

THE SPIRE

Newsletter of the First Baptist Church in America

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FROM THE PASTOR

Theologian and writer Frederick Buechner (July 11, 1926 - August 15, 2022) inspired generations of faithful people through his prose and fiction. Considered a “pastor’s pastor” by many, the Presbyterian minister never held a church pastorate, but nonetheless answered his calling through his ministry of the pen. In the 1950s he studied theology at Union Seminary in New York under Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. Over the years, many of Buechner’s (pronounced BEEK-ner) meditations made their way into my sermons and thinking. He professed to find divine grace everywhere in the human experience. He exhorted people to not only make a living, but to make a life. His unorthodox religious perspectives gave others permission to similarly work out their own faith.

“Contrary to widespread religious belief,” he wrote in a 1994 essay for the NY Times, “I don’t think God goes around changing things in the sense of making bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to good people, or of giving one side victory over the other in wars, or of pushing a bill through Congress to make school prayer constitutional.”

Buechner said he believed that chance largely ruled the universe, but also that “through the chance things that happen, God opens up possibilities of redemptive human change in the inner selves, even of people who wouldn’t be caught dead believing in Him.”

When asked to sum up the body of his work, he answered simply: “Listen to your life.” Because, he suggested, if there was a God and if God were as concerned with the world and involved in it as Christianity says, then surely one of the most powerful ways God speaks to people is in what happens to them.

In his final memoir, published in 1999, musing about death, he imagines a conversation between himself and his late grandmother. Seeking insight, he asks her: “You’ve already set sail. What can you tell me about it?”

She responds that she considers it misleading to speak of people as having passed away. “It is the world that passes away.”

As we head into the autumn, and as you continue in whatever season of life you find yourself, I exhort you, in the spirit of Frederick Buechner to pay attention to your own heart. Look for grace in your everyday encounters.

As he observed in his 1983 work, *Now and Then*: “Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.”

Peace,

Pastor Jamie



Lake Adams Dam Repair Project Celebration

The Lake Adams Dam Repair Project Celebration is almost here! I hope you are planning to join the festivities at Canonicus Camp and Conference Center on August 28 as together we celebrate the successful completion of the new Lake Adams dam and bridge. This major undertaking both preserves Lake Adams and ensures the safety of downstream neighbors.

Here are the activities being planned:

2:00-3:00 p.m. – hayrides, lawn games, guided walking tours

3:00-3:30 p.m. – brief program of recognition and thanks

3:30-3:45 p.m. – learn more about the dam construction from one of its engineers

3:30-5:00 p.m. – refreshments, souvenirs, boating, lawn games, guided walking tours

Don't forget your lawn chair or blanket for seating. See the flyer below for more information. (Please note: For the safety and enjoyment of everyone, pets are not allowed.)

Looking forward to seeing you at Canonicus Camp and Conference Center on August 28.

Sincerely,
Rev. Courtney Davis Olds, PhD
Executive Minister



ROGER WILLIAMS ATTIC

To raise money for the Mission trip to the Dominican Republic, we will hold our Roger Williams Attic yard sale on Saturday, September 10. Please save gently-used household items that you no longer need. We will happily receive any household items, dishes, linens, books, etc; however we will not take clothing. We will be accepting items to donate starting Aug 24. You can also help by volunteering to organize and price items during the week and sell (and buy!) on Saturday.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Worship

Sunday, September 04 is the last Sunday for 10:00 worship.

Sunday, September 11 Fall worship will begin at 11:00 AM with an outdoor service; and final Day of Roger Williams Attic after the Service. (please see attached flyer)

Sunday, September 18 will be Rally Day. (Please see attached flyer)

Photo Directory

The last time we published a photo directory of our members and friends was in 2008. Much has changed since then! Several folks asked for an updated version. We have photos of many of you from your Great Day, but for others, we need a more current image. Stan Lemons agreed to bring his camera and snap photos on Sundays. We want you in the directory, so please put on your best smile when he approaches. Holly is updating the addresses, as well. Please contact her directly if you have moved recently. Thanks for helping us with this project.



Elsa and Jerry Grieder celebrated their 90th birthdays with an amazing party on August 13th. The couple have been married 66 years, experienced living in China as well as have traveled extensively. Congratulations, good friends.