

THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter

December 2024



See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:19

Year round, and particularly now, we are exhorted to stay alert and keep watch for manifestations of the divine. What we perceive is shaped by what we expect to see. In these days, keep your senses alert and your heart open; ours is a God of surprises. Holy revelations have always defied expectations; the same remains true now. Take this time as an opportunity to recalibrate your sacred sensors. God is all around, do you not perceive it?

As Advent begins, here's an excerpt from Truman Capote's 1956 short story, "A Christmas Memory," laid out as a poem for your reading pleasure:

"My, how foolish I am!" my friend cries,
suddenly alert,
like a woman remembering too late
she has biscuits in the oven.
"You know what I've always thought?"
she asks in a tone of discovery,
and not smiling at me but a point beyond.

"I've always thought a body
would have to be sick and dying
before they saw the Lord. And I imagined
that when He came it would be
like looking at the Baptist window:
pretty as colored glass
with the sun pouring through,
such a shine you don't know it's getting dark.
And it's been a comfort: to think of that shine
taking away all the spooky feeling.

But I'll wager it never happens. I'll wager
at the very end a body realizes
the Lord has already shown Himself.
That things as they are" — her hand circles
in a gesture that gathers clouds and kites and grass
and Queenie pawing earth over her bone —
"just what they've always seen, was seeing Him.

As for me, I could leave the world
with today in my eyes."

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SUNDAY at FBCIA

Upcoming December Sundays at First Baptist:

December 1 Advent begins. .

December 8 Rev. Kelsey Stillwell will fill the pulpit.

December 15 Blue Christmas" The holidays, while full of cheer, also can be times of difficulty and grief. This service holds space for sorrow entwined with joy while going through the longest nights.

December 22 will be filled with music. In the morning, Stephen will discuss the history of Christmas carols during the adult forum. At 11, we will have a carol request service, followed by a jazz vesper service at 2:00PM.

December 24 Bring out your bells for a service of scripture, song, and joy.

December 29 We will welcome Rev. Jim Miller back to the pulpit.

Sunday Forums for December

Dear Friends,

Here is the Sunday Forum program until the end of the year. Please note we have typically not had forums on the Sundays after Christmas as members are often away visiting families.

Best,
Ruth

December 1st
NO FORUM

December 8th
Lectio divina led by Ruth Marris Macaulay

“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.” **Isaiah 43:19**

December 15th
Out of Darkness: Into Light: Ruth Marris Macaulay

Looking at the light at the end of the tunnel in our Advent journey and in similar traditions in other faiths and cultures.

December 22nd
The Origins of Christmas Carols: Stephen Martorella

Our own Minister of Music, Stephen Martorella will talk about how our favorite Christmas carols originated.

December 29th
NO FORUM

FBCIA NEWS



Rev. Marlene Gil was the guest minister on **November 2** and officiated at the monthly Communion service. Deacon Ken Clauser was one of the two deacons assisting.



On **Wednesday, November 13** a few faithful gathered at the church to prepare a garden dinner for everyone. The gathering began at 4:00 pm in the kitchen where they made black bean soup and cornbread. Dinner was served at 5:30.



The guest preacher on **November 17** was Jeremy Langill, Executive Director of the Rhode Island State Council of Churches. He greeted Susan Lepore after the service.



Mauwa Bilobi graduated from Lincoln Tech on **November 21** with a degree as a medical assistant. She is shown with Ken Clauser and her brother Fikiri M'mandama who drove from Ohio to attend the ceremony. The photo was taken by Susan Lepore who also attended.



Pastor Jamie spoke to the children about the sharing of one another's burdens.

December is Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering Month

The theme for RMMO 2024 is: **Together, We Remember.**

Together, we remember. In 2023, thanks to your generosity, contributions to RMMO totaled \$965,568. RMMO recipients often tell us about the difference your gift makes in their lives.

We Remember the pastors, missionaries and leaders who have served ABCUSA churches and ministries. Each of those who have celebrated the wondrous works of Christ will be remembered in the form of a thank you check – a tangible expression of our enduring gratitude for their service.

Why should congregations give?

We give to remember and thank those who have dedicated their lives in service to Christ, the church, and to us. With gift revenue from the RMMO 2022 offering, we distributed 3,332 thank you checks averaging \$154, a modest amount in which the gesture says far more than the dollars. For all the blessings they've brought us, together, let's remember them again this year.

