

FPC NEWSLETTER

DEEPER IN CHRIST, FURTHER INTO THE WORLD



The Strange Way the Gospels are Written by Gerrit Dawson, Senior Pastor

How brilliant is our God! The LORD inspired the 150 songs that are the psalms. But God didn't give us any tunes! Great lyrics. But we get to make up the tunes. So the psalms continue to inspire music across cultures and centuries.

The Holy Spirit inspired four views of the life of Jesus in the gospels. Each corroborates the other. Each is unique. But have you noticed a quality all the gospel stories share? They never tell us how to feel. They rarely tell us explicitly how Jesus felt. Or how the characters felt. The gospels give us the bare bones of the events. The essential words but not all the words. The borders of the story but not every detail of the occurrence.

That's a lot like giving the song lyrics without the tunes. The gospel stories invite. No, actually they demand, that we fill them in. That's part of what makes them so compelling. They leave room for us. They pull us into the narrative. We get to consider how people felt and when we might feel the same. We get to identify the conflicts, the hopes, the change, the point. There's nothing quite like the gospels as literature in all the world.

But then, that's not surprising, since the triune God himself inspired the many writers of Scripture to speak with unified but unique voices across centuries.

As you read in John this Lent, take some time to think about the literary wonder you're encountering. Recall just how amazing it is that the Spirit continues to speak through the ancient word a unique and personal word to you—to you!

Volunteer to Bag Food for the Needy

The Christian Outreach Center (1427 Main St.) would love volunteers to help bag food for the needy each Wednesday between 8.30 am and noon. Sign up by using the volunteer form at christianoutreachbr.com. Please type "bagging" in the notes section before you submit. You will be contacted regarding scheduling and details.

Gardere School Art Gallery Walk

Please join us Sunday, March 19 for our Gardere School Gallery Walk. Our beloved Gardere students will be sharing over 100 pieces of their finest work. The Gallery Walk will be held in the Reception Room and up for display throughout the day. Light snacks and beverages will be provided that morning. We look forward to having you! Don't forget to welcome the children and their families in worship!

Spring Cleaning

Now is a great time to donate furniture, clothing and housewares to the Purple Cow. These thrift stores provide significant funding for the Christian Outreach Center, one of our core ministry partners. The COC assists walk-in visitors, leads job training workshops and teaches financial literacy. The COC offers a hand up, not just a hand out!

It's joy to be pursuing Jesus together during Lent, and as ever I love being your pastor!

Lent



2 WATCH AND PRAY

3 LIVING WATER REFLECTIVE RETREAT

3 PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP & CRAWFISH BOIL

4 MISSION EVENTS & UPDATES

EVENTS

- Daughters of the King MAR 5
- Smiles Presentation MAR 9
- rEcess MAR 10
- Women’s Reflective Retreat MAR 11
- Gardere Art Walk MAR 19
- Manners of the Heart Gala MAR 23
- IFP MAR 24

ONGOING EVENTS

Weekly Weds. Lent Worship at 12 pm
Lent Small Groups

BAPTISMS

February 12:
Henry and Noah Black
Parents are Selene and Chris Black

Rowan Swarner
Parents are Elizabeth and Jeff Swarner

IN MEMORIAM

February 3, 2023
Marvin Blumentritt
Father of Rud Blumentritt

February 16, 2023
Victor Gastinel
Father of Philip Gastinel

February 18, 2023
Melanie McRoberts

FLOWERS

The Chapel and Sanctuary flowers are given . . .

MAR 5 . . . to the glory of God and in the loving memory of Linda and Wayne Barker’s parents, Wayne & Helen Harvey Barker and Christine & Sam Orwin, as well as Wayne’s sister, Kitty Barker.

MAR 12 . . . Open date.

MAR 19 . . . to glory of God and in loving memory of Bart Bennett by Ruth Anne, Claire, Adriane and Sarah.

