

FIRST MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE MESSENGER

Youth



¹⁵ So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun. Eccl 8:15

Friday, June 13, 2025, we were pleased to have 28 FMZ youth and 5 brave chaperones embark on an adventure to the Kings Dominion Theme Park in Doswell, VA. God truly blessed us to have a wonderful time. Our youth admission tickets included meals and the ability to have water or another beverage every 15 minutes. The beverage inclusion was particularly important because it was a very warm day.

The heat did not deter our park enthusiasts. The lines to get on the rides were reasonable, so our young people had the opportunity to ride several rides, sometimes more than once.

The ride of choice for our youth was the rollercoaster. They rode and conquered rides with such intimidating names as the "Dominator," "Flight of Fear," "Grizzly" and "Rapterra." There may have been a few screams during the rides but when they disembarked, our youth were all smiles and ready to take on the next ride. Kudos to chaperone Rev. Cheryl Manning who joined her group on several rides.

We thank God for giving us such a beautiful day, allowing everyone to have a great time, and returning us to FMZ safe and sound. Thank you to our church family. Our youth ministry budget and individual member donations allowed this trip to be possible. I am grateful to our chaperones Sonya Wells, Rev. Cheryl Manning, Deacon Jeff Manning and Deacon Andre Robinson, who assisted me and chaperoned our youth.

We hope this outing provided our young people with fun memories that they will treasure forever. We encourage youth in grades 6-12 and those interested in working with our youth to join us when we resume our program in September. We are expecting even more God directed adventures.

*Submitted by,
Reverend Beverly Jiggetts
Youth Minister*



Samara, Elin, Bethany and Cara conquer the Apple Zapple roller coaster.



Aniya and Lane enjoy the Snoopy Teacup Ride



FMZ youth feel proud to have survived and conquered the "Dominator" roller coaster at Kings Dominion!



In addition to riding roller coasters, Jabari, Jada, Anaya and Alyssa got Henna tattoos (they wash off).

MIKAYLA STEWART SIGNS WITH WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY



"I am truly excited and very grateful...it's been a long time coming..."

Mikayla Stewart, the granddaughter of Wayne County's Harold and Katuria Stewart, recently received a scholarship and committed to play tennis at Winston-Salem State University.

Mikayla just graduated with honors from C.D. Hylton High School in Woodbridge, Virginia, posting an undefeated junior season with the school's tennis team. She was also the district tennis champion for the third year in a row.

Mikayla said she's very happy to realize one of her longtime goals: a scholarship to an HBCU (Historically Black College or University) in the South. "I'm truly excited and very grateful!" she said in a recent interview. "It's been a long time coming, and I've been working very hard over the years." Mikayla mentioned that during an interview with *The Press-Sentinel*, she had already spoken of her goals when she was visiting her family in Jesup in September of 2022.

The young tennis standout has strong athletic roots from her grandfather, Harold Stewart—a 1977 Wayne County High graduate who played basketball and football—and her father, Michael Stewart, who played football for Georgia Southern University's championship teams in 1999 and 2000. She said that WSSU is only a few hours from her home in Virginia and that she's very pleased with the academic and athletic prospects at the university.

"When I visited WSSU, it gave me the feeling of a hometown environment," Mikayla said. "I got to meet the staff and teachers, and as soon as I stepped onto the campus, it felt like home. I knew it was where I wanted to spend the next four years. She said she is familiar with some of the university's tennis players and had met its No. 1 player, Sammie Moore, and watched her play. "I was very impressed," she said.

The WSSU Rams compete in the CIAA athletic conference. Mikayla said earlier that she's been inspired by a number of tennis players, including Coco Gauff, Naomi Osaka, and Madison Keys.

Mikayla also has academic aspirations that she feels the university will help her achieve. She said she wants to major in psychology and pursue a doctorate so that she can become a clinical psychologist.

Founded in 1892, WSSU is rated by *U.S. News & World Report* as the No. 1 HBCU in North Carolina, according to the school's website.

Mikayla's mother, Stephany, is a University of Memphis graduate.

*By John Eden
Staff Writer*

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Message from the Acting Pastor

PERSEVERANCE IN SERVING, STUDYING, STEWARDING, AND WORSHIPPING GOD



Beloved,

In these challenging and ever-changing times, the call to *persevere* is more urgent than ever. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:9, "*Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*" That is the promise—and the challenge.

Perseverance in Serving means continuing to give of ourselves even when the work is hard and the recognition is few. Whether you serve behind the scenes or on the frontlines of ministry, know that God sees your labor of love. Keep showing up. Keep making a difference.

