



Find Out Who You Really Are!

An Interview with Gerrit Dawson, Senior Pastor

Will the church have a special theme for Lent again?

Yes, we plan to focus on identity. That's the question of who we most truly are.

That's a hot topic in our culture right now.

There's a lot of discussion about the power of choice: who do I want to be?

And about genetics and predispositions: who must I be?

We plan to take the discussion deeper: who does God say that I am?

How do we find out?

Identity is actually a dominate theme in Scripture. Our God constantly tells his people who they are. They are meant to live from that.

How will you approach the identity teaching of the Bible?

For the six weeks of Lent, we'll look at six key themes. Who am I? Scripture replies that I am:

- 1) *Created, Called and Claimed* by God
- 2) *Hopelessly Fallen* and Mortally Wounded by Sin
- 3) *Utterly Redeemed* by Christ
- 4) *Lovingly Adopted* into Christ's own Sonship
- 5) *Daily Dependent* on Christ our Life
- 6) *Significantly Sent* on Christ's Mission

What's the one key to this whole identity business?

Here's the open secret: Jesus is God identifying with us in our lost and forsaken condition. He identifies with us, even unto death, so that he can gather us to himself and enable us to

identify with him in sonship with his Father. Our true identity is in Christ. That runs deeper than any genetics, choices or circumstances.

How will you invite the congregation to participate?

Once again, we'll take a three-fold approach.

- 1) *Sunday worship*: the messages will focus on the six identity themes.
- 2) *Daily Prayer Guide*: everyone will receive a book designed to lead us into 42 days of intense focus on our identity in Christ.
- 3) *Home Groups*: studying and discussing together is crucial to recovering our identity in Christ.

When does this get started?

Books will be distributed Sunday, February 18 and home groups also begin that week. Group sign ups start February 4.

You seem to ask a lot from this congregation!

I do! I have great confidence that our folks will rise to the challenge. I'm asking for 20 minutes a day for 42 days. That's 14 total hours offered to the Lord as time he can mold us according to his Word. Plus about 9 hours spent in home groups and weekly worship. Of the 1,000 hours we all live during Lent, that's really pretty reasonable! But more than that, I know our people. We have a hunger for Christ. We're on a quest to grow closer and closer to him. This is just a great way to pursue Jesus, together.

Gerrit

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

rEcess Feb 2
 Good Grief Seminar Feb 3
 Congregational Meeting Feb 4
 Youth Ski Trip Feb 9-14
 Church Offices Closed Feb 13-14
 Mardi Gras Feb 13
 Ash Wednesday Feb 14
 Lenten Noon Worship Begins Feb 14
 Lenten Small Groups Begin Feb 18

UPCOMING EVENTS
 Jacob's Follies Musical Mar 16-18

MARRIAGES:

January 6, 2018
 James Russell to Chandler Pearson

IN MEMORIAM:

January 2, 2018 - Gwin Montgomery
 January 3, 2018 - Marilee Barfield
 January 8, 2018 - Kemper Bornman
 Mother of Ann Gorman

January 11, 2018 - Winnie Gill

January 17, 2018 - Katherine King
 Aunt of Lin Sturgis and Ed Douglas

BIRTHS:

January 9, 2018 - Amelie Marie Founds
 Grandparents are Valerie and Philip Gastinel

January 12, 2018 - John Jackson Gastinel
 Grandparents are Valerie and Philip Gastinel

BAPTISMS:

January 28, 2018 - Emilie James Carter
 Parents are Jill and Stuart Carter
 Grandparents are Bicki and Richard Carter

SANCTUARY FLOWERS:

Sanctuary flowers serve to honor a departed loved one or celebrate with thanksgiving cherished people or events. The flowers are placed in the Sanctuary . . .

Feb 4 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Cabbage and Mr. and Mrs. Frances G. Frazier, parents of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Anderson, by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Anderson.

Feb 11 . . . to the glory of God in loving memory of Mr. Norman Goebel, Sr, by Barbara Goebel, Norman Goebel, Jr., and Charles and Byron. And in Celebration of Charles's birthday February 14.

