



# The Epistle

MAY 2026

First Baptist Church of Vienna, Va.

## from the PASTOR

### Forward Together: From Commitment to Movement

Today marks a powerful moment in our journey, Commitment Sunday. Many of you have prayerfully stepped forward, offering your “yes” to God and placing your commitments before Him. What we experienced today was more than a moment, it was an act of worship, a declaration of unity, and a step of faith rooted in Nehemiah 2:18: “Let us rise up and build.”

But hear this clearly: this is not the end. It’s the beginning.

Now we shift from commitment to movement. In the days ahead, we continue to pray, to prepare, and to position ourselves for what comes next, Forward Sunday, our first collective opportunity to begin walking out what we have declared. This is where faith becomes action. This is where vision meets sacrifice.

So what should we do between now and Forward Sunday?

First, keep praying. The same spirit that guided your commitment

**PASTOR**, *continued pn pg. 3*

## Celebrating 12 Years of Pastor and People: The Best Is Yet to Come

Twelve years is more than a milestone, it is a testament to faith, commitment, and the powerful bond between pastor and people. As we celebrate this anniversary, we reflect on a journey marked by growth, perseverance, and a shared vision rooted in purpose.

From the very beginning, Pastor Walton has served not only as a leader, but as a shepherd, guiding us through seasons of joy, challenge, and transformation. Through heartfelt sermons, quiet prayers, and unwavering dedication, he has poured into the lives of the people, both inside and outside the walls of the church. Over these twelve years, there have been countless lives touched, families strengthened, and dreams awakened.

Together, we have weathered storms and celebrated victories, always holding onto faith and the belief that greater things

**ANNIVERSARY**, *continued pn pg. 3*

**GUEST PREACHER:**  
DR. KEITH W. BYRD  
Senior Pastor  
Zion Baptist Church

**GUEST PSALMIST:**  
DR. EARNEST PUGH  
Award Winning  
Recording Artist

SUNDAY, MAY 17TH @ 10:00 AM

**12th PASTORAL ANNIVERSARY**

Dr. Vernon C. Walton

## *Beloved Church Family:*

With a heart full of gratitude and humility, I pause to reflect on what it means to share twelve years of ministry together. What a journey it has been.

When I first stepped into this assignment, I could not have fully imagined all that God would do in and through us. Through seasons of joy and seasons of challenge, one thing has remained constant, God's faithfulness. Time and time again, He has proven Himself to be our guide, our sustainer, and our source.

I thank God for each of you. Thank you for your prayers, your encouragement, your patience, and your partnership in ministry. No pastor serves alone, and I am continually reminded that we are strongest when we walk together in unity and purpose. Your love has been a steady support, and your commitment has helped shape the ministry we share.

Over these twelve years, we have celebrated victories, endured hardships, welcomed new members into the family, and said goodbye to some we love. Through it all, we have seen lives changed, faith deepened, and hope restored. That is the true testimony of our time together, not buildings or programs, but people.

As I reflect on where we have been, I am equally excited about where God is leading us next. I believe our best days are not behind us, but ahead of us. There is still work to be done, still lives to be reached, and still a community that needs the light of Christ shining through us. The words of Scripture remind us: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). That promise is not just personal, it also belongs to us as a church family. God is not finished with us yet.

As we celebrate this milestone, I do so not for recognition, but in thanksgiving for what God has done and for what He will continue to do through us. It is an honor to serve as your pastor, and I remain committed to leading, loving, and laboring alongside you.

Let us continue forward together, with faith, with hope, and with expectation.

*With love and appreciation, Pastor Walton*

## **It's that time again!**

**T**ime to get your shirts and get ready for a season full of celebration, service, and connection!

We're excited to offer two special shirts this year: our Annual Church T-Shirt and our Juneteenth Celebration T-Shirt, both designed to help us show up unified and proud at the many events ahead.

Each shirt is available for \$20, but we're offering a special bundle deal to make it even better:

### **Bundle & Save**

Purchase both shirts together for \$30 total—a \$10 savings!

### **Why You'll Want Both**

Our Annual Church T-Shirt will be worn during Christmas in July by all volunteers and church members, as well as at other upcoming churchwide events throughout the year. It's your go-to shirt for representing our church wherever we gather.

Our Juneteenth T-Shirt is a key part of our annual celebration, honoring history, culture, and community in a meaningful way.

