

The Epistle

SEPTEMBER 2020



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

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

FIRST FORWARD... Philippians 3:13-15



From Pastor Walton's Desk

Dear First Family,

It is hard to believe that we have not worshipped together in the sanctuary since March. Never would I have imagined that this would be our reality. Everything in me told me that we would be back in the building by Easter Sunday morning, needless to say it came and went. In spite of it all, I am indeed grateful to say that while the building has remained closed, worship and ministry have continued.

Yes, we were caught by surprise. We had to pivot and adjust very quickly. We stumbled along the way. However, we have managed well. I want to thank the staff, servant leaders, joint ministry, and especially the FBCV disciples. Together we have demonstrated that ministry is not confined to a building and the church is not the brick and mortar but she is a group of people empowered by God and sharing in community.

September marks the fall season of ministry. Students are returning to school. It won't be long and there will

Pastor, continued on page 5

Vote! Your Voice Matters!

November 3 is Election Day! If you have not already done so, the deadline to register to vote is **October 13**.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO NOTE:

Register Here: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/citizen-portal/>

To be eligible to vote, you must:

- Be a resident of Virginia (a person who has come to Virginia for temporary purposes and intends to return to another state is not considered a resident for voting purposes).
- Be a U. S. Citizen.
- Be 18 years old (any person who is 17 years old and will be eighteen years of age at the next general election shall be permitted to register in advance and also vote in any intervening primary or special election).
- Not be registered and plan to vote in another state.
- Not currently declared mentally incompetent by a court of law.
- If convicted of a felony, your right to vote must have been restored.

EARLY VOTING

You can vote early at your local registrar's office beginning **September 18th** until the Saturday before Election Day. To check your registration status please visit: <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation>

To vote early in-person, please note the following:

Voting, continued on page 2

New Member of the Team

First Baptist is pleased to welcome Melinda Warren. Melinda is joining the staff as an intern through Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. At Wesley she is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree.

Melinda is a member of The First Baptist Church, Inc. of North Brentwood in Brentwood, MD where the pastor is Rev. Dr. Duane T. Kay. She says she loves the Lord and loves serving in his army. This is evidenced in her service to her church. There she has served in Christian Education, youth, dance, and health ministries. She was also a coach for the church's yearly oratorical contest participants.

She has always had a passion for working with and mentoring teenagers and serving the elderly, but recently she has developed an interest in and passion for

Warren, continued on page 7

Dr. Valentine Receives President's Choice Award

The President's Choice Award was presented to Rev. Dr. Emma Valentine at the 143rd Northern Virginia Baptist Association, Inc. virtual session. At the 105th Women's Ministry Annual Day on August 18, President Marian Hines surprised Dr. Valentine. President Hines said that she had worked diligently with the seniors of the community through the Seniors With A Purpose (SWAP) Ministry at First Baptist Church of Vienna. Rev. Valentine is the ministry leader who makes sure seniors are recognized, feel wanted and enjoy activities that are stimulating and informative.

Family, friends and church members were able to attend the Zoom session and witness the presentation. We are blessed to have her exhibiting the way of the Lord by encouraging the seniors. It is the passion of Rev. Valentine to work with and for the seniors of the church and the community.

—Esther McCullough

SAVE THE DATE

A Dine and Learn, Sept.
24 at 7:00 p.m.

Author, Hilda Valentine reviews her book, *The Other Side of Nothing*. Clinical Psychologist, Malinda Williams-Gray, will also be our guest. The book can be purchased at Amazon.com to be prepared for dialogue and our participation.



Voting, continued from page 1

- Visit your registrar's office or a satellite voting location in your county or city to vote early. The Saturday before Election Day is the last day to vote early. You can find your local registrar here: <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation/PublicContactLookup>

- You do not have to have a reason or fill out an application to vote early.

- At the registrar's office or satellite voting location, you must provide your name and address and show an acceptable form of ID or sign an ID Confirmation Statement.



ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF IDENTIFICATION

(For voting at the polling place or voting early)

- Voter confirmation documents you received after you registered to vote
- Virginia DMV-issued Driver's License or Identification Card
- Valid United States Passport
- Any ID card issued by the US, Virginia, or a local Virginia government
- Any student ID card issued by a US university or community college
- Valid student ID issued by a public school or private school in Virginia
- Employer-issued photo ID card
- Any current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document with your name and address
- An ID Confirmation Statement
- Accessible equipment and/or curbside voting is available upon request.

