

AUGUST 2025

The

# Epistle

First Baptist Church of Vienna, Va.



From  
Pastor  
Walton's  
Desk

*Grace and Peace from God  
Our Father,*

**A**s we prepare to close out the month of July, I am overflowing with gratitude for all the ways you have led, served, and shown up for the work of the Kingdom. This has been a month marked by movement—intentional, Spirit-led movement—and it would not have been possible without your commitment and servant leadership.

From the laughter and learning at Summer Camp, to the powerful impact of Freedom School—where young minds were not only educated but also affirmed in their brilliance—we have seen God's hand at work in our children and volunteers alike. Your presence and prayers have helped shape safe, sacred spaces for growth and transformation.

Our Pulpit Swap with the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation was another beautiful reminder of the importance of dialogue, unity, and shared hope across faith communities. In a world that so often highlights what divides us, your openness helped underscore what binds us together: love, justice, and the pursuit of peace.

**PASTOR,** *continued on page 5*

## A New Look, A Big Impact: Thank You for Making Christmas in July a Blessing

*By Stacey Seay, Special to The Epistle*

**T**his year's Christmas in July was a powerful reminder that the love of Christ knows no bounds—and neither does the generosity of our church family. In the face of a changing political climate, we did not waver. Instead of gathering for one large event, we took the celebration and service into the heart of our community, reaching people right where they were. And because of your faithfulness, the impact was wide and deeply felt.

Across multiple locations and smaller events, we distributed over 300 backpacks, 300 pairs of shoes, school supplies, toiletries, personal hygiene supplies, and words of encouragement to those in need—including the underserved and the unhoused. We witnessed firsthand how a new pair of shoes or a backpack filled with supplies can become more than a gift—it can be a doorway to hope.

There were smiling faces everywhere, from children excited about a new school year to families who felt seen, loved, and supported. The music and joy were contagious—DJ Swifthands kept spirits high as we played games, laughed together, prayed with families, and celebrated what it means to serve with joy.

**CHRISTMAS IN JULY,** *continued on page 6*



## Men's Ministry Update

**Philippians 3:13–14** *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

**T**he summer is heating up and so is the service of the Brothers. Busy on multiple fronts from supporting Freedom School to Christmas in July, the men of FBCV have continued to support the mission and vision of our church to the glory of God.

We were honored and highly favored by our guest speaker Jayden Seay at our July Wings and a Word. He informed, challenged and inspired us all. Here is a short summary of his incredible message, **“Finding the Natural RESET”**.

“For me, graduation felt like more than just the end of a school chapter—it felt like a full reset, a holy pause. It was a moment where I had to acknowledge that although I’d achieved something meaningful, I hadn’t yet arrived at the final destination. I still have so much to learn and become. Like Paul, I’m learning to leave behind what no longer serves me—the past mistakes, missed opportunities, and even the comfort zones I had outgrown. Sometimes, walking past a hallway of closed doors—failed plans, unreturned calls, rejected applications—hurts. But I’m beginning to understand that those closed doors were necessary detours, not dead ends. They pushed me forward toward the door that was meant to open. And in that space of moving forward, I’ve found power in being empty. When I come to God with nothing left to prove and no distractions in hand, I give Him full room to shape, fill, and lead me.

So, here’s my advice: embrace the reset. Whether you’re graduating, ending a season, or stepping into something new, take the time to clear the clutter in your mind and spirit. Don’t rush into the next thing just to feel productive. Let yourself be empty for a moment—because empty doesn’t mean useless, it means available. Forget what’s behind, not because it didn’t matter, but because it can’t define where you’re going. God often does His best work in moments of surrender and transition. Keep pressing forward, not just for the next big goal, but for the higher calling that God is shaping uniquely for you. The prize isn’t just success—it’s purpose. And that’s always worth the reset.”

The Brethren thank Jayden Seay for his message and the push to continue the reset of our lives. Many activities are in the works for the fall including: a fishing trip, Veteran’s Day event, Wings and the Word on September 29 and much, much more.

To know more about the Men’s Ministry please reach out to Sinclair Harris, Deacon Andre Carpenter or Deacon Julian Purvis for more information. —*Sinclair Harris, Men’s Ministry Servant Leader*



## COLLEGE CONNECTION

**A**s the start of a new academic year approaches, we extend our warmest wishes to all the students heading off to college—whether for the very first time or returning to campus with more experience and perspective.

