

Good Friday afternoon, New South Family. Welcome to the 29<sup>th</sup> edition of the Weekly Word – this for the week ending January 17, 2020.

-----**The Critical**-----

## Announcements

**1) New South Annual Conference (AC) – Save the Date:** A reminder that our annual conference is scheduled for May 29 and 30 (Friday and Saturday, basically noon to noon) at Oakdale Christian Academy in Jackson, KY. Information about housing, etc. will be forthcoming. We are working hard to make Annual Conference a helpful, valuable resourcing event, while conducting necessary business in an efficient but open manner.

Please note some preliminary details about AC2020:

All persons in relationship with the New South Conference (Conference candidates, ordained elders and deacons, all under conference appointment) are expected to attend. Excused absences may be granted by written request to Bishop Cowart, submitted to the conference office (newsouthconference@gmail.com) by April 1.

All conference societies should be represented by a clergy delegate (typically the pastor) and a lay delegate (layperson/church member that is elected by the society/church membership.) Names and contact information for lay delegates should be submitted to the conference office (newsouthconference@gmail.com) by March 31.

**2) Pastors / Elders / Appointees Conference Report Forms** were e-mailed out on Tuesday, January 7th. Every person/deacon/elder under appointment should fill out this brief form and return it to me by January 31, 2020. Your information helps the Ministerial Appointments Committee determine appointments for the following conference year. Thanks for your timely attention to this. \*NOTE – I realized after I sent the forms that the fill-able feature did not really work well...your typed text ran off the page. If you'd like a new form sent to you that actually works (!) shoot me a note and I'll get you that ASAP. My apologies!

**3) Compensation Change Forms** If you are a pastor and your church is paying into the denominational retirement/pension on your behalf, and if your compensation has changed for 2020, don't forget to complete the change in compensation form: <https://hr.fmcusa.org/forms/>

**4) Denominational Church Report Forms** will be out shortly. Please watch for these, coming from the World Ministry Center. These are the statistical reports for the general church.

**5) Pass Through Funds:** Your church's financial assessment/fair share amount is based on your church's income from "two" years ago – 2020 assessment amounts are based on your church income from 2018, for example. That income number is the result of a calculation which may involve pass through funds – which need to be approved by the superintendent by the end of January. If you'd like to submit pass through funds for approval, please send your request to me by January 31.

**6) Our NSC Conference Web Site** is down for some web host transition work and should be back up in a matter of days.

**Church of the Week:** Please keep the Irvine (KY) FMC with pastor Chris Robershaw in your prayers this week.

### **Conference / Superintendent's Calendar** (all times eastern)

January 23-24	Daryl in Nashville area for meetings
February 2-4:	Area Bishop and Superintendents (ABS) meeting in Nashville
February 7:	FM History and Polity class begins at WFMC
February 13:	DL Zoom, 9:30a
February __:	Strategy Day
March 12:	DL Zoom, 9:30a
March 20:	District Leaders – Wilmore, 2:00 – 5:00 p
March 20:	BOA – Wilmore, 6:00 – 10:00 p
March 21:	MEG/MAC – Wilmore, 8:00 a - noon
March 31-April 2:	Global Overseers Team (GOT) - Indianapolis
April 9:	DL Zoom, 9:30a
April 26-28:	ABS - Tampa
May 14:	DL Zoom, 9:30a
May 29-30:	New South Annual Conference, Oakdale Christian Academy
June 7-9:	ABS - Indianapolis
June 15-20:	NSC Teen Camp
June 11-14:	NSC Family Camp
June 22-26:	NSC Kids' Camp
August 9-11:	ABS – Baltimore
August 25-28:	Starting Strong for new pastors - Indianapolis
September 23-25:	New Room Conference, Nashville, TN

And now...