MAR 26 . . . Open date

Watch and Pray by Colton Underwood, Assistant Pastor of Children, Youth and Families

Over our years together, Rachel and I have taken many 10+ hour drives over the course of a single day. On one such occasion in August of 2018, we were facing the long drive back to Jackson, MS after a hot outdoor wedding as the sun began to set against a brilliant evening sky. While driving on previous road trips, I had felt my eyes droop and my head begin to nod (telltale signs of being on the edge of sleep), so I knew my physical limits of exhaustion while driving. During that particular drive home, I used every means possible to keep awake at the wheel. I cranked the AC uncomfortably high, I blasted music that would get my blood moving, I drank an amount of caffeine that was on the edge of unwise, I engaged Rachel in conversation for hours on end, and I even came to the point of slapping myself in the face!



**Eyes open,
firmly awake and aware
of our surroundings,
ready for whatever
might come.**

Why would I resort to such ridiculousness? I knew the danger. Falling asleep at the wheel is deadly serious business, as I’m sure you know well. Knowing the danger, therefore, I will take every precaution to avoid the catastrophic effects of such an action. As I’ve recently pondered and preached over the last few verses of 1 Peter, these experiences came to mind as I considered the implications of what Peter calls Christians to in verse 8 of chapter 5: “Be sober-minded; be watchful.” The Holy Spirit through Peter’s pen exhorts each of us to have our eyes open, firmly awake and aware of our surroundings, ready for whatever might come.

While it may not be evident immediately, I believe Peter’s command to exiled Christians provides a reflection of his on an experience with Jesus a few decades prior. It was Thursday night, the night when Jesus was to be betrayed, and as the disciples joined Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told them simply to “watch and pray” (Matthew 26: 41). Failing to do just that, the disciples fell asleep as Jesus prayed to the

Father, the first step which led to their flight and abandonment of the Lord at his arrest.

As with much in his life during Christ’s earthly ministry, Peter learned best from his failure. Therefore, he reminds us as Christians the importance of watching and waiting, to be sober-minded and watchful, to watch and pray. To take these imperatives to heart, we need to be aware of our tendency to spiritual drowsiness. As I am aware of my tendency to doze at the wheel while the day is dark, we ought to know what seasons of life might yield unique temptations to let down our guard. It may be in times of prosperity, times of spiritual victory, times of isolation, or times of uncertainty. Whatever the season, be aware of the temptation to let down your guard.

Then, aware of our surroundings and the present danger, we ought to seek the Lord, running to him, fixing our eyes upon him, clinging to his promises, finding our strength in his. This is what is meant by Christ’s command to “watch and pray.” It calls us not only to holy diligence in watching but also holy dependence in prayer. As the watchman defends a city against attack by sounding the alarm to wake the sleeping guard, so too ought we sound the alarm of prayer before and during times of temptation. When we do so—grabbing hold by prayer and living into God’s promise to hear our cry, to never leave us nor to forsake us, to provide a way of escape when temptation does come—we are invited to find a firm place to stand, a refuge and strong tower to keep us safe.

As this season of Lent progresses and we find ourselves in a heightened place of spiritual practice, don’t neglect the need for holy watchfulness. Rather, use these weeks leading up to the Lord’s passion to stand beside him, joining with him in the Garden on Thursday night, ready to watch and pray.

Living Water: Women's Ministry Reflective Retreat

Join us for a full morning of goodness! We will look at the story of the woman at the well from John 4 and how her testimony caused many to believe! We will also hear how Jesus has been "living water" in the lives of several of our beloved sisters-in-Christ: Kristina Graham, Liz Voelker, Brittany Comeaux, Courtney Hilton and Susan McCarter. Come and enjoy fellowship, food, music from Nancy Spiller and personal reflection time as we contemplate the wondrous experience of Jesus as our Living Water!

DETAILS:

Saturday, March 11

9 am-1 pm at the home of Chelsea Smith (6448 Oak Cluster Drive, Greenwell Springs)

Register Online (fpcbr.org) or scan the QR Code: \$15

Catered by Gourmet Girls, plus a special Living Water "treat"!!



