

JUNE 2021

The Epistle

First Baptist Church of Vienna, Va. | Fast Forward: Unfinished Business. *Phil. 3:13-15*



From
**Pastor
Walton's
Desk**

Grace and peace, First Family!

As the year progresses into the summer months, I am extremely excited about all the wonderful things we have going on in the life of our church. I am particularly excited for this year's Juneteenth celebration. We have partnered with the Town of Vienna to bring this wonderful event to our community. It really will be a fun day for families and friends to gather. We will witness African drumming and dance, and the music will highlight some of the great eras of black music from spirituals to modern day genres and artists. Local vendors, including some of our very own entrepreneurs, will be sharing what they have to offer, and of course, there will be plenty of food from local food trucks. It is my desire that you would help make this event a success by attending and inviting your friends and family to attend.

The excitement doesn't stop at Juneteenth. Vacation Bible School will start the Monday following Juneteenth. Each year, VBS is a time for us to learn, grow, and fellowship together. This year is no different. We will gath-

Pastor, continued on page 3

What Juneteenth Means to Me

By Esther W. McCullough
Special to *The Epistle*

Juneteenth began in Texas because the freedom from slavery message at the end of the Civil War reached Black people in Texas late. On January 31, 1865, Congress passed the 13th Amendment, called "Abolition of Slavery." It was ratified on December 6, 1865, to provide freedom from slavery to Black people nationwide. That freedom did not happen for Texas slaves and some in a few other states.

A Union General rode to Galveston two and one half years later to announce that the Civil War had ended and slaves were to be freed. We can only specu-

Memories, continued on page 4



The Celebration of Juneteenth at FBCV

By Stacey Seay
Special to *The Epistle*

This year, our Juneteenth celebration will be bigger and better than ever! After a year of quarantine, we have much to celebrate. The Town of Vienna has set aside a time to celebrate the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments as part of their Inaugural Liberty Amendments Month celebration, and we have partnered with them. As a result of this partnership, our Juneteenth Celebration will also serve as the kick-off event for the town's monthlong celebration!

You can expect to find all sorts of entertainment on our main stage – with music ranging from spirituals & gospel to steel pan and more. Our second stage will serve as a reader's stage and will feature book readings and lots of great giveaways. Plan to visit one (or both) of the food trucks that will be on site. Soul Rebel Food Truck, owned by our very own Kofi & Shareem Annan, will be serving up their Caribbean fusion specialties. If you have an inkling for barbecue, be sure to check out the Right on Que', who will also be on site.

As part of our continued commitment to being a service to the community, we will be hosting a COVID-19 vaccination clinic indoors throughout the cel-

