



First Baptist Church in America

Church Profile, 2014

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Pastoral Leadership

The position of Minister of FBCIA is open following the announced retirement, effective February 28, 2014, of Dr. Dan E. Ivins. Dr. Ivins officially became the 36th minister of this church on December 1, 2006. He began first as the interim minister in February of that year, and as the pastoral search committee labored to find a new settled minister, people began to ask, "Why not Dan?" His great sense of humor and his wonderful preaching captured the hearts of everyone. He was near the end of his ministerial career, having served as the interim at another church in Rhode Island before we hired him. First Baptist Church accepted him with the knowledge that he was closing out his active pastoral ministry. He had to be talked into becoming the settled minister, and he agreed to stay at least three years. He remained with us into his eighth year and has retired at age 70.

We are now looking for our 37th minister in a line that runs back to Roger Williams in 1638. We are seeking a servant minister who relishes the opportunity to lead this ancient Baptist church which lives in the heart of Providence, which is not a neighborhood church and whose parish is the state.

Church Organization

The church staff is composed of the Minister, Associate Minister, Minister of Music, an office-manager/secretary, part-time bookkeeper, full-time sexton and, and a Sunday child-care person. The Minister of Music has been with the church for over twenty-seven years; all the rest were engaged between 1998 and 2012.

The church is governed in "New England town meeting" style. The church has quarterly business meetings, chaired by a lay moderator. The Moderator and other general officers are elected at the Annual Meeting in January, and these other officers include the Clerk, Treasurer, and two Assistant Treasurers (whose function is largely to sign checks as needed). The church is run in many respects by the elected committees, which report to the quarterly meetings and to the Executive Committee. The pastor joins in the monthly meetings of the various major committees and the Executive Committee. The pastor has day-to-day supervision of the church staff and plays a leading role in planning and programs for the church.

The Executive Committee generally meets each month and has primary oversight of the church between the quarterly meetings. The

Staff

Minister

Associate Minister

Minister of Music

Secretary

Bookkeeper

Sexton

Sunday Child Care

Provider

Committees

Deacons

Finance

Properties and Sexton

Missions

Christian Education

Social



Executive Committee is not, however, a “legislative body” but hears reports, coordinates activities, and makes recommendations to the quarterly meetings, which have the ultimate authority. The Executive Committee consists of the Minister, Associate Minister, Minister of Music, the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, three members of the church elected at-large, and the chair (or a designated representative) of the following committees:

Board of Deacons

Finance Committee

Properties & Sexton Committee

Board of Missions

Board of Christian Education

Social Committee

Other committees not on the Executive Committee include the Flower Committee, representatives to the Providence In-Town Association [PICA] and the John Clarke Retirement Center, and the Nominating Committee. Ad hoc committees are often appointed to carry out specific projects. The recent past saw a Restoration Committee, a Landscape Committee, and a 375th Anniversary Committee. A large percentage of the membership serves on the various committees.

The corporate entity of the church is the Charitable Baptist Society, created in 1774 by a charter granted by the colonial legislature of Rhode Island. This charter is one of only four or five remaining colonial charters of incorporation in Rhode Island. The Charitable Baptist Society holds all the assets (including the building, its contents, property, and endowment) of the First Baptist Church in America. Officially the Charitable Baptist Society elects a slate of general officers, but these are identical to the general officers of the church itself and the two entities meet simultaneously in quarterly meetings. The membership of the two entities is slightly different in that membership in the Charitable Baptist Society requires that one be an adult “contributor of record” in the prior year to be admitted and a continuing contributor to retain one’s membership.



Church Membership and Attendance

As of April 1, 2014, the total membership was 113 people. [The membership roll is pruned each year to erase individuals who have ceased participating. The church eliminated the “Inactive” category years ago.] Thirteen members are non-resident, and three others live in nursing homes. The active membership – those who attend services and take an active part in church activities - is between 55 and 75. Average attendance at the Sunday worship services in 2013 was 79 per Sunday. These figures include the choir, which numbers between 16 and 26 members (except during the summer months when the full choir is excused.) The congregation always has visitors, including any number of students. Although the majority of the congregation is white, one finds considerable diversity among us, including Asians, Native-Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics, and Africans. The adult Sunday forum has approximately 35 people, and the children number about 8-10. For the past several years we have had a special class for a small group of college students. In addition to Sunday activities, two spirituality groups meet each week, and the Missions Committee has a prayer service once a month on a Saturday. The choir rehearses on Thursday evenings.



