

RHODE ISLAND BAPTIST HERITAGE CENTER 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

The RI Baptist Heritage Center is organization affiliated with the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island. Its purpose is to preserve, explore and share our rich Baptist heritage, local and universal. Through educational events, archival work with local congregations, and continuing research, the Center offers opportunities to those interested in our heritage to discover the roots of Baptist identity. The board has met regularly through the year to both evaluate previous programs and to plan this year's offerings.

Since its inception the Center has offered two main programs. The first is a biennial "Baptist Heritage Weekend. In November 2016 our guest was Brent Walker, the retiring executive of the Baptist Joint Committee. Emmanuel Baptist Church in Providence graciously hosted Walker's presentation and fed everyone royally. Everyone was greatly entertained by the appearance of Roger Williams [incarnated by National Park Ranger, John McNiff] who engaged Brent Walker in a dialogue about religious liberty. The second major offering is a Baptist history and polity course designed to meet the requirements of our regions for pastoral ordination or standing. We have also offered smaller events such as tours and celebrations for local congregations.

On Feb. 5, 2017, Charlie Hartman led a "heritage" event at Oaklawn Baptist, Cranston, as a part of the celebration of their 175th anniversary.

During the year Dr. Stan Lemons has helped several congregations archive their old records and artifacts. Dr. Lemons and the Center are significant resources for any congregation that wishes to sort the "keep" from the disposable "stuff" that accumulates in our facilities! Our members also have fielded questions about Rhode Island and Baptist history that have come to our regional office.

This year our History and Polity course received a major revision. In order to reclaim an academic level that meets the expectations of our denomination, an additional session was added to make four. These met in September, November, and January. The last session was Feb. 24, 2018. We also included a new instructor, the Rev. Dr. Johnny Wilson, to expand our coverage of the African American traditions. He joined Drs. Lemons, Charles Hartman and Jonathan Malone who each had a separate focus. Dr. Lemons described the arc of Baptist experience, Dr. Malone worked with "Baptist" theology, and Dr. Hartman offered exercises to explore the practical consequences of being a Baptist. Both the expected reading and writing were increased to place this course as an equivalent to a seminary level offering.

Our invitation to participate in this class was open to those seeking ordination or standing and to any lay person wanting a more informative Baptist narrative. We also continued to invite people from our neighboring region, The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts. To our surprise, we were challenged by the response. The class began with 20 students, all but three seeking ordination or standing. The larger than expected response and the additional requirements resulted in a bit of a learning curve as we continued to develop the format and logistics. One problem that we have faced has been the significantly different levels of preparation and expectation of the students. Some students are quite ready for a graduate level course, but some are not. But the feedback from

those involved is positive. We expect that this will continue to be a developing program that will edify both individuals and our regions.

Our last meeting of the year began the process of planning our next heritage weekend. On Nov. 3, 2018 we will have the great privilege and pleasure of hearing Dr. William Brackney speak about our inherited congregational format. Dr. Brackney will provide the historical basis for exploring how congregations, especially smaller congregations, survive and achieve success. We will also recognize some of our own congregations that are exemplary. Topics such as “congregational spiritual discernment” and congregational process are a part of the planning. Details about this inspirational event are now being developed.

Dr. Brackney has been invited to preach on Nov. 4 at FBC in Providence as our weekend continues. We are considering the addition of a historical tour of the downtown area on Sunday afternoon as well. We ask all interested folks to save these dates now!

Members of our board have continued their research or been published this year. Dr. Tom McKibbens has now received his copy of *Baptists in Early North America, Vol. 4, Boston, MA*. Dr. Charlie Hartman had his keynote paper “Surviving the Wilderness - The Dynamics of Grace” published in *Maritime Baptist Old First Churches*, ed. William Brackney w/Evan Colford, a compilation of papers offered at the 2016 “Old First Church” conference at Acadia University, Nova Scotia. Rev. Steve Hollaway has had his poems published. Dr. Clay Berry finished his doctoral work. Dr. Lemons has finished his book on history of the Baptists in Rhode Island and is waiting to hear from the publishers. Dr. Malone sits on the board of the American Baptist Historical Society. The Center is a gifted group of dedicated Baptist scholars!

This has been a successful year for the Center. We have continued to delight in the discussion of our history and heritage. We are dedicated to sharing our expertise and resources with our fellow Baptists. We are an open organization that encourages ANYONE interested in Baptist thought and practice to work with us. We look forward to serving many more of our congregations and people through 2018.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles K. Hartman, President

**RHODE ISLAND BAPTIST HERITAGE CENTER
Officers and Board Members 2018-2021**

Office/Term	
President 2018-2020	The Rev. Dr. Charles Hartman FBC Swansea, MA
Vice President 2018-2020	The Rev. James C. Miller Emmanuel Baptist Church, Providence
Secretary 2018-2020	Mr. Don Waterman Berean Baptist, Harrisville
Treasurer 2018-2020	Mr. Don Waterman Berean Baptist, Harrisville
Class of 2018	The Rev. Dr. Clay Berry Wakefield Baptist The Rev. Dr. Don Anderson* RI Council of Churches
Class of 2019	Rev. Dr. Tom McKibbens Interim, FBC Georgiaville, RI Rev Dr. Jon Malone FBC E. Greenwich
Class of 2020	John Odams First Baptist, Boston, MA __Open_____
Class of 2021	Dr. J. Stanley Lemons FBC in America, Providence The Rev. Stephen E. Hollaway (open after 8/18) FBC, Block Island

2017 Financial Report

1-1-2017	Balance	\$3503.63
	Brent Walker event expenses	-967.97
	Total	\$2536.66
	Donation	+200.00
	Total	\$2735.66
	Net from polity course	+5900.00
12-31-17	Balance	\$8635.66

Respectfully submitted,
Don Waterman, Treasurer