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I’m excited for the combined services this July. They sound lush, textured, faithful, interesting and authentic to our personality as a church. I know you all will keep attendance strong and the missions rolling. Our great pastoral team, elders and staff will make sure we don’t miss a beat. (In fact, they might really enjoy having the old curmudgeon out of the office!)

**Thoughts on Marriage**

Wedding season has been full this year. Each time, I love to say the introduction to Christian marriage. One line strikes me: “The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation.” This is a foundational statement, built upon Genesis 1 and 2. The definition of marriage flows from the Creator who made us in his image. Before we were made, God determined that we would live and fill the earth through his gift of marriage between a man and a woman.

Jesus reaffirmed this ancient definition as he declared, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh’?” (Mt. 19: 4-5).

The Christian understanding of marriage flows from the Triune God our Creator as he has spoken in his magnificent word. No state or government can change this. As Psalm 100 declares, “It is he that made us, and not we ourselves.” We don’t self-define. The God who is love, who knows what makes for human flourishing, speaks to us in his ordering of our relationships.

I write these words before we’ve had any court rulings on states’ ordering of marriages in our society. Fundamentally, whatever is ruled changes nothing in our core. If we must become out of step with prevailing cultural norms, or even laws, then so be it. Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate. His church need expect nothing less. You may be confident that last fall your elders reaffirmed this understanding of marriage in our congregation and denomination. Meanwhile, we have work to do, bringing the transforming power of the gospel to a broken world hungry for forgiveness, hope and love. We have marriages to encourage, children to teach, and healing to offer in Jesus’ name.
Change Through God Via Community by Derek McCollum

How do people change? We talk often about going “deeper into Christ,” but it’s important to remember how it happens. How do people come to know Jesus, and how do those who know him get to know him better? How do we begin to see change in our lives, in our communities and in the society around us?

One of the most fundamental claims of the Christian Church for the last two millennia is that God’s revealed Word, the Bible, is the foundation for change in people, communities and societies. David writes these words in Psalm 19:

The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

He goes on to say that God’s Word is sweeter than honey and more desirable than gold. Why? Because God’s Word has the power to change us for the better. The New Testament echoes the same teaching. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3: 16 that “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness…” And in Romans chapter 1, we read these wonderful words: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes…” The Power of God is in the Gospel! God’s Word has power to change us!

Preparing Children for Worship by Audra Cato

It is that time of year again when we prepare to move our children up a grade level! Bittersweet, I know! Here at First Presbyterian, our pastors welcome children at the 1st grade level to sit with their parents in church. Beginning August 16, your 1st grader will officially begin his/her grade level Sunday school. Summer is a great time to start practicing!

Let the children come! Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." ~Matthew 19:14

Here are some helpful tips to prepare your children for worship...

1. Begin at home. Start with small increments of time sitting quietly and listening to a sermon. Talk to your children and prepare them for the transition. Practice at home!

2. Bring one or two simple activities. Let them bring a Bible, some paper and a pencil.

3. Don’t be afraid to ask for a helping hand. We are in this together! Also, if the child needs discipline, carry them to a quiet place to talk with them.

Hope to see you all this coming Sunday!

We will have two books for sale at our Connection Center to help your child during this transition: Joy Journal and God Cares for Me coloring book. Both of these resources will be helpful for your child to bring into the church service along with some crayons or a pencil. Joy Journal is $5.00 and God Cares for Me coloring book is $1.
Sunday Worship @
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

SUNDAY WORSHIP @
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
Come Worship with Us!
Each Sunday in July will have one combined 10:30 am sanctuary worship service.

July 5, AD 2015
Genesis 38
July 12, AD 2015
Genesis 39
July 19, AD 2015
Genesis 41
July 26, AD 2015
Genesis 44

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
Associate Pastor of Student Ministry

Sunday, August 23, Nashville recording artist and songwriter Buddy Greene will join us for worship at the 9 & 11 sanctuary services. Sunday night Buddy and his keyboardist, Jeff Taylor, will perform a concert in the sanctuary at 6 pm. Buddy delights audiences of all ages with great musicianship, crossover style and a passionate faith. He is most famously known for writing the Christmas hymn, “Mary Did You Know?”

