

# THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter  
December 2023

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Greetings Church ~

As we begin the season of Advent in preparation for welcoming the arrival of the infant Jesus and the full-grown Christ, our work is to make both ourselves and our world ready. What kind of place do you want to nurture for this impending arrival? What would need to happen in order for us to be truly ready? When is the time for love to be born? Are you willing to take love's risk in a world rife with hurt? This, dear ones, is the work of Christmas.

I offer this poem, penned by Madeleine L'Engle fifty Christmases ago, as a prism for your prayers and preparations.

See you on Sunday.

Peace,

Pastor Jamie

## **The Risk of Birth, Christmas 1973**

This is no time for a child to be born,  
With the earth betrayed by war and hate  
And a nova lighting the sky to war.  
That time runs out and sun burns late.

That was no time for a child to be born,  
in a land in the crushing grip of Rome:  
Honour and truth were trampled by scorn-  
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.

When is the time for love to be born?  
The inn is full on the planet earth  
And by greed and pride the sky is torn-  
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.

~ Madeleine L'Engle

### First Baptist church said goodbye to Morris, a service dog in training.

For the past year, Morris, a 1 1/2 yr old yellow Labrador retriever, has attended church with Colleen and Larry Whelpley. Morris is a service dog in training from NEADS, a nonprofit organization that provides service dogs for people with a physical disability, veterans, deaf or hard of hearing, as well as children with developmental disabilities.



Most of the NEADS puppies are raised in correctional facilities through their Prison PUP Program. NEADS dogs live with inmates in Massachusetts and Rhode Island prisons Monday through Friday, but the puppies get weekend furloughs! As Volunteer Weekend Puppy Raisers, Colleen and Larry take Morris out of prison each weekend for about a year to work on house manners, socialization, and training. These weekends in a home environment ensure that service dogs get the socialization and training in the real world that they need, like visits to the grocery store, restaurants, churches and other typical household activities.

Morris is moving on to advanced training in Massachusetts and we wish him well on his next adventure as a service dog for someone who needs him.

Thank you to everyone at FBCIA for being a welcoming place for service dogs in training and for doing your part to socialize and love on Morris. He will miss you all!



### ***Walking to Bethlehem: A Labyrinth Journey***

ABCORI's Elder Care Ministries invites people of all ages to reflect on Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem this Advent season by experiencing its new labyrinth.

Walking a labyrinth is an ancient spiritual practice used by many faith traditions for prayer and contemplation. The labyrinth represents a journey, a pilgrimage, an intentional time to seek God.

Our labyrinth will be available for individuals, families, and groups from ABCORI congregations to walk at a time they select and at a pace that is meaningful for them. There will be resources about using the labyrinth, along with several self-guided stations of activities, to help participants reflect on the walk to Bethlehem.

We invite people to drop by and use the labyrinth, which will be located in ABCORI's Meadowwood Conference Center (54 Exeter Road, Exeter), during any of the following windows of time:

5:00-7:30 p.m. on Friday, December 15

11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 16

3:00-6:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 17

1:00-3:30 p.m. on Monday, December 18

For more information, including the possibility of scheduling an alternative time for a group from your congregation to use the labyrinth, contact Rev. Kathryn Palen at (401) 522-9731 or [kpalen@abcori.org](mailto:kpalen@abcori.org).

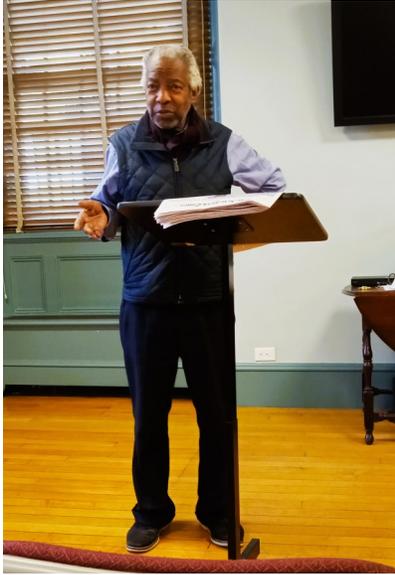
### **◇ Around FBCIA**



Kathryn Botelho from the Communities for People, an organization working with DCYF on foster care in Rhode Island, spoke to the Adult Forum about the fostering system.



