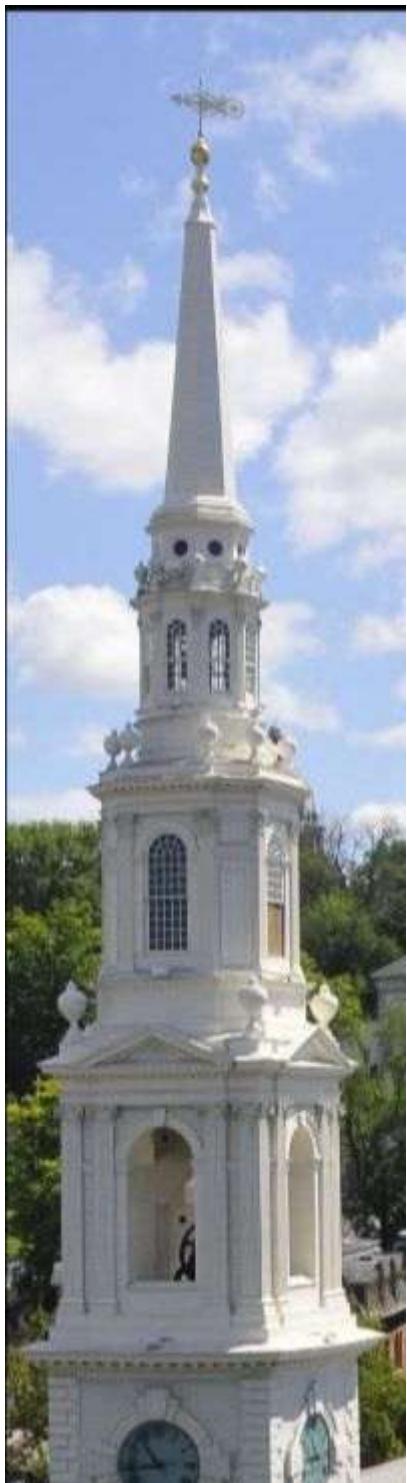


THE SPIRE

Newsletter of the

First Baptist Church in America



A Message from Pastor Jamie

January 2026

At the start of the year, many of us resolve to overhaul ourselves in epic ways, but what if our aims were more modest? If we are honest, many extravagant resolutions overwhelm us and then fall by the wayside. (Reality check: Do you remember your 2025 resolution?) To that end, I propose small steps and incremental shifts. Write down what you accomplish and place it in jar to remind yourself that you are able to achieve what you intend. In that spirit, I offer you the poem, "Small Kindnesses," by Danusha Laméris. In a time that seems fraught with incivility and tragedy, perhaps these small, but not minor, kindnesses could be a meaningful and manageable way forward.

Peace,

Pastor Jamie

"Small Kindnesses," Danusha Laméris

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk
down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs
to let you by. Or how strangers still say "bless you"
when someone sneezes, a leftover
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.
And sometimes, when you spill lemons
from your grocery bag, someone else will help you
pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other.
We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot,
and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile
at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress
to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder,
and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.
We have so little of each other, now. So far
from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange.
What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these
fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here,
have my seat," "Go ahead—you first," "I like your hat."

Sunday Morning Forum
10:00 AM - Every Sunday

Jan. 11: "My Volunteer Work" - Karen Bell (Youth Pride RI, blessing bags); Heidi Toppel (The Women's Project)

Jan. 18 - "Sharing Our Stories" - Vincent Tiemo, Sharon Gendron-Petroff

Jan. 25 - "Theologian Walter Rauschenbusch" - Janet Davies, Steven Seay

Birthday's in January

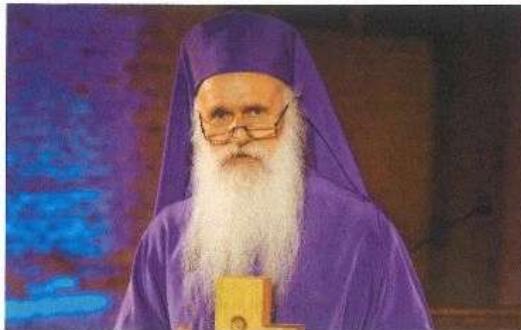
January 9, Jarbadan, Rob
January 9, Naledi Kolishovska
January 16, Riedel, Jennifer
January 18, Shealy, Betsy
January 21, Adodoadjji, Ahuma
January 24, Lepore, Richard
January 26, Shealy, Jason

Up Coming Events

Camp Wightman
2026 SNOWBALL SLEEPOVER Traditional Camp Reunion
January 30 - February 1, 2026

Drop -off is between 6-7 pm on Friday, and pickup is after lunch around 2 pm on Sunday.

all meals on Saturday and Sunday are included. Cost is \$100.00



(Credit: IG@jedcraigconsidering)

A conversation with Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili

**Bishop of Georgia's Evangelical Baptist Church
Leader of the Peace Project**

In Tbilisi, Georgia, a radical experiment in interfaith relations is taking place. The Peace Project is one of the world's first to bring a mosque, synagogue, church, and other places of worship together under one roof. Sounds of Muslim prayer, Shabbat services, and Georgian hymns fill the air as worshippers from different faiths mingle and break bread in the communal Hall of Abraham.

