

THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter
October 2023

Unintended Consequences, Unexpected Blessings

It seems hard to remember, but last month, temperatures soared near the 90s and even with fans and open windows, on one particular Sunday morning, the auditorium was toasty. We opened all the doors to allow any breezes to blow through. Turns out the wind was not the only thing moving that day. A number of visitors, hearing the choir and organ, entered the building. Others, passing by on the sidewalk, tiptoed up the side stairs and on into a pew. At the conclusion of the service, several mentioned hearing the music or seeing the



doors open and coming inside. Some were longtime neighbors; others were travelers or new students in town. One man said he'd always wanted to come in and this day he could see and hear what was happening, and so he wandered inside and stayed.

We began holding services outdoors during the pandemic, then continued during renovations inside the building. We received this as a gift that covid and construction offered us; we now continue to meet in the back garden for monthly services during clement weather. For many, coming into the Meeting House can be imposing; once they enter our building, they find a warm and hospitable community. However, the initial crossing of that threshold can be a barrier. Having church outside is a way of our crossing the threshold to meet our neighbors. We go to them and welcome them in from there.

The Garden of Earthy Delights is one of the ways we welcome and meet our neighbors. Our cheerful volunteers planted a crop of sunflowers earlier in the summer only to see them crushed by a car that careened through our back garden wall a few weeks later. The driver was not harmed and the flowers rebounded. While we wait on repairs, the gap offers a fine view of the blooms. (Perhaps the scenic sunflowers will slow drivers down if concrete barriers fail to do so. Hope springs eternal!)



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Unintended consequences and unexpected blessings. Looking for a refreshing breeze, we met our neighbors. A global pandemic led to a garden filled with people, song, and prayer. A broken wall made sunflower blooms more visible. What other unlooked for graces might emerge from our actions in ways we did not anticipate? As we continue to open the doors and windows – literally and figuratively – of First Baptist Church, keep seeking ways to cross our thresholds and make people welcome. Who knows what unimagined blessings await on the other side?

Pastor Jamie

◇ Around FBCIA

♥ We wish Hayley Baccaire well in her new position at RI College working in the President's office supporting strategic planning, data and fundraising. It will give her a more predictable schedule and benefits for her family. We are thankful for the time and talent she shared with us through her ministry of interpretation.

♥ We pray for comfort and peace for Allen Shinn and his family, on the passing of his father Eun Shinn on September 11th.

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!

Joint Service for Baptists on the Journey of Radical Welcome

Join us as we worship together with the congregations of Berean Baptist Church, Lime Rock Baptist Church, Phillips Memorial Baptist Church, and Tabernacle Baptist Church and find support in our own journey to be a radically welcoming and inclusive community. The service will include a joint choir, preaching by Rev. Dr. Donnie Anderson, and opportunities for table discussions with people from the other churches on topics around what it means to be radically welcoming of all our siblings.

Sunday, October 15th @ 2 p.m.
Phillips Memorial Baptist Church
565 Pontiac Ave, Cranston, RI

Garden Work Day

We'll be putting the garden to bed on Saturday, October 14 beginning at 9 am. This will include cleaning out the beds, topping off the soil and planting barley as a cover crop. As part of the cleanup, we will harvest everything that is edible, including the lemon grass which we will cut and create lemon grass wreaths. When dried, you can use them this winter to make tea. There will probably be other herbs to take home and freeze of dry.

Looking forward to seeing you in the garden.

The Sacred Muse: Celebrating “Black and Unknown Bards”

The First Baptist Church in America
75 North Main Street, Providence
Service of Worship 11 AM
Adult Forum 10 AM

Our Service on October 8, 2023 will be devoted to...
Celebrating Negro Spirituals and African-American
Contributions to Sacred Music

Situated in the context of growing calls for a racial reckoning in our time, Royalties for Negro Spirituals is a faith-based initiative that is spreading across North America. Recognizing the deep biblical connection between justice and worship, we join with other Barrington Interfaith Partners in recognizing that we have been blessed by hearing and singing Negro Spirituals for centuries, acknowledging that the original creators of this music were never compensated for their work, and in seeking to right this injustice, albeit in a small way, we ask that you consider making a “royalty” contribution into the beautiful Tzedakah* box made by our children, so that whenever a Negro Spiritual sounds during worship, we are reminded to pay this debt forward to local organizations that support musicians and artists of color.

*Tzedakah is a Hebrew word rooted in the concepts of “justice” and “righteousness.”

“Spirituals are expressions in sound of enslaved people who experienced trauma, oppression, and pain, who had no economic, social, or political power, and who were perceived as chattel. Those who were enslaved sang to express their innermost feelings and leveraged their voices to send coded messages to other enslaved people. Spirituals were thus both religious and secular.”

*—Dr. Emmet G. Price, III, Director of Africana Studies at
Berklee College of Music
and Visiting Associate Professor of Music at Harvard*

1 Corinthians 14:15 (NIV) *“So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.”*

◇ International Ministries



Rev. Toya Richards, Global Servant
Dear First Baptist Church,

My sincere thanks for your generous support of my call to full-time mission service in South Africa. There is so much work to do there, and I am grateful you are joining me and local partners as we follow God. I'll keep you posted on my programs, and welcome continued prayers. Peace!

Children and Youth Event at Camp Canonicus

Saturday October 28th 2-6 pm

Calling all young people, elementary to high school!

Join with young folks from other American Baptist Churches across Rhode Island for an afternoon of fun and adventure at Camp Canonicus.

We plan to go through the Boldrdash ropes course, then enjoy a campfire and picnic before heading homeward. Make plans to join us that day!

Contact Pastor Jamie or Susan Lepore for more information.

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SUNDAY FORUMS FOR OCTOBER

October 1st

Watch *Human Flow* **Susan Lepore** will facilitate

A 2017 documentary directed by Ai Weiwei, a director also known for *Vivos* and *The Rest*. This film takes a look at the refugee crisis on a worldwide scale. The documentary approaches the situation from a micro and macro level by focusing on specific examples of displaced people while simultaneously capturing and properly displaying the scale of the issue. The film is shot over the course of a year and shows people from over 23 countries.

October 8th

Steve Martorella & Larry Wilson will speak on the reparations initiative for singing spirituals.

October 15th

Watch *Human Flow* **Susan Lepore** will facilitate

October 22nd

Watch *Human Flow*

October 29th

Discussion on *Human Flow* led by **Ruth Marris Macaulay**

DATES TO REMEMBER IN OCTOBER

October 8th: Dedication Service celebrating Negro Spirituals and African-American contributions to Sacred Music (see page 3)

October 22nd: Quarterly Business Meeting

October 29th: 385th Anniversary and Roger Williams Family Day. We will be joined by Former pastors that served at First Baptist Church in America and pastors that were ordained in our church.