The members of the church are generally “white collar” professionals, educators, and business people from diverse cultural, geographical, and theological backgrounds. For example, the pastoral search committee includes:

1. a university development officer / lawyer, from New York; United Methodist
2. a retired public librarian from Indiana; American Baptist
3. a registered nurse and theatre artist from Virginia; Southern Baptist
4. a retired elementary school teacher, United Methodist
5. a computer specialist / musician from South Carolina; Lutheran
6. a private school teacher of Spanish from Indiana; Mennonite
7. a retired college professor from the Middle West; American Baptist
8. an executive for an NGO from Ghana; Methodist



In theological terms, the congregation is quite broad, holding a wide range of theological positions. We embrace the concept of “soul liberty” which accepts that each soul must find its own path to God, and we respect each one’s efforts. It creates considerable diversity which enriches our fellowship, worship, and spiritual lives. Not since its founding in 1638 has FBCIA ever adopted a creedal statement or a

confession of faith, as we have agreed with that great Baptist forebear, Rev. John Leland, who long ago said, “Confessions of faith often check any further pursuit after truth, confine the mind to a particular way of reasoning, and give rise to frequent separations.”



Our active members commute from all over the state, approximately as follows:

Number	Miles from Church	Communities
15	Within 1 mile	Providence
27	1 - 5 miles	Providence, East Providence
17	6 – 10 miles	Johnston, Barrington, Riverside
38	10 – 36 miles	Coventry, Cumberland, E. Greenwich, Lincoln, Greenville, North Scituate, Exeter, Middletown, Portsmouth, Little Compton, Carolina, Woonsocket, N Attleboro, MA, Rehoboth, MA



The actual ages of participating members (excluding non-resident and nursing home residents), as on April 1, 2014, are:



Under 20	1
20 – 29	7
30 – 39	8
40 – 49	6
50 – 59	19
60 – 69	30
70 – 79	16
80 – 89	6
90 – 96	4
Total	97

It is notable that the membership of FBCIA is 53% female and 48% male. The membership of nearly all Protestant churches in the United States is about 67% female and 33% male.



Many members are upwardly mobile, so career moves account for an annual loss of several members. We recognize this as a “fact of life” and a challenge. We must run to stay in place. Our “alumni” frequently



tell us that they find it difficult to find a church that suits them like First Baptist. On the other hand, we have visitors and prospects nearly every Sunday. A Sunday worship service will find between five and forty or more visitors from all over the world. Annually around 3,000 visitors come to the Meeting House on Sundays and during the week. A guided tour is offered following Sunday worship, and a paid guide is available weekdays from the end of May to the middle of October. A self-guided tour is available all year, Monday through Friday from 10 to 3. In addition to English, the self-guided tour is available in German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, Chinese and Swahili.

Sundays at First Baptist

The choir arrives for a 9:30 run-through of the music for the morning, polishing the material that they practiced at their regular Thursday evening rehearsals.



In the Fellowship Hall those who come to take part in the Adult Forum (which is in the hour prior to worship), gather around the coffee table and chat before being called into session. The programs are highly varied, running from presentations by the pastor, by members, by groups and guest speakers. The topics cover Bible study, theology, Baptist history, discussions on topics of the day (such as, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, Fair Trade and Exchange), comparative religion, issues of concern to the life of the church, issues in the community (such as, children's poverty and health, sex-trafficking, political ethics, same-sex marriage). In response to the fact that one of our children is deaf, we had a series on ASL and deaf culture. Speakers invited in past years have included the mayor of Providence, the superintendent of schools of Providence, one of Rhode Island's Congressmen, the chair of the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee, the president of Brown University, the president of Andover Newton Theological School, the president of Colgate-Rochester-Crozier Divinity School, speakers on prison ministries, speakers on poverty and hunger, including a representative from the National Association for the Prevention of Starvation, several visiting American Baptist missionaries, and a couple from Wycliffe Bible Translators.



