

Happy Friday, New South Family. Welcome to the 65th edition of the Weekly Word – this for the week ending October 16, 2020.

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

Announcements

1) New South Fall Youth Retreat – From Andrea Tinsley, NSC Youth Camp Director:

Dear NSC Churches and Youth Groups,

I hope you are doing well these days and enjoying the early days of fall!

Please find the attached / below information for the upcoming fall youth retreat at Eagle Ridge. The dates are October 30-November 1, 2020. We are making plans in light of Covid-19, changing a few things about how the retreat will go. If you have any questions, please contact me at atinsley@wfm.net.

Church of the Week: Let's keep the Pastor Sosthene Gatware and the Agape Fellowship FMC in Smyrna, TN in our prayers.

Conference / Superintendent's Calendar

(all times eastern; in-person schedule subject to COVID restrictions)

October 16:	BOA Meeting – Zoom, 6:00p
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) Here is a **Prophetic Word from Paul Harvey** you who are a bit older will remember him as an enormously popular radio personality from decades past. I've included the text below, but if you'd like to hear the actual broadcast from 1965, [just click here](#). For me, it was good just to hear his voice again – he died in 2009.

"If I were the devil ... If I were the Prince of Darkness, I'd want to engulf the whole world in darkness. And I'd have a third of its real estate, and four-fifths of its population, but I wouldn't be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree — Thee. So I'd set about however necessary to take over the United States. I'd subvert the churches first — I'd begin with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: 'Do as you please.

To the young, I would whisper that 'The Bible is a myth.' I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. I would confide that what's bad is good, and what's good is 'square.' And the old, I would teach to pray, after me, 'Our Father, which art in Washington...

And then I'd get organized. I'd educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting, so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting. I'd threaten TV with dirtier movies and vice versa. I'd pedal narcotics to whom I could. I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. I'd tranquilize the rest with pills.

If I were the devil I'd soon have families at war with themselves, churches at war with themselves, and nations at war with themselves; until each in its turn was consumed. And with promises of higher ratings I'd have mesmerizing media fanning the flames. If I were the devil I would encourage schools to refine young intellects, but neglect to discipline emotions — just let those run wild, until before you knew it, you'd have to have drug sniffing dogs and metal detectors at every schoolhouse door.

Within a decade I'd have prisons overflowing, I'd have judges promoting pornography — soon I could evict God from the courthouse, then from the schoolhouse, and then from the houses of Congress. And in His own churches I would substitute psychology for religion, and deify science. I would lure priests and pastors into misusing boys and girls, and church money. If I were the devil I'd make the symbols of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a bottle.

If I were the devil I'd take from those who have, and give to those who want until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious.

And what do you bet I could get whole states to promote gambling as the way to get rich? I would caution against extremes and hard work, in Patriotism, in moral conduct. I would convince the young that marriage is old-fashioned, that swinging is more fun, that what you see on the TV is the way to be. And thus, I could undress you in public, and I could lure you into bed with diseases for which there is no cure. In other words, if I were the devil I'd just keep right on doing what he's doing. Paul Harvey...good day..."

Note – if you'd appreciate a more scholarly rendition of this theme, read *The Screwtape Letters*, by C. S. Lewis.

2) A Word About Elections This week, I've written two short papers related to the upcoming elections – attached below. The first has to do with aligning ourselves too closely with candidates whom we don't really know, and offers something of a solution. The second might be described as a voter's evaluative tool based on the Ten Commandments.

Job Openings

At this point, we have two churches who need pastors: Greeneville (TN) and 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.

October Birthdays (*that we know of)

16 – Craig Saunders

24 – Diane Munoz

*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: We here at Wilmore continue on with our series, "Jesus, Provocateur," taking a look at the persistence Jesus provoked in the heart of the crippled man's friends, as told in Luke 5:17-26.