On Sunday afternoon, November 5, the world renowned violinist Arturo Delmonico played to an appreciative audience in a wonderful recital with Stephen Martorella our Minister of Music.



On November 12 Ray Rickman, the director of Stages of Freedom, led a discussion in the Adult Forum on the Israel-Hamas War and told of the work of Stages of Freedom in providing swimming lessons for African American children. The drowning rate of Black children and youth is five times as high as for white children because of lack of opportunity to learn to swim.

Our guest minister on November 19 was Marlene Gil, seen here discussing the "fruits of the Spirit with David & Ella Shealy.



Rev. Marlene Gil was the guest preacher again on November 25 and conversed with Susan Lepore after the worship service.

## Rev. Bill Carter & The Presbybop Quintet



**CELEBRATE THE SEASON OF ADVENT WITH A  
“JAZZ VESPERS”**

The First Baptist Church in America  
75 North Main Street, Providence  
Saturday, December 9, 2023, 4:00 PM

“Refresh your spirit and enhance your holiday celebrations  
with this nationally acclaimed jazz group!”

**Free and open to the public**



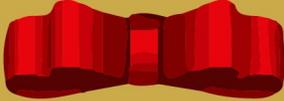
## RMMO2023: Good will come.

*“Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely,  
who conduct their affairs with justice.” — Psalm 112:5 (NIV)*

In December, we are collecting for the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering. This annual offering provides us the opportunity to show our appreciation for the service of ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses who have inspired us. Our offering makes it possible to provide emergency assistance in times of need and to send a “Thank You” check. You can write a check to FBCIA with RMMO on the memo line or go to FCBIA.org to make an online donation with RMMO in the Notes section.

This year, we are supporting the *Adopt a Family* campaign through AIDS Care Ocean State. Donations will add joy to the lives of more than 150 children this holiday season. We will be collecting donations through December 13. Please indicate World AIDS Day on your check or online donation.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.



SIMPLY SCAN THIS  
QR CODE AND MAKE  
YOUR DONATION TODAY.  
HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM  
ALL OF US AT ACOS



# ADOPT A FAMILY

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

A GIFT OF ONLY **\$50**  
WILL ENSURE THAT A FAMILY  
RIGHT HERE IN RI WILL HAVE  
FOOD, WARM CLOTHES,  
HEAT FOR THEIR HOMES  
AND A GIFT FOR EVERY CHILD  
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

2023 CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS

If you would like to have a poinsettia plant in Church  
Christmas Eve - Sunday, December 24, 2023

or

In lieu of flowers you may also donate to  
Better Lives Rhode Island

Please fill out this form and return it to the church office with  
either Flowers or BLRI in the memo line on or before,  
but no later than

Monday, December 18, 2023!

(Please Print Clearly)

IN MEMORY OF: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

GIVEN BY: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Number of Plants: \_\_\_\_\_ Cost: \$16.50 each

Please make your check payable to:

The First Baptist Church in America

Payment Must Accompany Order Form!



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

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## SUNDAY FORUMS FOR DECEMBER

An Advent Series led by Ruth Marrs Macaulay will focus on the message of each advent candle and its application in today's world.

A presentation will be followed by a discussion. I will not be there for December 24th. I will be back again on December 30th.

### **December 3rd: First Sunday of Advent**

Hoping in a World That Seems Hopeless

### **December 10th: Second Sunday of Advent**

Faith in a Climate of Challenge

### **December 17th: Third Sunday of Advent**

Maintaining a Joyful Spirit in Dark Times

### **December 24th: Fourth Sunday of Advent & Christmas Eve**

Carol Sing & Peace on Earth

### **December 31st**

New Beginnings & Old Memories

## DATES TO REMEMBER IN DECEMBER

Jazz Vespers, Saturday, December 9, 4:00 PM

Christmas Eve Worship Sunday, December 24,

7:30 PM Preludes,

8:00 PM Service of Carols and Bells