ABSENTEE VOTING

- Apply by mail: <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation>

—Submitted by Shareem Annan

VIRTUAL CONNECTION GROUPS...

Coming Soon!

The fall season of ministry is upon us and now is the perfect time to re-commit to intentional study of God's Word. Our fall session of Virtual Connection Groups will launch in October and last for six weeks. The groups will not only serve as a time of learning but also of fellowship. This session's offerings include:

Resilient Faith

This course will examine the Book of 1 Peter and offers the needed understanding of what a resilient faith looks like and how we can stand strong regardless of what comes at us.

Pressure Points

Pressure is nothing new. The Book of James beckons us to let the pressures of life push us deeper in our journey with Jesus. This course will help remind us that pressure doesn't have to dismantle our faith; rather it can lead you to experience the presence and power of God like never before.

Help My Unbelief

All of us have questions about faith, but we often feel awkward or uncomfortable asking them. We assume doubt is always a bad thing. God is infinite, beyond our understanding—yet He chooses to reveal Himself in ways that spark our questions rather than settling them all. This course will help us begin the process of learning all we can understand and trusting God in all we can't.

The Life of a Jesus Follower

Does Christianity ever seem like a burden to you? Why is something that came so naturally to Jesus so difficult for us? We have complicated and over-programmed the simple way that Jesus showed us to love God and others. This course will help you exchange the "burden" of religion for the simpler, biblical method of following Jesus.

The Church and the Racial Divide

In light of racial tension in America, many Christian leaders are talking earnestly about racial reconciliation. Many pastors and lay leaders look at the growing tensions in our churches and wonder how they can be a healing force in our culture. This course will explore ways to accomplish this.

More detailed course descriptions are available on the church website: <http://www.fbcv.org/communications>

Registration for our fall cycle of Connection Groups will begin on Wednesday, September 9th. Space is limited, so don't delay in registering for your desired class before it fills up! You can register online at: <https://tinyurl.com/fbcvgroups>



With all of the news about COVID-19 and how it is negatively impacting people's "normalcy," I would like to take another approach and look at it from a different perspective. Personally, this change has been impactful in a positive way! It has forced us to be more creative and spread the gospel far more than we have ever done before. We thank you all for your support with the Friday night musicals and Jammin' in July, especially those who tuned in, donated and participated. For First Baptist and myself, it has given us the opportunity to minister and to reach people at different places in their lives, emotionally, spiritually, and geographically. As we move into the fall, we want to continue in that spirit and make being creative the "norm."

Last year for Homecoming we had our first musical concert with guests including Carlton Ponder, and Ministry's Desire, Natalie Wilson, and Maurette Brown-Clark to name a few.

This year, we will be going beyond the walls of First Baptist and hosting Homecoming 2020 outdoors at 10 a.m. on Sunday, September 20. Our musical guest will be Stephen Hurd. Stephen is a renowned leader in the gospel music community. He serves as the minister of music for First Baptist Church Glenarden in Landover, Md. He has released two acclaimed recordings with Integrity Music, and he is a Stellar and Dove-Award nominated songwriter and artist. His songs "Revelations 19:1 (Hallelujah, Salvation and Glory)," "Undignified" and "Lead Me To The Rock" are sung at faith gatherings around the globe.

After worship we will have "Comedienne Tanya Lewis." She is the former manager and writer on the comedy page for Mr. Brown from the sitcom, "Meet the Browns." She has opened up for Marcus D. Wiley, Akitude, Chinnatra Morris amongst others. She is the Church Stars Comedienne of The Year Recipient for 2016 and 2018.

We look forward to "doing something different" while still celebrating our Homecoming. It is our hope that you will come out and share with us. Pack a lunch and bring your lawn chairs if you would like to worship on the lawn or stay in your car and tune into audio through your car radio. Either way, grab your mask and prepare for an impactful morning of worship! —Kwan McKnight

2020 FALL VIRTUAL

STRIVING *for* EXCELLENCE Program

TUTORS NEEDED

FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL BSLAUGHTER@FBCV.ORG

Academic Enrichment is Back!