To the new College Connection students, this is a season of firsts: your first dorm room, your first college course, your first steps into greater independence. It’s an exciting time to explore your interests, build new relationships, and begin shaping your own path. Remember—every challenge is an opportunity to learn and grow.

To the returning College Connection students, welcome back! You’ve already proven your resilience, and now you’re stepping into another chapter with more clarity, confidence, and determination. Whether you’re focused on your major, deepening your campus involvement, or preparing for post-college plans, you’re one step closer to your goals.

College is more than academics—it’s a journey of personal discovery. Take time to connect with others, take care of your well-being, and make the most of the experience. We’re praying for you and cheering you on every step of the way and can’t wait to see and hear what this year brings.

**Keep In Touch—Let us know what you are doing, how you are doing, and register for your Incentive Grant.**

Don’t forget your First Baptist Family wants to know what and how you are doing while you build more brain muscle and continue to learn at your home away from home. Complete the 2025–2026 College Connection Scholar Database to stay in the know and earn points towards your incentive grant. If you don’t have the online link for the Scholars Database try: <https://forms.gle/6cKk5etVfuxj8kLJ8>

For more information about College Connection or to be a member of the Ministry, contact Arnitra Duckett at [arnitrad@mac.com](mailto:arnitrad@mac.com)

## Freedom School: Learning, Lifting, and Leading Together

Over the course of four enriching days, our church came together across generations for our annual Freedom School—an experience that blended food, fellowship, faith, and freedom-focused learning. With nearly 100 participants, from young children to elders, our time together was more than just a gathering; it was a journey.

Each day began with a delicious shared meal, setting the tone for connection and community. Following that, we opened with a dynamic, intergenerational group session filled with music that moved both heart and body, games that brought out our competitive sides, and presentations that

opened our minds. We learned about the rich history of Luther Jackson High School and the significance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)—institutions that have long been centers of excellence, resistance, and Black pride.

A highlight of the week was our virtual visit to Ghana—what many affectionately called a glimpse into our motherland. Through this experience, we explored life in Ghana both past and present, and reflected on how our roots connect us across continents and generations.

Anchored in the story of Moses, we explored daily themes that challenged us to think critically about liberation, leadership, and justice. Through honest conversations and deep reflections, we were reminded of how God used Moses to speak truth to power and lead people toward freedom—and how we are called to do the same in our time.



We were taught, we were challenged, and ultimately, we were charged to carry the work forward.

On the final day, we came together to create a powerful “Footsteps to Freedom” mural—a collective art piece symbolizing the legacy we walk in and the work that still lies ahead. Each footprint reminded us to pause and honor those who fought for the freedoms we enjoy today, and to remain committed to justice and liberation for future generations.

Freedom School was more than an event—it was a movement within our church family. We give thanks for everyone who made it possible and for the Spirit that moved through us as we learned, lifted one another, and committed ourselves to continue the journey. —Stacey Seay

### SWAP Ministry's Zoom Discussion

with Dr. Victoire Kelly

"Keys to Avoid Risky Health"



September 18, 2025 at 7:00 PM ET

A discussion with Dr. Victoire Kelly regarding: "Keys to Avoid Risky Health." This event will be a Zoom meeting with Dr. Kelly; it is intended to educate participants on a variety of issues such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, depression, and lifestyles (such as excessive use of alcohol) that can lead to risky health. This event will take place on Thursday, September 18, 2025, at 7:00 PM ET on Zoom.

Note - this discussion is open to everyone, including First Baptist seniors, other members and the community at large.

By Esther McCullough



The family of  
FBCV Member  
Gloria H. Carter

## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

# MINISTRY UPDATE

*Greetings FBCV Family,  
Grace and peace to each of you.*

As we step into the month of August, I want to take a moment to encourage your hearts and share a word of hope, especially for our families and students preparing for the upcoming 2025–2026 school year. Whether your child is entering kindergarten, high school, or heading off to college, this season of transition is filled with both excitement and uncertainty. But we hold fast to God's Word:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

— Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

God is already ahead of our children, ordering their steps and surrounding them with grace. As we pray over this school year, we do so with confidence that God is faithful and will carry our families through.