Perseverance in Studying God's Word is essential for growing deeper in our faith. When distractions multiply and time feels short, commit even more to studying Scripture. The Word is our anchor and our guide, especially in the storms of life.

Perseverance in Stewarding means being faithful with what God has entrusted to us—our time, our talents, our resources. Stewardship isn't seasonal; it's a daily practice of faithfulness and gratitude, even when budgets are tight or energy runs low.

Perseverance in Worship reminds us that no matter what we face, God is worthy of our praise. Worship isn't just a Sunday act—it's a lifestyle of surrender, adoration, and thanksgiving that keeps our hearts soft and our spirits strong.

So, I encourage you, Church family: Stay rooted. Stay faithful. Persevere in every area of your walk with God, because in due season, God will bring the increase—not only in our lives, but in the life of this Church.

As we enter our Ministry break, our "Ministry Selah" (Selah is a Hebrew word that means to pause or rest), I encourage you to enjoy the days of Summer and be prayerful of where and how you will serve in September because the ministry needs you. It is my prayer that we will return stronger than ever. Congratulations again to all our graduates. Thank you to all who serve and work faithfully in a spirit of excellence and cooperation to help this Ministry be successful and glorify God. Have fun, be safe, and Happy Independence Day!

With faith and love,

*Reverend Dr. Sandra K. James
Encouraging You to Finish the Race Strong*



Dear Church Family,

As we move through the summer season, the Deacon Ministry encourages each of you to remain prayerful, especially as we prepare our hearts and minds for the upcoming pastoral election. Let us seek God's wisdom and unity during this important time in the life of our Church.

Summer is also a time for Selah — a meaningful pause. It allows our ministries to rest, reflect, and prepare for renewed and revived service in September. As we embrace this season, we invite you to stay rooted in our four-step strategy:

Study, Service, Stewardship, and Worship. These pillars continue to guide us individually and collectively in our walk with Christ.

We also encourage you to:

- Stay connected with your Zone Leaders for encouragement and care.
- Support and engage in Sunday School and Wednesday Bible Study, where we continue to grow in God's Word.
- Above all, we pray your summer is filled with peace, safety, blessings, and opportunities to connect more deeply with God and one another.

*In Christian love
and service,*

The Deacon Ministry

"Prayer isn't about finding the perfect words but about drawing near to the perfect God. Speak from your heart, and trust that He will always meet you there."



WAS CHRIST COMFORTABLE ON THE CROSS?

"And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days,³⁰ save Yourself, and come down from the cross!'" (Mark 15:29-31)

No, He wasn't. Jesus, despite his discomfort on the cross, was a beacon of hope. He endured intense physical and emotional suffering, described as 'anguished and distressed,' while bearing the weight of the world's sins. His cry, ***'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? (Luke 23:34)'*** echoed a profound sense of abandonment and pain. His crucifixion, a brutal form of capital punishment, was not the end. It was a transformative journey, a path to redemption and growth.



As Jesus showed us, there is no growth in the comfort zone. Let's challenge ourselves to follow the example Christ demonstrated, to step out of our comfort zones, and grow. While some may not attend in sanctuary due to health or family situations, those who can, are invited to attend Sunday School in person.

Being comfortable in our own private Sunday School classes may hinder growth. Growth and diverse perspectives are necessary as ***"we seek to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ."*** In person Sunday School classes are a reservoir of fresh talent and ideas to maintain our church's relevance.

Sunday School is not just a place of learning, but a cornerstone of our community. It is vital to the success and continued operation of our church, establishing an understanding of the church's workings and organization from an early age. It is a host of growth and an exchange of ideas, a place where everyone's voice is heard, maintaining the church's relevance and fostering a sense of belonging. Sunday School supports one of FMZBC's four-step strategy ***-study of the word***. Join us Sundays and be a part of our journey towards growth and success!

*Peace, Blessings and Justice,
Reverend Gillis M. Taylor
Sunday School Superintendent*



SISTERS STRENGTHENING SISTERS

Sisters strengthening sisters is what God called each of us to do,
Yet we allow circumstances, emotions, and sometimes we ourselves from seeing it through.

We have all been charged to lift up one to the other and encourage, yet, if the truth be told, instead we tend to discourage.

But today is a brand-new day full of God's love, mercy and grace,
And together we can take what God has given us and put a smile on another sister's face.

God's grace is sufficient and His love is pure and true,
My sisters if we say we trust Him, then there is nothing we can't do,
This means no more excuses for not giving our best,
Just try Him and watch while He does the rest.

For on that solid rock, we shall all stand,
Sisters strengthening sisters as we hold each other's hand.

