

# Baptist church birthplace shows strains

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Grace Harbor Community Church's young congregants meet in a crowded hotel conference room, learn Scripture via PowerPoint and listen to a "praise team" play the bongos. The Web site of the 4-year-old Southern Baptist church includes a cartoon proclaiming "God said it, that settles it!"

Less than a mile away, the graying worshippers at The First Baptist Church in America prefer Bach to bongos, listen to a black-robed minister who quotes Winston Churchill and meet in a white-steeped National His-

toric Landmark.

First Baptist's historic congregation planted the faith in America, where 30 million people now call themselves Baptist. But in the movement's birthplace of Rhode Island, just over 2 percent of the population is Baptist, and some of its earliest churches are struggling.

Southern Baptist churches like Grace Harbor have emerged as the higher-profile public face of the tradition — which has evolved to become far more conservative than the church's roots in a liberal blue state would suggest.

Most Baptist factions trace their roots to Roger Williams,

the 17th-century minister who founded Rhode Island and organized the nation's first Baptist congregation in 1638. The uncompromising provocateur was banished from Massachusetts for attacking state-sponsored Puritan congregations, demanding the separation of church and state and arguing that American Indians had property rights.

Williams was fiercely committed to what he called "soul freedom" — or freedom of religion. Just months after organizing the first Baptist congregation, he left it and rejected the institutional church altogether.

Williams said he had a "restless unsatisfiedness" in his soul, and one of his contemporary critics called him "constant only in his inconstancy." Scholars say those attributes continue to mark the faith today.

"Wherever two or three Baptists are gathered together, there's a schism," said J. Stanley Lemons, the First Baptist church historian.

Over the centuries, Baptists

have split into three major branches: the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Baptists, mostly black congregations with diverse beliefs. Dozens of smaller groups populate the Baptist family tree.

The largest denomination by far is the Southern Baptists, which split from the American Baptists in 1845 after delegates meeting in

Providence banned slaveholders from serving as missionaries. Once confined to the South, the denomination spread north during the 20th century and claims 16.4 million members, making it the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

Williams' old congregation remains American Baptist, which has about 1.4 million followers and is concentrated

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## Jinwright's 25th anniversary

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sad commentary."

During a moment of reflection, Jinwright revealed his proudest achievement. "My major accomplishment has been to see the lives of people transformed. To watch people come in with no hope, receive hope, then their faith built to another level," he said. "They began to really believe that they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them."

Greater Salem has prospered as a result of Jinwright's leadership, however, first lady Pastor Harriet Porter-Jinwright has also worked for the church's success.

"My wife is a very strong part of the ministry, and she's anointed," he said.

After 25 years at Greater Salem, Jinwright said he still has a passion to serve the congregation and community.

"What inspires me to get up in the morning is my passion for what I do. I'm an early morning person, so that's my devotional time. My day is set when I rise early and spend



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Greater Salem Church Pastor Anthony Jinwright says he still has the urge to serve his congregation. "What inspires me to get up in the morning is my passion for what I do," he said.

time with the Lord. It shapes my day," Jinwright said.

The future of Greater Salem Church is bright. A few blocks from the church's present location is the site where Greater Salem City will sit on a 54 acre lot.

"Business owners will set up offices in the new complex," Jinwright said, which

will also include housing, retail, and education facilities.

On the Net:  
Greater Salem Church  
[www.greatersalem.org](http://www.greatersalem.org)

**The  
Charlotte  
Post**

## Church fires in Ala.

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suspects in mind, but they are seeking two white men in their 20s or 30s. Eric Kehn, a spokesman for the federal Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agency, said the assessment was based on witness reports and behavioral profilers.

"They're not youths or teens. It's probably someone in their 20s or 30s. We believe they're pretty much inseparable. They're something like bosom buddies," he said.

The FBI has been looking into whether the arsons were civil rights violations under laws covering attacks on religious property.

Evidence from one of the earlier fires indicates the perpetrators may have been briefly trapped inside the building and may have been hurt, said Jim Cavanaugh, ATF regional director.

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1515 Remount Rd. • (Tel.)332-8335 (Fax)372-7548  
28208



Dr. C.V. Owens

Sunday Morning Worship Services... 8:30 - 9:30 - 11:00am  
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Daycare & Afterschool Available

The Reverend Calvin L. Miller - Pastor  
Reverend Karen Roberts Miller - Spouse  
E-mail: [gamez531@bellsouth.net](mailto:gamez531@bellsouth.net)



### St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church "Christmas Service"

Sat., December 24th, 11:00 P.M. into Christmas Day

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Sat., December 31, 11:00 P.M. into New Years Day

No Sunday 10:30 service December 25, 2005, or January 1, 2006

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~ Rev. Wendell Phillips, Pastor ~

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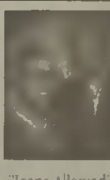
Wednesday: Bible Study, 7pm

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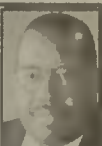
Sunday School.....9:45am

Wednesday.....Neon Day Worship Study.....7:00pm

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