On Saturday, August 22, Buddy will teach a workshop called “How to Worship Well and Lead Worship Well.” Those interested in learning more about leading worship can join us in the sanctuary from 3 pm to 4.30 pm. Cost is free, but it is essential to sign up online (fpcbr.org) for the workshop and childcare (4 years and younger). You may also register at the Connection Center.

July 1 Missionary Dinner
The Global Missions Committee invites you to dinner in the reception room on Wednesday, July 1 at 6.30 pm. The Botros and Magruder families will update us on their ministries in more detail. Please register at the Connection Center for dinner and/or childcare. Dinner is $7 per person to be paid at the door.

The King Is Coming:
VBS 2015, July 7-10
Camper, volunteer and childcare registration at fpcbr.org.

All VBS volunteers should meet in the Chapel on Sunday, July 5 after the Acoustic Communion service at 12.15 pm.

Wanted! July 5 Singers!
Come join the worship team and chancel choir as they come together for one service on July 5. Rehearsal is on Wednesday, July 1 at 7 pm in the sanctuary. Contact Nancy Spiller for more information: nancy@fpcbr.org.

THE PSALMS OF ASCENT
Eugene Peterson describes the Psalms of Ascent as both a celebration of the literal journey by the Israelites to the temple in Jerusalem and a metaphorical ascent that acts out a life lived upward toward God as they (and we) develop in spiritual maturity. Join us in our study of these uplifting psalms that will press us to wait for the Lord and hope in him always.

THE PSALMS OF ASCENT: A five-week Summer study using a team-teaching approach.
Tuesday Evenings: June 30-July 28, 6.30 - 8 pm
At the home of Alice Martty, 3620 Ridgetop Drive
Bring a friend!
Officer Nominations for the 2018 Class
The First Presbyterian Church Officer Nominating Committee nominates Elders and Deacons by receiving suggested names of members from the congregation, prayerfully preparing a slate, and presenting the slate at the annual October congregational meeting for election. Please submit names of members to serve as church officers. Suggestion cards are located in the pews and at the Connection Center. Place in the offering plate or mail to the church office after completing by the end of July.

Community Outreach Meal - Sunday, July 5
We love to serve the homeless of Baton Rouge. On July 5 at noon, we will cook hamburgers and hot dogs at the church and serve them at Open Air Ministries. Volunteers are needed to help cook and serve. For questions, contact Mike Salassi (msalassi@agcenter.lsu.edu).

Manners of the Heart Seeking Volunteers
Manners of the Heart is having a volunteer work week, July 20-25, beginning at 8 am each day. Over 310 kits need assembling which will reach 7600 children in 15 EBR Parish public schools. These new kits help kick off new superintendent, Warren Drake’s, implementation of the “Manners” program. Come help our fellow member Jill Garner and her team prepare these kits. Assembly will take place in the sanctuary basement middle school classrooms. Contact Jill Garner for further information: jrigby@mannersoftheheart.org.

Project S.T.A.R.S. Sports Camp Needs Volunteers
The Abounding Love Ministries summer soccer/basketball camp needs 20 volunteers. Camp will go from Monday, July 6 - Friday, July 10, from 8 am - 12.30 pm each day. Please contact Whitney to volunteer: whitney@fpcbr.org or 225.810.2607.

Mission Trip to Lebanon
Whitney Alexander is co-leading a Presbyterian-wide Lebanon mission trip in September. Please prayerfully consider this trip.
Details: CSP/GSP Lebanon Mission Trip September 4-13, 2015
Please contact Whitney Alexander if interested before July 22 for more details: whitney@fpcbr.org.