

CALENDER OF EVENTS

Sunday, September 14, 21

9:45 am Sunday School

11:00 am Worship/Pastor Johnathan

Sunday, September 28

9:45 am Sunday School

11:00 am Worship/Pastor Dwayne

Monday, September 22

7:00 pm Church Council

Monday, September 22

6:00 pm Finance; 7:00 pm Deacons

Tuesday, September 9, 16, 23, 30

6:00 pm Bible Study/Pastor Johnathan

Wednesday, September 10, 17, 24

12 Noon Bible Study/Pastor Johnathan

Wednesday, September 10

11:15 am Missions Committee

Wednesday, September 17 – 11:15 am Christian Ed. Comm.

Saturday, September 20

11:00 am Ladies Brunch @

Eggs Up Grill



First Baptist Builder (UPSP 191-800) published weekly except the weeks of July 4 and Dec. 25 by the First Baptist Church, 2650 Union Road, Gastonia, NC 28054. Periodicals postage paid at Gastonia, NC. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to First Baptist Builder, P.O. Box 6298, Gastonia, NC 28054-6000.



The Builder

Volume XIV Number 9

September 14, 2025

The Privilege

If you have ever roamed the halls of First Baptist Church of Gastonia you have likely at some point run into a gentleman by the name of Cy Rowe. If you have encountered Cy along the way then you have likely extended the customary, “Hey, how are you?” greeting that we’re famous for here in the South. What isn’t as common, and could be considered extraordinary, is the reply that Cy will give, which typically goes something like this, “Better than I deserve, for which I am incredibly thankful.”

It just takes one time to hear someone like Cy or many of you, who have experienced adversity or challenges reply in this way, and know that there is something different about these people. How do folks like these continue to smile and bear up under the hardships of life, when so many of us can only think of the difficulties? How are they able to see blessings instead of burdens or opportunities instead of obstacles? I believe that it comes down to one thing ... an attitude of privilege.

Recent conversations around privilege have cast it in a negative light. Culturally, we are not comfortable with the idea of someone living a life of privilege at the expense of others. Yet, as it relates to navigating the difficulties of life, conversations on privilege are grossly wanting. These conversations do not center on avoiding the difficulties of life because of a privileged status, but they center on embracing the difficulties and requirements of life from a place of understanding them as privileges.

Jesus in John 6:38 helps us to understand this (and his entire ministry) when he declares that he has not come to do his own will, but instead the will of the Father who sent him. We see from his eagerness to carry out the Father’s will, a will which will ultimately result in his own agonizing death, a Jesus who is beyond committed and beyond resolved. We see a Jesus who is not a passive player in God’s great drama, but instead we see a Jesus who considers himself equally invested. We see a Jesus who regards God’s will not as a task to be completed, but instead, a personal privilege to be exercised and embraced.

The Omnipotent God does not need us, but he made it plain that he wants us. How different does life then become when we approach it from a perspective of privilege versus obligation? What happens when we shift from a dominant narrative that says, “I have to” to one that says, “I get to”, and how do our churches, and the things that we undertake as a body of believers, change when we undertake them as privileges rather than responsibilities, mundane task, or obligations? The answer is that everything changes! We can’t begin to say enough about how viewing service to God as a privilege is the secret to a joyful personal and corporate ministry, and vibrant relationship with the Godhead.

As a pastor my daily outlook is largely this. I have the privilege of being known by God and knowing God. I have the privilege of being loved by God and loving God, myself, and everyone that he loves. I have the privilege of talking to The Creator anytime, and about anything. I have the privilege of being a pastor and joining God in his work in this way. I have the privilege of serving where he has placed me, among you, a beautiful gathering of his people in this part of the world, and I have the privilege of learning with you and fellowshiping with you. I have the privilege of being with you in the joys and the

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Worship Greeter
September
Mary Hope

CONGRATULATIONS
To Ann Siva upon the birth of a granddaughter, Vallie Sophia Ankelein, August 16, 2025. Parents are Lacey and Chris Ankelein and Doris Davis is the great granddaughter.

SYMPATHY
Our Christian sympathy is extended to Richard Hart and family upon the death of his father, Richard Hart, Sr., on August 25, 2025 in Asheville NC



OOPS!!

Pat Taylor had a birthday on August 12! Apologies!!!

SEPTEMBER

1 – Johnny Murdock

7 – Evelyn Leggette

8 – Art Queen

12 – Jay Talluri

29 – Charlotte Eddings

OCTOBER

4 – Ann Costner

14 – Rita Robinson

21 – Linda Hamrick

Joyce Laws

22 – Rebekah Wynkoop

31 – Vivian Spencer

Linda Wright

MEMORIALS

In Memory of:
Perry Baumgardner
(son of Jessie McSwain)

Given by: Bill & Julia Blalock,
Jim & Ann Costner, Larry &
Loretta Harris, Members of the
Adult SS Class, Ann Siva, David &
Linda Wright

In Memory of:
Richard Hart, Sr.
(father of Richard Hart)

Given by: Jim & Ann Costner,
Ann Siva



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A place to belong, a place to become, a place to bear witness

MISSIONS UPDATE

Through the month of September we continue to focus on Viddykh, a mission to support the mental health of youth in Ukraine, and the Women’s Shelter in Gastonia.