### **A Note for Volunteers**

All volunteers serving during the Juneteenth celebration, no matter the role, are asked to wear the Juneteenth T-shirt. This helps create a unified look, makes volunteers easily identifiable, and adds to the spirit of the day.

### **Order and Pickup Info**

You can preorder your shirts today to secure your size and be ready ahead of time. Be on the lookout for upcoming opportunities to pick up your shirts in person before the events.



## ANNIVERSARY, *continued from page 1*

lie ahead. And indeed, as we honor this anniversary, we are reminded that the best is yet to come. This moment is not only about looking back, but it is also about looking forward. With a solid foundation in place, the future is filled with promise. There are still more lives to reach, more hope to share, and more opportunities to grow together.

As we celebrate, it is also time for us to honor Pastor Walton for years of faithful service. Here are a few ways we can show appreciation:

**Words of Gratitude:** Write letters or share testimonies expressing how Pastor Walton has made an impact. Personal words can be deeply encouraging.

Join us for the Pastor's Anniversary on May 17th: Join us in worship as we worship God and celebrate our pastor. Our special guest for the day is the Rev. Keith W. Byrd, Sr. the pastor of Zion Baptist Church of Washington, DC. Stay tuned for other exciting announcements about this day.

**Acts of Kindness:** Consider giving a gift or offering support in ways that lighten the pastor's responsibilities, even if just for a time.

**Prayer and Encouragement:** Commit to continued prayer, asking for strength, wisdom, and renewed vision for the years ahead.

As we stand together at this 12-year mark, there is every reason to celebrate and every reason to believe that even greater things are on the horizon. The seeds planted over the years are continuing to grow, and the future shines brightly with hope. Here's to 12 years of pastor and people and to many more ahead. We are better together, and the best is truly yet to come. —*Stacey Seay*

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## PASTOR, *continued from page 1*

will sustain your follow through. Stay connected to God and remain open to how He may stretch, lead, and provide.

Second, prepare your first gift. Whether you are giving all at once or over time, begin planning now for how you will participate on Forward Sunday. This is not about equal amounts; it's about faithful obedience.

Third, stay engaged and encouraged. Talk about the campaign with your family. Share your "why." Encourage someone else. When we keep the vision in front of us, we strengthen one another.

Finally, celebrate what God is already doing. Every commitment represents a life, a prayer, and a step of faith. Together, we are building something that will outlast us and bless generations to come. We have said yes and now it's time to walk it out.

Let us move forward together!



## Pastor's Anniversary and Juneteenth Preparation

**M**ay arrives with a song already on its lips, and this month we carry two things in our hearts one that calls us to celebrate, and one that calls us to prepare. Both are meaningful. Both deserve our very best. As Director of Worship and Arts, my desire is that we, as a church family, move through this month with intention, unity, and hearts fully aligned with what God is doing among us.

This month, we take time to honor our Pastor during his pastoral anniversary. This is a moment of gratitude not to elevate a man beyond measure, but to give thanks to God for the faithfulness, leadership, and service we have experienced through him. We recognize the work, the consistency, and the calling, and we celebrate what God has done and continues to do in the life of our church. As a church family, let us come ready to honor well. Let our worship be sincere, our hearts grateful, and our focus clear giving God the glory for every season, every lesson, and every step forward.

At the same time, we are preparing for what is ahead. Our Juneteenth celebration in June is approaching, and the work has already begun. This is more than a date on the calendar it is a powerful moment to reflect, remember, and rejoice. Through worship and song, we will tell a story of endurance, faith, and freedom, giving God praise for His hand throughout history.

We are extending an open invitation to the entire congregation to join in this special celebration. You do not need to be a trained singer just willing and available. If you have a heart to worship, there is a place for you. Rehearsals will be held on:

- Saturday, May 2nd: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- Saturday, May 9th: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- Saturday, May 30th: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- Saturday, June 6th: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- Saturday, June 13th: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

May this be a month marked by gratitude and preparation. We honor faithfully, and we prepare intentionally always giving God the glory in all things.

—*Kwan McKnight, Director of Worship and Arts*

# Walking in the Prayers of Our Ancestors: Juneteenth Celebration Returns June 13



**F**irst Baptist Church of Vienna is preparing for a powerful and joy-filled Juneteenth Celebration on Saturday, June 13, beginning with a community parade at 10 a.m. and continuing with a vibrant festival on the church grounds.

This year's theme, "Walking in the Prayers of Our Ancestors," invites the community to reflect on the faith, resilience, and sacrifice of those who came before us—while celebrating the freedom and opportunities we carry forward today.

