

First News

Sign Questions

Over the past few weeks, a couple of our church members have raised some questions regarding signs posted outside our office and children's entrance, as well as removeable signs posted on our front sanctuary doors for our Spanish-speaking worship gatherings. The signs read:

Attention!

First Baptist Church of Newport News is part of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). Pursuant to a court order from the U.S. District Court of Maryland entered on February 24, 2025, Department of Homeland Security including ICE and CBP must treat our church as a "sensitive location" under the DHS Memorandum of October 27, 2021.

Although these signs have been up since the first week of March, we realize that some questions still exist. The details below will hopefully help explain the legal decisions behind the signs.

What is a "Sensitive Location?"

Sensitive locations are places where U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) do not conduct immigration enforcement actions (i.e. arrests, searches, interviews, or surveillance operations). Sensitive locations have included schools, churches, hospitals, religious gatherings like funerals and weddings, and public demonstrations like rallies,



Mission Opportunities for July and August

July: We collected 470 pounds of food for Thrive Peninsula! Thanks to your generosity, we filled up the back of the church bus with food and the front row of seats with blessing bags.

August: We are collecting school supplies for Yates Elementary.

demonstrations, or parades. The idea behind “sensitive locations” is that if immigration enforcement happened in these places, people would be reluctant to seek out necessary services and treatments, while also being frightened from participating in public worship, assemblies, and educational opportunities. The first “sensitive area” or “sensitive location” language appeared in US Immigration policy in 1993.

What is the Preliminary Injunction for CBF Connected Churches?

On January 20, 2025, a memorandum from the Homeland Security Administration rescinded the *Guidelines for Enforcement Action in or Near Protected Areas* that were introduced in 2021. In effect, this rescission removed special protections and guidelines for immigration enforcement in sensitive locations.

On February 5, 2025, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship joined a lawsuit that “sought to halt immigration authorities from enforcing actions in and near houses of worship and religious gatherings and to restore a decades long policy that protects the values of religious liberty.”

On February 24, 2025, a judge in the United States District Court of Maryland issued a preliminary injunction requiring Homeland Security, including ICE and CBP, to treat the religious space of the three plaintiff groups, which includes CBF churches, as “sensitive locations” according to the Department of Homeland Security Memorandum of 2021.

This preliminary injunction means that ICE and CBP can only legally conduct enforcement activities at First Baptist Church of Newport News or any other CBF church with a judicial warrant or in the midst of exigent circumstances

Below is a list of items needed for the start of a successful school year.

- Crayons, Colored Pencils, Markers
- Pencils
- Dry Erase Markers
- Large Glue Sticks
- Two-Prong Folders
- Composition or Spiral Notebooks
- Pencil Pouch, Box, or Holder
- Wide-Ruled Filler Paper
- USB-C Headphones with Cord

Click on the button below for a downloadable copy of the list of school supplies. (Paper copies will be available at the Welcome Center on Sunday.)

[Yates School Supplies](#)



(pursuit of a dangerous felon, national security risk, or potential of imminent harm). Below you will find a link to a CBS news article reporting on the court decision, a link to the actual preliminary injunction, and a link to the 59 page judicial opinion that explains the reasoning behind the preliminary injunction:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-judge-immigration-arrests-places-of-worship-quakers-baptists-sikhs/>

<https://cbf.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/prelim-injunction.pdf>

<https://cbf.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/memorandum-opinion.pdf>

In reading the preliminary injunction, judicial opinion and news report, you will notice the judge did not apply his decision to every church or sensitive location. Instead, he applied this decision only to the plaintiffs, including all churches that partner with CBF.

The signs were placed on our building to let any ICE or CBP agent know we are a church under the protection of the preliminary injunction, since many churches are not. It is a courtesy to them and anyone else to make sure people know that we are an official and legal “sensitive location.”

What is Our Relationship with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship?

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is a “network of churches, individuals and partners inviting each other into deeper community, equipping each other for ministry and seeking the transformation of God’s world” (from CBF website). Since CBF is not a denomination, churches, individuals, and partners connect with CBF in many different ways.



What a Great Week of VBS

We had a wild and wonderful Alaskan adventure this past week at True North Vacation Bible School! We had 147 children attend and 89 youth and adult volunteers. We trekked the tundra and learned that when we wonder, feel alone, feel powerless, need hope, and need help we can trust Jesus. The children’s mission offering to Thrive raised \$579.68, which will help feed families in our community. We weathered the drizzle and ended VBS with a fun pool party at Wendwood Pool on Friday night. We could not have done this week without your generous help. Thank so much to all the volunteers for their fantastic leadership and the church for your prayers and donations! Thank you for investing in the children’s ministry.

Some of the ways we connect with CBF include giving to CBF through our church budget, participating in Passport Camps (Passport is a CBF partner), CBF Field Personnel and leaders speaking in our worship services including Elket Rodriguez, Gennady and Mina Podgaisky, Matt and Michelle Norman, Paul Baxley, Laura Ayala, Ruben Ortiz, Mark Snipes, and Laura Davis, hosting CBF Virginia Mission Madness in 2023, regular youth participation in CBFVA Mission Madness and Fall Retreats, Randy Shepley serving as the chair of the CBF Mission Council in 2020 - 2021 and Juan Garcia finishing his term as CBF Moderator this past June. These are only a few of the ways our church partners with CBF.

What is Religious Freedom?

Religious Freedom is one of the defining values of Baptists around the world. In fact, it was the value that set us apart from other Christian groups at our beginning. While others sought by influence, coercion, or persecution to force people into their belief system, Baptists maintained that God gives each person the freedom to respond (or not respond) in worship to God's invitation of love and grace.