One of the highlights of our fall season is Glow Back 2 School Sunday, happening on Sunday, August 17th. This special worship service is dedicated to lifting up our youth and educators as they return to the classroom. We will celebrate their gifts, pray over their school year, and remind them to shine brightly for Christ wherever they go. In preparation, we invite all youth to join us for choir rehearsal and worship prep on Saturday, August 16th at 10:00 AM. Let's come together to make this weekend a powerful moment of praise and preparation.

Lastly, with both joy and bittersweet gratitude, we honor Jarron Williams and Mikaila Jackson as they prepare to transition to Boston. Jarron and Mikaila have served with excellence and deep care as our Young

Adult Ministry Leaders. Their passion, consistency, and love for our young adults have left a lasting impact. While we will surely miss their presence and leadership here at FBCV, we are confident that God's hand is upon them. We rejoice in all that God has done through them — and in faith, we celebrate what God will continue to do in and through them in this next chapter.

Thank you, church family, for being a community that shows up, prays faithfully, and continues to pour into the next generation. Let us move forward into this school year united in purpose, anchored in faith, and glowing with the light of Christ.

With gratitude and love,  
—Min. Kennard Jones, Minister,  
Youth and Young Adult Ministries,  
First Baptist Church of Vienna



## Altar Flowers

Harriet Carter and daughter  
Jennifer in loving memory of their  
father and grandfather,  
Harry Carter.

Bob and Ceola Allen  
and Tremayne Bunaugh to  
commemorate the 76th birthday of  
her sister and Tremayne's mother,  
Alva Bunaugh.

Lenora and Robin Barnes  
to commemorate the birthday  
of their mother,  
Doris Barnes.

—Compiled by Ceola Allen

**GLOW**  
**2 SCHOOL**  
**SUNDAY**

August 17, 10AM

First Baptist Church of Vienna  
450 Orchard St. NW, Vienna, VA  
Dr. Vernon C. Walton, Senior Pastor

## Am I A Witness?

**M**y early Christian experience was shaped as the only child of Anna and Dan Davis, who brought me up in a traditional Baptist church in Savannah, Georgia. There I learned the importance of faith, the significance of trust in our Savior, and the value of prayer. Following my father's passing at a young age, both my mother and I deeply felt his loss. Nevertheless, she found comfort and guidance through regular reading of the Bible. With the support of friends, family, and our church community, I consistently attended Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and participated in the youth choir. This environment provided me with a strong sense of belonging within my church family.

Christians are entrusted with the responsibility of sharing the gospel of Jesus with others, encouraging them to learn about Him, follow His teachings as disciples, and engage in acts of goodwill. Sounds easy, right? It's not.

### What is A Witness?

Christian witnesses express their faith through obedience, openness, courage, and personal experience—qualities essential for sharing the gospel. I have discussed my faith and trust in God with friends, family, and strangers, sharing life's challenges. But does this count as witnessing?

A devoted witness is defined as an individual who not only affirms belief in the resurrection of Jesus but also substantiates this conviction through consistent actions and demonstrable conduct. In 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear but the power, and of love, and of a sound mind." A witness for Jesus is someone who loves Him, has been changed by His teachings, lives them out daily, and shares their faith openly. I believe I am a good Christian, but I wonder if I am truly a good witness and whether I'm instructed by scripture to share the joy of knowing the Lord with others. Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world,

and preach the gospel to every creature."

I would like to clarify that I am open to discussing my experiences and the ways they have influenced and benefited my life. In reflecting on my suitability for this assignment, I acknowledge the importance of evaluating my biblical knowledge and my ability to communicate meaningful messages. Of course, as an adult life changes, and the trials and tribulations of the world would visit me often.

Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes."

After the passing of my mother, I found that both my faith and various life circumstances encouraged me to seek greater spiritual understanding. I increased my engagement with religious texts and devoted time to pray for insight and wisdom.

I continue to pursue guidance through prayer to ensure my actions are in accordance with God's word. As a Christian, I am aware of the importance of conveying positive messages and recognize that my faith is integral to my identity. 1 Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses."