**Saturday, January 31 at 4:30
Followed by a Soup Dinner at 6:00**

You are invited to join us as we learn more about the Peace Project in Georgia and think about how we can promote interfaith peace in our neighborhood.

Learn more about the [Peace Cathedral](#)

Please sign up in Fellowship Hall and indicate if you will bring soup, bread, or dessert.

Missions and Outreach



During the winter months, we are collecting hats, gloves and scarves for individuals in our community who need them in the cold weather. These may be given to people in our church family, used in Blessing Bags or sent to Crossroads. Please consider donating to help our neighbors stay warm. You may bring these items to the Fellowship Hall.



Our next game event will be held on Saturday, January 10 at noon in the Fellowship Hall at church. It will be a potluck; so, please bring a dish to share. And bring your favorite board game to play.



In Rhode Island, child food insecurity is a significant issue, with recent data indicating roughly **1 in 7 children** face hunger, impacting around **30,000 young people in our state**. We continue to do our part by contributing non-perishable food items for the Better Lives Rhode Island Food Pantry. Bins are located at the top of the stairs as you enter the Meeting House. The need is great; so please, consider donating.



Blessing Bags

We distribute our Blessing Bags to individuals in need. These bags include peanut butter crackers, granola bars, bottled water, sanitary wipes, socks and a list of available resources. You can donate these items in the bins in the

Fellowship Hall. And please, take bags to distribute.



We are also collecting supplies for Youth Pride Rhode Island. Youth Pride hosts a community pantry that serves over 700 youth each year. The pantry is open during the week for young people in need of food, clothes, toiletries, and/or school supplies. These items are free for them on a weekly basis. You can donate these in the Fellowship Hall.

FBCIA NEWS

On December 3, we bid farewell to Mauwa, who stayed behind to finish her CNA studies here in RI while her family relocated to Dayton, OH last year.

Now that she is all done, a few of us joined her in a farewell coffee break before she heads home to join her family.

Godspeed Mauwa!



Peter Schoonmaker, our chair of P&S, maintained pressure on the fence repair company until they finally got around to fixing the back fence which was seriously damaged by a car back in July 2023. He and others had tried for two years to get the City of Providence to fix the portion of the fence for which they were responsible. The City refused, so he went ahead and found a company that made fences like the one that was destroyed and after much delay on their

part the job was done on December 17th. That being done, there was a place to hang the banner announcing the Christmas Eve service.



Trenton Vasconcelos, the new Sunday sexton, began his service on Sunday, December 21, 2025. Currently, he is attending CCRI in Lincoln. When you see Trenton on Sunday, please welcome him and introduce yourself,



On December 14, the Saturday Mass Shooting at Brown University, Pastor Jamie delivered a moving prayer that spoke to the tragic events at Brown and the on-going conflicts in so many places in the world.



A BIG thank you to all of you who made our Christmas Breakfast a wonderful success!

Sincerely,
The Christian Education and Social Committees



It was a full day at church on Sunday, December 21. It began with the annual Christmas breakfast before the church service.



While Jason Shealy read the scripture passage, the rest of the family, Andrew, Will, Betsy, Eleanor and David, lit the Advent candle.



Samuel Hall, the oldest (96) and presently the longest standing member of the church (65 years), was able to be at worship.



Olivier Mbabazi, a student at Rhode Island School of Design, was baptized.



Finally, Safi Hussani, the daughter of Bertha Walenga received the church's blessing in the company of her mother, grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins.



The Christmas Eve service featured music, the reading of the Christmas story from the Bible, lighting the Advent candles, a sermon by Pastor Jamie Washam, and the joyous ringing of the bells to accompany "Joy to the World." About one hundred people were there, and afterwards a free will collection was taken for support of Better Lives Rhode Island.

Stephen Martorella, aided by his page-turner Jideobi Washam Unaka, began the evening with a half hour of organ selections.



Anna Coon read a portion of the Christmas account and church moderator David Coon lighted the third of the five Advent candles.



Pastor Jamie preached a passionate message about hope and responsibility.



Rev. Sheila A. Singleton-Charron was the guest preacher on the last Sunday of December 2025, filling in for Pastor Jamie Washam who had gone to visit her parents in Texas. Dr. Sheila is greeting Linda Bausserman.



Announcements

Snow Closing

When there is a parking ban in the city of Providence due to inclement weather, church services and other activities held at the church will be cancelled until the parking ban is lifted. Please tune in to your local television and radio stations.

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!

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.

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.

The First Baptist Church in America

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