Feb 18 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of Helen and John Waldie, parents of Joann Thurston and Robert Moore Thurston, father of Scott Thurston, given by Joann and Scott Thurston.

Feb 25 . . . to the glory of God and in loving memory of James Howard and Emogene S. Elliott by their family, Dr. and Mrs. Louis Cenac (Elizabeth Elliott) and Dr. Clifton O. Bingham III.

Giving Other Churches a Fighting Chance by Emily Malden

Howdy from Texas! Our family is mostly settled in here. Even so, we think of you all often and greatly miss your fellowship, which still feels to us very much like home. I have lost count of how many local churches we have visited here. So many are joyfully advancing the work of the gospel, and in this we are encouraged. The Body of Christ is alive and well here; glory to God!

And yet this process of finding our new church family is draining, frustrating and sad. At first I couldn't pinpoint what was so difficult. We were in church every week and, sure, things were different, but this isn't our first rodeo, so we *expected* to have to adjust to theological nuances, worship style differences, differences in volume, lighting, in preaching style, etc. But as we walked out of each church feeling encouraged that the gospel has been proclaimed, we were also discouraged that just didn't seem to "fit." Slowly I have realized what has been making this church-finding process so hard: I am looking for y'all! What I'm so eager to find in our new church home is something that took years and years for God to cultivate there with you all. It's looking around on Sunday mornings and seeing all of you and **knowing** so many of you. It's all of the connections and the history of sharing this journey for nearly a decade. It's leaders whose love has been selfless and consistent over the long term. It's having my eyes opened to the vision of a local body; knowing both the unity of mission and the diversity of roles. Its lives and personalities that challenge me as well as those that are a soft place for me to land. It's a sense of love-debt that I want to repay and pay forward: the realization that much has been invested in me and an eagerness to share with others. These are the things that I miss so much. These are the things that feel like home. And I realize my discouragement in this process is because I am measuring each of these new churches against the one that has been home for so many years. But let's be real. No other church can stand up to such a wildly unfair comparison.

So in order to give churches here a fighting chance, I am shedding my unrealistic expectations of instant fellowship and community (which of course were never reasonable in the first place). And I'm mentally preparing myself to do the worthy work of building relationships and eventually the privilege of serving as God allows. But as I do so, I cannot help but think again of y'all there at First Presbyterian Church and I want to urge you to continue to welcome guests like you do: with joy and warmth. Maybe they are, like us, wishing for an irreplaceable church family they've had to leave behind. Or maybe they've never experienced the beauty of having a true church home. Either way, God is at work in them and your kind words and welcoming smiles mean more than you know. Those little gestures matter a lot! If visitors are cranky about silly things like the length of the sermon, the placement of their kids, or the timing of Sunday school, please realize they're probably just a bit heartbroken and/or road-weary. May God fill you with compassion and love for them! And I pray for those visiting (as I pray for us) that the Holy Spirit will give them an inkling of the richness of family and fellowship that they'll find if they put down roots with you. What a special community awaits them!

We miss y'all! When we do finally find our spot here, you will retain a very special place in our hearts. We are profoundly grateful for the years we had to grow and serve among you. We pray and trust that God will sustain and bless you for his glory.



Emily and Jon Malden with (l. to r.) Elliot, Bethany, Wesley and Gavin.

Home Groups: Finding Your True Identity In Christ

Identity is a crucial issue in our culture these days. It's also a major theme in the Scriptures. This Lent, we are daring to consider that God's identification of us runs deeper and truer than any identity chosen or given to us.

Sign up for a Lenten home group on February 4, 11 and 18 in the Reception Room. Home groups are a perfect complement to the weekly sermons and daily readings which begin February 18. Daily email sign up becomes available online February 4.



Ways of Worship: Contemporary by Gerrit Dawson

Every Sunday, we offer three distinctive styles of worship. The Scripture and message are the same in each service, but the order and music vary. I encourage all of our members to become multilingual in worship: to try each service during the course of a year.



