

THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter

April 2024

The following article, “In Praise of Church Musicians” by Peter W. Marty comes from the April 2024 issue of the *Christian Century* (published on March 27, 2024). At First Baptist we are blessed by a chorus of fine church musicians, led with tenderness and talent by Stephen Martorella. On behalf of our entire worshipping community, thanks to you all!

Peace,

Pastor Jamie

In praise of church musicians

Great leaders of congregational song attend to the new community formed every time a church gathers.

Much of the meaning we find in our personal lives stems from contributions by people we often neglect to thank. Individuals who impact us in untold ways inadvertently get overlooked. Some of the unsung heroes who’ve helped make me who I am are church musicians. Worship organizes my life and centers my soul in ways that you can only know by knowing me. But the music of worship is what has helped generate the particular kind of person I am.

Gifted church musicians know how to help people sing together. They’re genius at helping a congregation get “lost in wonder, love, and praise,” to borrow Charles Wesley’s words, without simply getting lost. Week in and week out, these practitioners enlarge individual worlds, send chills up spines, and remind worshipers that singing is not an external option for our lives; it’s an internal component of being fully human. This column is for all those who help congregations make music on a weekly basis but who might not often hear how much their work matters to those around them.

Every time a congregation gathers, a new community must form. Even if the assembly just met the previous week, its character has altered. Various component parts have shifted. Bodies have aged, however slightly. New joys have walked in the door. Fresh sorrows have settled into a back pew. Two tenors from the choir are missing. An elder has died. A baby gets happily passed around. A funny bulletin typo has people whispering. One of the spotlights above the pulpit is flickering annoyingly.

It’s the musicians who must pay attention to all of the nuances of this new community. They have the job of listening closely to everything that’s going on. They must assume responsibility for helping the boundaries and distinctions of this diverse group of people relax enough to become fresh solidarity. This is hard work that requires no small degree of faith, skill, and humility. But if it’s successful, a bonding of people will occur. A thickness of congregational spirit will emerge. A weight of mystery will fill up the interior dimensions of people’s lives. Those who thought they couldn’t sing, or who don’t want to sing, suddenly find themselves enveloped in lovely ways by the resonant voice of the church singing together.

Excellent church musicians—whether they play piano, lean into an organ, lead a band, compose music, or direct a choir—are theologians in their own right. They’re people convinced that the glory of God is central to honest worship and not just some Jesus-y feelings that can well up inside the bellies of hungry worshipers. They’re busy fighting for the congregation to find its voice, yearning for each and every soul to discover that singing is sacred duty. Church musicians who have given the greatest shape to my life are those who appear to delight more in getting music into my soul than just out of theirs. Yes, the talent of their hands, feet, and vocal cords may be awesome, which is beautiful. But the way they deploy their abilities determines whether the rest of us feel bigger or smaller than when we arrived.

Eugene Peterson suggests that song is the result of excess energy. “When we are normal, we talk,” says Peterson. “When we are dying, we whisper. But when there is more in us than we can contain, we sing.” The next time you find yourself in worship experiencing more joy than you can hold inside yourself, sing like your life depends on it. And then, flag down your music leader on your way out the door to let them know of your gratitude.

<https://www.christiancentury.org/first-words/praise-church-musicians>



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IN MEMORIAM



Barry Richard Bainton, aged 82, died March 11, 2024 at the Heatherwood Rehabilitation and Health Care Center in Newport. He was born in Providence on August 8, 1941, son of Walter E. & Natalie (Norton) Bainton. His paternal grandparents immigrated from England in 1888, and Barry's father was a sales representative for the Cummins Business Machine Company and then the curator of bio-medical physical facilities at Brown for seventeen years. His mother was a bookkeeper at the Providence-Washington Insurance Co. for 20 years before retiring in 1974. All of these relations were Baptists which is why Barry often referred to himself as an "ethnic Baptist." He was baptized on Maundy Thursday April 15, 1954, and his brother Wayne was baptized on Maundy Thursday March 29, 1956. Because 4th Baptist Church had a more active youth program which included many of their friends, both boys transferred his membership there: Barry in December 1956 and Wayne in April 1957.

