. We had a great time, and I enjoyed meeting people from different cultures." (Morocco)

"I really enjoyed being with you and everyone else. I loved talking with everyone. Thank you so much for making me feel welcome." (Afghanistan)

We had almost 50 internationals but fewer locals. We'd love to have more locals to share the love of Christ than internationals at each event. Please join us for a future one!

The next IFP event is the annual Ladies' Advent Tea on December 19 from 10.30 am to 12 pm at Garland Wilson's home, 2077 Ramsey Dr. Join us for a time of fellowship and international ministry without leaving the city.







PURPLE COW NEEDS DONATIONS

The Perkins location of Purple Cow, a ministry of the Christian Outreach Center, is ready for gently used clothes and house ware items. Pick up is available for large items. Call 225.364.2734 to schedule.

ALL THEY WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS AN ENCOURAGER!



Our congregation has generously stepped up to adopt the teachers of our ministry partner McKinley Elementary. But we still have ***five*** teachers (Carol Horton, Lyle Bellard, Sybil Thomas, Tysheka Grimes, Sherrise Thomas) who would love an Encourager!

Please consider adopting one of our remaining teachers and being a blessing to them this school year. Sign up at the Connection Center or contact Laura Shaw at *laura@fpcbr.org* for more information.

WRAPPING PAPER, *continued from page 1*

barrier between God and humanity was torn open as well (Mark 15:38–39), and in opening up that most precious gift, John tells us that the glory of the Lord was most clearly seen. It was the answer to our most desperate gift request – "Oh, that you would tear open the heavens and come down!" (Isaiah 64:1)

Glory simply means the presence of God discerned in a tangible way. When we open a gift, we see an expression of that person's love for us. What they are really offering is a bit of themselves. The most precious gift anyone gives is the gift of the giver. In God's wrapping paper – in Jesus Christ – we not only see the glory of the Lord shine around us, we are given the opportunity to receive him as well.



The Lord bless and keep you all this Advent and Christmas season!

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PAST AND PRESENT, *continued from page 4*

A few years later, at the close of a presentation, Jill Garner invited the children watching to come closer to baby Jesus. All passed by except one little girl with long blonde hair and eyes sparkling in the soft light. She climbed into Mary's lap and asked to see Jesus.

Mary replied, "Yes, my child. Jesus came for you."

The little girl leaned forward, gently lifted the wrap from Jesus' face, kissed him, and whispered, "I love you too, Jesus."

Could there be a clearer reminder of why we continue this cherished tradition?

After a pause of more than 20 years, the Live Nativity returned in 1996. As we celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2026, we give thanks for a tradition that continues to share the wonder and true meaning of Christmas with our community.

FIRST
First Presbyterian Church
763 North Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70802