

# Phillips Memorial Baptist Church

March 2021



Dear Friends,

I am continuing with the articles on Baptist identity I started in February. This month the principle I am writing on is Liberty of Conscience.

Some people would say that liberty of conscience as a faith construct had its roots in America, often ascribing Roger Williams with first instituting this distinct belief. But those people would be wrong because its roots go back to the Old Testament when Daniel, when given the choice between the lion's den or giving up worshipping God and praying to King Darius, chose the lion's den. Moving to the New Testament, in the Book of Acts, when the disciples were arrested and put in prison for preaching about having faith in Jesus, the disciples responded, "We must obey God rather than any human authority."

Certainly, Roger Williams and John Clarke were early proponents of the principle of liberty of conscience, but they were not alone, nor were they the earliest. John Smyth and Thomas Helwys were two pastors who preached liberty of conscience in the earliest of Baptist life in England. Helwys died in prison because King James I would not tolerate such liberty.

Freedom of conscience was met with persecution whenever it was preached. Roger Williams was banished from Massachusetts and John Clarke was imprisoned in that state for preaching and their commitment to freedom.

So, what is liberty of conscience? Simply put, every individual is responsible only to God in matters of faith - not to the state, not to the church, not to creedal statements, not to pastors, not to denominational leaders, not even to one another. True faith is voluntary.

Any person, anywhere, anytime, can choose the spiritual direction the individual's life will take. God expects no less. We worship as we please, study the Bible on our own terms, and because of liberty of conscience we are

expected to also defend the religious liberty and human rights of all people. We do this today in the United States through the Baptist Joint Committee, a Baptist funded lobby in Washington D.C. which has as its sole mission defending liberty of conscience.

Many factors can work against liberty of conscience: apathy, misuses of authority, violations of the priesthood of all believers, and others. But the two greatest dangers are persecution and creedalism.

You may believe that persecution is a thing of the past, but banishments among Baptists continue in our country when individuals, pastors, or churches exercise their consciences.

Around the world Christians face imprisonment, beating, and death because of their liberty of conscience. During the last decade our American Baptist Churches have been joined by Baptists from Myanmar (formerly Burma) who fled their country because of religious and ethnic persecution.

Creedalism raises its head when church leaders mandate that church members ascribe to a specific set of beliefs to be in fellowship. Creedalism creeps into church life when pastors or denominational leaders seek to force their views on the agenda of other people's lives through rigidly applied statements of faith. While it may be thought important to make public declarations of faith it is important that such statements leave room for individuals to hold disparate personal beliefs.

Our history of liberty urges three things: declarations of Christ as Lord, approach life with an open Bible and an open mind, and choosing liberty of conscience.

*Note: This article contains information from, "The Baptist Style for a New Century," jointly published by the Baptist History and Heritage Society and the William H. Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society.*

Respectfully yours,

*Rev. Alan G. Newton*  
Transitional Pastor

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## Join Us for On-line Worship Sundays at 10:00 am

**Remember services are held every week on Zoom.** Click "Join the Meeting!" below.

Recordings of services are posted on YouTube.

[Click for Zoom Phone Info](#)

[Click for PMBC on YouTube](#)

[Click to Join the Meeting!](#)

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### Search Committee Update

Thank you all for your participation in our survey. Your thoughtful responses have informed our search for a candidate who will meet the needs and hopes of our congregation.

It is clear that we seek a pastor who has the ability to effectively lead worship, to preach the Gospel, and to make it relevant to our time and lives. We want an individual who provides pastoral care by word and presence, who demonstrates understanding and concern for persons in their routines, joys, crises, and transitions of life. We want the person we call to maintain an atmosphere in which persons feel accepted, included, cared for, and able to identify with the church. These were the three most important pastoral qualities identified.

