

THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter
July 2023



The Growing Church

"Look well to the growing edge. All around us worlds are dying and new worlds are being born; all around us life is dying and life is being born. The fruit ripens on the tree, the roots are silently at work in the darkness of the earth against a time when there shall be new leaves, fresh blossoms, green fruit. Such is the growing edge. It is the extra breath from the exhausted lung, the one more thing to try when all else has failed, the upward reach of life when weariness closes in upon all endeavor. This is the basis of hope in moments of despair, the incentive to carry on when times are out of joint and men and women have lost their reason, the source of confidence when worlds crash and dreams whiten into ash. Such is the growing edge incarnate. Look well to the growing edge!"

Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman

In 1956, theologian and pastor Howard Thurman penned the above words to describe the subtle and transformative work of the human heart, comparing its breakdown and growth to the fecund conversions of the earth. At First Baptist we are experiencing growth, both figuratively and very literally. If you've not had the opportunity to check out our new raised edible beds, stop by the back garden (aka the Garden of Earthy Delights) to check them out. Feel free to join in tending and harvesting.

The inner work of growth is often less immediately perceptible, rooting deeply down in the underground recesses of our hearts, emerging as fragile shoots. However, when conditions are right, growth can be startling and rapid. Look away for a time, and when you return, what had been tentative and tender becomes prolific and lush, laden with leaf and fruit and bloom.

What are you tending, with your hands, with your heart? What is emerging within and around you? Is something about to break forth and bear fruit? What have you needed to prune or uproot in order to make room for what is to come?

I love the new edible gardens and can't wait to give directions to our church as the place that is growing. Now, we can welcome others to the place where, if you are hungry, you can come and be fed, in both body and soul. Come, and be a part of the growing church.

Peace,

Pastor Jamie

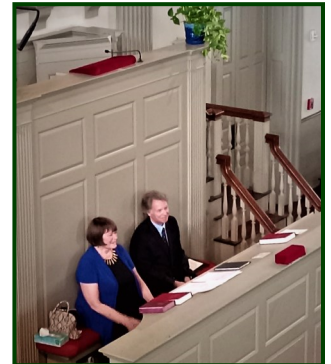
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◇ Sunday Worship



Pastor Jamie Washam is back! She returned from her sabbatical leave and led the church in the celebration of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday in June.

While Pastor Jamie was attending the biennial gathering of ABCUSA, our guest preacher was Dr. John Minahan, a long-time colleague of Ruth Marris Macaulay at Lincoln School.



Each year members of the St. John Lodge, No. 1, Providence of the Free and Accepted Masons visits a church service, and this year they came to FBCIA. One of their current leading members is Jason Shealy who planned the visit and was a worship leader on Sunday, June 11. As the baritone section leader in our choir, he sang solo parts in two anthems. After a luncheon for everyone, the lodge members had a special tour of the Meeting House.



Jason Shealy and John Paliotta shared the worship leader role in the morning worship.



Our own Kenneth Long, a member of the Rising Sun Lodge, served as an usher to honor his fellow Masons. He has had a 57-year career with the Masons, rising to be national president from 2005 to 2008 and international president from 2008 to 2011.



The members of the St. John's Lodge gathered for a group photo under the portico of the Meeting House.



After worship, the lodge hosted the congregation to a luncheon in the Fellowship Hall.

◆ Garden of Earthy Delights

The creation of the Garden of Earthy Delights is nearing its completion. On Saturday June 3, a rather raw windy day, fifteen members of the congregation came together to assemble more containers for the raised beds, hauled many wheelbarrows of dirt to fill the siloes, and planted flowers, herbs, and vegetables for our public garden. Because RISD was going to be using the Meeting House and the memorial service for Rev. Paul Schoonmaker was planned for the next afternoon, the crew cleared away the three cubic yards of soil needed to fill the raised bed containers. A few more containers will be added to complete the garden.



Steve Ashworth, Karen Marshall, and Tom Montgomery assembled the metal containers for the raised beds. Elsewhere [not pictured], David Coon, Stan Lemons, Jeanne Kolb, and Linda Bausserman also put some together.



Six of the eight containers for the raised beds were being filled with wheelbarrows of fresh soil. At the other end, others were busy planting flowers and herbs. [L to R} Richard Lepore and Linda Bausserman, Pauline & Steve Ashworth, Jeanne Kolb, Jideobi Washam,- Unaka and Karin Coon.]



Lee McDaniel and Linda Bausserman filled the last silo. Rev. Jamie Washam hauled a wheel barrow, Susan Lepore worked on a plant by the wall. David Coon and Kenneth Clauser discussed the progress, and in the background, Karin Coon continued working on plantings.

The Garden of Earthy Delights has already offered us some delicious strawberries, peppers, tomatoes and eggplants are on the way. There's also basil, dill, oregano, chocolate mint and other herbs if you need a bit for a favorite dish.

Work days will continue in July. The plan is to work on Thursday, July 6 and Saturday, July 15 from 9 am to noon. Chores will include weeding, laying soaker hose, mulching, and planting. (No wheelbarrows will be involved!) You can come for the full 3 hours or stop by for a shorter period.

If gardening is not your thing, we are also looking for recipes. We are putting recipes on the website to provide cooking ideas for those who harvest from the garden. If you have a recipe to share, send it to Susan at susanlepore@gmail.com

And every time you are at church, check out the garden and harvest anything you would like to munch on or share with someone else.



◆ Board of Missions

Thank you to all who contributed toward the baskets for Crossroads. We were able to donate a total of 12. Each basket contained some of the essentials that are needed when individuals and families are first placed into permanent housing.



Pictured here is Damaris Molina the Development Associate at Crossroads along with Pauline Ashworth, Board of Mission chairperson at FBCIA

Supporting Local Restaurants

Back by popular demand, we are organizing periodic dinners at local refugee and minority-owned restaurants. This is a great opportunity to enjoy some wonderful food and each other's company while at the same time giving back to the community! Our first dinner will be on Wednesday, July 19 at 6:00 at Aleppo Sweets, 107 Ives Street, Providence. We are open to restaurant suggestions for future dinners. We hope to see you there!

Camp Canonicus

Several very lucky children from our congregation will be attending Camp Canonicus for a week in July. We are collecting donations to ensure they have the supplies and clothing needed to have an enriching and fun-filled experience. If you would like to make a donation, you can do so online at FBCIA.org or via check. Please remember to indicate "Camp" on the donation. Thank you for your consideration.

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

◆ **Around FBCIA**



Congratulations High School Graduates!

Mauwa Bilobi graduated from Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School on March 13. Mauwa is shown with her brother Fikiri Mmandama.

Other High School graduates are: Mangy Walenga, Byaombe Umbelwa, Grace and Aaron Guiney.

Apartment or Room to Rent

One of Stephen's former students, Jina, is looking to rent a small studio apartment or a room. If you know someone you may contact her at: Jina.maksad@gmail.com.