The 10:00 hour also includes a class for local college students. These classes are based on the interests of the students. They have included Bible study, Baptist traditions, spiritual growth, and the role of

music and art in religion. The college students and adults meet together for some discussions. There is also a nursery and Sunday School for children during the forum.



For the worship service, our past minister rarely wore a robe (and never a priestly stole), and the sermon was generally delivered from the high pulpit raised above a lower reading bench which is used for other parts of the service. The church is accustomed to excellent preaching by its minister and from visiting preachers. After a welcome is extended from the reading bench, all are invited to make everyone welcome, and most leave their boxed pews and flood the aisles to meet and greet folks. We have found that this activity helps to break the formality of the auditorium and has led visitors to remark on the friendliness of FBCIA. All attendees are invited to register their attendance and to record their prayer requests. These prayer requests are typed out by the church secretary and sent on Monday to the “prayer team,” approximately two dozen members, who intentionally lift those requests in their daily prayers. The team is an informal group, does not meet, and is essentially anonymous. But people often express their appreciation for the value of this quiet, but consistent, presence. A surprising number of the visitors on any given Sunday morning will have prayer requests.



The church maintains an “Inquirer’s Room” for anyone seeking membership, information, or desiring to speak about a personal or spiritual problem. After church services a deacon or one of the ministers will be in the Inquirer’s Room to meet anyone. This, along with speaking to the ministers, is the usual first step toward becoming a member of FBCIA. The second step is a meeting with the full board of deacons after which the board presents the candidate to a church business meeting for a vote of admission. Our attitude about membership is summed by our motto: “We reserve the right to accept everyone.”



The church continues to uphold the principle of “soul liberty,” but we adopted a mission statement that said, “The mission of First Baptist Church in America is to worship and serve God as revealed in Jesus Christ.” This church has never had a formal creedal statement, but we are open to all who would call themselves Christians. If the Baptists have a sacrament, it is preaching, and we are accustomed to a high standard in the delivery of that “sacrament.” We follow the example of Jesus in the ordinances of Believer’s Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. While FBCIA baptizes by immersion, we accept the practices of other



Christians and welcome members by baptism, transfer of membership, and by Christian Experience where a letter cannot be obtained.

Communion is served on the first Sunday of each month and “is open to all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.” Communion is served by the deacons to the congregation in their pews or alternatively by everyone coming forward to receive it by tincture.



The music program of the church is outstanding. The Minister of Music (who is a concert organist and pianist and a member of the church) directs four paid section leaders and a volunteer choir. The choir grew from around 14 members to 24-26 in the past year. We were honored by being invited by the General Secretary of ABCUSA to sing at the “Mission Summit” biennial in Overland Park in June 2013. A CD of the music of the church was produced in 2013 and bears the title of “God Makes a Path,” taking its title from a line in one of the poems of Roger Williams. The music played and sung at FBCIA ranges widely from classical to contemporary. Many of the choir members are active leaders in the congregation; for example, seven of the eight members of the pastoral search committee are choir members, and more than twenty positions on the various church committees are filled by choir members.



Everyone is invited to gather in the Fellowship Hall after the worship service for coffee, snacks, and conversation. It affords an opportunity to meet visitors and to catch up with each other. A guided tour of the church for visitors begins in the Manning Room, an attractive parlor room, every Sunday after services. Owing to the widely dispersed character of the constituency, many of the monthly committee meetings take place after church, and the Annual and Quarterly meetings of the church and Charitable Baptist Society are held following services as well. Another Baptist “sacrament” is eating together, and church business meetings generally follow a deli luncheon. Periodically lunch is provided for the students, and frequent cakes are eaten to mark notable events in the life of the church: birthdays, graduations, retirements, departures of members, naturalizations – any excuse for a cake and a reception.



Church Programs

In addition to the regular Sunday activities and business and committee meetings, many church members (frequently with invited guests) attend and/or take part in the following activities. These are

open to everyone, and while they are coordinated through church channels, they are not part of any formal structure.



“Friday Seekers” generally meets once a month for fellowship and discussion on subjects of interest which include Christian affairs, travel, some aspect of culture, current issues, books, movies, music, history, and so forth. It is a “pot-luck” occasion and often meets at someone’s home. The average attendance is between 15 and 25.

