

fpcNEWS

Deeper in Christ, further into the world.

December 2017 Volume 51-12

Masthead photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

Risking Christmas

By Gerrit Dawson, Senior Pastor

It takes some courage to face another Christmas! All those expectations. All those expenses. All those memories. All those family members! All that once was but is no more. All that should be but isn't. All we hope for and the inevitable disappointment. For many, Christmas is merely something to endure. Entering the enforced festivity is a risky business.

That's why I like to dig beneath the demands of the season. We can cut through the trappings to that first Christmas. Almost nobody noticed what happened.

The Son of God laid aside the protection and privilege of his Deity. He risked entering the world as one of us. Roughly one in five pregnancies end in miscarriage. Jesus dared the dangerous process of developing in the womb as we do. Then he

who set the stars in their courses in the vastness of space endured the squeezing hazards of the birth canal. He cried at the brightness when his eyes saw the first day. Later, he would cry over the cruelty of the darkness in the human heart. He came to us via a family that was displaced. Later, he would strive against all that tears us apart: giving dead sons back to lonely mothers, forgiving adulterers and dining with outcasts. He touched the diseased whom others shunned. He stilled the hands cocked self-righteously to throw stones. He liberated the possessed. Jesus risked temptation and he dared the disappointment of loving those who would betray him. Jesus learned as he grew up that an enraged Herod had slaughtered innocent children in an attempt to destroy him. On the cross Jesus would shed his blood to give eternal life to those children

and to all who trust in him.

In other words, Jesus came straight into our mess in order to redeem it all. He risked the first Christmas and he risked 33 years in our midst. He drew on the courage of his Father to endure this life faithfully in order that we might be saved. This Christmas, before the madness begins, I want to dare to draw from the courage of the One who risked Christmas for me. And I'm so glad we get to do that together!



Gerrit

This article is also appearing in Baton Rouge Parents Magazine.

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DECEMBER CALENDAR

Live Nativity	Dec 1
Open Air Ministries	Dec 3
Messiah Concert	Dec 7
rEcess	Dec 8
Women's Advent Brunch	Dec 9
Downtown Pilgrimage	Dec 10
Live Nativity & Reunion Reception	Dec 17
Christmas Eve Morning Worship	10.30 am
Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship	4 & 6 pm
New Year's Eve Worship	10.30 am

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jacob's Follies Tryouts	Jan 13-14
Marriage Retreat	Jan 20

IN MEMORIAM:

November 8, 2017
 Rosalie Herring
 Mother of Sandy Kleinpeter

November 14, 2017
 Laura Ann Baker
 Mother of Claudia Phillips

BIRTHS:

October 30, 2017
 Stetson Hewitt Woods
 Parents are Sarah and John Woods
 Grandparents are Cynthia and Lloyd Lunceford

November 6, 2017
 Joseph Nour Botros
 Parents are Rebecca and Nour Botros
 Grandparents are Cynthia and Lloyd Lunceford

November 9, 2017
 Londyn Marie Spradley
 Grandparents are Jeannie and Alan Baumeister

BAPTISMS:

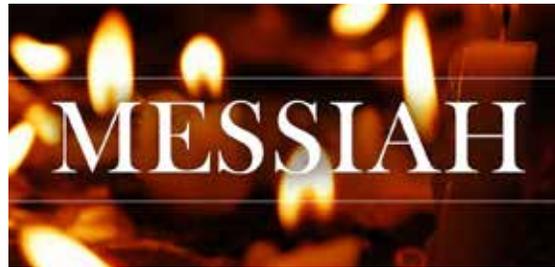
November 5, 2017
 Molly Anne Yates "May" Wood
 Parents are Amelia and Jim Wood

November 26, 2017
 Colin Flynn O'Neal
 Parents are Katie and Bud O'Neal

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 2018, please contact Kathy Mullins at 291.3095.

Sing "Messiah" with the Chancel Choir



"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." So begins the famous oratorio, *Messiah*, written by George Frederic Handel. From the very beginning to the final triumphant chorus, the gospel is woven into a musical tapestry consisting of orchestra, soloists and chorus. It is a message of hope and good news—our Savior has come and is worthy to be praised. While many churches

present only the Christmas portion of this renowned work, First Presbyterian Church will offer the whole Christ story in an inspired presentation of *Messiah* on Thursday, December 7 at 7 pm. Multiple levels of musicians come together in this performance: local orchestra members, LSU students and the Chancel Choir work together in an ultimate collaboration. *Messiah* has enraptured audiences and made kings leap to their feet for over 200 years.

Please join us as we present it as most heartfelt worship this Advent. Admission is free.

Christmas Begins with Christ by Audra Cato, Director of Children's Ministry



The Christmas season can be an overwhelming time for many. However, it doesn't have to be when you begin the season with Christ. The Christmas season is actually a time of waiting. Waiting for the birth of Christ.

With the new craze of hiding and finding elves, I have stumbled upon a fun, new Advent tradition you can start with your family. It is called *The Christmas Star from Afar*. This new tradition teaches children the true meaning of Christmas. Similar to *The Elf on the Shelf*, you hide the star each night until the wise men make their

way to their newborn king Christ Jesus. You can find the boxed set on Amazon, Barnes & Noble or by visiting starfromafar.com. I will read *The Christmas Star from Afar* to our younger Sunday school classes beginning November 26.

