

THE SPIRE

First Baptist Church in America Newsletter
September

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JAMIE

Poet Andrea Gibson recently died of cancer at age 50. She left a powerful body of work in her life and poetry. Although all our days are numbered, some of us live with more or less awareness of this truth. Receive her poem as a challenge to recalibrate your living.

Peace,

Pastor Jamie

A New Kind of Bucket List, Andrea Gibson (1975-2025)

Throughout my life I've heard friends talk about their bucket lists. They want to kitesurf in Peru. Bungee Jump in Bali. Have coffee with Dolly Parton in a roadside diner in Tennessee. All of which sound amazing. But my personal bucket list has always been a bit different. For many years now my biggest dreams haven't required passports or parachutes. As much as I love traversing the world outside, healing my inner world has been most of what I've longed to do in this life. So today, sweet community, I share my bucket list.

- To see through the lens of my spirit, and not the bruised and clouded eyes of my wounds.
- To wear my heart on my sleeve, and never grow out of that shirt.
- To stand guard over my own attention.
- To understand how much my attention is worth, and to only let it be bought by the silver in my love's hair, the gold of an Aspen tree in autumn.
- To grieve the way nature grieves. To weep like the first rain of Spring.
- To communicate with the dead *before* they die. To listen for the spirit beneath everybody's mind.
- To think like an inventor. To refuse to be a product of a thought assembly line.
- To sense with senses the world taught us do not exist.
- To know what lives at the root of my fear. To weed that garden until only truth blooms.



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From the Pastor (continued from Page 1)

- To reckon with my trauma until it is a poem no longer written in blood.
- To know shame can't live in the light, and let the light fall wherever I am hiding.
- To dance like everyone's watching but so what.
- To channel a mother's forgiveness.

- To see people as a mystery, especially those I know best.
- To be what Mary Oliver called *a bride married to amazement*, and to not file for divorce from amazement when my life is hard.
- To know exactly what parts of me are comforted by other people's approval and comfort those parts myself instead.
- To love my body as if it were my soul's silhouette.
- To break the vows I have made to my suffering.
- To interrupt my judgments, criticisms, blames knowing they are almost always trying to distract me from my own pain.
- To have a heart so warm it could heat the homes of my haters.
- To have a spirit so strong I own every instance I am the hater, the bully, the tongue sharp as a broken mirror.
- To be good to people without investment in being seen as a *good person*.
- To be guided by giving instead of getting.
- To live in a bungalow of kindness.
- To bend over backwards in yoga class only - To not shapeshift to fit the expectations of society that is yet to see all the ways it is sick.
- To know every leaf, every river, every sunrise is a child saying, "Watch me! Watch me! Watch me!"
- To repeatedly meet the euphoria of being thankful in moments I am told gratitude is impossible.
- To sweat through my shirt with nervousness in public and love myself *more* for it.
- To put my foot in my mouth and keep smiling.
- To deny no part of my life the word "life"—even what feels like life's antithesis.
- To live like I'm kissing the universe on her temple.
- To make sure everyone I love knows how much I love them.

FBCIA NEWS



Samuel Brunner, the choir's tenor section leader, provided the special music on Sunday, August 3. He play the spiritual, "Deep River" with his own arrangement of the tune.

August 4 was Jeanne Kolb's last Sunday with us as she prepared to move that week to Nashville, Tennessee to be near her children. She received a farewell blessing from Pastor Jamie Washam at the close of the morning worship



A reception for Jeanne and special cake baked by Betsy Shealy for the occasion followed in the Fellowship Hall. Ary Peralta cut the special cake

FBCIA NEWS



Eight of the eleven youth going from our church to Baptist Camp Wightman in Connecticut were present to receive a blessing and sendoff by Pastor Jamie Washam on August 10th.



Lee McDaniel is departing for California to enter seminary, so he was given a farewell blessing from Pastor Jamie



He was honored by a reception in the Fellowship Hall after the morning worship service.

FBCIA NEWS



Mike Burch, who was the Director of Christian Education at FBCIA from April 2002 to June 2007, was the guest preacher at the out-door service on August 17th. He is now the director of "The Crossing," an interfaith program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison...



On Tuesday evening August 19th at 6:00 PM a group of 16 met at Den Den on Benefit Street for the monthly mission dinner that helps support immigrant businesses.