Quote(s) and Joke(s) – Combined: Now please understand that I include these for humor purposes...I do have respect for, and pray for, those who lead us in public office. Next week, maybe I'll include some like these about preachers...and superintendents. ☺

Apolitical Aphorisms

If God wanted us to vote, he would have given us candidates. ~Jay Leno

We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office. ~Aesop

If we got one-tenth of what was promised to us in these campaign speeches, there wouldn't be any inducement to go to heaven.
~Will Rogers

Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river. ~Nikita Khrushchev

When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President; I'm beginning to believe it. ~Clarence Darrow

Why pay money to have your family tree traced; go into politics and your opponents will do it for you. ~Author unknown

Politicians are people who, when they see light at the end of the tunnel, go out and buy some more tunnel. ~John Quinton

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other. ~Oscar Ameringer

I offer my opponents a bargain: if they will stop telling lies about us, I will stop telling the truth about them. ~Adlai Stevenson, campaign speech, 1952

Politicians are people who will lay down your life for their country. ~Tex Guinan

I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians. ~Charles de Gaulle

Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks. ~Doug Larson

There ought to be one day -- just one -- when there is open season on senators. ~Will Rogers

Blessings on your worship this weekend!

D-

new south conference fall



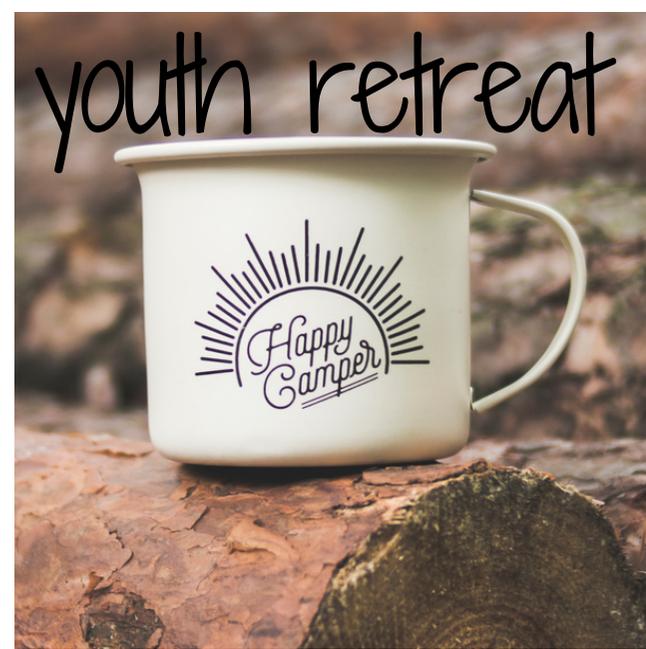
"Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands. "
Deuteronomy 7:9

-Missions Offering-

This retreat, our offering will go to support Eagle Ridge Retreat Center. We love Eagle Ridge and it needs our support. Much of Eagle Ridge's funding through the year comes from group /church rentals. This year, the pandemic eliminated nearly all the rentals Eagle Ridge had booked. Eagle Ridge is a special place to many of us, a home away from home. Let's give sacrificially to see the ministry of Eagle Ridge continue on for years to come.



youth retreat



October 30–November 1
Youth Grades 7–12
\$30 per student
Eagle Ridge Retreat Center
8744 Barren River Rd
Bowling Green KY

-Packing List-

Bible, sleeping bag/bedding, toiletries, comfy clothes (layers), walking shoes, jacket/sweatshirt, cloth facemask



"He is the faithful God"
Deuteronomy 7:0

NSC FALL YOUTH RETREAT

FINAL DETAILS

Check-in for Fall Retreat: Check-in will begin at 6:30 (CDT). Groups arriving before 6:30pm are welcome to help set up chairs in the pavilion. No meal will be served on Friday night, only snacks following the first session.