Growing from an occasional study group about thirteen years ago, now two small groups meet weekly to consider matters of spirituality, Bible study, and prayer. These are led by our Associate Minister who is a trained spiritual director.

From 35 to 70 meet in the Fellowship Hall for food and fellowship on a number of occasions throughout the year. Prior to most Quarterly business meetings, a deli lunch is provided. There is a long-standing tradition of an Easter breakfast, followed by an Easter egg hunt on the grounds for the children. Usually there is a Rally Day breakfast to kick off the fall Sunday school season. Traditionally, a Christmas dinner brings an appearance of Santa Claus who gives presents to the children. When New Year’s Day falls on Sunday, as it did in 2012 (and will again in 2017), it has been the practice to have a meal after morning worship featuring the traditional Amish/Mennonite New Year’s Day dinner (roast pork, mashed potatoes, apple sauce, and sauerkraut).



The Christmas Eve service is publicized and attended by several hundred people. The program is principally one of lessons and carols, climaxed by singing “Joy to the World” while everyone rings bells that they have brought to the service. The special offering taken that evening is usually distributed among several community charities, such as the Emergency Fuel Fund.

Affiliations

*American Baptist Churches
Of Rhode Island
American Baptist Churches/
USA
RI State Council of Churches
National Council of Churches
World Baptist Alliance
Baptist Joint Committee on
Religious Freedom
Providence In-Town Church
Association*

Affiliations and Outreach

The First Baptist Church in America is affiliated with the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island (ABCORI) and the American Baptist Churches/USA (ABCUSA). The church actively supports the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, the World Baptist Alliance, and the Baptist Joint Committee on Religious Liberty. Our involvement in ABCORI has been substantial as we have two past presidents in our membership along with others who



have served on the annual program committee, the board of directors of the Baptist Heritage Center, Missions Committee, Investment Committee, task force on the region's future, Standing Committee on the Ministry, Executive Minister's Relations Committee, Stewardship and Administration Committee, ABCORI appointees to the Finance Committee and the Governing Board of the Rhode Island State Council of Churches. One of our members served as a legal counsel to ABCORI for a number of years. Finally, the current Executive Minister of ABCORI is a member of this church.

FBCIA's public face includes the church sign in the front yard, an attractive website, an account on Facebook and Twitter. A new minister will probably have to continue the practice of the church's sign. It has become one of the most attractive and talked-about things in Providence. One sign went viral on Facebook and received over 700,000 hits. We regard the sign, the website, Facebook, and Twitter as part of the continuing outreach of this church.

The church is directly involved in outreach through a number of local organizations and agencies.



1. We were a founding member and continuing supporter of the **Providence In-Town Churches Association (PICA)** in the downtown Providence area, which operates a food bank, a clothing bank, special ministries to some of the low-rent high-rise apartments, etc. On the fourth Sunday of each month members bring non-perishable food for the food pantry of PICA.
2. The **South Providence Neighborhood Ministries (SPNM)** provides similar services in the South Providence neighborhood (less than two miles from our church.) They also provide an after-school program, a summer camp, conflict resolution training, and a youth leadership development program for school-age children in this largely immigrant community. One of our members is currently the president of the board of directors of SPNM. Each year a team from the church has taken part in SPNM's fund-raising spelling bee. (We won one year.)
3. **Canonicus Camp and Conference Center (CCCC)** is a Baptist facility in Exeter, RI. We provide "camperships" for our children to attend summer camps at Canonicus, and we provided camperships for twenty-five children this past





summer. The church contributed to the major building campaign which allowed them to extend year-round opportunities for retreats and conferences.

4. **The John Clarke Retirement Center** in Middletown, RI is a Baptist-affiliated facility where three of our members are residents. From time to time, members from FBCIA have served on the board or directors, and one was the treasurer.
5. FBCIA has been aiding a number of refugee families from Africa. In addition, we have substantial resources to aid members in need as well as to provide support to other local agencies and institutions that deal with immigration, poverty, and homelessness.