Worship Team Member, Tracy Munson

The 9.00 service fulfills Psalm 150:

*Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe,
Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that has breath praise the
LORD!*

A multitude of instruments augments the vibrant singing of both current and treasured worship songs. The atmosphere is the least formal of our services, and the congregation rejoices that every generation is well

represented. The robust fellowship creates a wonderful loving atmosphere every Sunday at 9. The congregation communes monthly through the intimacy of forming small groups at the front of the Sanctuary.

Your Loved One Is in a Better Place. Are YOU?

by Jim Solomon, Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care & Prayer

On Saturday, February 3 at 10 am, we will have another Good Grief Seminar. Although we don't all grieve in the same way, we do all grieve. Yet, the grief process is something we can reluctantly go through or intentionally grow through, transforming our lives further into the image of God in whose image we have been created. After all, it is in becoming more like him that we find true contentment, fulfillment, meaning and purpose in this life as we prepare for the next.

Won't you join us? To register for this free seminar, contact Laura Shaw (laura@fpcbr.org) indicating "grief seminar" on the subject line of your message, or call 620.0222 and leave a voice mail with your name and anyone else attending with you. Coffee and light refreshments will be served. The seminar is free of charge and open to the entire community. Childcare will be available.



Annual Congregational Meeting, February 4

The session has called for the annual meeting of the congregation to hear reports on the amazing work of God in our midst in 2017, to hear a report on the 2018 budget, to elect at-large members of the officer nominating committee and attend to any other business pertinent to our life together. Join us Sunday, February 4 at 10.15 in the Sanctuary. There will be no adult Sunday school.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

7.45 Chapel Communion
9 am Contemporary
11 am Classic Reformed

FEBRUARY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Texts are subject to change.

FEBRUARY 4
Luke 19: 11-27

FEBRUARY 11
To be determined

FEBRUARY 18
Isaiah 43: 1, 4-5, Ephesians 5: 9-10,
1 Peter 1: 13

FEBRUARY 25
Psalm 139: 1-18

PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON
Senior Pastor

WHITNEY ALEXANDER
Associate Pastor of Missions

JOSH MADDIN
Assistant Pastor of Student Ministry

BARRY PHILLIPS
Ministry Executive

JIM SOLOMON
Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care & Prayer

DARIN TRAVIS
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HEART IN HAND GALA. Manners of the Heart takes the Good News of the Gospel into schools and throughout our community through their respect-based education curriculum for elementary and high schools, parenting and community programs. New this spring, community-wide parenting workshops will be offered through Abounding Love and Gospel Light ministries. Please support their mission to help children see beyond their circumstances to become all God created them to be by attending the 2018 Heart In Hand Awards Gala, Friday, February 23 at The Renaissance! mannersoftheheart.org.



YOUTH SUPER BOWL PARTY. Join us for a youth Super Bowl party at the Moore's home (214 Woodgate Blvd.) on Sunday, February 4 at 5 pm.



CONGRATULATIONS DR. FLYNT! Former associate pastor Alec Flynt successfully defended his dissertation and was awarded Doctor of Ministry by Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte. Alec is pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mobile.

SESSION INCOME ALLOCATION GRANTS. The Session Income Allocation Committee is accepting applications between February 12-March 26 for financial grants for individuals interested in seminary. Please contact Jaci if you have questions (jaci@fpabr.org or 620.0221).

GET YOUR RIGHT NOW MEDIA SUBSCRIPTION. We want to equip you with excellent resources for a deeper walk with Christ. Right Now Media is an online treasure trove of Biblical content with a wide variety of downloadable studies for personal and small group use. Contact Darin Travis for more information (darin@fpabr.org).



ANNUAL TAX STATEMENTS. Did you know you can access your 2017 giving amount from the Members Portal? After you login, click the "Give" tab, then select the "My Contributions" blue button. If you need assistance concerning your giving, please call Carol Pruitt at 620.0231. Statements were also mailed.