PACKING: bedding (sleeping bag or blanket), pillow, toiletries, comfy clothes, walking shoes, jacket or sweatshirt (count on it being WARM AND COLD at some point over the weekend!), cloth mask, and your Bible and journal.

LODGING: Youth groups will be housed separately in the dorm rooms, cabins, and bunkhouses. All buildings are heated. Please bring bedding and a pillow.

Missions Offering: Our offering will support Eagle Ridge Retreat Center. Eagle Ridge is a special place for many of us. And it is a special place for many other groups and churches. Eagle Ridge is supported greatly by the reservations of groups/churches throughout the year. But with the pandemic, most reservations have been cancelled. Let's give back to a place that has given us so much!!

Additional Details in light of Covid-19:

- 1) Please complete the health check for each youth and leader before departing for retreat.
- 2) Please ensure EVERYONE in your group has a mask. We will wear these in the dining hall, while singing, and in situations where we must be in close proximity with one another.
- 3) We will meet together for our sessions in the pavilion, allowing extra space to spread out by youth group. Please remind your group to pack layers, as it might be quite cold in the pavilion at night.
- 4) It is vital that each youth group (including single youth) be accompanied by a chaperone. Housing will be arranged according to youth group, so that groups will not be mixed together in the dorm rooms or cabins. If you do not have a chaperone to send with students, unfortunately you may not send students.
- 5) Meals will be served as "low touch" as possible and dining will be encouraged outside (at picnic tables, around the fire ring, etc). A few distanced tables will be available in the dining hall as well. If weather does not permit outside dining, a dining schedule will be instituted.
- 6) Outdoor low touch games and hiking will be encouraged during recreation.

NSC FALL YOUTH RETREAT

October 30-November 1, 2020
Eagle Ridge is in Bowling Green KY,
(Its Time Change Weekend!!)

FRIDAY NIGHT

7pm Check-In @ Dining Hall

8pm Session 1 @ Dining Hall

Snacks in Dining Hall

11pm Curfew

SATURDAY

7:30am Rise and Shine

8:00am Leader's Devos @ Dining Hall

8:30am Fire Ring Devotions @ Fire Ring

8:45am Breakfast @ Dining Hall

9:45am Personal Quiet Time

10:30am Session II @ Dining Hall

Small Group Time

12:30pm Lunch @ Dining Hall

1:30pm Recreation

5:45pm Dinner @ Dining Hall

7:30pm Session III @ Dining Hall

Missions Coffee House in Diner

10:30pm Curfew Dorm/Cabins/Mavis

11pm Lights Out



*"Understand, therefore, that the Lord
your God is indeed God.*

*He is the faithful God who keeps His
covenant for a thousand generations and
lavishes His unfailing love on those who
love Him and obey His commands."*

Deuteronomy 7:9

SUNDAY

Time Change--Fall Back!

8am Leader's Devotions Dining Hall

8:30am Fire Ring Devos Fire Ring

8:45am Pack-Up/Clean-Up

9:30am Brunch Dining Hall

10:30am Session IV Dining Hall

12:00pm Depart

**CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
SPRING RETREAT DATE
WILL BE SET VERY SOON!**

New South Conference Fall Retreat Information
October 14, 2020

Dear Pastors and Youth Workers,

Over the past decade, spring and fall retreats have given our conference teens and youth groups space to slow down, to reconnect with each other, and to meet with God. We have watched as young men and young women surrender their lives to Christ in new ways, pick up the mantle of leadership, and find freedom to live in victory with Christ. This past year has been one of the most difficult our country has faced in many, many years. Our lives have been altered some for better and some for worse during the last 7 months. And even now, with the divisive and explosive political climate, we are struggling as a people to find common ground.

So I write to you, inviting you to consider bringing your teens to Eagle Ridge Retreat Center for a weekend retreat. Many of us need the time away more now than ever. I am making plans to help us stay healthy as we meet, and look for your support to make this weekend a good one.