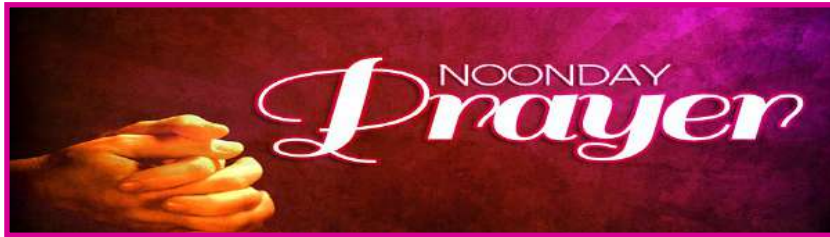
To love always, especially when we think a sister is unlovable to us,
Remembering just what Jesus did for us without even a fuss.

So let us start right now with open hearts and just listen,
We are supposed to be like Him, Christ-like, a Christian.

So as we walk this day forward by faith and not by sight,
We will be sisters strengthening sisters and doing it right.

Jeanne Coward
[Single poem - Poetry Nation](#)





THE GOODNESS OF GOD

I pray that this finds everyone doing well and staying safe. Continue to pray wherever you are during the noon hour, or join the Growing Together Midday Prayer Call.

Prayer:

"Lord, we thank you that even with our weaknesses and failures, you still choose to use us in fulfilling your will and plans for us. Your strength is made perfect in our weaknesses. May we always seek your will above our own.

When life's challenges and distractions cause us to grow weary, may we remember to stay anchored in you Lord. May we **NEVER** give up as we do the work that you have called us to do. Knowing that it will work out for God's glory and our good and nothing that we do for you is a waste of time. May we submit to you as you allow the challenges of life and our failures to cause us to grow stronger in our faith and relationship with you. Help us to let go of the things that we need to let go of and embrace the things that you are calling us to embrace, even if it takes us out of our comfort zone. May we learn to trust you even if we don't understand why, knowing that you see the whole picture and know what's best.

More than anything, we want your perfect will to be done and for you to receive the greatest glory that you can from our lives. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen!"

Scripture:

Psalm 23:6 NKJV

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

Psalm 23:6 AMPC

Surely or only goodness, mercy, and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life, and through the length of my days the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall be my dwelling place.

Psalm 23:6 MSG

Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life. I'm back home in the house of GOD for the rest of my life.

Praise and Worship Song: "CeCe Winans - Goodness of God" <https://youtu.be/9sE5kEnitqE>

Please continue to pray for our nation, our church, our families, and the world.

*Submitted by Noon Prayer Team
Deaconess Pamela Ford
Sister Carol-Ann Benjamin
Reverend Maxine Thompson*

PASTOR, STAFF, AND LEADERSHIP

Rev. Dr. Sandra K. James, Acting Pastor
Renee Woolfolk, Church Business Administrator
James Simpson, Chair, Trustee Ministry
Kavin D. Johnson, Chair, Deacon Ministry
Vietta Williams, Chair, Deaconess Ministry

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SUNDAY SCHOOL

"Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." (Isaiah 42:9)

Join Sunday School Hybrid each Sunday in Room 229/230. For those attending the register.

[Sunday School Extended Lesson Handouts](#) class via ZOOM, please [use this link](#) to access materials!



SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Spiritual Gifts Ministry was established to support the mission and vision of FMZBC by assisting members in discovering and developing Spiritual Gifts; providing resources to nurture spiritual giftedness through Christian education; and identifying FMZBC Ministries that provide opportunities for continued spiritual growth and Christian service.

We are currently seeking members who desire to be part of a dynamic Ministry with the goal of helping individuals discover their giftedness within the Body of Christ. If you are interested in exercising **your** gift(s) as a part of this Ministry, please contact us at:

spiritualgifts@firstmountzionbc.org
or
teach4God2003@yahoo.com.

Encouragement and Assurance for the Soul



READY-MADE FAMILY

During my early years, I lived in a community that considered each neighbor family. Family reached beyond members or individuals that shared the same address and last name, the community was family. When someone lacked a necessity, the expectation was to step up and provide for the member in need as God has provided for others in the community. Not only did the community step up and share resources items, but they also stepped up to assist with emotional welfare. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, we are urged as believers to encourage one another and build each other up. God knows each of us personally and He grants us gifts according to His will. The community, the Body of Christ, can be available for one another by encouraging each other through times of trouble, mourning, sickness, and life issues. God's word provides us guidance for every situation we encounter. He has given us hope through His word.

