

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Why I Love Xmas! by Gerrit Dawson, Senior Pastor

Hey, keep Christ in Christmas!! I agree! Merry Xmas! (Has our pastor lost his mind? Probably, but that's another column . . .).

Did you know that the familiar abbreviation for Christmas does not have secular origins? An "X" has been used for Christ since the time of the ancient church, even in some manuscripts of the New Testament! The "X" represents Chi, the first letter in Greek for *christos*, or Christ. An X for Christ has also been found in English writing since the 15th century.

So, I'm happy to reclaim the "X" in Xmas. And I enjoy the "X" all year long. I've even abbreviated my personal vision for ministry to these 3 characters: Q4X. Quest for Christ. As you study ancient Christian symbols and art, you'll often find this symbol: two Greek letters combined, the Chi (X) and the Rho (an "r" that looks like a "p"). These are the first two letters in *christos* and they make a beautiful symbol for our Lord and Savior. So,

joyous Xmas to you!

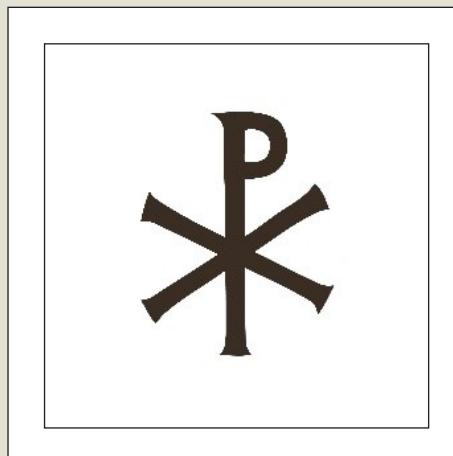
New Xmas Eve Morning Service

The session has authorized a third Christmas Eve service!

This 11 am worship will be a multi-media journey of lessons and carols designed especially for families with young children. We will tell the ancient story and sing the favorite songs in a way that appeals to our youngest worshipers. Glow sticks will replace drippy candles, and we'll use instruments, arts and stories to keep it creative and joyful. An infant nursery will be offered. There won't be communion. And, of course, we will be offering our 4 pm and 6 pm festive services of

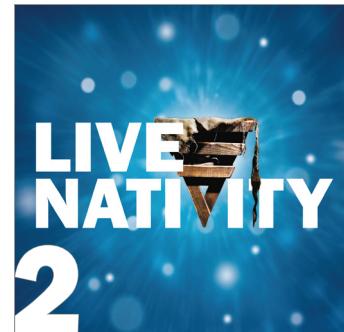
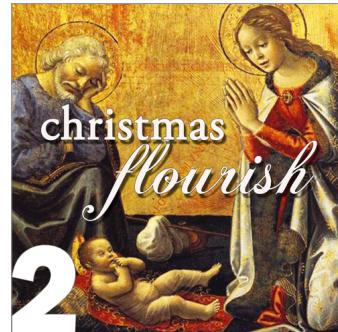
candlelight and communion.

It's always a joy to keep Christmas with you,



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

First Day of Advent	Dec 1
"Best Christmas Pageant Ever"	Dec 6
"Best Christmas Pageant Ever"	Dec 8
Pilgrimage	Dec 8
rEcess	Dec 13
Women's Advent Brunch	Dec 14
"Christmas Flourish" Cantata	Dec 15
Live Nativity	Dec 22
Church Offices Closed Half Day	Dec 24
Combined 10.30 am Worship	Dec 29

ONGOING EVENTS

Evening Prayer Gathering will meet the first Sunday in December only.

UPCOMING JAN EVENTS

"Hidden Conversations: Overhearing God"
Stay-Treat Jan 31- Feb 1

MARRIAGES:

November 15, 2019
Anna Magee Gandy to John Lane Ewing

BAPTISMS:

November 10, 2019
Wilson Palmer Haydel
Parents are Beverly and Justin Haydel

Pema Marie Hoek
Parents are Deki and Chris Hoek

Margot Amelia Lapeyrouse
Parents are Amelia and Jeremy Lapeyrouse

IN MEMORIAM:

October 30, 2019
Steve Lodei

November 5, 2019
Butch Mixon

November 10, 2019
Barbara Scott
Mother of Greg Scott

SANCTUARY FLOWERS

You are invited to contact Sherry McKinley by December 17 (387.0617 or sherry@fpcbr.org) to purchase a poinsettia in memory or celebration of a loved one. Poinsettias will be placed in the Chapel and Sanctuary. \$35 each.

