

# THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter

MARCH

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## A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JAMIE

Greetings Church ~

*Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in and among you?*

1 Corinthians 3:16

We live in the midst of interesting times. The national and international stages are in states of turmoil and flux; within our congregation we continue the work of making ourselves a safe and hospitable harbor for all people. Our picture directory is complete and in the hands of members. Construction of the ADA accessible, gender-neutral toilet continues; we are on target to have the project completed by Easter Sunday. During our annual meeting in February, we voted to affiliate with the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB). Each of these efforts enables us to better know one another, while making our welcome known and tangibly practical. Plans are coming together for our celebrations commemorating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Meeting House on October 11-12, 2025. Mark your calendars now! It promises to be a time to remember.

While your calendar is out, make sure to make note of events on March 22 and 23<sup>rd</sup>. In partnership with the RI State Council of Churches, we will welcome Amanda Tyler of the Baptist Joint Committee (BJC) to Rhode Island for a workshop and discussion on Christian Nationalism and how Christians can (and should) work to counter this distortion of our faith. Tyler will return to our pulpit on Sunday March 23. If you would like an advance preview of her work, check out her recent book, *How to End Christian Nationalism*.

In this moment in our nation, and in this community, we need to be clear about our welcome as the church. When those on the margins are afraid, we must be bold in declaring our firm commitment to opening our hearts and doors wider to welcome in the immigrant, the refugee, queer folks, people whose bodies function differently than others, those in the cross hairs and those with their backs against the wall.

The monument we are called to build is a living one, a monument of love with Jesus as our solid foundation. Now is not the time for fear or living small. We need to be wholehearted and monumental in our living. This is a time to build up what will endure by affirming and supporting one another.

1 Corinthians 3:16 reminds us that all of us together are the temple of God and the Spirit of God lives within and among us. God is manifest in our coming together and staying together. We live in interesting times; it is a goodtime to be a part of the church.



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**IN MEMORIAM**

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Lena Gates died Sunday morning, February 9, 2025, from pancreatic cancer at Hopehealth Hultar Hospice Center in Providence. She became a member of FBCIA nearly 79 years ago when she was baptized on Maundy Thursday evening on April 18, 1946, just one week shy of being 12 years old. During her long tenure in the church, she became one of the two first women deacons on March 26, 1972.

Lena was born in Providence on April 25, 1934, youngest of five children of Harry and Elena (Zeminkova) Rosiak, immigrants from Kiev, Russia, [now Ukraine]. Her parents were part of a Russian immigrant congregation that met in the Meeting House for a number of years, and they became members of FBCIA in 1942. Lena was the last person associated with that ethnic church. She graduated from Hope High School in 1952 and married Raymond Pate after graduation. They had a daughter, Janet (Pate) Heaton in 1953. Lena worked at various jobs, including as a cashier for the local Pinkerton Company while her husband was a helper in a bakery. After divorcing Pate in 1955, she married Noel Gates, a World War II army veteran and policeman, in 1961, and they had two daughters, Pauline Ashworth and Maurine Quinlan. But then, her husband died from brain cancer in July 1974. She spent most of her working years in customer service with various dairy distributors, including Yankee Milk, Ocean State Dairy, and many years for the H.P. Hood Dairy Company. Working at Hood, she met a widower, Arthur Marois, who became her long-time friend and companion for 38 years. He too was a veteran of World War II, having served in the Navy, and he passed away in 2017.

Lena Gates served the church in many ways for many years. She was a sponsor from our church to the Baptist Home in Newport from 1970 to 1975. As noted above, she was one of the first women deacons (1972-1975) and served two more terms (2006-2009 and 2011-2013). She also served on the Board of Missions and Evangelism from 2005 to 2008. Lena was the mainstay of the Social Committee, serving six terms (usually chair) adding up to eighteen years from 1974 through 2023. She faithfully attended of the mission committee dinners at the restaurants of immigrants and refugees and at Friday Seekers.

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## **SUNDAY FORUMS FOR MARCH**

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### **Sunday March 2**

No Forum

### **Sunday March 9**

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 March 16**

TBA

### **Sunday March 23**

TBA

### **Sunday March 30**

TBA

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## **FBCIA NEWS**

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To some merriment, Georgi & Naladi Kolishoveski had their "Great Day" introduction to the church on February 2 nd. Their deacon, Jennie Riedel introduced them to the congregation. Pastor Jamie Washam had officiated at their wedding last year.



Our Church Historian, Stanley Lemons, presented a talk on the early relationship of our church and the St. John's Masonic Lodge of Providence at the Adult Forum of the Sunday when the Lodge members came to worship with the church on February 23.



Some of the church congregation who recently went on the mission trip to La Romana in the Dominican Republic reported on their experiences. These included Heidi Toppel, Pastor Jamie Washam, Susan Lepore (seated) Jason Shealy, Will Shealy, and Richard Lepore.



On Sunday, February 23, members of the St. John's Masonic Lodge came to worship at the Meeting House, and they gave the church \$500 for the Blanket the World campaign and the Blessing Bags. Jason Shealy, Worshipful Master of the Lodge, announced the gift. Pictured with him were his daughter Ella and son David and Kenneth Clauser of the Missions Committee.



## MISSIONS AND OUTREACH NEWS



Thanks to everyone who donated so generously to the Church World Service **Blanket the World with Love** campaign. We surpassed our goal of \$1,000 and raised \$1,326 to buy 132 warm blankets for families left homeless by a disaster or individuals seeking refuge from the cold. A special thanks to St. John's Masonic Lodge for their contribution of \$250.

Starting the second Sunday of March, our focus will be the [America for Christ Offering](#). It is the American Baptist offering which is used for projects here in the US.

Among other programs, it sponsors:

1. The Children in Poverty Initiative
2. Student campus ministries
3. Refugee resettlement initiatives
4. After-school educational programs
5. Immigration concerns and advocacies



You can donate by writing a check to FBCIA with America for Christ on the memo line or by putting cash in one of the envelopes that you will find in the pews. Thank you for your generous giving.



In Rhode Island, 1 in 5 children faces hunger issues and nearly 2 in 5 households in Rhode Island are food insecure. We recently received notice from Better Lives Rhode Island that they are desperate need of food for their food pantry. Please contribute non-perishable food items. Bins are at the top of the stairs as you enter the Meeting House.

### *Youth Pride Rhode Island*

Please consider donating supplies for young people whose families may not be supporting them. You can find a complete list of needed items at <https://www.youthprideri.org>. Click on "donate" and then "donate supplies."

**The Blessing Bag Station** We continue to collect bottled water, socks, peanut butter crackers, granola bars and disinfectant wipes for our Blessing Bags to distribute to indi-

**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.



Sunday, March 16 at 12:30

Join us in the garden after the service to plant peas.

will only take a few minutes.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 26.

We will meet at 9:30 to officially open the garden.

We'll plant potatoes and cold weather crops.

--- Susan Lepore



Tuesday, March 4

5:00 – Help us Cook

6:00 – Eat

6:45 – Pancake Races

7:00 – Help us Clean-Up

\*\*If you have a recipe you'd like to share,  
bring it and the ingredients Tuesday evening.

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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

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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.*

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### 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.

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