Additionally, we expect the pastor we call to work cooperatively with staff and lay leadership to provide the greatest possible Christian life experience for the church as a whole. We desire that our future pastor will lead individuals to make decisions for Christ by encouraging their identification with and participation in Phillips Church and the community, by providing opportunities for individuals and groups to understand and enhance the spiritual dimensions of their personal lives, and by supporting and encouraging them to use their gifts for ministry in their daily lives. Beyond individual growth, our future pastor should encourage development and maintenance of programs and activities for enlarging the vision and ministry of the church.

In the next step of the search process, our Cabinet will address the questions of full-time versus part-time pastor and the use of the endowment to supplement regular church income to meet the new pastor's compensation

package. Your survey responses will provide insight as they deliberate and make the decisions the Search Committee needs to proceed.

To introduce Phillips Memorial Baptist Church to potential pastoral candidates, the Search Committee is currently preparing a written summary about our church and its caring congregation. This summary, and our expectations for our new pastor, will be sent to Rev. Douglas Harris, our Interim Executive Minister. He will then proceed to reach out to potential candidates who match our needs and the expectations we have identified.

As we receive resumes, we will review them and invite the candidates who best match our expectations to begin the interview process. Initially, we will ask questions and require written responses. Also, we will request access to recorded sermons. From there, we will narrow the pool of candidates before holding in-person meetings with them and observing them preach at neutral pulpits.

The Search Committee continues to meet weekly, often twice a week. We thank you for your support and ask for your prayers as we seek a new pastor.

Gratefully,

The Search Committee

*Kyle Baker   Steve Bergquist   Steve Brown   Peg Chatellier*

*Bonnie DerManelian   David Fresch   Kathy McKinney*

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## **Moderator**

I would like to start my first newsletter article by thanking Jean Manocchia for her service as Moderator. I know everyone joins me in recognizing all that Jean has done for our Church throughout her term, and especially during the numerous transitions we have experienced in recent years.

This month marks the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic and while we are still experiencing the disruption of the health emergency, there are rays of hope starting to shine through. More of our members are receiving vaccines, visitation restrictions to loved ones in hospitals and nursing homes are starting to lift, and spring will bring with it more opportunities to meet safely, socially distanced outside. While these rays of hope do not negate the need to still exercise recommended precautions, they do help restore our optimism about days to come. As we continue to meet virtually, I encourage anyone having trouble connecting to online service to reach out to the church office for assistance. Fellowship during these difficult times is more important than ever

and difficulties with technology should not prevent anyone from joining Sunday worship service.

Also, please save the date of April 28<sup>th</sup> as we will be having a church meeting to vote on the proposed by-law changes the Reorganization Committee has been drafting. A Question & Answer session, where committee members will be available to review the proposed changes, will be held after church the week before the vote on April 18<sup>th</sup>. The official notification of the meeting and a copy of the draft by-laws will come out later this month so please be on the lookout for that notice.

Thank you,

*Sarah Blusiewicz*

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## **Treasurer**

Fortunately we have about fifty of our church family who have been making regular gifts to the church. As a result we have been able to pay the bills. However, expenses are increasing, so hopefully more will be giving and considering increased giving. Checks sent to the church are always appreciated.

*Richard Pierce*

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## **Board of Deacons**

Zoom worship service continues along. Hopefully, as the vaccines continue to roll out, we will be able to think about service at the church. Until then please know we meet monthly discussing anything to help build up our church families' faith and worship experience.

We started a weekly Bible study on February 21st and believe that with this addition to our Sundays, we can add extra time to meet as a church family.

If you'd like to be a worship reader/helper please let one of us know. It's an easy thing -- mute/unmute yourself and follow along with the reading.

*Jeff Damrad*

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## Board of Mission

Thanks to America for Christ Offering many communities who were impacted by COVID 19 were supported in many ways -- and will continue to be. Families who lost homes to natural disasters (floods, wildfires, and storms), children living in poverty, AND seminarians....all were helped last year -- and will be this year! To paraphrase the Rev. Leslie Callahan, congregations from earliest times have aided each other; today, in a time of crisis, we too exhibit this core value. "Mirroring the grace of the One who has called us to live lives filled with gratitude, we extend generosity and love in material and tangible ways....We are in different rooms but no less a part of the same household...of the same body." Our region will benefit as well! We will be collecting gifts throughout March.