As children of God, we are called according to God's purpose. How wonderful it is to know that God designed each of us with a unique and meaningful purpose. Just as God placed the Body of Christ together to function as one big family, called "Children of God," He places us in designated areas to conduct His will and to merge each household as part of the bigger family. We are blessed to be the children of God, to be on His radar, and to call Him "Father."

Our circumstances change, but the word of God does not change. He is the same God today who placed the stars in the sky, led the Israelites through the Red Sea, and fed the five thousand. As we attend Sunday Worship service expecting an encouraging word from the preacher, we are reminded through the word of God that when life's issues try to overwhelm us, remember what God has done in the past, what He is doing in the present, and what He will do in the future. This is the blessing of being a member of God's "ready-made family."

*Submitted by
Reverend Annie Robinson*

FIRST MOUNT ZION
Ministry Summer
SELAH

A pause to reflect, a moment to breathe, a time to prepare

This summer, many FMZ ministries will pause from weekly meetings to rest and reset. We'll return in September with fresh vision and renewed strength!

Ministry Summer Selah: July–August
Ministries Resume: September

STAY CONNECTED THROUGH WORSHIP, PRAYER, AND SPECIAL SUMMER EVENTS!
WWW.FMZBC.COM

"He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul." — Psalm 23:2-3



Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area Chapter

"As a Gerontologist and Certified Dementia Practitioner, I am grateful for the opportunity to extend my support as a volunteer to the **Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area Chapter** as a support group facilitator and community educator. My goal is to strengthen the knowledge of caregivers during each stage of the disease, so they can effectively become the best caregiver to their loved one living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. My guiding mission is to "Make a difference each day for those fighting for their tomorrow."

Our heartfelt thanks to Stephanie for being part of our volunteer team! **#ProudVolunteer**
#NationalVolunteerWeek

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Stephanie Craddock

"My guiding mission is to make a difference each day for those fighting for their tomorrow."





UNITY DOESN'T ASK US TO ALL BE THE SAME

These days, chaos and divisiveness are all around us, in our workplaces, on the news, or on social media. We are constantly bombarded with images and content filled with conflict and discord which makes peace and unity seem like a far-off fairy tale. And if we are honest, even in our church, unity is strained as we find ourselves in the current season of transition. Differing viewpoints and impassioned perspectives are dividing the body of Christ and pushing us further apart every day. How can we answer calls for unity in times like these?

The Bible reminds us in Romans 12:4-5 that we are one body made of different talents, perspectives, and experiences. While we may see things differently, everyone's unique vantage point is necessary to operate as one body—in love, with purpose, and in alignment with God's will.

Without question, our church is uniquely qualified and, more importantly, called to live in unity. At the core of our identity is God's calling for us to be "connected" as outlined in our mission:

To connect people who have a desire
to become fully devoted followers
of Jesus Christ.

Merriam-Webster defines **connection** as "a relation of personal intimacy (as of family ties)." As part of God's family, we are connected to Him and each other. So, what do we do when our own connections have become frayed and stretched thin? What can we do when every decision or action leaves us physically, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted? How can we move forward when our community is fractured, and we are at odds with perhaps the very ones we love? What can we do differently?

Unity is oneness not sameness. Unity is less about seeing things the same way and more about making room for all parts of the Body of Christ. Unity asks us to hold fast to the truths outlined in God's word, "...put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:14 ESV).

I encourage you to join me in praying for a heart to love God and his people more, ears to hear the different perspectives of my brothers and sisters in love, the patience

to speak with kindness, and hands to do His will. I pray that we will all embrace 1 Peter 3:8 to "...have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind."

Humbly Submitted,

Deaconess Kishema Tapp



When you're not sure what to say to God, praying His Word back to Him is a great place to start. Here's one way to pray through Psalm 23

Dear God, I know that no person could possibly meet all my emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical needs. So I want to look to You to meet all my needs. You are my Shepherd; I lack nothing. Starting today, I'm going to obey Your instructions about rest. Thank You for the picture of You making me lie down in green pastures and leading me beside quiet waters. Help me to refresh my soul with the beauty of the natural world You've created. Let me look to things like art and music that You've given me to express my emotions.

Heavenly Father, sometimes I don't know what to do; I'm confused, and I lack wisdom. Help me go to You for guidance. When I go through dark valleys, help me not to be afraid of the shadows but to turn to You for comfort. When I'm ready to give up, help me to trust that You know what I should do. When I feel like I'm under attack and others are against me, would You be my protector and defender? Help me to speak words of kindness and to return good for evil—to pray for those who persecute and stand against me. Thank You for comforting me when I walk through hard seasons. And, God, I'm going to expect You to finish what You've started in me. Rather than feeling anxious about the future, I'm going to believe that Your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life—and that one day I will dwell in Your house forever. Jesus, I invite You to take over every area of my life and my mind. Slow me down so that I may see Your plan for my life. Replace my stress with Your peace. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

-- Anonymous



The Seniors' Ministry closed out its year in stellar form with a dual celebration in support of Father's Day and Juneteenth. Father's Day theme was "A Father's Love: The Foundation of Generations", using Psalm 103:13 as our guide, and our Juneteenth's theme was a

stark reminder of an act of freedom that was "*Delayed but not Denied*".

