

fpc NEWS

Deeper in Christ, further into the world.

December 2015 Volume 49.12

It Happens All Over Again!

By Gerrit S. Dawson, Senior Pastor

For centuries, the body of Christ has told and retold the story of Jesus' life and work among us. Early on in our history, we developed a rhythm of highlighting the remembering of particularly significant Jesus-events throughout each year. Advent is a word that means "coming" and it marks the beginning of the church year. For four weeks we enter the story of the yearning of the world for rescue, the yearning of the people of God for a savior and the hope in the human heart that God has not left us alone. We anticipate being surprised anew that God showed his face in the baby in Bethlehem.

Christian remembering, of course, is not mere nostalgia. We remember what happened uniquely in history in such a way that the meaning of what happened becomes a fresh experience. We relive anticipation for a savior's birth in such a way that we touch our longing right now for God to be at work in our world. We celebrate Jesus' birth in such a way that we feel hope in the present moment. Year by year, the Holy Spirit makes historical events come alive in our hearts as we gather for worship. That's what makes it such a joy to keep Christmas together!

So you won't want to miss our special advent service, "The Silence and the Sound" on December 6. We'll have just two services that morning, at 9 and 11. They will be identical as the worship team,

choir and an orchestra combine for this rich, inspiring musical. I'll have a short message preceding.

The Scriptures Behind the Carols

This Advent, we'll look at four famous Christmas carols and the Bible passages that inspired them. Two of these carols are exceedingly well known: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Joy to the World." One is 16 centuries old: "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence." And the other is merely five hundred years old and only recently surging in popularity: "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" (listen to soprano Rene Fleming sing it on YouTube!).

At our 4 and 6 pm Christmas Eve services, the message is entitled "Ready to Eat!" Can you figure out what Christmas has to do with the British food chain called Pret a Manger?

Surging Forward: Session Grants

Last year when Dr. Robert Lewis led a men's day with a focus on mission, he noted a particular role for a church like ours. We can provide the "jet fuel" for members launching out into ministry. Our worship and teaching inspire our members to open their lives to what God wants to do in and through them. Usually that means being available to our Lord right where we are in daily life. Sometimes it also means stepping out in new areas of service.

Our session (our board of elders) made grants totaling \$55,000 to members and ministries connected to our church. We're helping one of our young adults, Micah Webber, with seminary education. We're providing computers for Buchanan Elementary School and the Abounding Love STARS after school program. We're enabling new programs at Gaitway Therapeutic which member Shelly Rose leads. And after being inspired by the reports of Claire Wilson's visit, we're enabling Bethany Centre in Uganda to complete a vital multi-function building. We also approved a new scholarship for ministers in our denomination seeking to do residency training in how to plant new churches. The scholarship will be named in honor of our former pastor Russ Stevenson who has such a passion for starting new congregations. Your church is supplying jet fuel to ministries flying grace into our city and world!

Christmas Offering

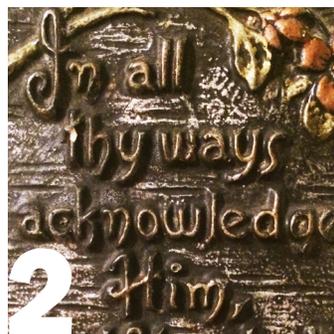
Every year, we take up only one special offering. This is our Christmas offering for local ministry. Last year, we raised over \$45,000 which was shared between the Christian Outreach Center and Gardere Community Christian School. This year, let's bless even more these two fabulous ministries that are effecting long term transformation in our city.

