

# The Spire

Newsletter of the First Baptist Church in America

August 2017, Volume 20, Issue 8

## *From the Pastor*

Rev. Dr. Tom Wiles, Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island, joins Rt. Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island, in this statement on the tragic events at Charlottesville.

### **Rhode Island Religious Leaders Call Christians to Prayer**

As leaders of majority-white churches in Rhode Island, we want to be clear: there is no place in Christianity, or in our country, for a belief that white people are superior or deserve preference and advantage over other people. White supremacy is sin. It rejects the teaching of the Bible and the traditions of the Church, teachings and traditions that our churches have many times failed to observe. Systems that perpetuate racial advantages for some and disadvantages for others are sinful. We must repent so that we all can be restored to a right relationship. God created us all, and because of that we are all of one family (Galatians 3:26-29). If one part of the family suffers, we are all suffering, for we are all children of the same God.

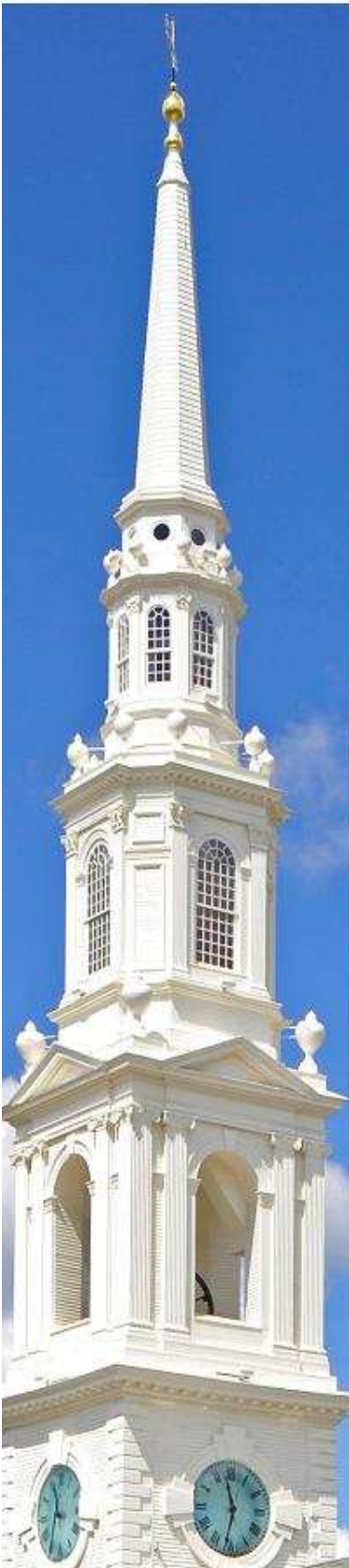
Over the weekend and the days that have followed, we have all seen the unmasking of long-hidden and often-ignored strains of racism and hatred of the other. We have seen self-professed Nazis carrying burning torches shouting slogans that we hoped had been consigned forever to history and insulting our Jewish neighbors. We have witnessed racially motivated violence, clergy peacemakers being beaten and spit upon, people being injured and killed. This is not of God. This fresh eruption of racial violence and hatred must be resisted by people of faith.

Our call to resist drives us to our knees in prayer. St. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians that we as members of the Body of Christ contend with the principalities and the powers of this world (Ephesians 6:12-13). As people of faith we have been given authority over the forces of darkness and hate, but it is an authority that is expressed by loving actions and selfless service to people who are being rejected by the powers of this world.

Our response as members of faith communities is first to be clear in our rejection of racial violence and systematic preferment, and second to pray for God to bless the work of reconciliation that can repair the damage that has been done.

We call on people around the State of Rhode Island, in Christian faith communities small and large, to join us in prayer:

“God of all the nations, who created us of one blood, and who invites us all to be part of the Beloved Community; strengthen us to work for racial reconciliation and peace in our community. Use us to be peacemakers and to help restore all to right relationship to each other and to you. Give us wisdom when we speak and courage when we must act. We ask this in the name of your Son, our crucified and risen Lord, who conquered once and for all the evil powers and principalities of this world. Amen.”