By Epistle Staff Writer HB McCown

The First Baptist Academic Enrichment Program also known as “Striving for Excellence” is back starting October 14 via Zoom. The mission of Academic Enrichment is to help students to reach their academic goals in the classroom. This year we have the opportunity to reach more students than ever before across multiple states via an online platform. Tutoring will be even more critical this year as many students will be entering the school year virtually, with less hands-on and one-on-one interaction in the classroom. This year Academic Enrichment will host several small group virtual classrooms supporting multiple grades in order to provide the support needed by the participants. This year’s program will include test taking skills in addition to the traditional support that is provided. In order to make Academic Enrichment the blessing and success we are striving for, we need volunteers to serve as tutors and mentors. If you are interested in serving, please contact Minister Brandon Slaughter or complete the volunteer form at (enter URL). If you would like to register for Academic Enrichment please visit tinyurl.com/FBCVlearning. In the words of Malcolm X, “Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.” Let’s help our children prepare to soar!

Welcome Back to School, College Connection Scholars

“For I know the plans I have for you”, said the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” - Jeremiah 29:11

While the fall semester of 2020 is not quite as you expected and virtual/remote learning is the new normal, we know that you will excel in any environment. Your First Family is here to support you during your learning. As we plan for the 2020–2021 school year, we would like to ensure you are continuously connected with your FIRST FAMILY. Please take time to complete the College Connection Roster no later than Thursday, September 10. Use the link here: <https://forms.gle/g7UmExo213XWwf9Y9>

Have a blessed semester,
Arnitra Duckett
Jennifer Spriggs



**Sunday
 Sept. 13**

A Meditation For the New School Year

The pursuit of education will engage you on a “journey of self.” Howard Thurman, religious scholar and Dean of Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel at Howard University, said, “There is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will spend all of your life and spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls.”

Through the pursuit of knowledge, you should be in search for this sound. This process may be messy and filled with many moments of uncertainty, or you may find your passion. However learning is a journey for the genuine passions that will guide you as you matriculate through life. These passions include the genuine urge to speak truth to power and the desire to chase innovation and vision.

As another school year begins, remember the words of womanist and scholar bell hooks, “To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while si-

multaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality.” Each student, no matter the grade, will live out this quote by being an advocate for justice and equity, joining new clubs or fostering opportunities to cultivate your creative self.

As youth and young adult pastor of First Baptist Church of Vienna, I charge you this school year to embrace the title of “emerging visionary.” I urge you to not only make good grades, but to be a visionary in the classroom. Whether in person or virtually—contribute your presence, talents, and creativity as you seek to unlock your best self.

As we soar to high heights and reach new plateaus, remember this moment. For it is at this moment, you accepted the possibilities of our realities in Christ. It is truly as Christopher Wallace (Biggie Smalls) and the Clark Sisters said, “the sky is the limit.” Let us have an amazing year!