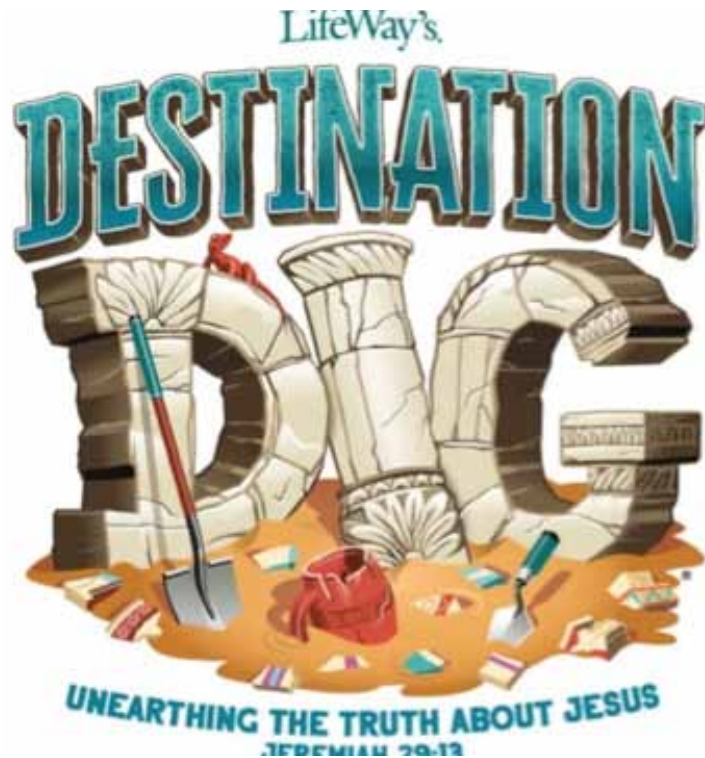
Juneteenth, continued on page 2



Worship and Arts Celebrates African American Music Month

June is always one of my favorite months because it is the onset of summer. I also love June because it is African American Music Appreciation Month. Formerly, Black Music Month until 2009, this celebration was initiated in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter. President Obama renamed it in 2009. The month was created to celebrate African American musical influences that comprise an essential part of our nation's treasured cultural heritage. African Americans are credited with creating, developing, and heavily inspiring sacred music (spirituals and gospel), folk music, the blues, military music, jazz, R&B, rock and roll, and hip hop.

We have a rich musical heritage, and it will be on full display at our Juneteenth celebration this year. We will have African drummers and dancers along with Al-Jabril Muhammad singing spirituals. Joshua Nelson will bless us with some traditional gospel, and there will even be some bands performing more contemporary music. I'm most excited about Domenic Lewis. He will be performing on the steel pans. Juneteenth will be the musical highlight of this month and I hope everyone who experiences this cultural celebration will leave inspired by this demonstration black musical excellence. —Kwan McKnight



VBS—FBCV, Let's Connect Virtually Again!

By Andrea B. Logan
Epistle Staff Writer

Roll up your sleeves and grab your excavation gear! We are heading to the archaeological sites of present-day Israel with "Destination Dig," our 2021 FBCV Vacation Bible School theme.

Please join us from June 21–25 from 6:30–8 p.m., as we share in God's Holy Word through Scripture, music and activities.

The theme verse is Jeremiah 29:13: "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all of your heart." The motto is "Seek Truth! Find Jesus!"

The registration link is: tinyurl.com/fbcvvbs2021.

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Juneteenth continued from page 1

celebration. Both the one-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine and the 2-dose Pfizer vaccine will be available for anyone who needs a vaccination from the age of 12 and above.

There are number of ways you can help ensure that this outdoor celebration is a success:

- **We need your presence.** Stop by the celebration, check out and support the vendors who represent businesses from around the Town of Vienna as well as black-owned businesses and organizations from throughout the region. We'll even have some special FBCV swag available for purchase.
- **Enjoy the performances!** If you are not quite ready to come out and join us, most of the performances will be available online via livestream.
- **Sign up to serve.** As we've shared, the expected scope of this event is larger because of our partnership with the town. A sign-up link will be sent via email.

Servant Leadership

By Shirley McCoy
Epistle Staff Writer

Several years ago, I was asked to present a workshop to church leaders based on Ken Blanchard's book, *The Servant Leader*. I had been trained by the Blanchard Group as a consultant for their Situational Leadership and Group Development (SLGD) model and had spent much time connecting the two models, SLGD and Servant Leader, so I agreed to conduct the workshop. I believed the model to be a good match for a religious group. FBCV has defined all ministry leaders as servant leaders. So, for the congregation, I would like to share Blanchard's thinking as to what a servant leader looks like and how it connects to the group's development and efficient functioning.

There are four simple dimensions of Servant Leadership: Head, Hands, Heart and Habits. Leading with the Head involves being a visionary, establishing clear and concise goals that everyone understands, doing the right thing and doing it the right way. Leading with the Heart involves encouraging, supporting and enabling others. Caring about them and focusing less on self and more on others. Leading with the Hand means to help members plan their performance and achieve their goals. Doing hands-on work to produce good results. Coaching members in order for the group to reach its full potential. The dimension of Habit is possibly the most important, as it speaks to consistency, accountability, discipline, and maintaining good relationships. To lead by Habit is to lead by example. If the leader cannot consistently follow the model, the group will become less motivated and frustrated which negatively impacts the work of the group. Inclusion, attitudes, motivations and the ability to serve first and lead second are all influenced by the understanding that to be a servant leader we must lead with the head, hands, heart and habit.

