

Good Wednesday afternoon, New South Family. Welcome to the 57th edition of the Weekly Word – this for the week ending August 21, 2020.

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

Announcements

1) Annual Conference Ordination Service: This service is scheduled for Saturday, August 29, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30a at Wilmore. Bishop Keith Cowart will be with us. We will be receiving Licensed Pastors, several Conference Candidates, and several Elders.

* **Change** – sadly, Adam’s travel plans fell through and they are now not able to be with us.

Schedule for the Weekend: Friday, August 28 6:00p NSC BOA meeting – Superintendency – Room C202
Saturday, August 29 10:00a Worship and Ordination Service – Sanctuary

In all the gatherings, the wearing of masks while within 6’ distances of others and while singing is required. Once we’re in seated 6’ away from other family units, masks can be removed.

Here are some housing options, should you need housing:

Places to stay in Wilmore:

[Scott Station Inn](#)

[Red Bud Inn Bed and Breakfast](#)

[Potters Inn Bed and Breakfast](#)

[Asbury Inn](#)

[The Home Place guest House](#)

Places to stay in Nicholasville:

[Comfort Inn South](#)

[The Cottage on the Corner](#)

[Holiday Inn Express](#)

[The Home Place Inn](#)

[The Corner House Bed and Breakfast](#)

2) NSC Family Camp Change: Due to the number of regular attendees who said they would/could not be here at Eagle Ridge for the camp and the difficulty in securing some key staff positions, the decision has been regrettably made to cancel Family Camp for this year. Scott Clark, Family Camp Director

3) Ongoing Corona Virus Counsel if where you live is anything like where I live, there is new news, once again, just about every day about the Covid threat and announcements by lawmakers about new regulations, restrictions, etc. Though we are in different states and cities with different recommendations and mandates, please remember that our position on this is to honor the law and presume the best of our lawmakers, even in things about which we disagree – to the point of defacing the gospel. There will very likely come a day in our world where Christians are asked to dishonor Christ – which we cannot do. But until that day, we seek to honor Christ by honoring the laws of our land.

Along these lines, check out the attached article, “I Preached Where the Worship Leader Sang and Now I Have COVID-19.” A very sensible response to an issue of our day, written by a pastor.

Church of the Week: Let’s keep the Pastor Msafiri Eradi and the Louisville Kiswahili church in your prayers in these days.

Conference / Superintendent’s Calendar (all times eastern; in-person schedule subject to COVID restrictions)

August 25:

Daryl interview with potential new congregation in middle Tennessee

August 28: District Leader dinner with Bishop Cowart, WFMC, 4:30p
 August 28: NSC BOA meeting – Wilmore, 6:00p (Superintendent Search Team)
 August 29: Breakfast meeting with Adam Teacher – Wilmore, 8:45a
 August 29: NSC Adjourned Sitting / Ordination – Wilmore, 10:00a
 September 10: DL Zoom, 9:30a
 September 11-13: NSC Family Camp – pending restrictions
 September 23-25: New Room Conference, Nashville, TN
 October 2-3: Mustering of the Men – Eagle Ridge Retreat Center
 October 7-8: Superintendent’s Leadership Team (SLT) - Zoom
 October 16: DL Meeting – Wilmore, 2:00p
 October 16: BOA Meeting – Wilmore, 6:00p
 October 17: MEG / MAC Meeting – Wilmore, 8:00a
 November 12: DL Zoom, 9:30a
 December 10: DL Zoom, 9:30a
 March 19: DL Meeting – Wilmore, 2:00p
 March 19: BOA Meeting – Wilmore, 6:00p
 March 20: MEG/MAC – Wilmore, 8:00a
 June 17-20: NSC Family Camp – Eagle Ridge (tentative dates)

And now...