Missions and Outreach

Frozen Meals Ministry: We are always in need of more frozen meals to distribute. Please pick up containers and labels from the deacon's welcome table, prepare and freeze your meals, then return them to the church freezer for distribution. Thanks for being a part of this timely and fulfilling ministry.

The Blessing Bag Station in Fellowship Hall is always in need of socks, crackers, granola and water, hand sanitizer or body wipes that folks can give to needy individuals

Basic Needs Pantry Drive

WISH LIST - Nothing opened or expired, please

- ◆ Milk of all types (shelf stable-cow, almond, oat, etc.)
- ◆ Band-aids
- ◆ Dish Soap, sponges, disinfectant sprays, and other cleaning supplies
- ◆ Kitchen supplies (cling wrap, plastic bags, tin foil, etc.)
- ◆ Office, school, and crafting supplies
- ◆ Sanitary pads (no tampons)
- ◆ Shampoo and conditioner (for all hair types)
- ◆ Single-load laundry detergent packets
- ◆ Soaps, toothpaste, deodorant, travel-size mouthwash, and other hygiene products
- ◆ Pasta sauce, Peanut butter, Ramen, Rice, Snack mixes, Soups, cake mix and frosting, canned fruit, any variety, Canned/shelf-stable proteins



World Aids Day

Since 1988, December 1 has been recognized around the globe as “World AIDS Day.” The purpose of this important observance is to remember those who we have lost, to celebrate survivors, to educate, and to promote awareness. This year, events will be taking place all week long across the State, but one of the first of these events will be an Interfaith Prayer Service to be held on Sunday, December 1, at 4:00pm. Open Table of Christ Church (1520 Broad Street, Providence). You are welcome to this celebration of hope, life, and remembrance.

Trip to La Romana

At the end of January, a group of 9 people from First will join 6 folks from Phillips and 2 members of Allendale to travel to LaRomana, Dominican Republic. Once there, we will join a group from Maine to provide medical clinics in the Batays (small villages in the middle of the cane fields) and continue work on the Good Samaritan Hospital.

To facilitate our work there we invite you to join us in gathering OTC drugs for the medical team to distribute. We need:

Antacid tablets (generic TUMS)

Acetaminophen tablets

Topical creams (moisturizers, anti-itch, hydrocortisone)

Topical antibiotics (neosporin, polysporin)

Anti-diarrheal (generic Imodium)

Pregnancy tests

Vitamin tablets

ABSOLUTELY NO GUMMIES or GEL CAPS

We can also use toothbrushes, toothpaste, and soap bars.

Thank you for your ongoing support with this mission project.



2024 CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS

If you would like to have a poinsettia plant in Church on
Christmas Eve Tuesday, December 24, 2024
Please fill out this form and return it to the church office

I will take the plant home with me _____ I will donate the plant to a shut in _____

In lieu of flowers you may also make a donation to Better Lives Rhode Island

(Please Print Clearly)

IN MEMORY OR HONOR OF: _____

GIVEN BY: _____

Number of Plants: _____ Cost: \$17.00 each

Please make your check payable to:

First Baptist Church in America (FBCIA)

with either Flowers or Better Live Rhode Island (BLRI) in the memo line
on or before, but no later than Monday, December 16, 2024!

Payment Must Accompany Order Form!



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Rev. Dr. Jamie Washam, Pastor
Stephen Martorella, Minister of Music
Holly Edwards, Administrative Assistant
Anne Gagan, Bookkeeper
Tony Zambarano, Sexton
Ary Peralta, Sunday Sexton
Victoria Pfanstiehl, ASL Interpreter
Ashley Muchiri, Nursery Room Assistant

Statement of Welcome

Roger Williams gathered the First Baptist Church in America in 1638 on the bedrock of religious liberty, with its principles of soul freedom and the separation of church and state. Together, we continue our ministry of welcome and liberation.

This congregation honors its Baptist heritage. Many of our members are lifelong Baptists and others come from varied denominational and religious backgrounds. We welcome all people of every age, race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, cultural background, socio-economic status, mental or physical ability, marital status, and any other distinctions of society. We are diverse people united in Christ. We remain a safe harbor.

Announcements

When there is a parking ban in the city of Providence due to inclement weather, church services and other activities held at the church will be cancelled until the parking ban is lifted. Please tune in to your local television and radio stations.

A gentle reminder that parking in the church driveway is reserved for those with Handicap Placards on Sunday. If you have one, please pull all the way up so others are also able to park. Thank you.

Christmas Eve Worship is Tuesday, December 24 beginning with organ preludes at 7:30PM and Worship at 8:00PM.