Our church strongly supports the four annual offerings of ABCUSA (America for Christ, etc.) and has provided some direct financial contribution to other Baptist-related institutions, such as Andover-Newton Theological School and Colgate-Rochester-Crozier Divinity School. In addition we buy blankets in the “Blankets for the World” program and buy coffee and other commodities through the Equal Exchange program. We have members who are part of the Simeon Ministry and take communion and lead worship services in various nursing homes. Eighteen took part in the “Out of the Darkness” walk, a program aimed at suicide prevention and awareness, and others pitched in with a community clean-up of the Woonasquatucket River.

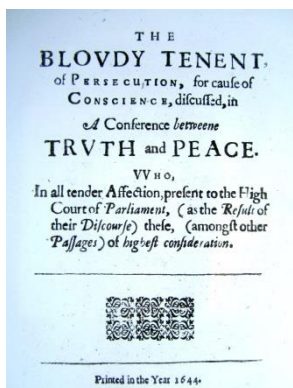


Each month we take part in Amnesty International’s “Urgent Action” letter-writing appeal. This year the Missions Committee again sponsored a successful “Roger Williams’ Attic,” a fall fair, to raise money to support our members who go on mission trips to help build a hospital at La Romana in the Dominican Republic. Groups have been going to La Romana every other year since 2000. In August 2012 six from First Baptist traveled to New Orleans to help in the clean-up of a neighborhood still suffering from the effects of Hurricane Katrina.



Church History

This congregation was gathered by Roger Williams in 1638 and has existed continuously ever since. The Massachusetts Bay magistrates ordered the banishment of Williams, but before he could be deported to England, he fled from Salem to the Narragansett Bay area. In April 1636



he founded Providence on land given to him by Canonicus and Miantonomi, chief sachems of the Narragansetts. He was joined by a number of his parishioners from his former church in Salem, and they founded a place that was to be a haven for those “distressed of conscience.” Their government had authority “only in civil things.” First, Providence and then all of Rhode Island established the first secular state in Western history. Church and state were completely separated, and everyone was to have freedom of religion.

Williams began holding worship services in his home in 1636-1637, but their beliefs were like the Separatists at Plymouth. By 1638 Williams became convinced that believer’s baptism was the only valid form of baptism. Consequently, he deputized one of his followers to baptize him, and he then baptized about twenty, thus starting the first Baptist church in America. Their church had no covenant and no creed. Within a few months, Williams resigned as pastor, having concluded that the visible church and all its institutions had become irredeemably corrupted when Christianity had been made the official religion of the Roman Empire back in the 4th century A.D. He never again affiliated with any church although he always retained a deep interest in the one church that he had founded. He regarded himself as one of God’s “Witnesses in sack cloth” until his death in 1683.



From 1639 until 1771 the church was pastored by Elders who were elected and ordained from the congregation. Although Williams had been a Calvinist, the Providence church was clearly a General Six Principle Baptist church from 1652 to 1771. It became a Regular Baptist church with the coming of Dr. James Manning. From then until the present, FBCIA has been a “mainline” Baptist church.



Most Baptists in the 17th century regarded church buildings as vain and wasteful, so the Providence church had no meetinghouse from 1638 to 1700. Finally, the 6th pastor, Pardon Tillinghast, constructed a meetinghouse on his own property. This tiny structure was replaced by a larger one in 1726. The current Meeting House was completed and dedicated in 1775 “for the Publick Worship of Almighty God; and also for holding commencement in.” Pastor James Manning was the first president of Brown University, and he wanted a commencement hall for the Baptist college in Providence. Founded in 1764, Brown continues to hold its annual commencement at the Meeting House despite the fact that the university became a secular institution in the 1930s and 1940s. The architect of the Meeting House was Joseph Brown of that notable

Rhode Island family. The architecture blended 18th century English Palladian architecture with the 17th century New England Meetinghouse style, and the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is said to be the largest wooden building in the United States surviving from the colonial era. The auditorium is 80' x 80' square and seats some 1400 people. The crystal chandelier, one of the largest in the country, was installed in 1792 and was made in Waterford, Ireland. The steeple rises 185 feet from the ground and holds a bell weighing 2500 pounds. Extensively restored in the 20th century and carefully maintained, the general condition of the building is excellent. The structure was brought into complete compliance with the Rhode Island State fire-code in 2008-2009, and the lighting in the auditorium was upgraded at the same time.