-----**The Important**-----

Resources

1) Free Methodist National Prayer Summit – Brent Heintzman, Director, FMCusa National Prayer Ministry writes: *The FMCusa is pleased to announce our very first ON-LINE National Prayer Summit. The launch begins this Sunday evening and will continue for five additional Sundays, each evening being a time of guided prayer. The Board of Bishops is issuing this call to prayer and our National Prayer Ministry Leadership Team has been praying and discerning the direction for our gatherings. Pastor Laura Warth, from Chapel of Change in Paramount, California, will be leading the online prayer gatherings. We are confident our FMC family will be blessed by her passionate leadership and personal experiences that uniquely equip her for this prayer summit.*

Here are the details:

When is the first meeting? This Sunday, August 23rd at 6pm EDT (5pm Central, 4pm Mountain, 3pm Pacific)

Where are the videos being posted? On the FMCUA Facebook Page <https://facebook.com/fmcusa>

Will the videos be recorded and available later? Yes! The beauty of this online format is that you can join live, or any other time that works with your church, conference, or prayer group.

What are the topics for prayer? The format will be intercessions for the Whole Church – the 10,000 ft. view Each Sunday will be a different topic. The attached flyer lists all of them.

Why the call for prayer at this time? From the Bishops: “We are calling the Free Methodist Church to prayer and we ask every local church to join this time of unified Intercession. In this challenging season, we stand together in prayer because our great need will only be met ‘by my Spirit, says the Lord.’”

(Brochure Below / Attached)

Job Openings

At this point, we have three churches who need pastors:

Greenville (TN)

Harriman (TN)

Please keep this process in your prayers – that the Lord would provide shepherds for His flock.

Remember too that [if you click here](#), you will find job opening listings at FMC Human Resources.

August Birthdays (*that we know of)

Ed Bryson, August 27

*I would love to know the birthdays of all those related to the NSC who receive this communique – pastors, elders, delegates, special friends, etc. Please send month and day to Timothy at

newsouthconference@gmail.com

This Week's Passage, Quote and Joke

Passage: My family is at Deer Tick (I mean Deer Creek - ha) Lodge this weekend celebrating my mom's 80th birthday, so no preaching for me this Sunday.

Quote: “We now demand glamour and fast-flowing dramatic action. A generation of Christians reared among push buttons and automatic machines is impatient of slower and less direct methods of reaching their goals...The tragic results of this spirit all all about us: shallow lives, hollow religious philosophies...the glorification of men, trust is religious externalities....salesmanship methods, the mistaking of dynamic personality for the power of the Spirit. These and such of these are the symptoms of an evil disease.” — A.W. Tozer,

Joke:

When COVID-19 is over and you can finally go finish the 8th grade.



Blessings on your worship this weekend!

D-

I Preached Where the Worship Leader Sang and Now I Have COVID-19

Some cautions about COVID-19 and church.

JOSH LAXTON

But where did I contract COVID-19? I was contacted by my home church—where I periodically preach—that I had been around someone the previous Sunday who had later tested positive for COVID-19.

As I thought back to that Sunday, I was never really around that person for more than a couple of minutes, and I especially wasn't around them without my mask. If you know me, I'm pretty conscientious when it comes to germs and thus practicing good hygiene. [Now, I'm not like my boss and friend, Ed Stetzer. He's on a whole different level.]

I also, thought back to other people I had been around a couple days before that Sunday and after that Sunday. I was around no one. So, I am fairly confident that I contracted COVID-19 that Sunday morning. But I still didn't know how. I maintained social distance the entire time. I wore my mask the entire time—other than when I preached. I didn't touch anything; I used hand-sanitizer throughout the morning.

So, how in the world did I contract it?

I started to do a little more digging into how one can contract COVID-19. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), here are [three](#) main ways people can contract COVID-19:

- Droplets and Close Contact
- Surface Transmission
- Airborne Transmission

I also came across a couple of other articles and a video as I learned more about airborne transmission. According to [Harvard Medical School](#), “A person infected with coronavirus—even one with no symptoms—may emit aerosols when they talk or breathe [or sing]. Aerosols are infectious viral particles that can float or drift around in the air for up to three hours. Another person can breathe in these aerosols and become infected with the coronavirus.”

