

Historic First Baptist Church announces month long 245th anniversary celebration

By EM HOLTER

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Williamsburg's First Baptist Church as seen Thursday, March 18, 2021. (Stephen M. Katz/The Virginian-Pilot)

WILLIAMSBURG — The Let Freedom Ring Foundation, in partnership with Colonial Williamsburg, announced it will begin its monthlong celebration on Saturday to honor historic First Baptist Church.

The church will celebrate its 245th anniversary this year, a testament to the faith, struggle and perseverance of Black experiences in America. Today, it is

one of the oldest Black churches in the country, according to a release issued by the foundation.

The anniversary celebration will begin at 2 p.m. Saturday with the premiere screening of “History Half Told is Untold,” a mini-documentary produced by the foundation showcasing the church’s history and its founding.

Guests will have the opportunity before the screening to tour the archaeological site from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Currently, the church descendants are working with Colonial Williamsburg to uncover artifacts to better understand the members. Additionally, folks will hear from archaeologists on some of the findings.

The community can celebrate the church’s anniversary 11 a.m. Sunday on the front lawn of the Colonial Williamsburg Arts Museum, 301 S. Nassau St. The Rev. Dr. Gwendolyn Boyd will deliver the keynote address and the Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra String Ensemble will be featured.

Folks will have the opportunity to come out at 10 a.m. Oct. 30 to hear an update on the archaeological site and hear discussions on next steps from the church’s steering committee at the Bruton Heights’ Lane Auditorium, 301 First St.

The celebration will conclude on Nov. 13 with a black-tie gala event at the Williamsburg Lodge, 310 S. England St. Actor Danny Glover will co-host the event as well as a performance by Jennifer Holliday and RaJazz. For tickets, call 757-585-2146.

Face coverings will be required while inside any of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation sites regardless of vaccination status and use outdoors is strongly encouraged.