### -----The Important-----

#### **Resources, Articles and Attachments**

**1) Free Methodist Historical Center** newsletter – [click here for the latest edition:](#)

**2) African Heritage Network:** A message from the AHN Director, Superintendent Michael Traylor:

*“The African Heritage Network of the FMCUSA is a formal network of pastors and leaders seeking to be a healthy biblical community of African Heritage Free Methodist Leaders supporting one another, assisting the Free Methodist Church of North America in understanding the societal distinctives in the African-American and African Heritage community in order to multiply disciples, leaders, groups and churches.*

*The AHN continues to have a leading role in encouraging the recruitment and retention of African-American pastors through participation in our yearly conference.*

*The 2020 AHN conference is scheduled for February 19-21st, in Orlando Florida. The conference offers dynamic worship, fellowship, and preaching. The deadline for registration is around the corner (1/21/20).*

*The AHN needs your help in identifying African-American pastors and leaders in your conferences and encouraging them to attend. Registration is completely online and can be found at [www.myahn.org](http://www.myahn.org).”*

### 3) Free Webinar from Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College:

#### Reimagining Church Property for Mission

How can the spaces where we gather and the community we inhabit be used as a tool for mission?

Northeastern Seminary is hosting a free, one-hour webinar on Wednesday, February 5, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. (eastern) for ministry and community leaders looking for actionable ideas.

In this free webinar you will learn:

- What land, facility, and community repurposing strategies look like
- How to identify areas of opportunity, and build models for sustainability
- How to create vision and buy-in for new ideas
- Hear about lessons learned and success stories [Click here for more information.](#)

**4) The Church and Homosexuality:** Appended to this letter is a document of some thoughts I shared just last Sunday night about all that's happening in the United Methodist Church, followed by a review of our own statements about sexuality and marriage – right out of the FMC Book of Discipline. Just FYI.

### Job Openings

At this point, we have a pastor or interim pastor in every NSC church, although those interim situations are, well, interim. However, [if you click here](#), you will find job opening listings at FMC Human Resources.

### Remaining January Birthdays (\*that we know of)

Kevin Hale – January 17 – Conference Trustee

Shivraj Mahendra – January 19 – Elder, student

Carol Matthews – January 21 – Conference Auditor

Bob Barnard – January 25 – Elder, Chaplain, Thomson Hood Veteran's Center

Ron Johns – January 27 – Elder, retired

Ralph Kester – January 27, Lay Delegate, Wilmore

\*I would love to know your birthday! Send month and day to [newsouthconference@gmail.com](mailto:newsouthconference@gmail.com)

### This Week's Passage, Quote and Joke

**Passage:** This Sunday concludes the "Christmas From the Backside" series by looking at a passage I don't believe I've ever preached on or heard preached about: Jesus and His family's resettlement in Nazareth upon returning to Israel: Matthew 2:19-23

**Quote:** "You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most. It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance." –John Wesley

**Joke:** *A devout old shepherd lost his favorite Bible while he was out looking for a wayward lamb. Three weeks later, a sheep walked up to him carrying the Bible in its mouth. The shepherd couldn't believe his eyes. He took the precious book out of the sheep's mouth, raised his eyes heavenward and exclaimed, "It's a miracle!"*

*"Not really," said the sheep. "Your name is written inside the cover."*

Blessings on your weekend and day of worship.

D-

Methodism and Sexuality  
Adapted from a "While We're At It" message  
Wilmore FMC, January 12, 2020. 6:00 p.m.  
Daryl Diddle

I grieve for our sister denomination, the United Methodist Church. We all should.

Just a few days ago, Joseph Horton, a professor at my alma mater wrote about his grief.

Some wanted him to remain in the UMC as a support to orthodoxy. He chose to leave because of the battles, because of the finances, and because of the brazenness. He writes, "Tears come to my eyes as I remember a notice about a pro-life prayer vigil being torn down from the bulletin board of the last Methodist church I attended. That notice even said, "No signs. No protests. Just a time to pray for the least among us." Why would someone tear that down? How could this be objectionable in my church?"

What really caught my eye in his article, though, was this observation...Horton writes, "This past summer, orthodox theology with regard to sexuality and LGBT issues was affirmed by a vote of delegates to the General Conference, which would not have happened without the votes of the African delegations. But American liberals were unmoved by the votes of the Africans and continued to violate church teaching, which has led the church to split."