In a [YouTube video](#) titled, “The TRUTH of How Coronavirus Spreads and How to Prevent Coronavirus,” [Doctor Mike Hansen](#) notes that droplet nuclei (the smaller droplet particles), given the environmental conditions, can stay emitted in the air up to three hours. He also notes a few life situations that seem to concur that people contracted COVID-19 by breathing in the smaller droplets via airborne transmission.

One case he noted in particular, [as many news outlets covered](#), was the choir in upstate Washington. Early during the pandemic, the choir chose to meet with healthy protocols in place such as social distancing, hand-sanitizer, and no hugs or handshakes. However, it is unclear whether masks were worn. Nevertheless, 45 out of the 60 choir members contracted COVID-19—and two of the 45 died.

Dr. Hansen, in his video, noted that though there is no conclusive evidence that COVID-19 spreads through airborne transmission, there are certain studies that seem to draw that conclusion. In other words, there is circumstantial evidence that COVID-19 can be contracted through airborne transmission from smaller droplets that hang in the air longer than the heavier respiratory droplets.

I should note that early on in the pandemic, the World Health Organization downplayed the possibility of transmission through aerosols, stating that people could only contract COVID through the transmission of large droplets. But further studies since then do show, at the very least, how the virus in smaller droplets form a mist that can stay suspended in the air between 1–3 hours. As Dr. Hansen concluded, there is enough “circumstantial evidence” to conclude airborne transmission is a viable way COVID-19 can spread.

As I read such articles and watched such videos, I came to the conclusion *this might have been* what happened to me. I had taken all the necessary protective measures, yet when I got on stage without a mask, I found myself standing, literally, where the misty cloud of smaller particles would have been lingering from the person singing—who later tested positive for COVID-19. And I stayed in that mist for 40 minutes.

There is no way to prove this. It is certainly, at most, circumstantial.

Why do I share my story?

There are a couple of reasons why I share my experience.

First, churches should take the virus seriously, if they aren't already.

This doesn't mean that churches shouldn't be meeting. Even after contracting COVID-19 I am still an advocate for churches meeting—as long as they take protective and preventative measures and have effective and efficient policies at responding to news one of their staff members have been around someone infected or starts showing symptoms of the virus.

I understand the arguments on why some church leaders don't take this seriously. They think people have heavily politicized this virus and blown it out of proportion. They think that fear of the virus trumps the faith needed to be protected from the virus. And so, some want to be cavalier and refrain from wearing mask and practicing social distancing, instead going back to ministry as normal. From where I sit today—in my bed recovering from COVID-19—this is a mistake.

The last I checked, there's a book in the canon of Scripture called Proverbs, which is all about exercising wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Part of living out the Christian faith is exercising God given wisdom. And the way I define wisdom is living the way God intended us to live. And in a fallen world this is sometimes more complex than we often would like to admit.

Living wisely, with understanding and knowledge, is living in such a way as to protect not only ourselves, but others as well.

Second, there are some practical things I believe churches may want to consider in conducting in-person ministry in this pandemic.

These suggestions should in no way reflect poorly on the church where I serve. They have worked extremely hard to create a safe environment for in-person worship gatherings at all their locations.

Nevertheless, I believe that in an issue-based crisis—one that is on-going and contains volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity—churches (and organizations) should constantly be learning and adjusting their policies and procedures to be even more effective at mitigating the threat of the virus. With that in mind, here are a list of 5 practical thoughts I've gathered from my experience.

First, churches should have solid policies, protocols, and procedures that err on the side of safety. Following the CDC guidelines should be common sense. But this is new territory for us as Americans and as churches. Churches can't just send out one memo and hope their staff and volunteers read it weekly and know what to do in the case of coming into close contact with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms, or who tested positive.