## FBCIA NEWS



Reconstruction of the north steps of the Meeting House is in progress. The poured concrete base of the steps and some of the brownstones are in place.

Construction equipment rested on Sunday and the cast iron railings await their return to the steps.



Our tenor section leader, Samuel Brunner presented the special music on Sunday, August 13, singing "Deep River" and "Every Time I Feel the Spirit."

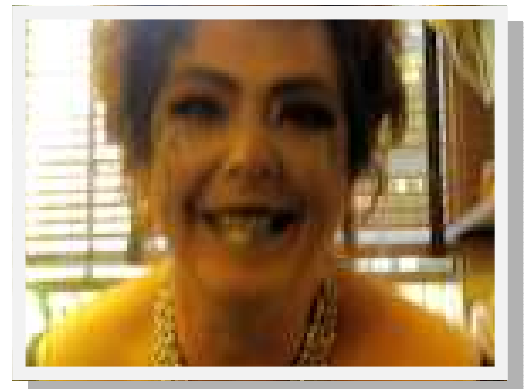
A large crowd of people attending the 2017 NecronomiCon gathered at the Meeting House for the convention's opening program. This is a biennial gathering of scholars and fans of H.P. Lovecraft who was a major figure in the founding of horror and science-fiction writing. The NecronomiCon likes to start each time at the Meeting House because Lovecraft especially loved the building, prowled in it, and even tried (unsuccessfully) to play "Yes, We Have No Bananas" on the organ.

Lovecraft's mother and grandmother were members, and he attended Sunday school here until he was expelled for being an atheist. In light of the recent events at Charlottesville, Virginia, various speakers at the convention were going to deal with the fact that H.P. Lovecraft was virulently antisemitic, believed in white supremacy, and despised the evolution of the United States in modern times. One reason that he loved the Meeting House was that it represented Colonial America before immigration brought large numbers of Catholics, Jews, and others that he held to be inferior to the British stock of Yankee New England.

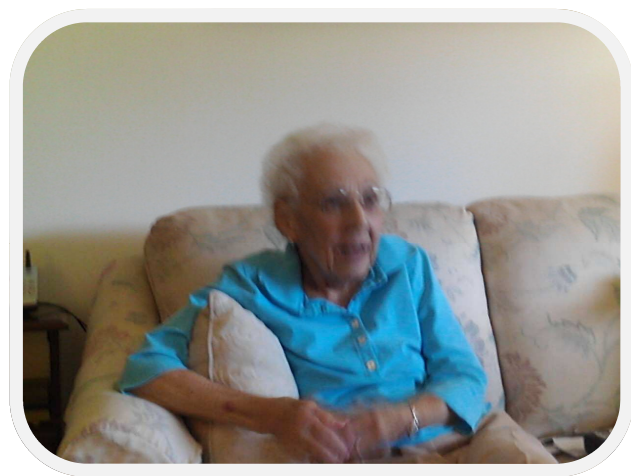


The picture of Lovecraft was taken in 1898, when he was 8 years old, about the time he was expelled from Sunday school for siding with the lions against the Christians.

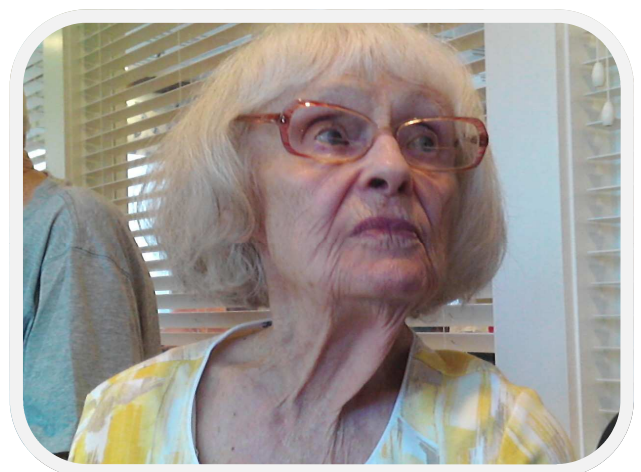
This photo of Gigi Mitchell-Velasco was taken by 7 year old Jideobi Washam Unaka. Gigi appearing as a spooky character from Lovecraft, provided the music at the NecronomiCon



