

THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter
February, 2023

Pastoral Sabbatical

In 2022, our congregation approved a pastoral sabbatical leave policy. The Pastoral Relations Committee and Deacons affirmed my proposal to take sabbatical leave effective Sunday, March 5 – Friday, May 26, 2023. The period requested equals 12 weeks which is consistent with the time allocation granted for pastoral sabbatical leaves. As of October 2022, I accumulated seven years of full-time employment with the First Baptist Church in America. These seven years have come and gone quickly, and I continue to be energized and motivated by our church and community. Nonetheless, I am heartened by the provision for a sabbatical contained both in church personnel policy and in my initial employment agreement. The sabbatical is a much-needed opportunity to rest, renew my physical and emotional energy levels, and to restore my spiritual well-being. While the work I do is meaningful and rewarding, the persistent demands of pastoral and executive leadership, as preacher, denominational leader, academic, and justice advocate takes a toll, resulting in the need to rest, renew, and repair from time to time.

My goal during sabbatical is to remove myself from the demands of pastoral leadership to pursue a time to “scavenge, sew, and sow” through spiritual direction and improved physical health through self-care and exercise. Through a combination of short-term travel and home rumination, I intend to pilgrimage, sew, and garden.

Intended Pursuits are as Follows:

Before the sabbatical commences, I will take some vacation during the school winter break (February 19-26) to ride the train south to visit friends with Jideobi. Much of the sabbatical will be spent close to home, with brief and occasional trips, scavenging for fabric and working on quilts, doing springtime garden plotting, learning to beekeep, and shifting into another gear.

I return in advance of Brown’s commencement (May 27) and will be back in the pulpit June 4.

Request for Financial Assistance

The church included \$15,000 in the 2023 budget to accommodate coverage for pastoral care and pulpit supply during the sabbatical time. I am not requesting further financial assistance



75 North Main Street
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: 401.454.3418
Website: fbcia.org
Email: fbcia1638@gmail.com

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Leadership Plan During Sabbatical

During my absence, the Rev. Dr. Linda Bausserman will provide pastoral care, (along with the deacons and other members of the church community). There will be a rotation of preachers during the sabbatical, some returning each month, others bringing the word on one Sunday.

First Baptist has a well-managed leadership and supervisory system that are expected to perform smoothly in my absence. In the event of a pastoral emergency, Linda Bausserman as lay minister, David Coon as moderator, or Holly Edwards as church administrator can be contacted as needed on any issues, inquiries, or demands that might arise requiring a response. They will pass these along as needed during this time.

I will be delighted to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Pastor Jamie

Small Groups

Our small group book discussions have started up again after the holidays. Both groups are in the middle of books; but, anyone is welcome to join us at any time. Just let me know (linbau84@gmail.com) if you are interested and I will send you the link by email.

Wednesday 1:00-2:30, women only, book: Restoring the Kinship Worldview by Wahinkpe Topa (Four Arrows) and Darcie Narvaez This book takes excerpts of writings by indigenous peoples to which the two authors add commentary.

Thursday 5:45-6:45, men and women, book: Jonah for Normal People by Jared Byas. This is a fun and fascinating Bible Study about the Old Testament book Jonah.

Linda Bausserman

Notes from the Annual Meeting

During the budget discussion at the recent annual meeting Stan pointed out that if not for Mary Campbell's bequest supporting the maintenance of the building and grounds, we would be in serious financial straits. Another substantial bequest came from Alice Jackson and provides significant resources to help those in need and to help keep families together. Stan reminded us that the endowment largely results from such bequests and that all of us should consider including such a gift in our estate planning.

Ken supported Stan's thoughts with the admonition that all of us should have a will. A gift of a percentage of your estate is a good way to make such a gift. David pointed out that an easy way to leave money to the church is to name it as the beneficiary of a percentage of your retirement benefits at your death. This can be done with simple paperwork (or online) with the administrator of your IRA or retirement plan without the need to amend a will or trust. Our mission is largely funded through the generosity of past donors. Our gifts can ensure that the mission continues into the future.



Every 12 minutes, someone in the United States dies by suicide. Suicide is a preventable public health problem and prevention depends in large part on appropriate screening and response. The clinicians at **Bradley Hospital** designed a training program, specifically for individuals **who do not** have a background in behavioral health. "Suicide: Prevention, Screening and Response" is a 3-hour class offered to anyone in the community who may wish to learn more about suicide prevention.