The program started with prayer and Scripture reading by Bro. Willie and Sis. Alicia Ford, followed by Dr. Keith Boykin, who gave a rousing welcome to all and thanked the first-time visitors for sharing in the occasion. Sis. Hope Singleton recognized the JUNE birthday and anniversary celebrants, followed by a tribute to Fathers, delivered by Deacon Robert Creekmur. "Hero," a video by Gerald and Eddie Levert, was shown following his presentation. Deacon James Tribble, Brother Doug Earl and Brother Cardell Hunter then shared treasured memories, reminiscing on the advice from fatherhood that sustains them; the words of wisdom learned; and the cherished memories of their fathers.

A delicious "down-home" southern meal was served to the delight of everyone! It included pickled cucumber, coleslaw, turnip greens, corn bread, sweet potatoes, fried Whiting, pulled pork and barbecue chicken. Carrot cake with a delicious cream frosting, and refreshing watermelon topped off our meal, along with some tasty punch. During lunch we were serenaded by a collection of songs dedicated to fathers, which gave the Fellowship a special touch. This fellowship was a stark reflection of family cookouts, and a reminder of the way things used to be "back in the day".

Our Chaplain, Sis. Loretta Archie delivered a tribute to all fathers followed by a presentation to the eldest father present, Deacon Emeritus Camillus Sessoms, also acknowledged for being a long-standing member of the Seniors' Ministry. We then presented Dr. Holley with a beautiful floral arrangement in appreciation for her dedication to the Seniors' Ministry and her unwavering support. She has been an inspiration to the Seniors' Ministry, offering wise guidance when called upon to share any remarks. We thank God for Dr. Holley. And, to our surprise, Dr. Holley presented the Director (Ms. Oonagh Bell) and the Co-Director (Dr. Keith Boykin) with an appreciation gift for their great leadership and hard work, noting that the Seniors' Ministry is blessed to have them at the helm doing awesome work for the Kingdom. Additionally, Dr. Holley acknowledged all the Seniors' Ministry servants with cards and an ice-cream gift card to stay cool during the summer.

We then transitioned to the second half of our program where we celebrated "Juneteenth - A Celebration of Freedom - Delayed, But Not Denied!" We began with a collective singing of the Black National Anthem led by Minister of Music and Arts, Sylstea Sledge, followed by a moment of silence in remembrance of those who fought for freedom and justice. The program continued with Dr. Ryle Bell delivering a rather poignant poem he wrote entitled "Juneteenth," followed by Sister Doris Johnson who gave a brief explanation of Juneteenth and its historical significance. We listened to a stirring delivery of "Glory" by John Legend and Common. This clearly brought back vivid memories to everyone in attendance.

We were enamored to have three notable speakers, Reverend Cozy Bailey (NAACP), Dr. Rhudine Wilkes (NCNW), and Reverend Kara Franklin-Taylor (Black Clergy), who spoke about the Juneteenth experience from their different perspectives. After relishing in such an informative and educational fellowship, everyone was anxious to get their "Boots on the Ground!" Our instructor, Ms. Latonya Thuragood and our DJ (PE Entertainment), were chomping at the bit to get things started. Just watching the seniors line dancing was a treat and while we were unable to spend as much time on the dance floor as we would have liked, a good time was had by all. The promise is that our next "dancing" experience would not take a year to happen and there would be no talking (well, maybe a little)only dancing!

The Seniors' Ministry closed out its year with a bang and we look forward to September. Stay tuned... more forthcoming! Enjoy the summer, stay cool, and be safe!

With immense appreciation,

*Sister Oonagh M. Bell, Director
Dr. Keith Boykin, co-Director*





VISION: Sharing the Light: From the Promise, to Pentecost, to Points Around the World

Pastor Candidate Finalist



A Season of Discernment: Reflecting on Our Pastoral Candidates

As we conclude the candidate visit process, we invite you to enter a time of intentional prayer, reflection, and spiritual listening. Below, you'll find information to help you recall each candidate's visit and message by scanning the corresponding QR Code or logging onto First Mount Zion Baptist Church's YouTube Channel.