In spirited and agape love,
Minister B



Ella Patterson and family
for the loss of her husband,
Ronald Patterson

Rosie Maye and family
for the loss of her sister,
Lucille Tolliver

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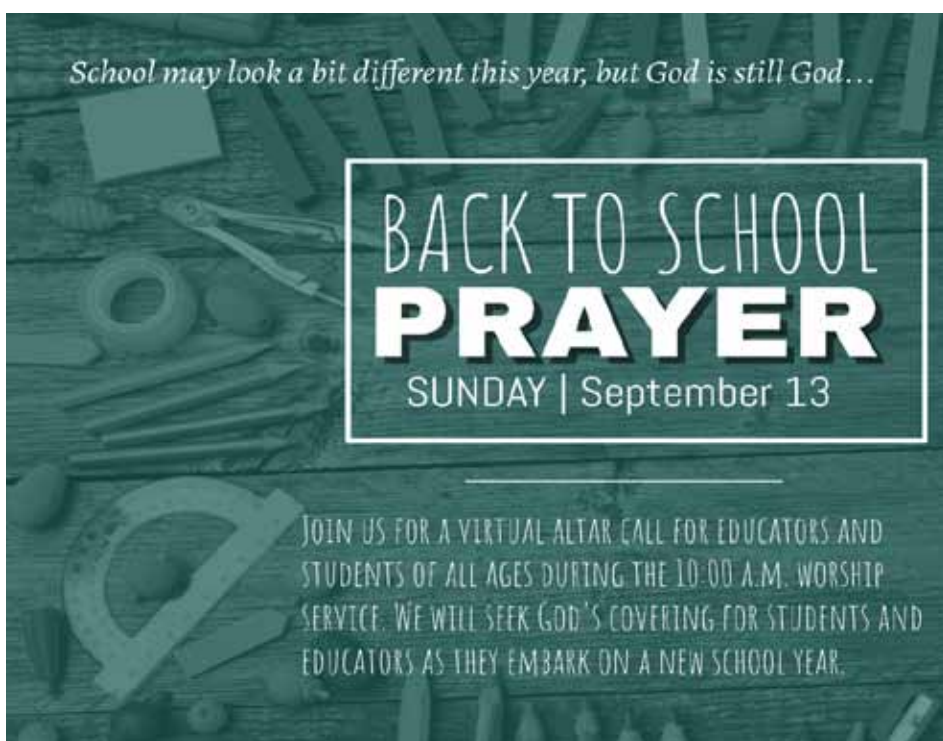
Pastor, *continued on page 5*

be a shift in the weather. This time of year typically sparks a new energy, excitement and enthusiasm for ministry following a summer hiatus. Well, I know many of us didn't engage in a lot of travel this summer but hopefully you had an opportunity to rest.

Ready or not we forge ahead! I invite you to prepare yourself for what God has in store for us. The last five months caught us by surprise. Today I have embraced this new reality for ministry and look forward to our continued growth together.

In closing, I ask you to mark your calendar and join me for two significant opportunities. I would love for you to join me Saturday, Sept. 12th at noon for an outdoor prayer service. Let's collectively bombard heaven with our thanks and requests. Secondly, I invite you to join me for our 2020 Homecoming Celebration, Sunday, September 20th at 10 a.m. We will observe social distancing and have radio capabilities for those who desire to remain in their vehicles at both of these events. I hope you will prayerfully consider attending.

Be blessed,
Pas. W



Clergy in Action

On Tuesday July 27, over 100 clergy from Northern Virginia gathered on Zoom for a meeting hosted by Pastor Walton and Dr. Howard-John Wesley. It was Pastor Walton's vision to specifically bring together Black clergy to discuss police reform, education reform, housing reform and other related issues. Clergy were informed on the current status of these issues and ways in which they and their congregations could engage in the process of change moving forward.

Panelists included Patty Barbour from the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, Sean Perryman who is president of the Fairfax County NAACP, and First Baptist member Kofi Annan from The Activated People.

Pastor Walton opened with remarks on the church's historical involvement in social justice issues followed by Dr. Wesley discussing key points from his "Birth of a Nation" preaching series which highlighted the significance of voting. Each panelist weighed in with presentations in their areas of expertise and the work they are currently doing. There was particular interest in discussion around what it means to defund the police and the best way to reallocate those resources.

Participants were also able to ask questions of the panelists and get real time solutions for change in our community. They left with action items on ways they could engage and galvanize their local congregations to progress the work that is already being done. Overall, the forum Pastor Walton envisioned was a success and is the start of a larger movement in Fairfax County and the greater Northern Virginia area.

—Submitted by Stacey Seay

God Amid Pandemic

Last spring, life changed as we became familiar with terms such as social distancing, flattening the curve and self quarantining. We could hardly believe the closed schools, businesses and especially churches — just as Holy Week and Easter drew near! The coronavirus ran rampant. Where was God?

But as the spread continued, many civic leaders stepped up, calmly informing us of the facts, of actions being taken to mitigate the crisis and of how we could help. Healthcare professionals risked their lives and endured separation from families; teachers drew on astounding stores of creativity to teach online; pastors delivered sermons and lessons to empty sanctuaries as members listened and prayed while living in lockdown. Surely God was present — through them!

Then I remembered how God assures us through Isaiah, "Fear not! When you pass through the waters, the fires, yes, even the pandemics of this world, I will be with you" (43:1-2, paraphrased). —Sandy Hyland, newsletternewsletter.com



On the Move During the Summer

Although we were not able to gather in the building to worship God, we were still on the move. Several members of the Missionary Ministry participated in both the Lott Carey Foreign Missions Convention and the Northern Virginia Baptist Association One Hundred Forty Second Annual Session.