Viddykh’s mission is providing a journal to Ukrainian youth as a tool to be used to express their feelings as their country is torn apart by war. The Women’s Shelter provides a safe place for women and their children escaping abusive relationships.

If you would like to designate which of these two missions your mission donation is going to benefit, just write Ukraine, or Women’s Shelter on your check or the envelope you put in the offering plate or give to Alice. Any donations that do not have a designation will be divided equally to both missions. To date you have given \$1,150 for the Ukraine Mission and \$975 for the Women’s Shelter. (Please remember Mission offerings are separate from your offering to support the operation of our church)

If you have a heart for missions, or just want to find a place to put your talents to work, please consider joining the Missions Committee in 2026. Thank you,

The Mission Committee
Ann Costner, Jim Costner, Evelyn Leggette, John Price, Charlotte Eddings

Our backpack ministry for the new school year has begun. We are currently serving 4 families (18 people)

PRAYER SCHEDULE UPDATE

Fruit of the Spirit 40 Day Prayer Schedule.
October 13th: Gentleness;
November 22: Self-Control

NEW SERMON SERIES – PASTOR JOHNATHAN

The Mission of God (Missio Dei) Series
September: The Destination
September 14th: Eternity Pt. 1: Hell
September 21st: Eternity Pt. 2: Heaven

CHURCH COUNCIL

Monday, September 21 @ 7:00 pm

FINANCE MEETING

Monday, September 28 @ 6:00 pm

DEACON’S MEETING

Monday, September 28 @ 7:00 pm

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

WILL MEET THE SECOND WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH @11:15 AM IN THE PARLOR
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MEETS THE 3RD WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH @ 11:15 am in Johnathan’s Office

First Baptist Church of Gastonia Ladies Brunch
Saturday, September 20th at 11:00AM

Eggs Up Grill
2609 S. New Hope Road,
Gastonia, NC 28056
980-320-1755
(Vegan Options Available)

(continued from front page)
sorrows of our lives, coming alongside you in sickness, loneliness, heartache and celebration, and likewise I have been privileged to pray with and for you, to break bread with you and enjoy the reality of your existence, inside and outside of our church.

Most of all, I know that I have done nothing to deserve the favor of God in this way. It is God’s great love that has drawn me into the place where pleasure and pain are relative to my willingness to give God thanks for both, look for opportunities to glorify him in both, and know that both are reminders of how privileged I am to be doing “better than I deserve, for which I am incredibly thankful.”

God bless you all for allowing me to see Christ at work in you. It is beautiful as are you the people of God.

Pastor Johnathan

FROM PASTOR DWAYNE

Several weeks ago, while scrolling through social media, I paused on a picture of a beautiful nine-year-old friend of our family. Her name is Catherine, but we all know her as Cat. Her smile is radiant, her spirit full of light.

In the picture, Cat wasn’t alone. Seated next to her was not another child or a beloved pet, but a peculiar stuffed creature—a green doll with a mishapen head and features that could only be described as unattractive. It was, in a word, ugly.

And yet, Cat saw something entirely different. She wrapped the doll in one of her own sweatshirts and carried it with her proudly. She even took it to breakfast, placing it beside her at Waffle House as if it were family. She had even given it a name: Henry.

Over time I learned that Henry was no random toy. Cat and her dad had spotted Henry in a local consignment shoppe only a few weeks before Cat’s father was suddenly taken from her in a tragic car accident.

When Cat and her paternal grandmother saw Henry in the same sore and the same spot a few weeks ago it reminded her of sweet memories with her dad. Cat saw not ugliness, but connection—something about Henry reminded her of her dad. To her, Henry wasn’t an embarrassment. He was a treasure.

As I reflected on Cat and Henry, a truth crystallized in my heart: Henry’s appearance did not diminish Cat’s affection. Instead, his uniqueness drew her love. She wanted the world to see Henry—not because he was different, but because he carried meaning. He reminded her of her father.

And isn’t that exactly what we are called to do as ones who claim to follow Christ? To see beyond what others dismiss? To cherish those who are different, wounded, rejected, or misunderstood? The gospel is clear: every person, no matter how they look, how they smell, how they act, or how they get labeled is made in the image of God. Cat’s love for Henry is a child’s parable reminding us of heaven’s command: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40)

So here is the challenge: Embrace the Henrys.

- Love the down and out—those that others have written off.
- Welcome the outcast—the ones who never seem to fit in. And are misunderstood.
- Stand beside the rejected—the ones who’ve been told they don’t belong.
- Listen to the misunderstood—the ones whose voices are often silenced.
- Cherish the different—the ones the world calls strange, but God calls beloved.

Cat has reminded me—and I hope now reminds you—that Christ’s love does not recoil from brokenness. It runs toward it. To love the Henrys in our world is to love with the heart of Jesus. May we learn from Cats' example.