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DECEMBER CALENDAR

Prayer for Our Nation	Sundays, 5 pm
Wim Advent Luncheon	Dec 2
Live Nativity	Dec 4
"Silence and the Sound" Worship	Dec 6
Wrap Party	Dec 6
rEcess	Dec 11
Belize Informational Meeting	Dec 13
Downtown Pilgrimage	Dec 13
FAS Crowd	Dec 14
"Old-Fashioned" Pounding	Dec 19
Live Nativity	Dec 20
Church Office Closed	Dec 24-25
Combined Worship @ 10.30 am	Dec 27
Church Office Closed	Dec 31

UPCOMING DATES

Church Office Closed	Jan 1
Polar Thang	Jan 15-17
Gala for Dick & Judie Gates	Jan 17
Global Missions Conference	Jan 30-31

IN MEMORIAM:

- November 11, 2015
Duane Richey, brother of Barbara Sawyer
- November 13, 2015
Henry Alsobrook Jr., father of Eugenie Burglass
- November 14, 2015
Jean Jones Degges
- November 15, 2015
Sam W. Chase, brother of Doretha Jackson
- November 20, 2015
Sharon Joan Stone
- November 23, 2015
George Caldwell, grandfather of Rosemary Beall

BIRTHS:

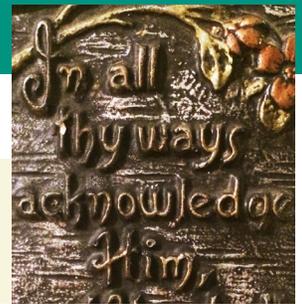
- November 6, 2015
Grayson Scott Kurtz
Grandparents are Rhonda and Gerrit Dawson

SANCTUARY FLOWERS:

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 2016, please contact Kathy Mullins at 291.3095.

Directing My Path By Lisa Head

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3: 5-6)



Recently challenged to give a testimony/devotional during staff meeting on a favorite or meaningful Bible verse, I discovered that I can't really pick a favorite verse...I have different go-to verses for different situations. The above wouldn't normally even make the cut as a favorite but I used it because it is the verse that has been a part of my life for the longest time.

The plaque pictured has been hanging on my wall since the third grade. I won it for memorizing the most Bible verses in a summer group called "Good News Club" that some kindly ladies ran for kids in my apartment complex.

In considering this verse in light of a devotional, I began to wonder why God would have this be the one verse that was in front of me for the bulk of my life? Somehow that plaster plaque has survived multiple moves, college, graduate school and the years I was a devout non-believer. It has always hung on my wall in whatever apartment, dorm room or house I was living in. Why did this plaque matter so much to me when God didn't? When I won the plaque, I was already being asked to bear heavy burdens that most 8 year olds didn't have to bear. So why this verse in all those difficult times? Why not the "peace that surpasses all understanding" or "he will be there through all the fires" or some other seemingly more relevant verse to my circumstances??

Now I know God was thinking long term...not just something for the moment. God knew how independent I was going to be. I was forced to be independent far too young and I desperately

clung to that independence as I got older. It has always been about me.

When I think about this verse now, as a maturing believer, it gives me great comfort to know that from the beginning of my life, he knew me. He wouldn't have put this particular verse in my life if he didn't already know I was going to need it in my face, on my wall, day after day, year after year for the rest of my life. It didn't matter that I didn't know him. He knew me. I've always found comfort in knowing that he knew me before I was formed, but the way this verse has been in my life proves that to me without a shadow of a doubt.

These days, I am always repenting of my independence idolatry. The crazy thing is, if I wasn't a Christian, I would be applauded for it. Today's society is all about independence! However, I've had this plaque in my face telling me something different for years and years. Quietly preaching to me from my wall...quietly just there waiting for me to acknowledge it. To acknowledge him. He knew my sinful pride long before it began to rear its ugly head. For "your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm 139: 16)

Today it's a discipline to ask for a spirit of humility and then yield to his will. I am freer to serve him, to receive him and to recognize the work he began in me before I was even conceived. Praise, and thanks be to God.

"Old-Fashioned Pounding" for New Habitat Homeowner by Whitney Alexander

Our Habitat for Humanity homeowner, Marah Bowie's official pounding will take place on Saturday, December 19 from 11-1 pm at 2810 Madison Avenue (corner of N. 28th St). We hope you will join us in celebrating Marah's arrival to her new home. Marah's plan is to move into her new home by Christmas!