In a true Servant Leadership model you can expect (1) reasonably high morale among the team resulting in team ownership, (2) a focus more on the development and health of the group, not on power or personal gains, (3) power relinquished to more able members when it is required, (4) members who care about the organization and demonstrate loyalty to it because they know that all are valued and they feel safe in bringing forth new ideas, (5) decision-making that is collaborative, and (6) people who are empowered, more engaged, motivated, ethical, trusting, collaborative, and innovative. Ego, power and control taking a back seat.

Servant leaders possess healthy emotional intelligence which will allow him/her to identify strength and weakness within the group and be aware of how to handle them. They should possess excellent communication skills, the most important of these being listening skills. Being able to listen to the people allows the leader to better understand issues and creates a democratic organization where other opinions are invited and valued. In such a setting, varied perspectives are considered, and the leader benefits from input that might allow him/her to learn from past mistakes. Many times, others may be able to see the situation from a perspective not open to the leader.

A disadvantage of Servant Leadership is that it takes time and patience to develop such an organization and the required leadership skills. If goals are not clear, and the leader does not stay with the style, members can become less motivated and frustrated which will negatively impact the function of the group. However, since Christ was the model, this appears to be a perfect style for a church. (*Books on Ken Blanchard's Servant Leadership are housed in the church library.*)



Pastor, *continued from page 1*

er virtually each night to uncover spiritual truths, as this year's theme is Destination Dig. I encourage you to register your family and anyone else who would be blessed by this opportunity. Because it is virtual, we have a chance to reach people from around the world. Now is also the time to get the children in your life registered for our annual summer camp. I am most looking forward to this event for our youth. This year it will be a Virtual Youth Leadership Bootcamp. Our young people will be immersed in the study of activism through the lens of the arts. They will engage with social justice through the lens of poetry, drama, music and much more. It promises to be fun, engaging and educational.

In addition to the many opportunities I have shared, I also want to congratulate the class of 2021. I am aware these last 2 school years have not been ideal. However, you have persevered and overcome to get to this point. Some of you have graduated with honors, received scholarships, and have been accepted into wonderful institutions to further your education in the Fall. I salute all of you and pray God's continued blessing on your lives, and that he would guide your next steps.

Finally, as we look to the Fall, I want to encourage each of you to respond to the Re-entry Survey that has gone out via email. I want to hear from you as we prepare to make our way back into the sanctuary. It is my desire to ensure we are safe and comfortable once worship resumes. I look forward to sharing with you this month and in the months to come!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR COLLEGE GRADUATES!

Alexis Beasley is graduating from Robert Morris University. She majored in Environmental Science/Photography.

Taylor Renne Hampton graduated with honors from George Mason University. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Integrated Studies with a minor in Early Childhood Education. Taylor plans to attend graduate school this fall.



Taylor Renne Hampton

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Jada Brown	Loren Richey
Mitchell Colter	Jayden Seay
Aija Graham-Salazar	Nadia Wilbourne
Evan Neal	Stephen Wilson
Giani Phillips	

SCHOLARS' PRAYER CIRCLE

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a HOPE."

The College Connection will stand in the gap for our college students. You can say whatever you want in your prayer request. Please send in by June 10 to Arnitra Duckett at arnitrad@mac.com

PARTICIPANTS IN PAY FOR As

Please submit your spring transcripts by June 5 to Vivian Morton.

BIRTHDAY WISHES

Happy Birthday blessings and wishes to **Eric Morgan**, a sophomore at Virginia Commonwealth University, majoring in Business Foundations, and **Ronald Ayers**, a freshman at Olympup Prep Academy.