Barry graduated from Brown University in 1963 with the B.A. in anthropology and then entered the Peace Corps and served three years in Peru. He said that his most exciting moment was when his horse slipped on a narrow trail nearly throwing him off a 400 foot cliff. Returning to the United States, he entered the University of Arizona and earned the M.A. in anthropology. In the years that he was away from Rhode Island, Barry was married for twenty years to his first wife and four more years to his second wife. He returned to the University of Arizona and received the Ph.D. in anthropology in 1979 and then earned a Masters degree in international business from the Thunderbird School of Management at Arizona State University.

After an absence of 31½ years, Barry rejoined FBCIA in July 1988. He was received by Christian Experience since no letter of transfer was available because 4th Baptist had disbanded in 1981, a casualty of the great decline in Providence's population and demographic changes. At FBCIA he would meet Jeanne Kolb, and they later were married in an out-door ceremony of May 16, 2010 at Colt State Park in Bristol, officiated by Dan Ivins. Barry taught classes at local colleges and worked as a small business consultant. He applied anthropology to help companies do business in foreign countries. Barry held various offices in the church over the years by serving two terms on the Budget & Finance Committee, being a member of the Executive Committee for three years, a deacon, member of the Missions Committee, the Nominating Committee (twice) and a delegate to ABCORI.

Our Condolences

Our condolences and love go out to Priscilla Steadman on the passing of her grandson, Frederick L. Steadman III, who died on March 21, 2024 at age 40 after several years of living with brain and lung cancer. In addition to his grandmother, parents and sister, he leaves behind a 20 yr old daughter and 14 year old son.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

◇ **Sunday Forums in April**

Sunday April 7th

Stephen Martorella

Singing the Lord's Song in a Post-Covid World

Sunday April 14th

Ruth Marris Macaulay

Immigration Part 1: A Short History of Immigration to the United States.

This is the first of two forums on immigration. The first will look at the push-pull factors that brought immigrants to the United States throughout its history and what they contributed to building the nation. Unless you are Native American, we are all immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, and bearing this in mind I hope to provide some context for the issue of immigration today in part 2.

Sunday April 21st

Ruth Marris Macaulay

Immigration Part 2: What Challenges Do We Face in the 21st Century?

Immigration is likely to be a major political football this year and it is important to examine the facts and figures related to it. We will examine what a commitment to hospitality and loving our neighbors means for us as people of faith in a world which has become increasingly hostile to and fearful about immigration.

Sunday April 28th

Ruth Marris Macaulay

Living the Lord's Prayer

We will do an interactive close reading of the Lord's Prayer and what it means for us in our 21st century lives.

◇ **Thank You**

Christian Ed sends out a BIG Thank You to all who helped make our Easter Breakfast and Easter Egg Hunt a huge success!

Our special thanks to our champion Easter Egg-hiders: Will, Andrew, Jideobi, and Kitanganu, and to Cindy Martorella who kept everyone's coffee cups full during the breakfast.

Speaking of breakfast, another special Thank You to all of you who signed up and brought in your breakfast delights. We are blessed to have so many generous contributors.

And finally - our clean up crew: Thank You, Thank You, to the Walanga brothers and Jameson and Jack Powers, who stored our decorations and helped our Sexton stack the chairs and put away the tables.

We are truly grateful!

Sincerely,

The Christian Education Committee

Dear 1st Baptist in America Church members,

Thank you so much for showering our little one with love and gifts. She will enjoy the stroller set!

We appreciate you.

The Munyampirwa Family

◇ **Frozen Meal Ministry**

Frozen meals are a success! We are in need of more to distribute. Please pick up containers and labels from the deacon's welcome table, prepare and freeze your meals, then return them to the church freezer for distribution. Thanks for being a part of this timely and fulfilling ministry.

◇ **Around FBCIA**



Ary's birthday was February 25. However we didn't have a cake for him until Sunday, March 17th when he returned from his college break.

Sunday, March 17th, was the Great Day for Eugene Folgo and Kiana Moore as they were formally introduced and welcomed as members of the church. Betsy Shealy, their deacon, introduced them, and Pastor Jamie beamed.



Susan Lepore and Pastor Jamie were delegates from our church to the Annual Gathering of AB-CORI at the Central Baptist Church of Westerly on Saturday, March 9.

Ric Wild, the Community Outreach & Volunteer manager for Crossroads Rhode Island, spoke to the Adult Forum on March 24, telling about the varied programs and plans that Crossroads has in combatting homelessness in the state.