Some ideas for an "Old-Fashioned Pounding" are: flour, sugar, cereal (Cheerios or Corn Flakes), laundry detergent, fabric sheets, stain remover, dishwashing supplies, paper towels, napkins, toilet paper, cooking oil, salt, pepper, different kinds of seasonings, kitchen towels. Stocking the refrigerator with the basics: milk, butter, eggs, mayo, mustard, ketchup; and some lunch items: peanut butter, jelly, meats and cheese, bread, lettuce, salad and dressing, fruits: apples, oranges, lemons, bananas, and some treats like pudding cups, sodas, orange juice. For the freezer, some frozen pizzas, frozen OJ, veggies, etc. Or even some home cooked meals that you have frozen! Also, bathroom stuff like towels, washrags, soap or even a gift certificate to Wal-Mart where they may purchase items as well.

Items may be brought to the church office. Thank you for your love for the Bowie family.

Deacons Are Here to Help!

The Diaconate has a growing passion to help the home bound and needy within our congregation. In the coming weeks, the deacons will begin organizing ministry teams to better serve our church community. We are asking for your help in identifying those needs within our church body, and also would welcome any of you who feel a passion to assist us in this mission!

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, or know of a member with a need, or would like to participate, please contact Lisa at the church office at 387.0617 or lisa@fpcbr.org.

Belize 2016

By Josh Maddin, Assistant Pastor of Youth



The Burial Grounds area just outside Belize City.

There will be an informational meeting on December 13 at 4pm to talk about our 2016 trip to Belize. This is our 3rd Inter-generational trip to one of the poorest areas of Belize City.

Our team will be involved in construction work on a new church building, working with neighborhood kids, playing sports, leading in worship services and growing in our walks with Christ as we minister 2,000 miles away from home.

Please consider joining our team. Preliminary dates are June 11-18, but we are finalizing airfare right now. We will take approximately thirty people from FPC. If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact Josh Maddin at josh@fpcbr.org.

Mission Conference: Jan. 30-31, 2016

The Global Missions Committee is happy to welcome back Sameh Hanna from Kasr el Dobra Evangelical Church in Cairo, Egypt as our guest. Mark your calendars now for a weekend of learning and praise.

WiM 2016 Winter & Spring Offerings

January will be the start of a four-week book study. Join us in reading and discussing C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*. This entertaining and thought-provoking book is sure to spur on wonderful conversation!

The first week in February we will begin our Spring Bible Study. Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday Elizabeth Parker, our WiM director, will teach through the first part of 1 Samuel.

Be on the look out for times and locations for the book study and Bible study, as well as other Spring Bible study offerings.



December Circles

1ST TUESDAY, DEC 1

WoW Circle 1 Baton Rouge CC @ 10 am
 WoW Circle 2 Church Parlor @ 9.45 am
 WoW Circle 3 FPC Room 201 @ 10 am

1ST THURSDAY, DEC 3

WoW Circle 11 Church Library @ noon

1ST FRIDAY, DEC 4

WoW Circle 7 Sara Blankenstein's @ 2 pm
 2030 Terrace Ave (344.7911)

1ST MONDAY, DEC 7

WoW Circle 15 Zachary Waffle House @ 7pm

2ND TUESDAY, DEC 8

WoW Circle 4 Michelle DeSimone's @ 6.30 pm
 2055 Old Carriage Ln (349.8598)

WoW Circles 5 & 6 (Joint meeting)
 Baton Rouge CC @ 10.30 am
 Lunch to follow.