Our next food collection will be March 13. Some of the items requested: food in pull-top cans, peanut butter cracker packs, and ramen noodles will be appreciated by the folks at Church of the Master.

*Diana Litterick*

**Church folks and God's folks ain't the same.  
Church folk goes to church; God's folk ARE the church.  
-Anonymous**

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## Sharing Prayer Concerns

Steve Huntley, Lisa Elliot surgery recovery, David Fresch's friend Evan, Joyce Smith, Rev. Steve Guilmain, Bonnie DerManelian's daughter Heidi, Rina Hopkins, Rev. Dr. Tom McKibbens, Sheldon Belmain's sister Judy Carver, Carolyn Belmain's friend Michael O'Connor, Linda Liebrich's parents, Peggy Chatellier's brother, Jean Manocchia's daughter-in-law's mother Linda and son-in-law Gary, David Barber's colleague's brother, ABC Missionaries in lock down around the world, our shut-in members.

Rev. Steve Guilmain's address: 11 Old Schoolhouse Road, Garland, ME 04939

Joyce Smith's address: Room 305, Kessler Institute of Rehabilitation, 92 Brick Rd, Marlton, NJ 08053.

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Nancy Olsen Ross, daughter of long-time members Bill and Marguerite Olsen died on June 14, 2020. Nancy spent 4 summers volunteering in a girl's orphanage in Romania, had served in the Peace Corp in Thailand, and had been a Job Corps teacher in Kentucky before relocating to South Kingstown and taught reading and English at the South Kingstown High School.

Joan Johnson

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## Daily Lectionary Bible Readings

I have decided that instead of monthly Daily Bible Readings I would provide you with an Internet link for immediate access with links to the Bible passages for each day.

You will note that, starting June 3, 2021, the daily Bible reading list has two series, complementary and semi-continuous. There is no right or wrong way to use the readings. American Baptist Churches USA have used either series. Some people like to use both series, reading one in the morning and one in the evening. It is generally better to read one or the other consistently than try to do both and give up because of the time commitment. If you are not sure which to use, follow the complementary series.

If anyone wishes to have a printed copy mailed to you, please contact the church office.

Here is the internet address:

<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/daily.php?year=B>

Pastor Alan

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LINDA WILES  
& THE LIFETIME  
JOY OF MUSIC

March 11  
1:00 p.m.



Join us via Zoom as we explore the lifetime joy that music can provide. Our featured artist will be Linda Wiles, gifted keyboardist, choir director, and music teacher. A member of First Baptist Church in America, Linda has performed in a number of our congregations, as well as for various regional events.

For the Zoom link and/or additional info, contact [eldercare@abcori.org](mailto:eldercare@abcori.org). (The program also will be recorded for viewing after March 11.)

Elder Care Ministries  
American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island  
(401) 522-9731 • [eldercare.abcori.org](http://eldercare.abcori.org)



## 2021 Winter Webinar Series

Join us for one or more of our webinars in our series  
"COVID 19: Addressing Needs and Teaching Resilience".

<https://abwomensministries.org/resourceDetails.aspx?resourceDetailId=1536>

### List of ABWM 2021 Winter Webinar Series COVID 19: Addressing Needs and Teaching Resilience

#### *Birthdays!*



|                   |          |
|-------------------|----------|
| Debbie Barber     | March 5  |
| Alice Tordoff     | March 5  |
| David Fresch      | March 6  |
| Joseph Scianna    | March 6  |
| Anne Crocker      | March 8  |
| Kim Paquette      | March 8  |
| Joetta Creasia    | March 10 |
| Richard Zambarano | March 21 |
| Amanda Scianna    | March 23 |
| Barbara Hopkins   | March 26 |

#### *Wedding*



#### *Anniversaries!*

|                        |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| Scott & Kristen Trahan | March 8  |
| Ken & Betty Clark      | March 13 |

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Visit our website