This is not about comparison—it's about seeking God's will together as a church family.



**SANDRA K.
JAMES**

Bible Study
April 26, 2025

[Bible Study Link](#)



Sermon - They Not Like Us
April 27, 2025

[Sermon Link](#)



**STEVEN G.
BLUNT**

Bible Study
May 3, 2025

[Bible Study Link](#)



**Sermon - Your Faith Has
to Do It**
May 4, 2025

[Sermon Link](#)



**DREW K.
ROSS**

Bible Study
May 17, 2025

[Bible Study Link](#)



**Sermon - Learning to Handle
Snakes**
May 18, 2025

[Sermon Link](#)



**LAURENT S.
GROSVENOR**

Bible Study
May 31, 2025

[Bible Study Link](#)



Sermon - Jesus Is On My Side
June 1, 2025

[Sermon Link](#)



VISION: Sharing the Light: From the Promise, to Pentecost, to Points Around the World

MESSAGE FROM THE PULPIT COMMITTEE



Join us for a Prayer Circle.

When: July 27th (4th Sunday)
Time: Immediately After Service
Location: Chapel

Note: This time is for Prayer ONLY



A PRAYER FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SEARCH MY HEART

"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people by the will of God." - Romans 8:27 NIV

My heart became increasingly heavy as I read the requests that friends, co-workers, and family members had shared with me over the past week.

Uncle's cancer returned.
Wayward daughter.
Husband's infidelity.
Life-altering diagnosis.
Job loss.

The list in my prayer journal was never-ending, and the petitions for help far outweighed the praise reports. Scanning through the list, feelings of helplessness overwhelmed me. I desperately wanted to help each person, providing relief, comfort, or peace, but prayer didn't seem enough. So often, I think of prayer as a last resort, something I turn to after I've tried everything else. In a feeling of defeat, I think, "Well, I guess all I can do is pray." But, as a friend shared with me the other day, "prayer shouldn't be the last thing we offer, but our first response.

It isn't all we can do is pray; instead, we do what we can, pray." Once I started thinking about prayer in this light, it changed my perspective, and I began feeling a sense of relief as I released these requests to the One who can meet needs, calm hearts, heal hurts, and provide peace. I can articulate most requests to our Heavenly Father, but for some, human words and wisdom fail me, so I must rely on the Holy Spirit to step in and speak for me.

Paul encourages the Christians in the church of Rome with these words, "And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. (Romans 8:27 NIV). In the preceding verses, Paul speaks about the here and not-yet tensions Christians live in. While those of us in Christ are saved from the penalty of sin, we still live in the presence of sin. Accepting Jesus as Savior means we have a future hope and the promise of eternal life, but that doesn't mean we won't experience pain and suffering while we wait for the day we are in the presence of the Lord. Paul says that not only humanity but all of creation is groaning, waiting for the day the Lord will return and make all things new (Romans 8:23).

*"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."
- - Shirley Chisholm*

While the reality of suffering may feel like we are fighting this battle alone, we have a helper and advocate, the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our weakness. Paul says that we may not know what to pray, but the Holy Spirit searches our hearts and intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:26-27). How beautiful that the Spirit is always at work, searching our hearts and petitioning for us in accordance with God's will.

Have you ever bowed your head before the Lord in prayer and whispered, "Lord, help me, I don't know what to say, but You know my heart?" We can be tempted to think that these are prayers of defeat, but these are prayers of the faithful who call on the Spirit to give us strength and align our will with the Father's. Next time you feel weighed down by the many requests and unable to put the specific needs into words, call out to the Spirit, who searches hearts and speaks to God on our behalf.

Let's Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of prayer. May we never take for granted the ability to communicate with You. Lord, there are numerous requests both in our homes and communities and worldwide that we could lift up to You. There are people who are hurting, souls that need to be saved, and hearts that need to be healed. The prayers are endless. We know that You are a God who sees, and that You see these requests and answer according to Your will. Lord, we ask that we lean into the Holy Spirit when we cannot speak or petition on behalf of others. We allow the Spirit to help us in our weakness, searching our hearts and minds to intercede. Thank you for giving us a Helper to guide and direct us and bring us comfort and peace. Please help us to wait well through the suffering and trials. Let us not become despaired but cling to our eternal hope in Christ.