Educators, public safety personnel, family members, health care workers, faith leaders, community members, in fact, anyone who interacts with children or adults will benefit.

When: Thursday, March 2, at 10 am

Where: Bradley Learning Exchange

**1 Catamore Blvd, East Providence, RI
02914**

Upon completion of this program, participants learn to administer the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale-Screen Version (C-SSRS Screener) and learn how to respond appropriately to the needs of the individual being screened based on the results. The C-SSRS Screener is an evidence-based tool, consisting of a maximum of 6 questions, designed to be used by those **without** specialized training in suicide assessment.

Participants also review current Rhode Island and national statistics on suicide, and learn risk factors, warning signs, and myths and facts. Local resources will also be presented.

Participants have the opportunity to practice using the C-SSRS Screener in a safe, supportive environment through the use of video demonstrations, case studies and role plays.

Clergy and members of the faith community are invited to register to take the course. Program is sponsored by the Gruben Charitable Foundation. There is no cost to the participant.

To register, contact Rev. Charles B. Ortman at the RI Council of Churches at cbortman@gmail.com or Rev. Gene Dyszlewski at rev.gene@icloud.com

Guest Services Associate

ABCORI is seeking a part-time guest services associate. The associate will be the primary point of contact for groups holding events at Canonicus Camp and Conference Center, which is owned and operated by American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island. The associate will be responsible for customer service and hospitality from initial inquiry, through the reservation process, during the event, and through checkout and evaluation.

For additional information, please see the attached position description. To apply for the position, visit: www.indeed.com/jobs?q=American+Baptist+Churches+of+Rhode+Island&l=Exeter%2C+RI&from=searchOnHP&vjk=81b43b323fad90a7.

You are invited to take part in a short term Discovery mission trip.

Here there are:

Be part of the team heading to The Netherlands April 17 – 25, 2023 <https://portal.internationalministries.org/global-service-opportunities/record/a073m00000sikH9AAI> Only 6 spots left.

Be part of the team traveling to Japan April 27 – May 8, 2023 <https://portal.internationalministries.org/global-service-opportunities/record/a073m00000siKOWAA2>

Be part of the team heading to Liberia May 24 – June 2, 2023 <https://portal.internationalministries.org/global-service-opportunities/record/a073m00000qxCcNAAU> Only 6 spots left.

Be part of the team heading to Stavanger in Norway July 2 – 9, 2023 to attend the Mission Summit sponsored by the European Baptist Federation. Be part of the Body of Christ sharing testimonies of what God is doing through Baptist churches and unions to spread the good news and transform lives. <https://portal.internationalministries.org/global-service-opportunities/record/a073m00000tklAKAAY>

Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil
Director Short-Term Mission
International Ministries
1003 West, 9th Avenue, Suite A
King of Prussia, PA 19406
610-768-2164 (Office)

Warm up mid winter with an inter-faith open mic night! Join with Temple Beth Shalom and other east side congregations on **Saturday, February 11 at 7:30 pm at Wildflour Bakery in Providence.**

We are looking for poets, writers, musicians, slammers--anyone who would like to share their creative wisdom with the wider Providence community in the heart of the winter. If you are interested in participating--or just simply interested in showing up--we would love to have our community present!

◇ FBCIA News



Ary A. Peralta is the new Sunday sexton for the church. Ary is a student at Johnson & Wales University, majoring in Entrepreneurship, with a focus on food and drink. He contributed some special roasted pork loin to the

New Year's Day dinner in addition to all of the other help with the dinner.



The executive minister of ABCORI, Rev. Dr. Courtney Davis Olds, our guest preacher on January 29, was engaged with Jason Shealy about "Y'all." Pastor Jamie Washam, just returned the previous night from the La Romana mission trip, was speaking to Jeanne Kolb. Waiting to greet Dr. Davis Old were Wopre Tiemo (just returned from a year of work in Japan), Rob Jarbadan, and Richard Lepore.

From Junior contributor, Jideobi Washam Unaka

Help for La Romana

On Saturday, January 7 your author went to the Lepore's home where we learned the details of the trip to the Dominican Republic. Susan Lepore and her husband Richard put together an extremely interesting slideshow with images of previous trips to La Romana. You might recognize some of the FBCIA members who are going including regulars Susan and Richard Lepore, Peter Schoonmaker, and Anne-Marie Bausserman, and the addition of a few newcomers including Reverend Jamie Washam and Tom Stevenson (husband of Karen Marshall).