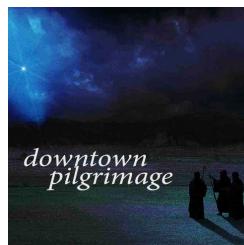
The Sanctuary flowers serve to honor a departed loved one or celebrate with thanksgiving cherished people or events. If you would like to donate flowers for a particular Sunday in 2020, please contact Kathy Mullins at 291.3095.

Keeping Christ in Christmas: Advent at First Presbyterian



December 6 & 8: "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever!"

"The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" is a hilarious Christmas classic. A couple is struggling to put on a church Christmas pageant and is faced with casting the Herdman kids—probably the most inventively awful kids in history! You won't believe the mayhem—and the fun—when the Hermans collide with the Christmas story head on and end up teaching the town the true meaning of Christmas. Friday, December 6 at 7 pm and Sunday, December 8 at 4 pm. Admission: One non-perishable food item for Baton Rouge Food Bank.



December 8: "The Best Christmas Pilgrimage Ever!"

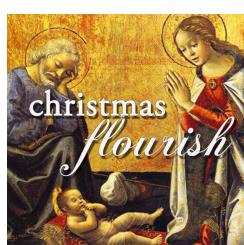
This year, the downtown carol Pilgrimage falls on the same night as our Xmas play, "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever." Our program will be presented by the Xmas play cast re-enacting the nativity story with children's choirs singing and audience participation. We will miss our adult choir presentation terribly, but this might be "The Best Christmas Pilgrimage Ever!" Come out for both the play and the Pilgrimage December 8: 4 pm show and 6.15 Pilgrimage. Get there early, as we anticipate a large crowd for both. Visit fpcbr.org for the entire Pilgrimage schedule.



December 14: Women's Ministry Advent Brunch

Have you ever wondered about the history or theology of some of our most beloved Christmas hymns? How did "Joy to the World," which is inspired by Psalm 98, become a Christmas song? We sing "Hark! the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King," but did that really occur in Luke 2?

Come sit around the fire and enjoy the warmth of fellowship at our annual Advent Brunch as we listen and learn about some of our favorite Christmas songs. December 14, 10 am-12 pm, at the home of Rosemary Beall (1452 Glenmore Ave.). \$10 per person. Register online at fpcbr.org.



December 15: "Christmas Flourish" Cantata

On December 15, at both the 9 am and 11 am services, the Chancel Choir will present *Christmas Flourish* by Randol Bass. This Yuletide presentation will bring together choir, soloist and orchestra for a sparkling collection of carols that will put you in the Christmas spirit. First Presbyterian specifically commissioned the reduced orchestration for this exuberant work that has been performed in holiday and Christmas programs nationwide. *Christmas Flourish* contains many favorite carols such as *Joy to the World*, *Silent Night* and *Angels We Have Heard on High*. Join us for this festive

work that will surely put you in a merry mood! Invite a friend. There will be no Chapel Communion service at 7.45 am.



December 22: Live Nativity at 6 and 7 pm

Baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the three wise men, angels, the children's choir and the shepherds along with a donkey and sheep will re-enact Jesus' birth. One night; two shows. Join us in the terraced garden. Children's petting zoo for the kids.

Presents vs. Presence? by Whitney Alexander

Parenting is one tough job and not for sissies or the fainthearted. Giving birth is a snap compared to parenting and being the biological male sire is by no means the same as being the parenting father. It is kind of like the fact that weddings do not necessarily result in marriages, if you get my drift.

The world doesn't honor parenting. It never has, and a lot of lip service is given but like the saying goes, "words are cheap." The world has pulled mother out of the home under the guise of liberating her to equal status with men. By what standard are we measuring this worth? The world's standard? Money? As for men, they have never been encouraged by the world to put as much energy into parenting as they do their labor for the almighty dollar.