Our church has supported this call to religious liberty throughout our history. In fact, when our former pastor Randel Everett challenged our church to grow a Hispanic ministry in our congregation, we were living out the call of religious freedom. We were making it possible for people to worship in a safe space, without any linguistic or other barriers. It is no surprise, then, that Pastor Everett went on to found the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, an organization who pursues the cause of religious liberty for every person on this planet, including all who worship in our building.



A Big Thank You!

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to you for helping us spread the Word of Jesus to the children of Newport News. A group of 31 children participated in the soccer training and formation camp last week, and approximately 20 volunteers helped to run this event including our youth and adults. We received plenty of Gatorades and snacks to share with them. Moreover, we were able to teach them about Jesus by helping them understand that we do not play alone, based on our theme verse, Deuteronomy 31:8. We also invited them to attend VBS this past week

Our Spanish speaking church members and English speaking church members are all called to Embrace God, and our property must be a safe space for everyone to do so. We are one church called to Embrace God together, without placing any barriers, including government, between people and God.

The preliminary injunction protects religious freedom and respects CBF churches as places of worship according to the first amendment.

What are our Next Steps?

Over the decades, American Christians from all different denominational and political perspectives have worked to love, feed, teach, empower, and educate immigrants in the United States. Our church has a great opportunity and responsibility to engage in honest dialogue about immigration, scripture, and culture. We can see the image of God in every immigrant, even as we work on ethical immigration structures that respect people and national boundaries. We are already talking about holding a special series on Biblical hospitality and immigration during the Fall. Please contact Pastor Randy if this study and conversation interests you. Also, as the case goes to trial in the future, we will keep our church apprised regarding any new decisions or developments.

and take part in other church activities.

We know that the Word of God does not return void, so please continue to pray for our children from Newport News, Hampton, and Williamsburg and beyond.

Thank you for your support and partnership in God's mission.
Pastor Juan Garcia

Visitation and Memorial Service for Rick Elofson

Many of you have heard that member for 37 years, Sunday Bible Study teacher, and Treasurer of FBCNN, Rick Elofson, passed away Friday, July 11. Below are the details for the visitation and memorial service.

Visitation: August 7, 5-7pm in the Parlor and Payne Fellowship Hall
Memorial Service: August 8, 2pm in the Sanctuary followed by a reception in Payne Fellowship Hall

Please continue to keep Betty, Amanda, Matt, family and friends in your prayers.

Additional News from FBCNN

Upcoming Events

August 13 - Youth VolleyBARF 6:30-9pm; All middle and high schoolers are invited to come out and have a great time at this specially themed BARF (Bring A Real Friend)

Ways to Give Throughout the Summer

- Online Giving
- Mail
- Automated Through Your Bank

Consider these options too:

August 22 - Back to School Youth Pool Party at Wendwood Pool 7-10pm; All youth are invited to welcome our rising 6th graders for a time of food and fun!

August Staff Birthdays & Work Anniversaries

Birthday:

8/26 - John Irving

Anniversary:

8/7 - Juan Garcia

Take a moment to let Juan and John know you are thinking of them!



We have exciting news to share! FBCNN is Debt Free!!

We are excited and invite you to join us in celebrating this wonderful achievement and to look ahead with us toward where God is leading FBCNN next. Please mark your calendars for a special joint service celebration on Sunday, October 5th at 11am. More details about this special service will be coming in future editions of First News.

- Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) Contributions
- Stocks and Real Estate
- Legacy Giving

If you need more information, please contact Monica, 757-930-0911 or monica@fbcnn.org. Thank you in advance for your partnership.

Support the Mission Through Your RMD Contributions

As you plan your financial giving this year, we invite you to consider directing your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your retirement account to support the ministries of First Baptist Church.

If you are age 73 or older and have a traditional IRA, you are required to withdraw a minimum amount each year from your RMD. By making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly to the church, you can fulfill your RMD requirement while reducing your taxable income. It is a meaningful and tax-efficient way to support the church's mission.

Make a financial contribution to FBCNN today by clicking on the Donate link.

Donate

Weekly Worship Opportunities

Join us for worship in person or online Sunday, August 10 at 8:30am and 11am! Randy Shepley will be leading us in worship.

The Sunday worship services are streamed directly to our [website](#) and can be accessed by clicking on **Upcoming Live Stream** tab located on the home page. If you miss a service, you can click on **Sermon Library** in the **Resources** tab to select the service you missed. (Services are listed in chronological order with the most recent on top.)

The following is a list of weekly events. Learn more about children's events on Facebook and youth events on their Instagram page-@fbcnnyouth.

Sundays

- 8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship
- 9:45 a.m. Adult Bible Study
- 9:45 a.m. Children's Bible Study
- 9:45 a.m. Infant-Preschool Bible Study
- 9:45 a.m. Youth Bible Study
- 11:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship
- 11:00 a.m. Extended Session - infants through age 4
- 11:00 a.m. Hispanic Bible Study
- 12:30 p.m. Hispanic Worship

Mondays

- 7:00 p.m. Young Single Adults

Wednesdays

- 6:00 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal
- 6:30 p.m. K-Motion & Youth
- 6:30 p.m. Hispanic Prayer and Bible Study
- 7:30 p.m. Adult Choir Rehearsal

Thursdays

- 10:00 a.m. Swingin' Singers (rehearsals will resume September 4)

Click on the button below to watch the worship service from 8:30am or 11am this past Sunday.

August 3

Staff Contact Info

Randy Shepley, Senior Pastor, rshepley@fbcnn.org

Juan Garcia, Associate Pastor Hispanics, jgarcia@fbcnn.org

Walter Satchell, Associate Pastor Pastoral Care, wsatchell@fbcnn.org

Lesley Spitzer, Associate Pastor Worship and Creative Arts, [lspitzer@fbcnn.org](mailto:lsplitzer@fbcnn.org)

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