See Light, Be Light

In January 2021, National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman presented her poem "The Hill We Climb" at the presidential inauguration. The final lines read: "For there is always light, / if only we're brave enough to see it. / If only we're brave enough to be it."

How often we long for light! In recent years we've agonized amid pandemic, angry politics and new awareness of racism. Some have suffered deep sorrow. But Jesus says, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) and invites us to turn to him. God is always bringing light into darkness, through helpers, healers, peacemakers, friends. Sometimes bravery is required to turn our focus from the negative to the positive — to see the light of God.

Jesus also says, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14, emphasis added) and calls us to brighten the gloom. That requires bravery, as Gorman notes, but as Christians we're urged to look for light not just to make our own lives better but to shine into others' lives too. The Holy Spirit gives us the needed courage — to both see and be light. —*Newsletternewsletter.com*



The family of FBCV Member,
Charles Carter



Memories, continued from page 1

late why there was such a long delay—imagine people in that state were still enslaved and living in bondage.

The word Juneteenth is a combination of the words June and nineteenth. In East Texas, where I grew up, we would have gatherings of family and friends as an annual celebration. Each year there was the tradition of reserving a space at the park or in someone's backyard. We'd celebrate with fried chicken, hot dogs, barbecued meats, potato salad, salads, sandwiches and desserts like pies, cobblers and cakes. There was usually a red "soda pop" (usually a strawberry soda), other sodas and iced tea or lemonade. Gingerbread, cookies and melons were also popular. It was an outdoor celebration in spite of the very hot weather. The shade of a tree was always welcome.

Although the celebration originated in Texas, it has become popular in other states due to Black people moving and taking the holiday with them. I remember relatives in California celebrated Juneteenth just as they had in Texas. The rest of the United States eventually learned of the holiday and have attempted to make it official. Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia recognize Juneteenth as a state holiday or observance. (The exceptions are Hawaii, North Dakota and South Dakota). It has been a paid holiday for employees in Texas since 1980. There continues to be annual exhibits and celebrations across the U.S. by African American citizens that brings remembrance of their history.

June 2021 Money Matters: Tips to Improve Your Credit Score

A credit score is a number between 300 and 850 that shows a consumer's creditworthiness based on their bill payment history, current debt and other financial information. A high score could mean lower interest rates on a loan as lenders feel more confident that a person will repay their future debts.

A score of 800 or above is considered excellent, and most consumers have credit scores that fall between 600 and 750, according to Experian, a credit reporting agency.

On AnnualCreditReport.com you are entitled to a free annual credit report from each of the three credit reporting agencies. These agencies include Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the agencies are offering free credit reports every week through April 2022 so people can stay in control of their finances.

Here are tips for improving your credit:

Check your credit report

Getting an annual credit report will help you spot errors and fraudulent accounts. If you spot mistakes or errors, write to the credit reporting agency and information provider, such as your bank or credit card company, detailing the errors. They are required to investigate.

Pay down your debt

If you're behind on your bills, bringing them current could help. While a late payment can remain on your credit report for up to seven years, having all your accounts current can be good for your scores. It also stops further late payments from being added to your credit history as well as additional late fees, according to Experian.

Pay your bills on time

Make sure you don't miss loan or credit card payments by more than 29 days. Payments that are at least 30 days late can be reported to the credit bureaus and hurt your credit scores.

Avoid balloon payments

When you get the bill from your credit card, pay what you can. Don't wait until you have the full amount.

Don't open up too many credit cards

If you apply for too many cards over a short period of time, you may appear to a lender to be a greater risk. Appearing like you are looking for cash can produce negative results.

If you need assistance locating or improving your credit score, please feel free to contact your First Baptist Church Federal Credit Union.

—Submitted by Willie Boykin, based on the article by (Swapna Venugopal Ramaswamy in USA TODAY titled "Buying a home? Tips to improve your credit score")



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