All They Want for Christmas Is an Encourager

We have TWO teachers left who are still hoping for an Encourager. Consider adopting Prunella Smith or Lourain Walker at Buchanan Elementary and show them Christ's love through this ministry. The commitment is small but the reward is great! Sign up at the Connection Center or contact Laura Shaw at laura@fpcbr.org.

2017 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 17-31. 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.

Polar Thang: January 12-14, 2018

Polar Thang is our annual middle school winter retreat to Twin Lakes Camp in Florence, MS. We invite all of the youth ministry (high school students can come and be a part of the work crew) to join us for a long weekend of fellowship in the outdoors. We will play games, worship, learn and even take the dreaded polar plunge into one of the lakes. Come join us for a weekend in God's creation! Further information is online at fpcbr.org or contact Josh Maddin (josh@fpcbr.org).

Live Nativity Is Back!



The Live Nativity tradition is back again with two evening performances: Friday, December 1 at 6 and 7 pm and Sunday, December 17 at 5.30 and 6.30 pm. Come see the re-enactment of the birth of Jesus and experience a live performance with a horse, donkeys, goats, sheep and cows. You never know what is going to happen when the animals perform. This night will be uplifting with beautiful music, dancing angels, children's choirs and narrated drama. Appropriate for all ages. Each show lasts 25-30 minutes. Come early or stay late

to the December 1 performance to enjoy the petting zoo! Visit fpcbr.org for the list of cast members.

Live Nativity Reunion Reception, December 17

Have you ever been a part of the annual Live Nativity? Join us for a Live Nativity reunion reception after the last performance of the season on December 17. Come for the 6.30 pm show and stay after to visit with other current and past cast members. We'd love to see you!

Women in Ministry Advent Brunch



Celebrate the season and join us for our annual WiM Advent brunch! On Saturday, December 9 at 10.30 am we will enjoy warm fellowship and delicious food at the home of Wendi

French (212 Shady Lake Parkway). Because the brunch is off campus, we are not able to provide childcare but we hope you will leave the kids with dad and sneak away for an hour and a half or so! Feel free to bring a friend or two. RSVP (fpcbr.org or sherry@fpcbr.org) by Monday, December 4. \$10 per person.

Christmas and New Year's Worship



Christmas Eve falls on Sunday this year. Join us for one Sunday morning worship service at 10.30 am. Then we will keep Christmas Eve together with candlelight communion services at 4 pm and

6 pm in the Sanctuary. We hope you'll plan to join us as we come to adore the God who loves us enough to take up our humanity forever in Jesus. On New Year's Day we will begin 2018 with one 10.30 am worship service.

Downtown Christmas Pilgrimage



Stroll with us on Sunday, December 10, as we visit six different downtown Baton Rouge churches singing Christmas carols at each stop. First Presbyterian will perform excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*.

- 5.30 pm Mt. Zion First Baptist
- 6 pm First United Methodist
- 6.30 pm First Presbyterian
- 7 pm St. James Episcopal
- 7.30 pm St. Joseph Cathedral
- 8 pm First Baptist Church

Daily Readings for Advent: The Season of Expectation

A suggested list of Advent readings is available in the pew racks, on the church app as well as online (fpcbr.org/adventreadings.org). Daily prayers are included.

Christmas Poinsettia Orders

You 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 placed in the Chapel and Sanctuary. \$35 each.

SUNDAY WORSHIP @ FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

COME WORSHIP WITH US!

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

DECEMBER SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Texts are subject to change.

December 3

Genesis 3: 15; Numbers 24: 17; Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18; Job 19: 25-27a

December 10

Isaiah 11: 1-9

December 17

Isaiah 40: 1-11

December 24

Isaiah 9: 2-7

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
Director for Discipleship,
Men's Ministry & Young Adults



PH: 225.387.0617
FAX: 225.338.1010

fpcbr.org

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

Perspectives Is Coming!

Perspectives is a course designed to help Christians understand God's role in our life. Discovering God's hand throughout global history and across cultures can help navigate ever changing cultural and physical landscapes with God's grace.

Seeing how God moves in the midst of

chaos is becoming a valuable tool and skill. As more of our Christian heritage is removed from our traditional business, community organizations and political lives, this year's Perspectives course can illustrate hope that God is still engaged in our lives here in America, as well as highlight his hand across the globe.

Dates for the course are January 14- April 29, 2018 at Chapel on the Campus. Cost is \$300 or \$450 per couple.

If you have any questions about the course, please contact Wendi Couvillion French at wyndston@outlook.com or 225.205.6619.

Jacob's Follies, March 2018

First Presbyterian is thrilled to announce *Jacob's Follies*, a musical play by Terry Byars, coming to the stage March 16, 17 and 18. Recounting the fortunes of the Biblical Jacob (whose name means "deceiver"), this bold, bright musical will delight audiences from 5 to 95! Framed in high comedy, the show brings all the significant events of Jacob's journey to

life: from his stealing Esau's birthright early on to his ultimate encounter with God and the revelation that he will—incredibly—become the "father of many nations!" Woven into the story are all the larger-than-life, quirky and eccentric characters Jacob meets along the way. With music to touch the heart and a message of ultimate forgiveness, we pray

that through Jacob, you will sense the love of God and his undying desire to bless if we'll but ask!

Tryouts for *Jacob's Follies* will be January 13 and 14, 2018. Cast of 30 needed. Ages 12 and older. A complete list of cast bios is available online at fpcbr.org.