Here's what I would suggest, churches need to communicate with their staff if they learn that they were in close contact with someone with symptoms or who tested positive for COVID-19 then they need to quarantine for 14 days, and then the HR department (or someone on staff) needs to conduct some simple contact tracing to inform those who may have had contact with that staff member in the past few days.

Second, it may be wise to run temperature checks on all staff and volunteers each Sunday. Many businesses do this for employees to keep other employees and customers safe. Why shouldn't churches do it?

Third, make sure to configure the singing portion of the service as safely as you possibly can.

Don't crowd a small stage with band members. If you can't effectively spread a band out on a big stage, then you might want to reduce your band size. Also, band members who aren't singing may want to wear a mask to prevent being fully exposed to aerosols. You may even want to consider singing less to minimize the aerosols. Moreover, it may be wise to invest in air purifiers on stage to help clean the air.

Fourth, have a backup preacher ready.

In my case, I was preparing to preach again the following Sunday, but learned on Friday at 5pm that I was exposed to this person who tested positive the previous Sunday. At that moment I didn't have symptoms. Yet, the CDC guidelines state for persons who have come into contact (less than 6 feet for greater than 15 minutes) with someone with symptoms of COVID-19 or who has tested positive for COVID-19, the correct action is to "Stay home until 14 days after last exposure and maintain social distance from others at all times."

Before I started showing symptoms, we decided that the wisest thing to do was to let someone else preach. Fortunately, one of the other preachers had been studying for the same message and was able to fill in.

Fifth, be willing to pull the plug on in-person gatherings to allow for a reset.

Just because you have resumed in-person gatherings doesn't mean there shouldn't be a time where you suspend in-person gatherings again for a period of time. We are learning of churches who are doing this throughout the country. It is therefore important for each church to have some sort of guidelines in place that would provide instructions on how to pause in-person gatherings.

Moving Forward with Wisdom

My purpose in sharing my experience, once again, isn't meant to shame churches conducting in-person gatherings. In fact, I'm still an advocate of churches conducting safe in-person gatherings. However, I hope my story will give churches who haven't taken this virus as seriously a reason for pause.

In addition, hopefully it will encourage church leaders and staff to constantly evaluate their guidelines, policies, and procedures to make sure they are as safe and effective as they can be. Furthermore, it isn't meant to fuel excessive fear about this virus. Christians are still people of faith, not of fear.

While we are people of faith, church leaders must also lead with wisdom. Wisdom doesn't discount faith; wisdom intensifies faith. Embracing wisdom means we demonstrate that we are trusting God the way he has intended us to live even if it means being inconvenienced. And Lord knows, COVID-19 has inconvenienced all our lives.

[Josh Laxton](#) currently serves as the Assistant Director of the [Wheaton College Billy Graham Center](#), Lausanne North American Coordinator at [Wheaton College](#). He has a Ph.D. in North American Missiology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.



We are calling the Free Methodist Church to prayer and we ask every local church to join this time of unified intercession. In this challenging season, we stand together in prayer because our great need will only be met “by my Spirit, says the Lord.”
Bishops Matthew Whitehead, Linda Adams, Keith Cowart

by my Spirit

the **national prayer summit** online

Sunday, Aug 23rd 6:00PM EDT

5PM Central / 4PM Mountain / 3PM Pacific

 <https://facebook.com/fmcusa>

Five Additional Gatherings Same time and Location

- 8/30 “Cause Us to Weep”
- 9/6 “We Need Grace and Mercy”
- 9/13 “Consecrate Yourselves”
- 9/20 “Refine Us”
- 9/27 “Carriers of Your Presence”

Pastor Laura Warth Prayer Summit Leader

Pastor Laura Warth is from Chapel of Change in Paramount, CA where she teaches the school of prayer, and leads the church’s prayer ministry.