I found comfort in speaking with others who were dealing with hurt, fear, and loneliness. The more I spoke about the goodness of knowing God, the more peaceful their moods became.

### What makes an Effective Witness?

Effective witnesses are authentic, intentional, humble, empathetic, attentive, non-judgmental, and speak truthfully with compassion, while trusting God for the results.

Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all

the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Are you a Witness for the Lord?  
—Jacquelin Davis,

*The Evangelism Ministry meets in person at FBCV, and online using the Conference call option as needed, every first Saturday of the month at 10 a.m. We invite you to join us! For more information, contact Servant Leader Sis. Sylvia Taylor or the church office at (703) 938-8525.*

### PASTOR, continued from pg. 1

And how could we forget our reimagined Christmas in July? Through your generosity and joyful participation, we extended the spirit of giving beyond December, blessing families and ministries in tangible ways that will ripple far beyond this season.

As we now look toward August, we carry this momentum forward with prayerful hearts. The return to school is upon us, and with it comes both excitement and challenges. We ask for God's covering over every student, teacher, parent, and stakeholder—especially those who are making decisions that impact the lives of our young people. May this upcoming school year be marked by clarity, courage, and compassion.

To mark this transition, we are thrilled to invite you to GLOW Back to School Sunday on August 17th right here at First Baptist Church of Vienna. It will be a day of celebration, prayer, and encouragement as we send our students, educators, and support staff into the new year with the full backing of their church family. Wear your brightest colors and come ready to GLOW in the grace and love of God!

First Baptist, thank you for being the kind of church that doesn't just respond to needs—but anticipates them, meets them, and exceeds them in love. You continue to embody what it means to be a light in the world, and I am honored to serve alongside each of you.

—With deep gratitude and joyful expectation, Dr. Vernon C. Walton

# Money Matters: What is the new tax law for seniors?

## Deduction for Seniors

New deduction: Effective for 2025 through 2028, individuals who are age 65 and older may claim an additional deduction of \$6,000. This new deduction is in addition to the current additional standard deduction for seniors under existing law.

- The \$6,000 senior deduction is per eligible individual (i.e., \$12,000 total for a married couple where both spouses qualify).
- Deduction phases out for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income over \$75,000 (\$150,000 for joint filers).

**Qualifying taxpayers:** To qualify for the additional deduction, a taxpayer must attain age 65 on or before the last day of the taxable year

**Taxpayer eligibility:** Deduction is available for both itemizing and non-itemizing taxpayers.

### Taxpayers must:

- Include the Social Security Number of the qualifying individual(s) on the return, and
- File jointly if married, to claim the deduction.

## How will the new tax law affect retirees?

- The new law includes a provision that eliminates federal income taxes on Social Security benefits for most beneficiaries, providing relief to individuals and couples. It does so by providing an enhanced deduction for taxpayers aged 65 and older, ensuring that retirees can keep more of what they earned.

## What is the new tax deduction for over 65?

The new \$6,000 deduction is stacked on top of both the regular stan-

dard deduction—\$15,750 for single filers or \$31,500 for married couples filing jointly in 2025—and the 65-plus addition. For instance, a 65-year-old single taxpayer who qualifies for the full \$6,000 deduction would be able to deduct a total of \$23,750 from these three tax breaks on their 2025 tax return. A qualifying 65-year-old couple could deduct up to \$46,700.

## Does this mean Social Security benefits are no longer taxed?

No. The new tax law contains no provision ending taxation of Social Security benefits or changing how those taxes are calculated. You may still be liable for federal income tax on a portion of your benefits if your provisional income—your adjusted gross income (AGI), plus tax-exempt interest income, plus half of your Social Security income—exceeds \$25,000 for a single filer and \$32,000 for a couple filing jointly.

## Is the new deduction permanent?

No. The new legislation only authorizes the deduction for the 2025 to 2028 tax years. However, Congress could extend the tax break or make it permanent before it expires in 2029.

This article represents some information that you should be aware of as a senior citizen. Please take some time to review these changes on the IRS website to understand how you might be impacted as you prepare for tax season.

