

SERVICE OF WORSHIP

March 1, 2026 at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

First United Methodist Church

Baton Rouge, Louisiana



“Nicodemus” by Henry Tanner, 1899

Today is the second Sunday in Lent. During this season we are invited to examine the roots of our Christian discipleship and identify with Jesus’s journey to the cross. We are observing Lent in our worship services by removing “Alleluias” from the liturgy and flowers from the sanctuary. May these corporate practices, along with our individual Lenten disciplines, shape our journey with Jesus to the cross.

In the lesson from John’s Gospel, Jesus presents a new covenant—one we enter through water and the Spirit—and explains to Nicodemus the fullness of God’s plan. This plan gives us spiritual re-birth through a new covenant, bringing us assurance of salvation and eternal life.

CHIMES

Worship begins with the opening voluntary. At the sound of the chimes, we invite you into a period of quiet reflection preparing for today’s service.

OPENING VOLUNTARY “Meditation on ‘Lift High the Cross’”

Setting by Charles Callahan

GREETING

† HYMN 98 “To God Be the Glory”

† PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are: send your Spirit to strengthen us through your holy word: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

† GOSPEL LESSON John 3:1-21

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON “Faith in the Dark”

Reverend Wetekamm

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. As we come to the table with the risen Jesus, we are witnesses to the resurrection! Let us forsake all that holds us back from this joy as we offer our confession.

Silence is kept for reflection.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND PARDON

Holy God, we confess that we have turned away from you and from our neighbors, and in toward ourselves. We have sought security in possessions and the place of power in relationships. We have trusted ourselves most of all. Turn us back to you, O God. In your mercy, forgive our sinfulness and cleanse us from guilt and shame. Guide us on the path of freedom that is your gift to us in Christ our Lord.

KYRIE *All sing*



Hear for yourselves: There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. In the waters of baptism grace abounds for you and for all. God turns to you in love and puts away every sin, every wrong turn, for the sake of Jesus, the one God sent to save the world. **Amen.**

† PASSING OF THE PEACE *As a forgiven people, we greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

OUR SHARED LIFE

Today's music is underwritten in celebration of the life of Caroline Frances Esposito, by her grandmother, Judy Foust.

The votive candle on the lectern is in memory of Bobby White.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

An offering is collected to support the work of First United Methodist Church sharing God's love with the world. Please take a moment and record your attendance on a card located in the blue folders in the pews. Place the card in the offering plate when passed to you. Make a secure gift by scanning the QR Code or visit fumcbr.org/give to give online.



OFFERTORY

“Jesus Calls Us” (8:30 a.m.)

Wayne Wold

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea: day by day his clear voice sounding, saying, “Christian, follow me!” As of old Saint Andrew heard it by the Galilean lake, turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving all for Jesus' sake. Jesus call us from the worship of the vain world's golden store, from each idol that would keep us, saying “Christian, love me more!” In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease, still he calls, in cares and pleasures, “Christian, love me more than these!” Jesus calls us by the mercies, Savior, may we hear your call, give our hearts to thy obedience, serve and love thee best of all!

“O Love” (11:00 a.m.)

Elaine Hagenberg

O love, O love, O love that will not let me go; O love, I rest my weary soul in Thee. I give Thee back the life I owe, That in Thy ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be. O joy that seeks me through the pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain that morn shall tearless be. That morn shall tearless be. O love, O love, O love that will not let me go; O love, I rest my weary soul in Thee. I give Thee back the life I owe; and in Thy ocean depths its flow shall richer, fuller be. That morn shall tearless be. O love, O love, O love that will not let me go; O love that will not let me go.

† DOXOLOGY

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. You brought all things into being and called them good. From the dust of the earth you formed us into your image and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. When rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, you bore up the ark on the waters, saved Noah and his family, and made covenant with every living creature on earth. When you led your people to Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, you gave us your commandments and made us your covenant people. When your people forsook your covenant, your prophet Elijah fasted for forty days and forty nights; and on your holy mountain, he heard your still small voice.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and might.
 Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.
 Blest is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. When you gave him to save us from our sin, your Spirit led him into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights to prepare for his ministry. When he suffered and died on a cross for our sin, you raised him to life, presented him alive to the apostles during forty days, and exalted him at your right hand. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. Now, when we your people prepare for the yearly feast of Easter, you lead us to repentance for sin and the cleansing of our hearts, that during these forty days of Lent we may be gifted and graced to reaffirm the covenant you made with us through Christ.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died, Christ is ris - en, Christ will come a - gain.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

MUSIC FOR COMMUNION

“The Old Rugged Cross”

Setting by Yena Choi

“Ave Verum Corpus” (11:00 a.m.)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary, who has truly suffered, was sacrificed on the cross for mortals, whose side was pierced, whence flowed water and blood: be for us a foretaste of heaven.

INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

† HYMN 159 “Lift High the Cross”

† BENEDICTION

CLOSING VOLUNTARY “Fugue in C Minor,” BWV 549

Johann Sebastian Bach

MINISTRY OF WORSHIP

Acolyte	Skylar Dunphy (8:30 a.m.); Mary Collins Baker (11:00 a.m.)
Communion Servers	Frances Falcon, Jack Meyer, Jennifer Meyer, and Gabe Smith (8:30 a.m.) Rob Fairly, Mary Elizabeth Hart, Charles Spencer, and Rhonda Whitley (11:00 a.m.)
Liturgists	Pattye Hewitt, <i>Executive Director of Adult Education, Hospitality, and Care</i> Cherri Johnson, <i>Director of Spiritual Formation, Emerita</i>
Musicians	Dr. Susannah Knoll, <i>Cello</i> Spencer LeFebvre, <i>Baritone</i> (8:30 a.m.); Chancel Choir (11:00 a.m.) Holden Miller, <i>Associate Director of Music and Organist</i> Lamar Drummonds, <i>Director of Music and Worship</i>
Preaching	Reverend Kale Wetekamm, <i>Pastor to Children and Youth</i>
Soundboard	Tim McKey (8:30 a.m.); Rick Waldrop (11:00 a.m.)

Welcome to First United Methodist Church

Families with Children – Children are always welcome in worship! Childcare is available during all services for children ages 6 weeks through Kindergarten. FUMC also offers Sunday morning groups for children and youth from 9:45-10:45 a.m. To find a group, visit the check-in table located across from the welcome desk in the Conference Center lobby.

If you are new to First United Methodist and are ready to learn more or have questions, we invite you to join us for our monthly **Newcomer Coffee**. This is a great opportunity to ask questions and meet others. This event takes place on the first Sunday of each month from 9:45–10:45 a.m. in Ory Parish Hall. Registration is helpful (scan the QR code) but not required. For more information, contact Shan Schatzle, *Coordinator*, at shan@firstmethodist.org.



Café 930 - Enjoy fellowship and a cup of hot coffee or tea from 8:00-11:00 a.m. (Ory Parish Hall) every Sunday morning. An assortment of teas, flavored syrups, and sweeteners are available. All are welcome.

Believe & Belong – Are you discerning becoming a member of FUMC or ready to join? Attend the next Believe & Belong on March 15 from 9:45–10:45 a.m. in the Conference Center. Childcare and Children’s Sunday School are available during this hour. Register by scanning the QR code. Questions? Email Pattye Hewitt, *Executive Director of Adult Education, Hospitality, and Care*, at phewitt@firstmethodist.org.



Announcements

Draw closer to God by attending a service of Holy Communion each Wednesday in Lent from 12:10-12:40 p.m. in the Aldrich Chapel.

Help adorn the sanctuary on Easter morning with fresh flowers and Easter Lilies in memory or in honor of someone special to you. By scanning the QR code to the right with your phone’s camera, you will be directed to an Easter Flower reservation page. Each plant is \$23. You can also order by visiting www.firstmethodist.org under the “Lent” tab. The deadline for ordering is Sunday, March 29.



Registration is open for FUMC summer camps and mission opportunities! Go to firstmethodistyouth.org to register for the Sr. High Mission Trip (May 23-May 31) for 8th-12th graders and the Jr. High Mystery Mission Trip (July 21-24) for 6th-8th graders. Elementary signups are at firstmethodistchildren.org with Mission Day Camp (June 15-18) for rising 4th-6th graders and Vacation Bible School (July 13-17) for rising prek-4 to 6th graders.

4th and 5th graders are invited to the **Color Wars** at Independence Park on Friday, March 13 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. Wear white and expect a mess (and a whole lot of fun)! Cost is \$30/child and includes supplies and a light dinner. Register at firstmethodistchildren.org. Invite a friend to join you.

Ladies are invited to attend **Free to Be Women’s Retreat** on March 20-22 at the Feliciana Retreat and Conference Center, led by Mary Byo, Cheri Johnson, and Cindy Mann. This weekend will center around rest, reflection, prayer, and making space for the presence of God. This is your invitation to remember that faith is meant to heal and restore the whole of who you are: body, mind, heart, and soul. For more information, email mary@nurturedbr.com and to register, visit fumcbr.org/freetobe or scan the QR code.



The **FUMC Easter Walk** is on Saturday, March 28, and the Children’s Ministry is collecting 5,000 candy-stuffed and taped eggs. Empty eggs and bags of candy are also accepted. Please bring your donations to the church by March 22. Other opportunities for support include event sponsorships and monetary donations; go to www.firstmethodistchildren.org to sign up. Thank you for generously supporting this FUMC tradition!

This month we give thanks for the 2nd anniversary of “**Grace Notes**,” a writing ministry of FUMC. Since its beginning, Grace Notes writers have handwritten more than 7,500 notes to people who are walking through seasons of loss and hardship. Each note is a quiet but powerful witness to Christ’s abiding presence. Writers commit to mailing three handwritten notes each week. If you would like to join the team, contact Pattye Hewitt, *Executive Director of Adult Education, Hospitality, and Care*, at phewitt@firstmethodist.org.

Our Ministries Require Your Support: Your contributions help underwrite the important ministries of FUMC. Recurring gifts provide stability for our church, helping us know how much income to expect and to manage cash flow throughout the year. To establish a recurring gift via ACH bank draft, contact Destiny Muse, *Contributions Coordinator*, at dmuse@firstmethodist.org, or at 225-383-2777, extension 218. For instructions on setting up an online recurring gift, visit <http://www.fumcbr.org/give>.