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THE SPIRE

Newsletter of the First Baptist Church in America

A Message from Pastor Jamie

The year is new and yet it already feels long, given the onslaught of painful and daily newscasts. Not only cold and busy, the short days of 2026 continue to challenge our morality, and our sense of self and nation. Some question if we are who we have believed ourselves to be. We are worn thin by all we cannot easily repair and overwhelmed by the formidable nature of the multiple crises confronting us.

Poet and funeral director Thomas Lynch penned this poem in response to the disaster caused by Hurricane Katrina, first published on NPR.org. May his recommendation to look to and for local heroes serve as a way forward in these short days and long nights.

Peace,

Pastor Jamie

“Local Heroes”

Thomas Lynch

Some days the worst that can happen happens.

The sky falls or weather overwhelms or



The world as we have come to know it turns
Towards the eventual apocalypse
Long prefigured in all the holy books —
The end times of floods and conflagrations
That bring us to the edge of our oblivions.
Still, maybe this is not the end at all,
Nor even the beginning of the end.
Rather, one more in a long list of sorrows,
To be added to the ones thus far endured,
Through what we have come to call our history:
Another in that bitter litany
That we will, if we survive it, have survived.
Lord, send us in our peril, local heroes,
Someone to listen, someone to watch,
Some one to search and wait and keep the careful count
Of the dead and missing, the dead and gone
But not forgotten. Sometimes all that can be done
Is to salvage one sadness from the mass of sadnesses,
To bear one body home, to lay the dead out
Among their people, organize the flowers
And casseroles, write the obits, meet the mourners at the door,
Drive the dark procession down through town
Toll the bell, dig the hole, tend the pyre.
It's what we do. The daylong news is dire —
Full of true believers and politicians
Old talk of race and blame and photo ops.
But here brave men and women pick the pieces up.
They serve the living tending to the dead.
They bring them home, the missing and adrift,

They give them back to let them go again.

Like politics, all funerals are local.

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Sunday Morning Forums in February 10:00 every Sunday

2/1: Lectio Divina - Linda Bausserman

2/8: The Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Community - Shealys

2/15: Discussion of the "Peace Cathedral" video and
the visit of Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili - Susan Lepore

2/22: Community Church of Providence Warming Center - Harrison Tuttle

February Birthdays

February 6, Gary Penfield

February 7, Anne Gagan (Bookkeeper)

February 8, Pauline Ashworth

February 8, Betsy Beach

February 13, Lawrence Wilson, III

February 15 Lee McDaniel

February 24, Linda Wiles





SHROVE TUESDAY

PANCAKE SUPPER

Tuesday, February 17

5:00 – Help us Cook

6:00 – Eat

6:45 – Pancake Races

7:00 – Help us Clean-Up

****If you have a recipe you'd like to share, bring it and the ingredients Tuesday evening.**

First Baptist Church in America
Providence, RI

75 North Main Street,

FBCIA NEWS



Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri was the guest preacher on Sunday January 18. She is the director of Intercultural Ministries for the American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

Sammuel Brunner, tenor soloist and section leader of the choir, presented the special music for the worship service on January 18th.



From Missions and Outreach

In February, let's Blanket the World with Love



For over 70 years, **Church World Service** has provided aid to individuals suffering during disasters. These resources include blankets, tents and food. Our church is one of 8,000 congregations across the United States that will sponsor a Blanket Month, providing funds to help people in need around the world. **\$50** can provide five warm blankets for a family left homeless by a tornado or another disaster. **\$110** can provide an emergency food package for a family of five for one month. Each heart on our blanket = a \$10 contribution = 1 blanket. Our goal is to see 100 hearts on the blanket in the Meeting House by the end of February. Please join us by contributing generously to support this important outreach sponsored by the Missions Committee.



During the winter, 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.



In Rhode Island, food insecurity continues to be a significant issue **with approximately 38% of families facing hunger statewide. During the cold weather, Rhode Island food pantries need staples like canned tuna, beans, pasta, sauces, cereal, rice, peanut butter, and soup.** 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.



The luncheon prior to our Annual Meeting will be catered, in part, by More Than a Meal, the catering service of Amos House. Since 1976, Amos House has been serving the homeless, the unemployed and those living in poverty in Rhode Island. More than a Meal is a catering service staffed and run by the graduates of the Amos House Culinary Arts Training Program. So please, on Sunday February 8th, contribute generously to help support the great work that Amos House does.

Announcements

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the First Baptist Church in America and the Charitable Baptist Society will be held on Sunday, February 8th after the worship service at 12:15 pm in fellowship hall. A luncheon catered by More Than a Meal will be served prior to the meeting.

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.

Staff

Pastor:	Rev. Dr. Jamie P. Washam
Minister of Music:	Stephen T. Martorella
Administrative Assistant:	Holly B. Edwards
Bookkeeper:	Anne Gagan
Sexton:	Tony Zambarano
Sunday Sexton:	Trenton Vasconcelos
Nursery Care Worker:	Ashley Muchiere
Sunday School Teachers:	Jayonna Harris Mangye Walanga

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