At the Northern Virginia Baptist Association, many lectures occurred: Issues on Social Justices, Mental Health Wellness during Covid-19, as well as a presentation on Re-entry into our Churches.

Missions Education

Rev. Dr. Emma Valentine, Deacon-in-Training Donna Ivey and Vernelle Boykin have been very busy with mission education. They attended classes and participated in three major virtual conferences during the summer:

- Baptist General Convention of VA (BGC)
- Annual Session of Lott Carey Foreign Missions on August 11-13. The theme was "God's Mission During Troubled Times." The textbook used was *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert.
- The Northern VA Baptist Association, Inc. (NVBA) on August 16-18. The theme was "Celebrating Our Commonality by Exalting One Another in Love." Following the Session, The Commission on Education held classes for two consecutive Saturdays. Two of the courses were taught by Rev. Dr. Emma Valentine and Rev. Dr. Mary Smith. Dr. Valentine's course was "The Church's Response to Human Needs through Community Action" and Dr. Smith's course was "History of Women in Religion". FBCV member Terri Robinson was also a participant.

They also attended the virtual Seventy Third Founder's Day at Children's Home of VA Baptists, Inc. held on July 11.

Missions Celebration

BGC Women's Division Lifetime Membership Pin Recipients this summer were: Aaron Carson, Morgan Carson, Linda Grant, Monica Evans, Gloria Runyan, Sharon Gray.

—Tomara Simmons Morgan

FBCV's 1st Virtual VBS!!

By Andrea B. Logan, Epistle Staff Writer

This year's Vacation Bible School was not only FBCV's first virtual VBS, but proved to be an amazing opportunity to reflect on God's power, forgiveness, and love in the lives of not only our church family, but the community at large.

The theme this year was "Concrete and Cranes," in which participants learned how to rebuild by holding onto the promises of God. This was reflected in the Scripture for the week, Philippians 1:6: "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."

Participants learned valuable lessons while adding a building block upon a Christian foundation daily.

Day 1: Foundation of Love

Day 2: Foundation of Forgiveness

Day 3: Foundation of Worth

Day 4: Foundation of Promise

Day 5: Foundation of Life

Instructors used these building blocks not only for inspiration, but for hope as participants worked on becoming more Christ-centered.

"Colorful slides, relevant lessons, hands-on activities, games, videos and connections were made each day," VBS instructor Teresa Lane said. "The engaged learners participated and followed each day with a new perspective on God's love. I am blessed to have had this opportunity to experience God's love and His promises."

We are looking forward to the GREAT things GOD has in store for the VBS ministry!

—Contributing: Kamryn Logan

Warren, continued from page 1

pastoral care. She enjoys visiting the sick, giving words of encouragement, praying for and being a presence to those who are in spiritual and physical need.

When Melinda is not hard at work in church ministry, she can be found doing a different type of ministry. She became a voter registration volunteer for the state of Maryland in 2008 and has assisted her community in fulfilling their civic duty ever since. She is employed by Marriot International. She is also the mom of one adult son. If there's any free time, she uses it to have fun and enjoy life by staying active and playing backgammon, mastermind, and taboo. Please join Pastor Walton and staff in welcoming Melinda to the FBCV family. —Rashena Draughn

FBCV Women's Ministry Holds Virtual Conversation

By Sandra Graham

Epistle Staff Writer

Over 60 First Baptist (FBCV) Women's Ministry members and friends came together on Aug. 4 via Zoom for the second in the series of "Red Table Talk" experiences. This virtual forum centered on the topic of "Reimagining Joy."

The uplifting and encouraging conversation was moderated by Women's Ministry president Phyllis Morris-Griffith and featured FBCV members Benita Thompson Byas, Kayci Griffith, Shirley McCoy, Deaconess Jeanne Taylor and Trustee Chanel Williams.

Morris-Griffith asked for the panel's thoughts on three points:

- A person, place, experience or thing that brings you joy.
- A challenging situation in which you had to find joy.
- Scriptures to encourage others in their quest for joy.