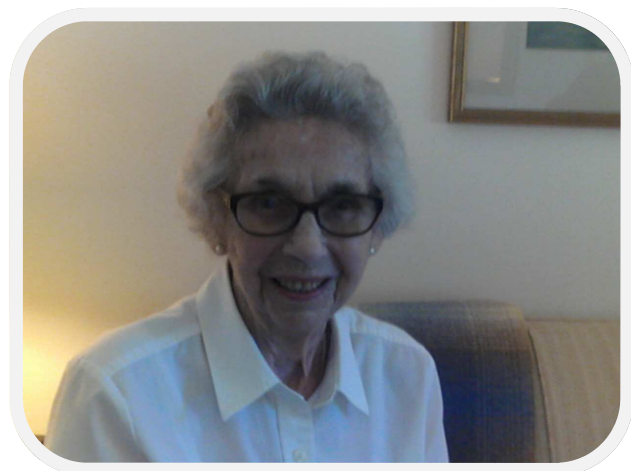
Recently, Jideobi and Pastor Jamie visited the John Clarke Retirement Community, and Jideobi brought his camera. Here are some of the portraits he took of the ladies of Middletown. Barbara Staples, Juanita Bedard, Dot White, and American Baptist friend, Clara Motter. Many will remember Clara Motter's late husband, the Reverend Eugene Motter, as the longtime Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of RI. The Motter Retreat House and Resource Center at Camp Canonicus stands as a memorial to him. Jamie and Jideobi stayed at Motter House during their week at camp, and it was exciting to see Clara, and to let her know how her husband's memory, and the generosity of her family, continue to be a blessing to Baptists in Rhode Island.



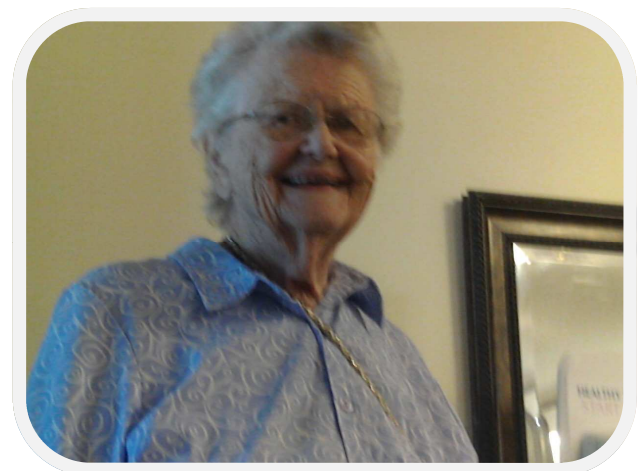
Barbara Staples



Juanita Bedard



Dot White



Clara Motter

## *Christian Education*

### **Rally Day**

Rally Day is September 10. We revert to our fall schedule with Sunday School at 10 and worship service at 11. The Christian Education committee is planning a fun morning at 10 to welcome everyone back and introduce this year's Sunday School teachers. We are adding a new class this year for high school students. They will be meeting in the Manning room. The younger children and adults will meet in their usual spaces. Then, after church there will be pizza for everyone! So please plan to come early and stay for lunch.

### **Small Groups**

The small groups will be starting up again in September. Both groups are continuing with Krista Tippett's *Becoming Wise An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*. The Wednesday group for women meets at 1:30 beginning Sept 13 and is on chapter 5. The Thursday group for both men and women meets at 6:00 beginning Sept 21 and is on chapter 4. The books can be purchased through Amazon.com. We welcome new members at any time. (The chapters stand alone). If you have any questions, please see or call Linda Bausserman

## A Service of Celebration

Please join us at 11 o'clock on Sunday, September 17 for a service of celebration in honor of Stephen Martorella's thirty years of music ministry at the First Baptist Church in America. We hope that there will be a strong gathering of past and present friends and colleagues for this joyous service. An informal reception will be held in Fellowship Hall following worship. We look forward to seeing all those who may not be able to attend the 11 o'clock service. Former choir members are welcome to rehearse at 9:30 a.m. on that Sunday in preparation for singing the morning anthem and offertory.

