

THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter
February



We sent a team of 8 from our congregation to La Romana, Dominican Republic in January to continue the medical mission and construction of the Good Samaritan Hospital. Members of our church have been a part of this for more than 20 years now. Our group this year included Susan and Richard Lepore, Jason and Will Shealy, Heidi Töppel, Joanne Schneider, Tom Stevenson, and myself. We joined with other American Baptists from across Rhode Island, Maine, Iowa, and Kansas. The 30+ member team worked daily in the bateyes running medical clinics with the people who work in the sugar cane fields and continued construction at the hospital. Midweek, we took some time to go to the shore where we swam, and then shared a meal and communion on the beach. Jason celebrated his birthday while there with a cake and a cup of water poured over his head, Dominican style.

We recognize that those who travelled represented a cloud of witnesses from our entire congregation. Your contributions to the Roger Williams Attic sale and your donations of medical supplies benefited those we met and worked alongside while there. Your prayers buoyed us during our travels and labors.

Some have remarked that it would be more efficient and economical to send checks rather than people, however, our Dominican partners make it plain that they have priorities that go beyond numbers. They want teams to come so that we might know one another. These relationships are transformational. Anyone who has spent time on one of these missions cannot hear news reports about the Dominican Republic or Haiti in the same way afterwards. Knowing people who seek to live with dignity, with health and without fear of deportation changes one's perspective on immigration and why people risk everything in the hopes of a better life for their families.

Plans are already in place to return in January of 2027. Between now and then, continue to hold our Dominican and Haitian siblings in your prayers. Consider joining us next time; there is a place and role for you on the team.

Dios te bendiga, y te guarde.

Números 6:24

Peace,

Pastor Jamie

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TRIP TO LA ROMANA



Susan Lepore replacing door hardware



Joanne modeling her new hairstyle, courtesy of some of the medical interpreting team.



Construction team taking a breather
L –R Richard, Roy, Susan, Andrew



Who need an electrical post when you have a tree?



Electrial meter in a Bateye



Children playing while their mothers receive healthcare .



Iguana stricking a pose



Tom Stevenson preparing to board the bus for a day of construction at the hospital



The group in La Romana celebrated Jason Shealy's birthday. Shown here on the left is Tom Stevenson, Heidi Töppel, and Susan Lepore. On the right is Joanne Schneider and Pastor Jamie. Jason is on the far right, at the other table.



Sunset after communion on the beach



View of La Romana in the rain from 5th floor of the hospital

JANUARY WORSHIP AT FBCIA



Leliani Nixon, our substitute organist while Stephen Martorella was away, and cellist Kate Ritzau, a senior at the Woodstock Academy (CT), presented the preludes and accompanied Jason Shealy's solos for the morning worship on January 5, 2025.



Samuel Brunner, tenor soloist and section leader of the choir, accompanied by Leilani Nixon, presented the special music for the service on January 12, singing "O Magnum Mysterium" by Morten Lauridsen.



Rabbi Emily Goldberg Winer was a guest on Sunday, January 19, and she and Pastor Jamie spoke about the special up-coming program for February 9th when her synagogue and our church will share a program in the Adult Forum about Martin Luther King and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.



Lielani Nixon has been our substitute organist since 1996 and on Sunday, January 19, she was honored by the church in a reception after church. Susan Lepore officiated at the ceremony.



On Sunday January 26, 2025, Rev. Marlene Gil was the guest preacher, filling in for Pastor Jamie Washam who was in the Dominican Republic as a member of our mission team that went to help build the hospital at La Romana. Rev. Gil is greeting Kenneth Clauser after the worship service.

SUNDAY FORUMS FOR FEBRUARY

Sunday February 9th

Members of FBCIA and Temple Beth Sholom will discuss readings from Martin Luther King Jr. and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and their relevance to the present time.

Sunday February 16th

Myanmar: A State in Crisis – Ruth Marris Macaulay

The human rights crisis in Myanmar has worsened as the military authorities continue their crackdown on peaceful opposition. Unfair trials of pro-democracy activists continue and more than 1,600 people have been sentenced to imprisonment, hard labor or death. More than half a million people have been displaced. Tens of thousands of ethnic Rohingya people, forcibly displaced over a decade ago remained in squalid displacement camps. The military authorities prevented humanitarian aid from reaching them after a devastating cyclone in May 2023. The military junta has carried out aerial attacks on civilians, homes, and places of worship. Rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are severely curtailed and journalists were among those imprisoned for their legitimate work.

Sunday February 23rd

First Baptist and the Freemasons: 1774-1830 – Stan Lemons

St. John's Lodge of the Masons is coming to worship with us on February 23rd. Our Jason Shealy is the current leader of the lodge and has asked to learn how St. John's Lodge and our church were connected in those early years. Stan Lemons will explore those relationships and include the weirdest episode in the entire history of our church.

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 deacons' 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, 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



CWS BLANKET SUNDAY

For more than 75 years, Church World Services has worked in partnership with communities in distress, providing resources to build the foundation for a more viable future. These resources include blankets, tents and food. The CWS Blankets program was created to give a kind, loving and tangible response to people who are facing difficult times. Our most vulnerable neighbors around the world can feel safe and keep warm with fresh linens and clean sleeping quarters. For example, last Fall, CWS distributed 5,824 Emergency Cleanup Buckets, 10,310 Hygiene Kits, 7,280 Blankets, 1,800 Menstrual Hygiene Kits, 650 School Kits, and 72 Welcome Backpacks to partners in Florida and North Carolina after hurricanes devastated those areas.

In 2024, our FCBIA family generously donated 51 blankets. Please join us again this year by supporting this important outreach. We will be collecting donations during the month of February, and every \$10 donation will provide a blanket to someone in need. Please be sure to write "Blankets" on the memo line if you pay by check, or in the notes section if you donate online at FBCIA.org. Thank you for your help once again.



"And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God."
— 2 CORINTHIANS 9:11

Thanks to the generosity of donors who support CWS Blankets and CWS Kits, Church World Service was able to respond swiftly to the devastation caused by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. CWS was on the ground quickly, providing essential relief supplies, including **26,436** CWS Kits and Blankets. These critical items are helping families begin the long journey of recovery.

Thank you for making this response possible.

- 10,084 emergency cleanup buckets
- 11,179 period packs
- 60,580 hygiene kits
- 17,610 school kits
- 278 welcome backpacks
- 27,275 blankets

YOUR COMPASSION IN ACTION
2024 CWS Kits & Blankets Shipping Report

Scan the QR code to see the complete shipping report.

"For many people living on the edge of poverty, they often have to choose between buying food for their family and basic hygiene items. The donations from Church World Service are an essential part of keeping families healthy."
— KAYLA DAVIS, A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

BP 20-43

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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 on Sunday is reserved for those with mobility issues and small children. You do not need a handicap placard. Please try to pull up when parking so others are also able to park there. Thank you.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IMPORTANT CHANGE OF DATE.

The Annual Meeting will be held on the 9th of February. Several of our members, including the clerk, were away on the mission trip La Romana on the 4th Sunday of January, our usual meeting date.