If you decide to go to La Romana in 2025 you will participate in painting, constructing and tearing down buildings, counting pills, and sometimes just playing with children. You will share a bedroom with fifteen other people of your gender. Of course you mostly do whatever the people need. Remember though you are helping other people. The trip is January 22-28 and the guest pastor is Courtney Davis-Olds on the 29th.

Reverend Doctor Jamie Washam, a first time volunteer is excited for the trip saying "I am really excited to participate in this mission I have heard so much about."

The Food Channel

Welcome Ary

Ladies and gentlemen...introducing Ary! Ary is our new Sunday sexton and he is doing a fabulous job. From bonding with the children to our oldest members, Ary has been kind and helpful to everybody.

Ary has been putting in loads of effort with learning names and helping people use the chair. He is also a really good cook, with great pork at New Years to pb & j sandwiches to lemonade and iced tea. Remember readers, next time you see Ary say thank you!

Children's Update

Goodbye Amber! Good Bye!

Recently we had to say goodbye to Amber, the service dog that Larry and Colleen Whelpey have been training over the weekends at church. The children were especially sad about the goodbye for they had all grown close to the golden labrador. Amber has become a mother which is sad for us but good for her. A new dog, Morris, who just came last Sunday spent the service downstairs and stayed away from the people. We'll get more on him in later newsletters.

Meal Ministry

Calling all cooks! While we have long aimed to nourish and sustain one another in times of need, this month we roll out a new iteration of the practice. Help stock our church freezer with meals to go. Prepare and freeze single portions at home, then bring them to church to be shared with those in need. Freezer safe plastic containers with labels will be available in the fellowship hall for those interested in participating. Thanks!

Forums for February

Sunday February 5th

Sexuality & the Bible

Part 2: The New Testament

Ruth Marris-Macaulay

Sunday February 12th

God & The Gay Christian: Part 1 – video

Matthew Vines, founder of The Reformation Project (a Bible-based, Christian organization that works to promote inclusion of LGBTQ people) discusses his book *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* with Roman Catholic Father Jack McClure. Father McClure, a strong advocate for the marginalized, was fired from the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer in San Francisco in 2015 for supporting the ordination of women.

Sunday February 19th

God & The Gay Christian: Part 2 – video

Sunday February 26th

Presentation on the trip to La Romana –

Susan Lepore & Co.

We look forward to seeing you at these forums - all of which will have built-in time for questions and discussion. The more of you who wish to join the discussion the richer the conversation. If you are unable to attend and would like to receive Google slides of a presentation or links to a video please contact the church office.

***February is the month to
Blanket the World
with Love***



This month we are supporting Church World Services, who for more than 70 years has worked in partnership with communities in distress to identify needs and access 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. Please join us again by supporting this important outreach. Every \$10 donation will provide a blanket to someone in need. In 2022, our FBCIA family generously donated 139 blankets. You can write a check to FBCIA with “Blankets” on the memo line or online by indicating “Blankets” in the notes.

The First Baptist Church in America
 75 North Main Street
 Providence, RI 02903
 Phone: 401-454-3418
 E-Mail: fbcia1638@gmail.com
 Website: www.fbcia.org

Dr. Jamie Washam, Pastor
 Stephen Martorella, Minister of Music
 Holly Edwards, Administrative Assistant
 Anne Gagan, Bookkeeper
 Tony Zambarano, Sexton
 Ary Peralta, Sunday Sexton
 Mauwa Bilobi, Childcare Worker

Weekly Activities at FBCIA

Tues.	12-1	PM	Quiet prayer/meditation (auditorium)
Wed.	1:30	PM	Women’s book group (online)
Thurs.	5:45	PM	Book group (online)
	7:30	PM	Choir Rehearsal (fellowship hall)
Sun.	10:00	AM	Sunday Forum/Sunday School
	11:00	AM	Worship Service
	12:15	PM	Guided Tour

Looking for some peace and quiet?

The First Baptist Church in America

will be open

Tuesdays beginning February 7, 2023

from 12 noon until 1:00 pm

for meditation, reflection or just being.

Come and enjoy the silence.

All are welcome.

Please enter by the side door