### RSVP

If you plan to join us, please respond to this email address. There is a road race in Providence on that Sunday and we want to send you directions to the Meeting House that will avoid closed roads.

## **GOOD NIGHT LIGHTS**

GNL is thriving with more signalers joining every week. My hope has been that this project would ultimately take on a life of its own with people joining spontaneously. Things seem to be headed that way, though I wish it were happening more quickly. Looking out from Hasbro Children's Hospital I see thousands of windows, each representing a potential signal at 8:30. I literally have dreams where hundreds of signals are seen. As my dreams go, that is by far the most attainable. You are helping make the dream come true and can help with further advocacy for GNL.

Last Wednesday night saw an amazing display that kept kids signaling well beyond the Magic Minute. The East Providence Harbormaster boats seemed to inspire pleasure craft on the Providence River to join in to the surprise and delight of kids and families at HCH. Slight timing delays or extensions of signals allow for kids to more fully take in the show. **The "GOOD NIGHT HASBRO" scrolling message at the top of 100 Westminster has become an anticipated end to the display as is the "launching" of the First Baptist Church in America spire "rocket" at 8:35.**

Efforts are being made to turn occasional building-to-building signals on the Rhode Island Hospital campus into something more regular, possibly nightly. Other Providence icons are being invited to join and there is strong interest from the Big Blue Bug ownership as well as that of the Superman Building. There's also more effort being made to get guests at Providence hotels to get in on the fun as well as residents of down-city skyscrapers.

Please do what you can to promote this project among colleagues, clients and friends. **There is no limit to how spectacular it can get and every additional light at 8:30 increases the lift on spirits of kids at HCH.** Trust that your efforts are worthwhile and that your loyalty is appreciated. I am eyewitness to the results every week.

GNL continues to garner media attention and there's an excellent chance that a national news network will be doing a story in the near future. International exposure was achieved recently when Germany's ZDF network aired a short piece covering the Magic Minute.

Thanks to all for the role you are playing in this growing tradition.

### **Steve Brosnihan**

*Resident Cartoonist, Hasbro Children's Hospital*

*The Tomorrow Fund for Children with Cancer,  
BOD*

*Conductor, Good Night Lights*

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## 2017 Sunday Calendar

- |                          |          |   |
|--------------------------|----------|---|
| <b>Sun. August 27</b>    | 10:00 AM | Worship: Pastor Jamie Washam<br>Worship Leader: Ruth Marris Macaulay<br>Greeters: Colleen and Larry Whelpley & Gilmore<br>Ushers: Joanne Schneider and Art Bone |
|                          | 11:15 AM | Tour Guide: Richard Aubin   |
| <b>Sun. September 03</b> | 10:00 AM | Communion Worship: Linda Bausserman<br>Worship Leader: Jason Shealy<br>Greeters: Janice and Richard Aubin<br>Ushers: Mark Hall and Frank Nicholson              |
|                          | 11:15 AM | Tour Guide: Stan Lemons   |
| <b>Sun. September 10</b> | 10:00 AM | Worship: Pastor Jamie Washam<br>Worship Leader: Ken Clauser<br>Greeters: Emily and Zach Martin<br>Ushers: John Mangenda and Richard Lepore                      |
|                          | 11:15 AM | Tour Guide: Joanne Schneider  |
| <b>Sun. September 17</b> | 10:00 AM | Worship Leader: Pastor Jamie Washam<br>Greeters: Holly and Michael Edwards<br>Tyler McKeon and Jideobi Washam Unaka<br>Ushers: John Mangenda and Bruce Leonard  |
|                          | 11:15 AM | Tour Guide: Elsa Grieder  |
| <b>Sun. September 24</b> | 10:00 AM | Worship: Pastor Jamie Washam<br>Greeters: Jeanne Kolb and Barry Bainton<br>Ushers: Emily and Zach Martin  |
|                          | 11:15 AM | Tour Guide: Richard Aubin   |