"Just Follow the Arrows." Over the years, at least 92 vehicle crashes have occurred around the Meeting House. After another one in May 1972, a photographer took this picture. The signs had been like that since the fall of 1971.

Congratulations to Allen for becoming an uncle once again. This time to twin girls ! Prayers for his sister, Heidi, her husband and their young son. Anna 5lb 7oz and Clara 6lb 5oz were born Saturday, March 9th.





Pastor Jamie led the Taize service on Maundy Thursday, March 28 in the Fellowship Hall.



The Maundy Thursday service included partaking of the Lord's Supper. The Albert Thomas Memorial Communion cups were in the service.



The celebration of Easter began with a traditional breakfast.



The brass quintette of the US Coast Guard Academy returned again this year to accompany Stephen Martorella and the choir in the Easter service music.

◇ Garden of Earthy Delights

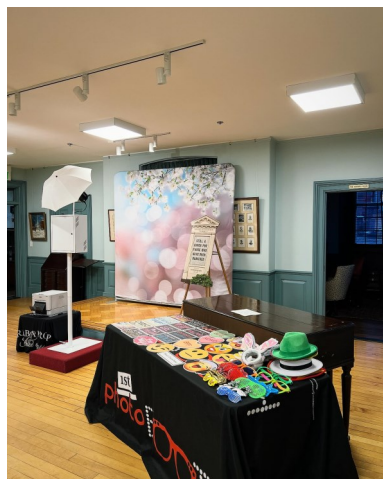
The good news is students and staff from RISD spent part of their spring break working in our garden. They removed the rest of the sod that needed to come up. They spread mulch in the new area. They built two beds. (We have two more to build.) And, they filled them with soil. Your job is now much easier!

On Sunday, March 17, we planted peas. When last I checked it looked like one might have germinated. For those who doubt, I refer you to the children's book, *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss. They will come up!

Our next work day will be Saturday, April 27 from 10:30 - noon. We will build the remaining two beds and fill them with soil. We will plant potatoes, carrots, radish, beets, kale, and spinach. The rest of the vegetables will be planted at our May work day on Saturday, May 18. We will also be scheduling a paint day for our youth. We have Adirondack chairs that need to be painted and then assembled.



Thanks to Jade, Sandy, Julia, Chelsea, Becky for moving sod assembling two more raised flower beds and spreading mulch and soil!



Thanks to 1stphotobooth for providing the great set up and photos for Easter!



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 Holly Edwards, Administrative Assistant
 Anne Gagan, Bookkeeper
 Tony Zambarano, Sexton
 Ary Peralta, Sunday Sexton
 Victoria Pfanstiehl, ASL Interpreter

APRIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Saturday, April 20th Garden of Earthy Delights work morning

Sunday, April 21st Outdoor Service in the back Garden (weather permitting). Bring your blanket or folding chair and join us for church al fresco!

Little Free Library dedication . Grace Guiney, the designer and builder of First Baptist's Little Free Library along with her family will be present for the dedication of our Little Free Library.

Sunday, April 28th Churchwide Hymn sing Sunday service April 28th

Our business meeting this quarter falls near Earth Day. In the spirit of sustainability and deliciousness, we encourage you to bring a vegetarian dish to share for the potluck that day.

Updated Statement of Welcome

After church on March 10th, interested persons gathered to discuss our updated statement of welcome approved by the Deacons. Those who stayed for the discussion expressed their affirmation of and need for the update so that it better reflects our lived practice at First Baptist. Enthusiasm sparked around the circle as people imagined ways for our church to further live into the welcome the statement articulates. A friendly revision to the last sentence was accepted and incorporated. (See below.) The congregation will vote on affirming the statement at the April 28th quarterly business meeting after church.

Roger Williams gathered the First Baptist Church in America in 1638 on the bedrock of religious liberty, with its principles of soul freedom and the separation of church and state. Together, we continue our ministry of welcome and liberation.

This congregation honors its Baptist heritage. Many of our members are lifelong Baptists and others come from varied denominational and religious backgrounds. We welcome all people of every age, race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, cultural background, socio-economic status, mental or physical ability, marital status, and any other distinctions of society. We are diverse people united in Christ. We remain a safe harbor.