Lent Continues

Palm Sunday 2023

We joyfully welcome back our annual Palm Sunday festival on April 2. The congregation will process around North Boulevard promptly at 10 am followed by a combined worship celebration in the Sanctuary. Join us for a crawfish boil lunch after worship with fun activities for the children: egg hunts (further details below), face painting, a balloon artist and a petting zoo. Casual dress is encouraged. Overflow parking will be available in the Old Governor's Mansion lot on North Blvd.

Early Bird Special Crawfish Pricing:

Through Sunday, March 26: 13 and older, \$10 per person. 12 and younger, \$5 per person.

Monday, March 27: 13 and older, \$15 per person. 12 and younger, \$10 per person. Register online today (fpcbr.org)!

Egg Hunt Details:

Children's Ministry will provide Easter eggs. Please bring an Easter basket for each child. 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders will hunt for eggs during the service in the Terraced Garden. Children in 4th and 5th grades will help hide eggs for the younger children. They may leave worship 15 minutes early and meet in the Terraced Garden.

Mid-Week Lent Worship

Noon services continue throughout the Lent season in Dunham Chapel without lunch. Invite a coworker!

Daily Lent Emails

Our 2023 Lent study focuses on Jesus' interactions with people in John's Gospel. In addition to printed books, you may also subscribe to the daily emails by visiting fpcbr.org.

"Come and See" Lent Small Groups

Lent small groups continue. Contact Kelly Wood (kelly@fpcbr.org) if you would like to join a group.



SERMON TEXTS

MARCH 5

John 6: 30-40, 48-51

MARCH 12

John 8: 12, 46-59

MARCH 19

John 11: 1-17

MARCH 26

John 11: 28-44

PASTORAL STAFF

GERRIT DAWSON

Senior Pastor

WHITNEY ALEXANDER

Associate Pastor of Missions

BARRY PHILLIPS

Ministry Executive

DARIN TRAVIS

Associate Pastor for Discipleship

SCOTT GRAHAM

Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care and Prayer

COLTON UNDERWOOD

Assistant Pastor of Children, Youth and Families



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763 North Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Mother's Day Out and Preschool
225.620.0245

BR Christian Counseling Center
225.387.2287

brchristiancounseling.com

Mission Events, Presentations and Updates

Smiles Foundation Presentations. Kevin Hoy, executive director of Smiles Foundation, is coming to Baton Rouge. On Thursday, March 9, Gee Gee Hargon will host Kevin in his home where we can get an update on the Foundation, construction on the Sunset House and the partnership between Smiles and First Presbyterian. Join us at 6 pm at Gee Gee's (5148 Mimosa St.). Please RSVP to Whitney Alexander (225.810.2607). For those unable to attend on the 9th, Kevin will speak in Ryan Dickerson's Sunday school class at 10.10 am March 12. Our next Romania mission trips are May 19-27 and December 1-10.

Manners of the Heart Celebrates Two Decades! This important ministry, with offices in our church, teaches the Biblical value of respect in schools across our parish and nation. On Thursday, March 23, Manners will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a gala reception at the Manship Theatre. A live demonstration by the Gardere Christian School will highlight how Manners works in a classroom. More info at mannersoftheheart.org.

International Friendship Partners

Baton Rouge is full of internationals, many of whom have never seen the inside of an American home, developed a relationship with a Christian or experienced the unconditional love of Christ. You can change that. Come meet some of these amazing internationals at one of our monthly gatherings. A great way to start is to attend the IFP "International Waffle Day" celebration, March 24, at 6 pm, 3565 Cole Dr. (Lee Ann and David Kozans').

Global Transformation Ministries. Brian Miller of Global Transformation Ministries in Medellin, Colombia will speak in Sunday school March 26. We look forward to hearing about the progress of the transitional living facility of Esther's House which is partially funded by your generous contributions to the *Building Up* campaign.

Mission Conference

Stay tuned for details on our Global Mission Conference to be held in August.