Parenting takes more time than money. It is really true. Just look at the number of boarding schools and children's homes that have been built for the purpose of kids being put aside while parents pursue their careers. If you ask children what they desire, their answer will be, "To be at home with their family." Toys and entertainment (i.e., Play Stations) don't make up for the longing for home in their hearts that shows in their eyes.

Children want **presence** not presents. Oh, we have taught them well; that like us, they are supposed to like presents. It is the material way. The American way. But I'm not sure it is God's way. Please don't get me wrong. We do have to live in this world and we do have to have real material bread for the journey. The economic status of many single mothers and couples dictates that both work. But even if that is the case, the economic necessity doesn't reduce the missed time of **presence** for both parent and child.

What is the answer? I'm not sure, but this much I know: **children need parents present as much as possible**. That means not just in their rooms but also paying attention and participating in their world. Quality time is vital and there needs to be a *lot of quality time* or else there will be no parenting going on. Take time to reflect for a moment on how we adults long for God's presence. And guess what? He shows up!

Please visit fpcbr.org to read Whitney's entire article and for some helpful suggestions about the gift of presence to your family.

Hidden Conversations: Overhearing the Trinity

The early church discovered the Father, Son and Holy Spirit discussing our redemption! These prophetic "scripts" in the Old Testament reveal the drama of the Triune God's saving work. Dr. Matthew Bates will guide us through these overlooked passages which enshrine the mystery of God's loving nature.

Join us for our winter "Stay-Treat." Friday evening, January 31, 6-9 pm; Saturday, February 1, 8.30-Noon. Three dynamic presentations, dinner, fancy desert, continental breakfast, a children's track and infant care. All for one low price (whether you attend all or part of the Stay-Treat). Registration coming soon.



SUNDAY WORSHIP

7.45 Chapel Communion
9 am Contemporary

11 am Classic Reformed

December 24: 11 am, 4 pm and 6 pm

December 29: One 10.30 am service

DECEMBER SERMON TEXTS

Texts are subject to change.

DECEMBER 1, 2019
John 1: 1-5

DECEMBER 8, 2019
John 1: 6-8; 15; 26-29

DECEMBER 15, 2019
John 1: 9-13

DECEMBER 22, 2019
John 1: 14-18

DECEMBER 29, 2019
To be determined.

PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON
Senior Pastor

WHITNEY ALEXANDER
Associate Pastor of Missions

BARRY PHILLIPS
Ministry Executive

JIM SOLOMON
Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care & Prayer

DARIN TRAVIS
Director of Discipleship,
Men's Ministry & Young Adults



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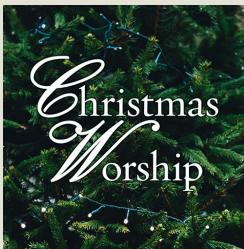
763 North Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Mother's Day Out and Preschool
225.620.0245

Baton Rouge Christian Counseling Center
225.387.2287
brchristiancounseling.com



Advent Happenings, *continued*



December 24 and 29 Worship

On Tuesday, December 24 we will have three Sanctuary services: Family friendly worship at 11 am (perfect for young children), 4 pm and 6 pm with candles, communion and gorgeous music.

Then on Sunday, December 29, join us for a combined 10.30 am service in the Sanctuary.



2019 Christmas Offering

Our annual Christmas offering goes directly to support two of our key ministry partners, both of which are making possible meaningful, long-term transformation in our city: The Christian Outreach Center and Gardere Community Christian School. We receive this offering from December 15-29. Envelopes will be provided in the pew racks. In the joy of the season, we support those who are bringing Christ and his love in tangible ways to others. Donations can be made by check (write Christmas Offering in the memo line) or online at fpcbr.org.

Christmas Poinsettias

All are invited to contact Sherry in the church office (387.0617 or sherry@fpcbr.org) to purchase a poinsettia in memory or celebration of a loved one. Poinsettias will be used to decorate the Chapel and Sanctuary during Advent. \$35 each. Tuesday, December 17 is the deadline to place an order.

XMas Bags for Malachi Dads

Items are being collected for Christmas bags to be distributed to the Malachi Dads (prisoners) at Angola Penitentiary. Please consider making a donation and dropping it off at the Connection Center: soap, antiperspirant, toothpaste/toothbrush, shampoo, lotion, body wash, white athletic socks or baby powder. Cash donations also accepted.