Stan Lemons paints the sixth Adirondack chair for the church yard.

Our church hung out the Welcome Sign to arriving RISD students on August 26 and 27.



The guest preacher on August 31 was Wesley A. Johnson, II, from Palmer Theological Seminary and Eastern University. His wife, Dionne Heron-Johnson preceded his message by singing "Praise the Lord."

Jason Shealy, baritone section leader in our choir, sang "Grace Full," accompanied by Stephen Martorella, Minister of Music.



Missions and Outreach



Thanks to everyone who contributed to sending our young people to camp at Camp Wightman. Your generosity is much appreciated.



Thanks also for donating clothes to the Amos House job interview project. We had many donations of women's clothing but could use more men's donations - especially shirts, polos and shoes. Thanks in advance for participating in this important outreach program.



Join us for our monthly dinner at a restaurant owned by immigrants. On **Tuesday, September 16th at 6 pm**, we will meet at **Tuxpan Taqueria**, 355 Broad Street in Central Falls. There is a sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall.



In September, we continue to collect non-perishable food items for the Better Lives Rhode Island Food Pantry. Bins are at the top of the stairs as you enter the Meeting House. As Pastor Jamie reminded us, every small step makes a difference. The need is great; so please, consider donating.



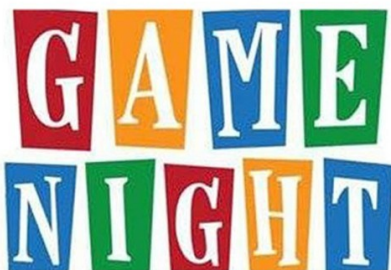
Blessing Bags

We also are collecting bottled water, socks, peanut butter crackers, granola bars and disinfectant wipes for our Blessing Bags to distribute to individuals in need. You can leave these items in the bins in the Fellowship Hall. And please, take bags to distribute.



At the beginning of the school year, we are collecting school supplies for Youth Pride: pencils, pens, highlighters, notebooks, binders, folders, backpacks, art supplies - anything that a student would need for the coming year. You can donate these in the Fellowship Hall.

Missions and Outreach



Our next Game Night will be on Friday, September 19th at the home of Susan and Richard Lepore. If you have an outdoor game you would like to bring, please do.

Announcements

City of Providence Road Races

The IGT Downtown 5K Road Race will take place through the historic streets of Providence with live music next Sunday, September 14th. When I find out more information, I will pass it along.

Sing a New Song Unto The Lord

If singing is your passion you are welcome to join our small band of singing disciples. Rehearsals are Thursday evenings at 7:30 with a Sunday morning warm up at 9:30. We would love to have you join our joyful noise!

Please join us for Rally Day in Fellowship Hall!

In lieu of starting off with our traditional Sunday School format, the Christian Education Committee cordially invites you to attend our first all church session with an introduction to ASL. Our interpreter, Victoria Pfanstiehl, will start us off with how ASL interpreters work and train, followed by insights from Betsy and Andrew Shealy.

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Book Groups

The Wednesday book group is starting September 10, and we are reading "How to End Christian Nationalism" by Amanda Tyler.

The Thursday book group is starting September 11, and we will be reading "Evolution of the Word" by Marcus Borg.

Please contact the church office if you are interested in joining either of the groups.

Little Free Library

Our Little Free Library is always in need of more books. If you have some to share, please place them in the little library directly (and do some browsing while there!) or leave them in the office for distribution over time. Thanks!

Celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the Meetinghouse of The First Baptist Church in America



SATURDAY OCTOBER 11 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM

SUNDAY OCTOBER 12 11:00 AM

The First Baptist Church in America
75 North Main Street, Providence

Speakers: John McNiff as Roger Williams
C. Morgan Grefe, J Stanley Lemons
Lorén Spears, Charlotte Carrington-Farmer

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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
Victoria Pfanstiehl, ASL Interpreter
Ashley Muchiri, Nursery Room Assistant

Statement of Welcome

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.

Driveway Parking

A gentle reminder that parking in the church driveway on Sunday is reserved for those with mobility issues and small children. You do not need a handicap placard. Please try to pull up when parking so others are also able to park there. Thank you.