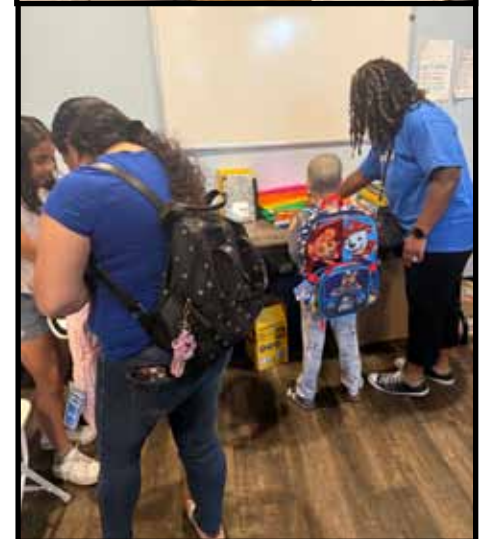
Your First Baptist Church Federal Credit Union is ready to assist you as you plan your end-of-year spend plan —Submitted by Willie Boykin, based researching the IRS website.

## CHRISTMAS IN JULY, continued from pg. 1

What made this possible was not just the planning—it was you. Your donations, your time, your presence, and your prayers were the heart of this outreach. Our church members, our virtual village, and our neighbors came together to share Christ's love in real and tangible ways.

We may never fully know how many lives were touched, but we do know this: hope was offered, needs were met, and Christ was glorified. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus. Thank you for proving that even in uncertain times, we can still move forward with purpose, compassion, and power.

Together, we gave more than gifts—we gave love.



## MINISTRY MEETING SCHEDULE

For more info call 703-938-8525

*All are welcome. join a new ministry today!*

Burden Bearers  
Feed the Homeless Ministry  
HANDS Health & Wellness  
Missionary  
Nursery  
Parking Lot  
Parent Nation  
Ushers  
Women's Ministry  
Worship & Arts (rehearsals)  
Young Adults  
Youth Advisory Council  
Evangelism Ministry

M-5pm; T,Th, F-6pm; Su-7:30pm  
(Conference Call Line)

4th Monday at 7pm (Virtual)

1st Tuesday at 7pm (Virtual)

3rd Monday at 6:30pm (Hybrid)

1st Monday at 7pm (Virtual)

1st Sunday at 8:30am (In-Person)

1st Thursday at 6:00 pm

2nd Thursday Time? (Virtual)

3rd Tuesday at 6:30pm (Virtual)

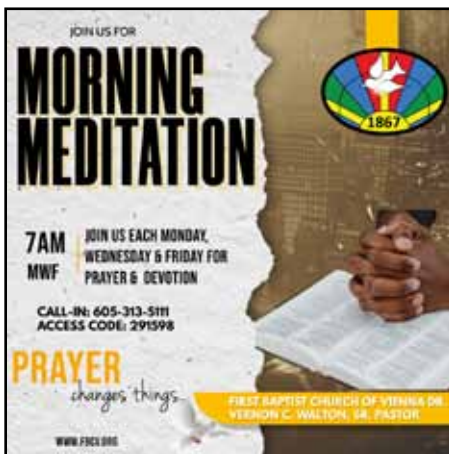
Tuesday Weekly at 7pm (In-Person)

2/6 and 3/6 at 6:30pm; 1st Thursday at  
6:30pm (Virtual)

1st Tuesday at 6:30pm (Virtual)

1st Sat. at 10 am (in-person + conference call line)

W W W . F B C V . O R G



### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF VIENNA

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Dr. Vernon C. Walton, Pastor

# August



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	31	1 7:00 am Prayer Call	2
3 <b>Communion Sunday</b> 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship	4 7:00 am Prayer Call	5	6 7:00 am Prayer Call	7	8 7:00 am Prayer Call	9
10 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship	11 7:00 am Prayer Call	12	13 7:00 am Prayer Call	14	15 7:00 am Prayer Call	16
17 <b>Glow Back to School Sunday</b> 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship	18 7:00 am Prayer Call	19	20 7:00 am Prayer Call	21	22 7:00 am Prayer Call	23
24 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship	25 7:00 am Prayer Call	26	27 7:00 am Prayer Call	28	29 7:00 am Prayer Call 7:00 pm 5 <sup>th</sup> Friday Live	30
31 9:00 am CLA 10:00 am Worship						

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

**2 Corinthians 5:17**