Retreat Details in light of Covid-19:

- 1) Please complete the health check attached below before leaving (youth and leaders) for retreat.
- 2) Please ensure EVERYONE in your group has a mask. We will wear these in the dining hall, while singing, and in situations where we must be in close proximity with one another.
- 3) We will meet together for our sessions in the pavilion, allowing extra space to spread out by youth group. Please remind your group to pack layers, as it might be quite cold in the pavilion at night.
- 4) It is vital that each youth group (including single youth) be accompanied by a chaperone. Housing will be arranged according to youth group, so that groups will not be mixed together in the dorm rooms or cabins. If you do not have a chaperone to send with students, unfortunately you may not send students.
- 5) Meals will be served as “low touch” as possible and dining will be encouraged outside (at picnic tables, around the fire ring, etc). A few distanced tables will be available in the dining hall as well. If weather does not permit outside dining, a dining schedule will be instituted.
- 6) Outdoor low touch games and hiking will be encouraged during recreation.

Your willingness to agree to the above with a positive attitude will go a long way in making this a good weekend for everyone.

Retreat Offering:

Since 2006, together we have worked together to make a difference for the Kingdom of God. We have completed service projects at Eagle Ridge, packed boxes for Operation Christmas Child, served at local FM churches, planted trees with Eden Reforestation, supported two families in crisis, supported the Thursday meal ministry @ Fountain Square Church, collected funds for our Puerto Rican brothers and sisters after devastating storms, supported missions around the world, and even in our own backyard. Most recently, our offerings supported the good work of Eden’s Glory, a home that works to bring freedom and restoration to woman who are survivors of human trafficking. You can find out more about their ministry here: <http://edensglory.org/>

This retreat offering will go to support Eagle Ridge Retreat Center. We love Eagle Ridge and they need our support. Much of their funding through the year comes from group /church rentals. This year, the pandemic eliminated nearly all the rentals Eagle Ridge had booked. Eagle Ridge is a special place to many of us, a home away from home. Let’s give sacrificially to see the ministry of Eagle Ridge continue on for years to come.

NEW SOUTH CONFERENCE FALL YOUTH RETREAT

Now for the final details:

- ❖ Retreat Weekend: October 30-November 1, 2020 (Friday evening through Sunday noon)
- ❖ Pre-Registration deadline is Sunday, October 25, 2020.
- ❖ Fall retreat is for students in 7th-12th grade.
- ❖ Cost for the retreat is \$30 per youth. Make checks payable to NSC, in memo: Youth Retreat.
- ❖ Please bring Individual Camper Forms as well as the Group Registration Form with the money to check-in on Friday, October 30th.
- ❖ Each church group must bring chaperones (no single youth). Please bring medical release forms for your students & keep those forms handy, just in case of emergency. Youth group leader/chaperone will be responsible for making decisions regarding emergency medical care.
- ❖ Don't forget that you and your students should bring your Bible, bedding, toiletries, comfy clothes (layers!), and walking shoes.

I can't wait to see you there! If you have questions or need anything, please contact me through Facebook: Andrea Tinsley, or email: atinsley@wfmc.net, or phone: 931-212-8083.

In His Service,



Pastor Andrea Tinsley, NSC Youth Director

Attachments:

- ❖ Medical Release Form (use as needed),
- ❖ Covid-19 Health Check (Youth & Leaders)
- ❖ Individual Registration Forms (Youth & Leaders),
- ❖ Group Registration Form for Each Church/Youth Group



Let's escape to the woods!