WoW Circle 8 Marianne Theriot's @ 6.30 pm
 387 Kenwood (924.0503)

WoW Circle 9 Meet @ 6.30 pm
 Contact Ann Gregorie (937.0488)

2ND MONDAY, DEC 14

WoW Circle 13 Catholic Presbyterian Apts.
 @ 2 pm

WoW Circle 14 ngrid Medford's @ 9.30
 7662 Sevenoaks Ave. (329.5662)

3RD WEDNESDAY, DEC 15

WoW Circle 10 Bistro Byronz @ 5 pm
 5412 Government St.

Narnia, The Musical: April 2016

The Creative Arts Department is excited to announce "Narnia" The Musical, directed by Terry Byars, coming to your sanctuary on April 14, 15, 16 and 17. Tryouts for major roles will be Sunday, January 10, with call backs on Sunday, January 17, at 6pm in the choir room. Ages 12 and over only.

SUNDAY WORSHIP @ FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

COME WORSHIP WITH US!

7.45 am Chapel Communion Service
 9 am Contemporary Service
 11 am Classic Reformed Service

DECEMBER SERMON TEXTS

December 6, 2015

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"
 Habakkuk 2: 20, John 1: 14, Rev. 5: 11-14

December 13, 2015

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"
 Micah 5: 2-4

December 20, 2015

"Joy to the World"
 Psalm 98

December 27, 2015

Combined 10.30 am Worship
 Ezekiel 36: 26-27

PASTORAL STAFF

Gerrit S. Dawson
 Senior Pastor

Richard "Dick" Gates
 Associate Pastor for Global Missions
 and Pastoral Care

M. Whitney Alexander
 Associate Pastor of City Ministry

Derek McCollum
 Associate Pastor for Discipleship
 and Young Adults

Barry Phillips
 Ministry Executive

Josh Maddin
 Assistant Pastor of Student Ministry



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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

www.brchristiancounseling.com

Advent Happenings at First

Acoustic Communion Advent Worship:

For each Sunday in Advent, the Acoustic Communion service will meet in the Sanctuary with the Classic Reformed service at 11 am.

Live Nativity: Baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the three wise men along with a camel, donkey and sheep will re-enact Jesus' birth. Show times are December 4 at 6.30 and 7.30 pm and December 20 at 5.30 and 6.30 in the terrace garden.



Special Worship Service, "The Silence and the Sound" Concert:

More than just a re-telling of the nativity, *The Silence and the Sound* explores both the mystery and the majesty of Christ's birth. Concerts are at 9 and 11 am December 6 in the



Sanctuary. Join us for a Stay for Fellowship at 10 am between the two services in the reception room. There will be no 7.45 or

11 am Acoustic Communion worship or adult Sunday school.

Toy Wrap Party. On Sunday, December 6 from 5-7 pm, there will be a "It's a Wrap" Party in the gym to wrap all the donated toys for Open



Air Ministries. There will be food, dessert, Christmas music and games! If you would like to donate wrapping supplies (paper, tape, scissors, gift tags), please email Jaime Carnaggio, jaime@fpobr.org. Last day for toy donations is the morning of December 6.

Downtown Pilgrimage:

Bundle up and stroll with us on Sunday, December 13, as we visit 6 different downtown Baton Rouge churches singing Christmas carols at each stop. We begin at 5.30 pm at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. First Presbyterian will sing at 6.30 pm.



Christmas Poinsettia Orders: Members are invited to contact Sherry in the church office (387-0617 or sherry@fpobr.org) to purchase a poinsettia in memory or celebration of a loved one. Poinsettias will be placed in the Chapel and Sanctuary. \$35 each.

Christmas Eve Worship 2015: Celebrate our Savior's birth at one of our two Sanctuary services. are 4 or 6 pm.



December FAS Crowd

On Monday, December 14, the Fun After Sixty Crowd will have its Christmas celebration in the church reception room. Music will be performed by Melvin Hale with soprano, Lauren Honea, singing. Senior Pastor, Gerrit Dawson will read a Christmas story. A Christmas dinner will be served. Please call the church office by Thursday, December 10 to make your reservation. \$15 per person.