Church Facilities



The Meeting House sits on approximately one acre bounded by city streets. Parking on the church property is limited to 6-8 cars. In late 2013, the City Providence granted on-street parking by permit only on Waterman Street for our church during business hours from Monday through Friday, adding another 10-13 spaces. On Sundays and evenings street parking is permitted all around, and several adjacent private parking lots are available without charge. The church lawn, shaded with stately elm trees, is practically part of the campus of the Rhode Island School of Design as students lounge about and sit to draw and paint. (The auditorium of the Meeting House is frequently used by the students for projects, and the Fellowship Hall has been used as a space for student shows.) In 2012-2013 a landscape project enhanced the back yard with a contemplative garden and a newly planted grove of trees. A new hedge was installed round the front yard and several new trees were planted to go with the older elm trees there.



The auditorium, which is 80 x 80 feet, occupies the main level with entrances on all four sides. An effective public address system was installed in the auditorium in 1994. A balcony runs on three sides, housing the organ and choir areas. The organ was rebuilt in 2000 by the Foley-Baker Organ Company. The Minister of Music has an office in the area behind the organ, and the organ and the pianos in the auditorium are routinely used for lessons by music students. An extension added to the auditorium in 1884 contains the baptistry, the rear inside stairs, and



the back rear foyer entrances, and a handicap entrance installed in 1999. A new baptismal tank was installed in 2013, which requires only ¼ as much water as the old tank held.

The area beneath the auditorium and openings at street level on three sides, includes:

- a large Fellowship Room, used for meetings or dining
- an adjacent, well-equipped kitchen
- the “Manning Room:” a 14 x 24 foot room, used for committees, small groups, and Sunday school.
- a nursery room, a large children’s Sunday school room and children’s restroom
- offices for the Minister, the secretary, the bookkeeper, and office work room
- a room for the small church library and used for committees and small groups
- a multi-use room for the photocopier machine, for mailboxes for the committees, for an the office of the Associate Minister, for small meetings and as our “Inquirer’s Room” on Sundays for people inquiring about church membership
- a souvenir nook and extensive storage spaces.



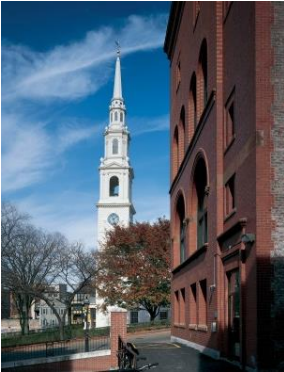
Beneath the lower level is a basement containing the boilers, sprinkler system controls and other mechanicals for the building. New boilers were installed in 2005 and new sprinkler controls in 2009.

The Neighborhood



The First Baptist Church is no longer a “neighborhood church.” Once, when nearly everyone lived within a few blocks, all of its members walked. But, the changes in downtown Providence have left the church in the middle of institutions, banks, businesses, and government. Most of our members live outside of Providence itself and drive into the city because we want to attend there. Nevertheless, the church has traditionally been prominent in the Providence community, and the pastor typically has associated with the leaders of the state, city, and academic and religious communities. It is not uncommon for the local news outlets to contact our pastor for his views on some issue of the day. The use of the church sign has drawn the attention of the community and been the cause of considerable positive comment. People now go by just to see what the sign says, and some come inside

to ask about it and speak to the pastor.



The Meeting House sits on the edge of the “East Side,” at the foot of College Hill. It is part of the College Hill Historic District and the immediate area has many expensive, well-restored 18th and 19th century houses and structures. Because we are part of a historic district, we are restricted as to what we can do to the building or the grounds. In addition, many of the surrounding institutions and entities are “stakeholders” in the situation of the meetinghouse. The East Side is home to Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design, the Rhode Island Historical Society, the Providence Athenaeum, the Roger Williams National Memorial, and the Providence Preservation Society. There are five other Baptist churches, many other Protestant and Catholic churches, and several synagogues as well as three private elementary and secondary schools. Much of the East Side escaped deterioration when the central city decayed between the 1930s and the 1960s, and some neighborhoods which did decline have been extensively gentrified. At the same time, there are various ethnic neighborhoods and shopping areas that give the East Side an unusual mix and character.