Medical History/Permission to Treat

Our commitment is to never misuse the information provided below or release it to unauthorized persons. It will never be used at Camp unless necessary, and then only with the greatest discretion.- Eagle Ridge, Inc and New South Conference of FMCNA-

NAME: _____ Male: ___ Female: ___ Birthdate: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT PERSON(S): _____ Phone: _____

_____ Phone: _____

Family Physician: _____ Phone: _____

Insurance Company: _____ Policy #: _____

IMMUNIZATIONS: (give dates if available) ___ Tetanus, ___ Polio Booster, ___ Measles, ___ Mumps, ___ DPT or TD, ___ Rubella, Others _____

PAST MEDICAL HISTORY: ___ Asthma, ___ Sinusitis, ___ Bronchitis, ___ Kidney Trouble, ___ Diabetes, ___ Dizziness, ___ Heart Trouble, ___ Stomach Upset, ___ Hay Fever, Other (be specific) _____

CHILDHOOD DISEASES: ___ Chicken Pox, ___ Measles, ___ Mumps, ___ Whooping Cough, Others (list) _____

ALLERGIES:

Food: _____ Penicillin or other medications: _____

Insect stings or bites: _____ Poison sumac, oak or ivy: _____

Other allergies: _____

PREVIOUS SURGERY OR SERIOUS ILLNESS: _____

CURRENT PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS (GIVE DOSAGE): _____

SPECIAL DIET: _____

OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS: Does the camp staff have permission to give the camper the following over-the-counter medication or generic equivalent when it is appropriate? : ___ Tylenol (Acetaminophen), ___ Advil (Ibuprofen), ___ Milk of Magnesia/Tums/Antacid, ___ Benadryl or Cough Syrup

PERMISSION FOR TREATMENT: My permission is granted for the Camp Director, Camp Nurse, or an Adult Counselor to obtain necessary medical attention in case of sickness or injury to my child. I, the undersigned, do hereby verify that the above information is correct. Dated this _____ day of _____, _____ (month/year) in the State of _____, County (parish) _____.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Relationship to Camper: _____

NOTARIZATION:

On this the _____ day of _____, 20____, _____ (the signer above), appeared before me _____, and in my presence executed the within and foregoing permission and release form.

Witness my hand and official seal this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

My commission expires on _____. _____ Notary Public

Covid-19 Health Check

Name _____ Temperature _____

1. Have you or anyone in your household had any of the following symptoms over the last 14 days:

- Sore throat ____ **Yes** ____ **No**
- Fever (greater than 100.0). ____ **Yes** ____ **No**
- Body aches. ____ **Yes.** ____ **No**
- Loss of smell or taste ____ **Yes.** ____ **No**
- Shortness of breath (for unknown reasons) ____ **Yes** ____ **No**

2. Have you or anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days? ____ **Yes**
____ **No**

3. Have you or anyone in your household cared for anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days? ____ **Yes** ____ **No**

4. Have you or anyone in your household been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days? ____ **Yes** ____ **No**

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Covid-19 Health Check

Name _____ Temperature _____

5. Have you or anyone in your household had any of the following symptoms over the last 14 days:

- Sore throat ____ **Yes** ____ **No**
- Fever (greater than 100.0). ____ **Yes** ____ **No**
- Body aches. ____ **Yes.** ____ **No**
- Loss of smell or taste ____ **Yes.** ____ **No**
- Shortness of breath (for unknown reasons) ____ **Yes** ____ **No**

6. Have you or anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days? ____ **Yes**
____ **No**

7. Have you or anyone in your household cared for anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days? ____ **Yes** ____ **No**

8. Have you or anyone in your household been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days? ____ **Yes** ____ **No**

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Individual Youth Registration

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Grade: _____ Gender: _____ M _____ F

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Home phone Cell/work phone

Email Address: _____

Youth and Parent Contract:

I agree to cooperate with the leadership in all planned activities.

Youth Signature Parent Signature Date

Parental Permission:

I give my permission for my child _____ to
Youth Name

participate in the Fall Youth Retreat sponsored by the New South Conference of the Free Methodist Church, and to ride Director-approved transportation during this event.

Parent/Guardian Signature Date



Youth Leader & Adult Chaperone Registration Form

Name: _____ Gender: ___M___F

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Email Address: _____

Phone: _____

Note: It is highly advised that you fill out the below information. In the event of an emergency, participating staff need to be aware of any special conditions you may have or medications you take.