This is ironic in that, while it has typically been the more liberal voices that cry out the loudest for racial equality...in this case, to those liberal voices, the votes of the Africans do not seem to matter and are not seen as equal to the votes of the Americans.

I can't help but wonder if God raised up British and American Methodist missionaries nearly two centuries ago to take the gospel to Africa...in part so that Africa might bring the gospel back to Brittan and America. But as those English missionaries to Africa discovered – a field must be ready in order for harvest to happen. "What we want" must bow to the truth of Scripture for harvest to occur.

Decades ago, the African fields were ready. Today, the American fields are not.

With regard to this issue, which I believe is the most significant American cultural challenge to Christ's Kingdom of our day, several have asked where, exactly, the Free Methodist church is - and where are we going - on this issue.

As far as I can see, to tell you where we are is to tell you where we're going. I don't see any hint of call for change out there.

And to tell you where we are, I'm going to simply read a little from our Book of Discipline – it's addressed in two places:

### **Regarding Sexual Intimacy:**

*Sexual intimacy is a gift from God for marital union. As such it creates a bond that scripture describes as one flesh. When expressed within marriage, sexual intimacy is a great blessing and source of fulfillment. The sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman is to be protected against all manner of immoral conduct, including:*

*Pre-marital intimacy, which robs the marital union of the exclusive bond that sexual intimacy is given to create.*

*Fornication, which is listed along with other forms of immorality.*

*Extra-marital intimacy, which Scripture describes as adultery, transgresses the moral law and betrays the marriage bond.*

*Adultery, a degrading and destructive force, which undermines trust and contaminates the exclusive bond of marriage.*

*Post-marital intimacy...occurring after divorce or the loss of a spouse, which debases the biblical design.*

*Homosexual intimacy, which is regarded by the Scriptures as immoral because it is a distortion of God's created order.*

*All persons are accountable to God for their thoughts, words and deeds. Yet, for those who have fallen, the grace of God is available and completely adequate to forgive and deliver.*

*The church has a corporate responsibility to be God's agent of transformation to persons as they learn to live a Christian life that is wholesome and pure. Therefore we oppose cultural mores and laws that legitimize adultery, pre-marital, post-marital and homosexual intimacy.*

## **On The Nature of Marriage:**

*At creation God instituted marriage for the well-being of humanity. Marriage is the joining of one man and one woman into a lifelong relationship which the Scriptures call “one flesh.” We look not to the state but to the Scriptures for our understanding of human personhood and well-being, including human sexuality and marriage. We order our life of faith and our ministries according to the Scriptures, not according to the shifting values of society and the state.*

*With deep compassion for persons who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, and especially those who have been mistreated and marginalized in various settings, the Free Methodist Church encourages its congregations to practice welcoming hospitality and embracing lovingkindness toward all who desire to worship among us. We will be a people who offer ourselves as agents of Jesus’ grace and love to all others, and we will trust the Holy Spirit to convict people of their sin, to enliven hope of transforming possibilities, and then to lead people to God’s best for their lives.*

*Nevertheless, we hold that marriage can only be the union of one man and one woman who have made a public covenant and vow before God and the state. Therefore, it would be a breach of the doctrine of our Church for ministers or members of the Free Methodist Church to conduct, officiate, or assist in officiating, the marriage or union between a same-gender couple.*

*Further, we hold that our congregations are stewards of church property. Officiating or assisting in officiating or hosting a marriage between a same-gender couple in any Free Methodist Church building or on any Free Methodist property would be a violation of consecrated property. Therefore, such marriages may not be performed or hosted at Free Methodist properties.*

Pause

This is not the popular, cultural view, and so it falls into Simeon’s description of the conflict that Jesus’ coming brings to a people.

I’m sorry to say people have left Free Methodist churches because of this view. I hope that doesn’t happen here, and I hope no one would ever have reason to feel they were pushed out of this church based on where they fall on this issue.

We are a people of love and a people of truth...spoken and lived always together.