Two blocks to the north of the Meeting House is the Roger Williams National Memorial; about three blocks beyond that to the west is the State Capitol building of Rhode Island. Just a short block to the west is the Providence River where the famed “WaterFire” is presented. The downtown business district begins just two blocks to the west, and the whole of the downtown is a “walking city.” Most of the principal hotels, City Hall, the Providence Place Mall, the Civic Center, the Convention Center, the Providence Public Library, Trinity Repertory theater, and Waterplace Park are within ten to fifteen minutes walking distance. The original campus of Johnson & Wales University is in downtown Providence, just five blocks from the Meeting House.

Rhode Island



Rhode Island calls itself the “Ocean State,” which highlights one of its principal attractions, the ocean, the bay, and the miles of beaches. Newport was the “first resort” in colonial America and became the “Queen of Resorts” in the Gilded Age. The “City by the Sea” remains Rhode Island’s number one tourist destination. On the other hand, Providence became the capital city, the center of government, banking, finance, education, culture, and athletics of the state. Despite being the

second most densely populated state in the nation, 60 percent of Rhode Island is covered with forests. Nearly 20 percent of the entire acreage of the state is protected from further development by land trusts, conservation measures, and state preservation programs. No place is far from beaches or forests. In fact, tourism has become the second most important part of the new economy of Rhode Island. Linked to the conservation of the natural environment has been a powerful historic preservation movement that has resulted in a tremendous growth in historic districts and conservation of houses and buildings. Providence alone has thirty historic districts, and boasts of blocks of restored houses. The Meeting House is part of the College Hill Historic District, and Benefit Street is one of the city's premier attractions.

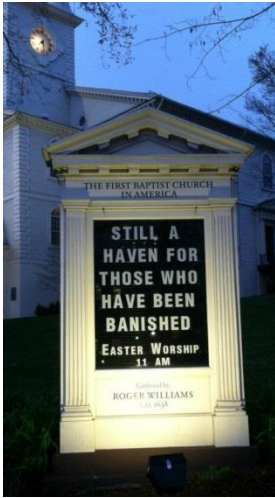


The American industrial revolution started in Rhode Island, beginning with Samuel Slater's water-powered spinning machine in December 1790. From the 1820s to the 1920s cotton and woolen textile manufacturing was the leading industry in the state. Growing along side were textile machine manufacturers and other metal-working industries. Great metal working factories developed so that by the 1890s Providence was an industrial powerhouse, boasting of its "Five Industrial Wonders of the World," the largest factories of their kind. These factories and mills attracted thousands of immigrants who made Rhode Island the nation's first urban, industrial, ethnic state, and by 1905 it was the first state to have a Roman Catholic majority. Catholics now constitute less than 50 percent of the state's population, a sharp decline from 68 percent in the 1990s. The 2010 U.S. Census counted 1,052,567 people, of whom 85.9 percent were European-America in origin, while the rest were identified as something else. Hispanics constituted the state's largest minority at 13.2 percent, and African Americans were 7.3 percent of the state's people.



Since the 1920s, Rhode Island has experienced "de-industrialization," and has developed a new economy based on biotechnology, computers and information systems, medical research and care, governmental services, tourism and recreation, banking and financial services, light manufacturing, and higher education. While the presence of the Navy was greatly reduced in the 1970s, a significant component remains in the Naval War College, Office Candidate School, and the research facilities of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center. Because of the number of institutions of higher education, Providence is said to have the highest per capita concentration of students in the country. Rhode Island School of Design sits across the street from the





Meeting House, and Brown University is one block up the hill. The “Providence Metropolitan Area” encompasses a large enough population in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts to support cultural institutions beyond what a city of 178,000 people might be expected to have. It has the Rhode Island Philharmonic, Opera Providence, the Providence Singers, Providence Civic Chorale, Festival Ballet of Providence, and Trinity Repertory Theater, a Tony-Award winning repertory company. If one needs more, Boston is one-hour to the north and New York City is four hours to the southwest.

It should be emphasized that Roger Williams created a state where church and state were separated, where religion and citizenship were unrelated. These were wildly radical ideas in his time. While his ideas and his colony were reviled and attacked in the 17th century, they became fundamental to the U.S. Constitution in 1789 and the Bill of Rights in 1791. Separation of church and state is regarded as America’s great contribution to religion, and it was first given a geographical place by Williams in Providence in 1636.