## A Celebration for the Whole Family

The Juneteenth festival promises something for everyone, but special attention has been given to creating an unforgettable experience for children and families through an expanded Youth Zone.

Families can look forward to:

- A petting zoo for hands-on fun with animals
- A mobile video game truck for interactive gaming
- A mobile VR theme park experience

- Free book giveaways to encourage literacy and learning
- Creative craft activities rooted in culture and history
- And many more engaging experiences designed to inspire and delight

The Youth Zone is intentionally designed to be both fun and meaningful. It connects the next generation to the significance of Juneteenth in ways they can understand and enjoy.

## Parade & Community Celebration

The day begins with the Juneteenth parade, and the community is encouraged to line the parade route and show support for participants as they march in honor of freedom, faith, and legacy.

Following the parade, the celebration continues with:

- Live entertainment
- Food trucks and vendors
- A car show
- Cultural experiences
- Community fellowship

## Honoring Our Legacy: 2026 Honorary Marshals

As part of this year's celebration, we are proud to recognize our Juneteenth Honorary Marshals, whose service and leadership have helped shape our church and community:

- Deacon Emeritus Charles Basil
- Deacon Emeritus Melvin McCoy
- Deacon Emeritus Anthony Weaver
- Deaconess Armeata Basil
- Deaconess Marjorie Duncan

We celebrate their legacy and thank them for their enduring contributions.

## Get Involved

This event is a true community effort—and there are still opportunities to participate.

### Vendors:

We are actively encouraging vendors to register and be part of this growing celebration.

### Volunteers:

Volunteers are essential to making this event a success. Sign up today through our volunteer portal:

[www.tinyurl.com/fbcvvol26](http://www.tinyurl.com/fbcvvol26)

Whether you serve for an hour or the entire day, your support makes a difference.

Juneteenth is more than a celebration—it is a time of remembrance, reflection, and rejoicing. It is a moment to honor the prayers of our ancestors and to walk boldly in the freedom they envisioned.

Bring your family, invite your friends, and come be part of a day filled with purpose, pride, and community.

*We'll see you along the parade route—and at the celebration!* —Stacey Seay

## May Special Days

**National Day of Prayer:**  
May 7

**Mother's Day:** May 10

**Armed Forces Day:** May 16

**Day of Pentecost:** May 24

**Memorial Day:** May 25

**Trinity Sunday:** May 31

# No Man Moves Forward Alone

*“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together”*

The brothers of First Baptist met for our Wings and a Word on April 13. The theme was—“No Man Moves Forward Alone”—accountability, partnership, and shared purpose. After a wonderful meal provided by Stacey Seay, we were elevated by a message and guided discussion by Pastor Walton. Four questions were posed to us to kick off the discussion:

1. Who is a man who shaped your life?
2. Why do men struggle to ask for help?
3. What are the dangers for men in being isolated?
4. Where do you need support (i.e., spiritual, emotional, etc..) today?

Man was built to live in community and in several communities all at once. Our family, our church, our city, our state...there are many communities we live in simultaneously. And man was not meant to be alone. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV) highlights the power of partnership, stating that “two are better than one” because they have a better return for their labor, offer mutual support in trouble (lifting each other up), provide warmth, and offer defense against being overpowered. A three-stranded cord is not easily broken.

Three points from tonight’s discussion:

## A. Partnership produces more:

- a. Shared vision, shared sacrifice, shared responsibility and shared celebration.
- b. Why do some men prefer to work alone?
- c. How can the men of FBCV work together?

## B. Brotherhood provides support:

- a. Men need spiritual, emotional, and ministry support.
- b. Isolated men are more easily discouraged.
- c. How do you build a supportive culture?
- d. Vulnerability builds trust...but not overnight.
- e. Spend time and energy reaching out.
- f. Be receptive and approachable.

## C. Unity provides strength:

- a. Strength to overcome temptation.
- b. Unity makes vision stronger.
- c. Unity and strength make families healthier.
- d. All together this makes the Church stronger.
- e. What happens when the men of the Church disengage?