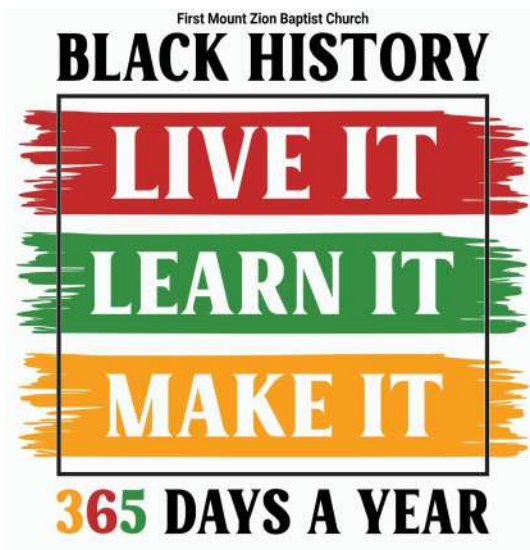
In Jesus' Name, Amen.

*By Laura Bailey
Christianity.com*

Sunday School
Join Sunday School
Hybrid each Sunday in Room
229/230. For those attending the
class via ZOOM, please [use this](#)
[link](#) to register.

We look forward to seeing you!

[Sunday School Extended Lesson Guides Handouts](#)



We're reaching out with something special — an open call to folks who care deeply about African American history, justice, and truth. We're starting a *new* ASALH branch right here in Northern Virginia — and we want you on the ground floor. **This is about more than just joining. This is about building.**

ASALH (the Association for the Study of African American Life and History) was founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson — the same visionary who gave us Negro History Week, now Black History Month. We're continuing that mission today, and launching this branch to spotlight the untold and under-told stories of Black life right here in our own backyard — especially across Prince William County and Northern Virginia.

Why now?

Because history is under attack. Books are being banned. Truths are being buried. And if we don't tell our stories — fully and honestly — someone else will tell them for us... or erase them altogether.

Why join us?

- **Be a founding voice.** You'll help shape what this branch does and where it goes.
- **Share real stories.** Help bring local African American history to life — from schools and libraries to community events and public spaces.
- **Connect and grow.** You'll be in community with educators, organizers, faith leaders, students, historians, artists — all united by a common cause.
- **Make a local impact.** We're not just talking history — we're talking *now*. How the past shapes today's struggles, policies, and victories.

What we'll do together:

- Highlight local heroes and hidden stories.
- Build partnerships with schools, churches, libraries, D-9, and local institutions.
- Host community events, walking tours, and talks that *actually matter*.
- Push for historical preservation and educational justice in our neighborhoods.

We're not waiting for change — we're making it. And we want you to help us get it started.

To learn more or sign up as a founding member, just reply to this message or reach us at joe.boutte@qtausa.com. Let's make this moment matter — and make sure our history is seen, heard, and never forgotten.

How to Join ASALH and Become a Founding Member of the Northern Virginia Branch

1. Join the National ASALH Organization.

Every local branch member must first be a member of the national organization. Here's how to join:

Go to: <https://asalh.org/join/>

- **Click** the red **"Join/Renew"** button.
- **Create an account** or log in if you already have one.
- **Select your membership type**

(**Complete payment** and keep a record of your confirmation)

cont'd on page 15 - -

-- cont'd from page 14

2. Notify the Northern Virginia Branch Organizing Team.

Once your national membership is confirmed, email us at joe.boutte@qtausa.com with:

- ✦ Your name
- ✦ Proof of ASALH National membership (a confirmation email or screenshot is fine)
- ✦ Your preferred contact information
- ✦ Any interest in volunteering or leadership
- ✦ **Spread the Word!**
 - Invite others who care about history, justice, and community empowerment to join too.
 - Institutional partners (churches, libraries, schools) are especially encouraged.

In solidarity and purpose,

*Brothers Joe Boutte and Harvey Woodson
Northern Virginia ASALH Branch
(Organizing Team)*

"The whistle walk" was the walk leading from the kitchen to the House. Enslaved people were required to whistle as they walked as whistling and chewing are incompatible simultaneous actions. It would also ensure that they did not eat or spit in Massa's food on the way to serve.



Robert F. Smith is the richest Black person in the U.S. and the second richest Black billionaire in the world. Forbes estimates his net worth at over \$9 billion dollars. He is the founder of **Vista Equity Partners**, a private equity firm that focuses on investing in software companies.

But how did he get there? Robert F. Smith was born in Denver, Colorado, in 1962 to Dr. Sylvia Myrna Smith and Dr. William Robert Smith. While in high school, Smith snagged an internship at Bell Labs, a telecommunications and technology company.

He attended Cornell University and graduated in 1985 with a chemical engineering degree. Cornell named the School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering after Smith after he donated \$50 million to the University. While at Cornell University, Smith joined the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Smith later attended Columbia University where he received his Master of Business Administration degree. Smith's first job out of business school was at Goldman Sachs. According to Columbia Business School, Smith was the first M&A banker in Silicon Valley. Smith met Suzanne McFayden at Cornell University where they both attended undergrad. The pair married in 1988, separated in 2011, and divorced in 2014.