The multigenerational panel shared that:

- Joy comes when we trust the Lord. (Psalm 40:4)
- Joy comes from the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:22)
- Joy is found in answered prayer. (John 16:24)
- Joy fills our hearts when we remember the good things God has done through the people He has placed in our lives. (Philippians 1:3-5)

At the close of inspirational comments by the panel, the Zoom audience was invited to join the conversation and reflect on what brings them joy, and to list their favorite Scriptures that are a testimony to God's goodness and faithfulness. Those Scriptures included: James 1:2-4; John 15: 4-5; Philippians 4:13; Proverbs 3: 5-6; Psalm 27; and Romans 15:13.

The next Red Table Talk is scheduled for this month.

CONGRATULATIONS

On the marriage of church member, **Andia Weaver** and **Dr. Ivan Enrique Hernandez**. Andia is the daughter of Deacon Anthony and Diann Weaver.



Money Matters: 3 Ways to Protect Yourself Financially During the COVID-19 Crisis

(based on an article by Dave Kovalski titled "What to do if you can't pay your bills?")

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world economy in unprecedented ways. Never before in most of our lifetimes has the nation been through a period where people have been asked to stay home, work remotely if possible, or not work.

The social distancing measures being taken are grounded in science, as the goal is to "flatten the curve" in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. Ultimately, it will help save lives and reduce the health effects of the pandemic, which is the primary goal right now.

But it's obviously had huge effects on people's finances, particularly those who work in retail, entertainment, restaurants, hospitality, travel, and education, to name a few of the hardest-hit areas. This is not to mention the devastating effect the pandemic has had on the markets, draining people's 401(k)s and investments. The markets will come back, as they have through other crises and recessions, but many are feeling the financial effects right now.

Here are some tips from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) on how you can guard against the financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Protect yourself if you can't pay your bills

If you are out of work, have reduced hours, or have experienced a loss of income in any way, it can be difficult to pay bills and meet financial obligations. The CFPB recommends reaching out to your lenders and loan servicers to let them know your situation. They will likely be able to work with you on a new payment schedule, waive fees, provide extensions, or find other solutions to provide relief.

Be prepared to answer questions on how much you can pay and when you'd like to restart regular payments, among others. If you have student loans, check if you qualify for a delayed, reduced, or alternative payment program. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) also has professionals available to provide advice for little or no cost on your options and working with mortgage lenders and servicers. You can also seek out HUD-approved housing counselors or credit counselors to assist with credit card-related issues.

The alternative of not reaching out and missing a payment, or being late, can have long-term effects on your credit. "The CFPB and other financial regulators have encouraged financial institutions to work with their customers to meet their community needs," CFPB officials said.

Protect yourself if you lose your job

In addition, many companies have been forced to close temporarily, while others may permanently shut down. If you lose your job, and your income, contact your state unemployment office to apply for unemployment benefits or explore their various resources.

Protect yourself from scammers

Scammers have been out in full force trying to trick people out of their money in various ways related to COVID-19. One popular scam, reported by police departments across the country, involves people calling, claiming to be from the CDC, asking people to make a reservation to be vaccinated with a credit card and social security number. Another scam is similar, with callers asking for your information for a coronavirus test. According to

reports, over one million coronavirus-related robocalls have been placed.

There are also fraudsters who will send texts or emails asking you to click a link for information on the virus. But the link spreads malware to your phone or device. There are others asking for donations or selling products the scammers claim cure the virus.

In times of social isolation, where people are home-bound, it may be tempting to engage, but the CFPB warns against it. "Be cautious of emails, texts, or social media posts that may be selling fake products or information about emerging coronavirus cases," a CFPB official stated.

The Federal Trade Commission and the Food and Drug Administration have already issued warning letters to seven sellers of products that claim to treat or prevent the coronavirus.

The FTC cautions Americans not to click on links from sources they don't know, and to trash emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). They won't send out emails. If you want the most up-to-date information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) web sites.

Also, ignore any offers for vaccinations, as they are not yet available, and fully research any requests for donations. Never give money on the spot. Do your homework on the organization first and then proceed accordingly.

Hope you found this information helpful and if you would like to discuss any of the topics, please feel free to contact your First Baptist Church Credit Union. Based on the article: What to do if you can't pay your bill by Dave Kovalski

—Submitted by Willie Boykin