A Threefold Cord requires:

1. Me
2. My Brothers
3. God—God makes the difference

Our next meeting will be on May 21 (the third Thursday of the month) in ZOOM at 6:30 p.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85959815600?pwd=TUvkO08dOigr7VheFFUIe6Zo6Y890s.1>

1. Meeting ID: 859 5981 5600/Passcode: FBCVMen

—Submitted by Sinclair Harris, Men’s Ministry Servant Leader



## Sending Our SYMPATHY

Deacon Fred Thompson and Benita Thompson Byas for the loss of their uncle Samuel H. Duck



Shirley Walker to commemorate the 104th birthday of her mother, Dorothy Nelson Robinson.

Ceola Allen, Danny and Alfred Bunaugh, grandchildren and great grandchildren to commemorate the 120th birthday of their father and grandfather, George Bunaugh.

Compiled by Ceola Allen.

## Shining Your Light Through a Lifestyle of Kindness

“Random acts of kindness” is a phrase we hear spoken of frequently to describe selfless, often spontaneous, acts intended to help, bless, or encourage someone. Simple acts include paying for someone’s coffee or meal, giving compliments, or leaving encouraging notes. Perhaps you have been a recipient of or a giver of such kindness.

As a follower of Jesus, the source of the kindness that we show is a supernatural virtue that begins in the heart of God and emanates from the Holy Spirit within us. Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV) reminds us: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*” When we choose kindness as a lifestyle, it defines how we live and is a very effective way to let our light from Jesus shine to others.

Sometimes, being kind means stepping out of our comfort zone, which takes courage to do.

However, when you sense that the Holy Spirit invites you to do a specific thing for someone else, that divine moment is called a Kairos moment, which means “the right, chosen, or appointed time.” You can be certain that because this is God’s timing, He is with you in those moments to give you discernment and empowerment to act in obedience to what He wants you to say and do. You are not doing the act of kindness alone! Jesus assures us: “**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**” (Acts 1:8). Our witness is to be wherever we are. Trust Him!

Did you know that when you show sincere kindness to someone, you are honoring Jesus? Read the parable of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46. In summary, Jesus describes the kindness of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing those who are without, and visiting the sick and those in prison. The key verse is v. 40: **And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’** The word Me refers to Jesus Himself.

Shining your light in this dark world is crucial at this time in our history! To equip ourselves to follow Jesus’ command to “**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven**” (Matthew 5:16), the Evangelism Ministry team is extending an invitation to all of our church members to join us in our study of *Each One Reach One: Everyday Ways You Can Shine God’s Light (Reflecting Matthew 5:16)* by Babbie Mason. The study started May 2 and will continue

monthly on the first Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. The current meeting room is FBCV library. Books will be provided. **Please join us in exploring this book!**  
~Sylvia Taylor, FBCV Evangelism Ministry



faith250  
Sacred Bonds, Shared Hopes

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026  
6:00 - 8:00 PM

at  
Florin United Methodist Church |  
13600 Frying Pan Rd | Herndon,  
VA 20171

RSVP BY MAY 12TH @:  
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/FBCVFAITH250MAY](https://tinyurl.com/fbcvfaith250may)



Congratulation  
Class Of  
2026  
We want to celebrate you!

Please take a moment to complete the appropriate graduate profile by Friday, May 15th:

High School Graduates:  
<https://tinyurl.com/fbcv2026hs>

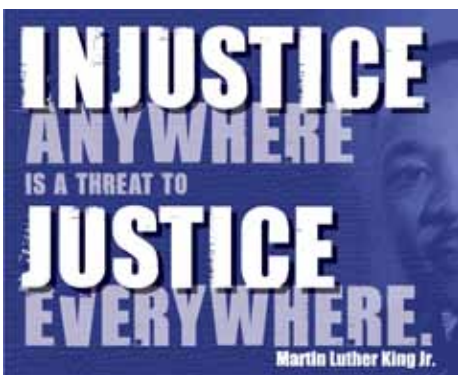
College Graduates:  
<https://tinyurl.com/fbcv2026c>

# Supreme Court: Ruling on Voting Rights Act

The Supreme Court's 6-3 ruling in *Louisiana v. Calais* (April 2026) weakens the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by limiting the use of race in redistricting, allowing states to redraw maps that previously protected minority-majority districts. This decision makes it easier to gerrymander maps based on party rather than race, likely bolstering Republican advantages in House elections. Though the timing may limit immediate effects in 2026, it is likely to have its largest impact on redistricting for the 2028 election and beyond, as 2026 primary timelines are already set.