In 2000, Robert F. Smith founded Vista Equity Partners, a private equity firm specializing in technology, in Austin, Texas. The company now manages over \$101 billion in assets. Smith is worth \$9.2 billion. Smith vowed to pay for the student loans of the entire Morehouse College graduating Class of 2019. He also received an honorary degree from the school. Smith served as Chairman of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights organization from 2013 to 2020. He also won the human rights organization's Ripple of Hope Award in 2010 for his work on racial inequities in the criminal justice system. Smith is well known for his philanthropic work. In 2018, he was the largest individual donor at the City of Hope Gala, which supports prostate and breast cancer research for Black men and women. He also donated \$50 million to his alma mater, Cornell University. He is the first African American person to sign the Giving Pledge to give away the majority of his wealth.

In 2015, Smith married Hope Dworaczyk, a former Playboy model, television host, reality star, and skincare entrepreneur. John Legend serenaded the couple, who were then 52 and 30 years old. Smith has seven children — three with his first wife and four with his second wife.



July 6, 2025
Volume 21, Issue 7



The last day to register for the July SHARE package is July 13th. Share packages are \$23 for food valued between \$35 and \$45. POC: Thomas Bates, 703-772-8837. Distribution will be on July 26, 2025.



ATTENTION ZOOM MEETING HOSTS

To protect our ministries from potential "Zoom bombing" by miscreants and hackers, it is no longer recommended to post meeting ID and passcodes to the website or social media. As an alternative, Zoom offers a registration feature for meeting participants to register for a meeting using a registration link. Once the registration link is established by the host, the link can be shared as usual via Connection Points, email, text, etc. The organizer/host will receive a roster of registrants and, if necessary, can use the list to verify people before they are allowed in the meeting.

For those who schedule ZOOM meetings, to follow is a short video on how to enable the registration feature to Zoom meetings

How to set up a Zoom registration link for better security: <https://youtu.be/VqomCzNnii>

USE THIS LINK TO VIEW THE FMZBC CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS.

[CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS](#)

YOU MAY ALSO VIEW THE DOCUMENT ON THE FMZBC WEBSITE. NOTE, IT IS PASSWORD PROTECTED. TO ACCESS IT, CLICK ON THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS SLIDE AND ENTER THE CODE: [FMZBCDOCS2024](#)

COPIES ARE AVAILABLE BY CONTACTING THE FRONT OFFICE AT 703-670-0184.

SUBMISSIONS FOR NEWSLETTER:

All members are encouraged to submit articles, photos, and events for inclusion in the Newsletter. Please be sure to clear all submissions with your Ministry Leader before sending to the Communications and Publicity Ministry. Submissions **should not exceed 300-350 words** and must be received no later than **12 noon on the 15th of each month** to be considered for the upcoming newsletter. Please note that we reserve the right to edit as necessary. Submissions should be sent to:

cpm@firstmountzionbc.org

We look forward to your participation!! Thank you!

CPM Team

Deacon Joseph Boutte, Chair
Sister Oonagh Bell
Brother Benson Blake
Trustee Alfranda Durr
Dr. Sandra Flowers
Brother James Gaskins
Deaconess Mary Lively
Sister Sylvia Moore
Sister Roslyn Parker
Reverend Kathy Russell
Deaconess Claudia Woolfolk

SUNDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE

Sunday School
9:45 AM

In-Person and via ZOOM

Worship Service – 11:00 AM (ONLY)
in Sanctuary or view us on line at

FMZ Life Stream:

<https://live.lifestream.tv/first-mount-zion-baptist-church>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/fmzbcumfries>

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzFC03nn-QRnObzNDEefeGQ>

SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Connect with us on:

Lifestream:

<https://live.lifestream.tv/first-mount-zion-baptist-church>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/fmzbcumfries

Instagram: [@thecore_fmzbc](https://www.instagram.com/thecore_fmzbc)

Linked In: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1890924/>

Twitter: [@fmzbc1](https://twitter.com/fmzbc1)

Vimeo: vimeo.com/25203195

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzFC03nn-QRnObzNDEefeGQ>

YouVersion Bible, Devotions, and Prayers:
https://bit.ly/FMZBC-YouVersion_Bible



[LifeStream.tv](https://www.lifestream.tv)

[indeed https://www.indeed.com/cmp/First-Mount-Zion-Baptist-Church](https://www.indeed.com/cmp/First-Mount-Zion-Baptist-Church)