

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Freewill Baptist Graduates 14; Students Express Readiness For Next Chapter

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Shenneth Canegata **June 08, 2019**



ST. CROIX – Free Will Baptist Christian School's (F.W.B.C.S.) commencement ceremony took place on Friday night at the Free Will Baptist Church in Sion Hill. Fourteen students walked across the stage and received their high school diplomas, a personal gift bag and a copy of the New Testament. The ceremony began with recitations of pledges to the American flag, the Virgin Islands Flag, and the Bible. Pastor Gene Wooton opened in prayer, followed by a reading of Psalm 139.

The keynote speaker, a former F.W.B.C.S. teacher, was introduced by one of the graduates, Lenna Martinez. Germaine Florent, who is now on staff at Welch College in Gallatin, Tennessee, knew all but one of the students intimately. They were her former

students. She explained that when she was invited to speak at the graduation, she had no idea that she would be privileged to speak into their lives and offer words of wisdom one more time before they went off to college. Ms. Florent said she considers them her children and prays for them continually.

Her prepared speech was based on Psalm 139 and she expressed amazement that it was the same scripture the F.W.B.C.S. graduating committee selected to be read at the graduation. "This is not a coincidence," she said. "There is something that God wants you to hear tonight." Ms. Florent shared that the graduates held a special place in her heart and that if they succeeded it would also be her success. She said that Psalm 139 clearly speaks of God's love for his people.



Free Will Baptist Class of 2019

The Valedictorian, Dazonte Mathurin, gave a speech that no one present would soon forget. It was inspiring, insightful, encouraging, and engaging, yet riddled with humor throughout. One would say that he had missed his calling, because, from the first sentence he spoke, laughter erupted in the room and continued throughout his speech. "We all have goals to accomplish, hopes and dreams to achieve, like becoming doctors – Samira Abed and myself; becoming engineers – Mathew Williams; becoming nurses – Alaejah Concepcion and Asherah Joseph; ruling the world – Jordan Frederick; and most importantly, cutting the president's grass – Amoy Smith," he chuckled. He said he learned that time is a valuable asset that must be used wisely, because once spent, we can never get it back. "As much as we want to succeed, God wants us to succeed even more," Dazonte told to his fellow graduates as he quoted Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." Dazonte heads to University of the Virgin Islands (U.V.I.) as a pre-med major. "U.V.I. has a partnership with Boston Medical and I hope to continue there," he explained. He intends to become a doctor.



Valedictorian Dazonte

Mathurin

The Salutatorian, Monae Laudat, was emotional as she gave her speech. She spoke of bonds forged with her fellow graduates and said that their time together at F.W.B.C.S. had been an amazing experience. She held back tears as she thanked her friends for their encouragement, often given at a time when she needed it most. "Our lives are about to change drastically, maybe some more than others, but I am confident that everyone of us will be just fine because we have had these amazing people who were willing to teach us about life, help us learn from their mistakes, and who I know are just a call away," Monae said. She shared a Thomas Edison quote, "There is no substitute for hard work," and said that it was unfortunate but true and applied to all of us. "Anyone that wants to accomplish anything must put in the effort and work towards their goal."



Salutatorian Monae Laudat

Trent Fredericks heads to the University of the Virgin Islands to major in accounting. When asked about his experience at F.W.B.C.S., he said, "I loved it. The staff treated me like family. They ensured that I received the information I needed. They do not leave anyone behind. It has been wonderful." He expressed sadness at the prospect of parting with his fellow graduates.

Jordan Frederick plans to study media and game development at Savannah College of Art and Design (S.C.A.D.) in Savannah, Georgia.

There were video presentations depicting the students in different stages of their lives and ending with each of their graduation photos. They also took time to present their families with flowers while Whitney Houston's song, "I Look to You", played in the background. The love and support in the room was evident.

In a heartfelt message shared in their program, the F.W.B.C.S. class of 2019 thanked family and friends for their love and support throughout the years and asked for prayers as they begin the next chapter of their lives. "The road we are about to take is unfamiliar, but we're confident that it's time, and we are ready. Thank you for getting us to that point. We love you!"