## Key Implications of the Ruling

- **Redistricting Limits:** The court ruled that using race to create majority-minority districts to comply with the Voting Rights Act's Section 2 can constitute unconstitutional racial gerrymandering.
- **Shifting Power:** The decision allows Republican lawmakers to dismantle Democrat-leaning districts drawn to protect minority voters, potentially aiding GOP control of the U.S. House, specifically in southern states.



## What is gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering is the deliberate manipulation of electoral district boundaries to give one political party, incumbent, or group an unfair advantage. It involves drawing irregularly shaped districts to pack opposition voters into a few districts or crack them across many, reducing their voting power. Common techniques include “packing” and “cracking”, often termed “rigging” or “map-rigging.”

## Key Aspects of Gerrymandering

### Methods:

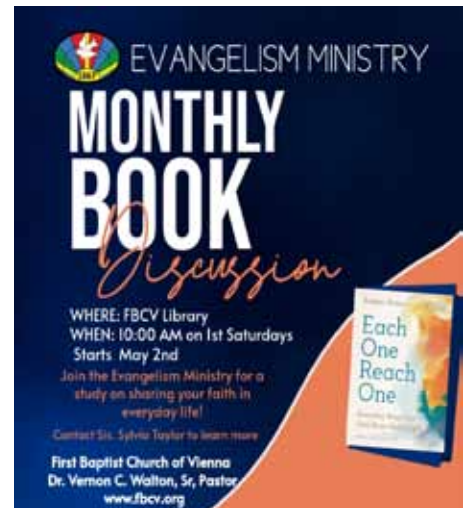
- a. **Packing:** Concentrating opposition voters into a single district to reduce their influence in other districts.
- b. **Cracking:** Splitting opposition voters across multiple districts to dilute their voting strength.

**Purpose:** To secure more seats for a party, enhance incumbency protection, or minimize the voting power of specific demographic groups.

**Consequences:** It leads to non-competitive elections, partisan bias in legislatures, and voter apathy.

This Supreme Court ruling marks a defining moment for the court under Chief Justice John Roberts, who, soon after joining the bench in 2005, declared, “the way to stop discrimination based on race is to stop discriminating based on race.”

Three years ago, the justices, by the same 6-3 vote, ended racial affirmative action in higher education admissions. This newest decision, which follows a series of rulings led by Roberts and



Justice Samuel Alito restricting the reach of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, will reverberate deeper across these United States.

Taken as a whole, the pattern would mean fewer chances for minority voters to elect candidates of their choosing. That, in turn, would mean fewer opportunities for the voice of Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and other minorities in government.

These types of attacks on the gains that minority communities achieved under the Civil Rights Movement are being rolled back intentionally to marginalize the minority community once again, and we as sons and daughters of the faith have to be intentional about speaking TRUTH to POWER. At the same time, we seek the guidance of the Lord in what direction we as believers must go in a time where the select few are instituting laws that adversely infringe on the way of life that we have been accustomed to, which was handed down to us by our forefathers and mothers of the Civil Rights era.

—Submitted by: *FBCV Social Justice Ministry*

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						
<b>3</b> 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship	<b>4</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call	<b>5</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call 7:00 pm Mid- Week Worship	<b>6</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call 7:00 pm Mid- Week Worship	<b>7</b> 5:30 pm Excellence Academy	<b>8</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> <b>Mother's Day</b> 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship	<b>11</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call 7:00 pm Mid- Week Worship	<b>14</b> 5:30 pm Excellence Academy 6:30 pm Faith250 @ADAMS Center	<b>15</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> <b>Pastor's 12<sup>th</sup>            Anniversary</b> 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship	<b>18</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call 7:00 pm Mid- Week Worship	<b>21</b> 5:30 pm Excellence Academy	<b>22</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship <b>Quarterly Birth            Month            Celebration</b>	<b>25</b> <b>Memorial Day</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call 7:00 pm Mid- Week Worship	<b>28</b> 5:30 pm Excellence Academy	<b>29</b> 7:00 am Prayer Call	<b>30</b> 9:00 Saturdays with the Shepherd
<b>31</b> 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship	<b>Nursery is open 2-5 Sundays            Youth Church 3rd &amp; 4th Sundays</b>					

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF VIENNA**  
 450 Orchard St. N.W., Vienna, Virginia 22180  
 (703) 938-8525 • www.fbcv.org  
 Dr. Vernon C. Walton, Pastor

**MAY 2026**

"I, therefore, the prisoner <sup>4a</sup>of the Lord, <sup>4b</sup>beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **There is one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism;" Ephesians 4:1-5