Emergency Information:

Emergency Contact Name: _____

Relationship _____ Phone Number _____ / _____

Doctor's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Medical Insurance Co. _____ Insurance Policy #: _____

Please check if you suffer from:

Diabetes: ___ Asthma: ___ Heart problems: ___ Food Allergies: ___

Allergies: _____

Details:

Please list any routine medications taken:

Church & Youth Group Registration Form

Church Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Group Leader: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration:

Chaperones (names please): Please include registration forms for each adult.

Male:

Female:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Total Adults: _____

Youth (numbers only, please): Please include registration forms for each youth.

Male: _____

Female: _____

Total Youth: _____

Registration Fee: \$30 per teen

Total Fee: _____

Please bring this form to Eagle Ridge and submit with payment at Check-In (Dining Hall).

Please reserve your spots by October 25 by phone or email.

Phone: 931-212-8083

Email: atinsley@wfmc.net



Let's escape to the woods!



“Jesus, 2020” Yard Signs Available!

If you're like me, putting a political sign in your yard with someone's name on it means aligning yourself with that person / candidate pretty intimately. I'm not usually willing to do that, because very few candidates for any office represent the whole of what I believe to be God's will for our nation or state. Not that I don't participate in the political process – I do...and gratefully so: I vote in every election for the people who seem to best represent God's will and character, and I discuss politics with anyone who might like to do that. But I generally don't do signs, because signs cannot carry the necessary context that I want understood about me and why I may or may not support a given candidate...and because of that, they tend to invite incomplete and/or incorrect assumptions that build walls between me and my neighbors.

This year, it has been especially difficult for me to put a sign in my yard, since, in my opinion, neither presidential candidate represents the whole of God's character.

Then I thought, “Why not put up a sign that actually represents Someone who does represent the whole of God's character? Why not align myself with a Name that I can gladly stand behind in every way?”

Toward that end, there are 300, “Jesus, 2020” signs available at the church office. Every person / family is welcome to take one for their yard, first come-first served.

Instead of building walls in our community, let's offer our neighbors the reminder that, truly, only Jesus can accomplish the healing and hope that our nation desperately needs.

Voting the Ten Commandments

As a follow up to what I wrote this week regarding the “Jesus, 2020” signs, I want to expand a bit on what I mean when I say that, just because I choose not to put signs upholding individuals in my yard does not mean I don’t participate in the political life of our community, state and nation. I participate for Biblical reasons, primarily because part of being a good steward – an important biblical principle – means participating in the free and participatory form of government with which God has blessed us, and a conviction to engage is especially important in these days, when, it’s been said, our nation may be as ideologically divided as it’s ever been.

I might also mention here that, by the nature of the calling, pastors are practical theologians...not pure theoreticians. The pastor’s job is to help apply theology to the real lives of real people; we don’t have the luxury of simply avoiding the intersection of people and life’s big issues, and apart from maybe the virus (which I’ve engaged in an ongoing way over these months) the coming election is certainly the biggest thing on the horizon. So I write as a pastor here, applying theology to this issue in, hopefully, a helpful way.

First, some admitted assumptions that I’m working with.

One thing we should all consider is that, unfortunately in our day, especially at the national level, we are no longer really voting for individual persons; we are voting for the ideologies and values that go with party platforms. Certainly the character of the individual is important, and so far as we can determine it (with our limited abilities to do so,) we must consider that. In our day, however, to prefer one candidate’s oratory, style, manner, or whatever over another’s is, in a practical sense, nearly irrelevant, because in our age, maybe more than ever before, politicians are voting according to their party affiliation. Other than the stray exception here and there, there is very little crossing of party lines going on when it comes to actual voting. That’s just a reality that, like it or not, we have to consider.

Along with this, we have to work with the fact that ours is a two-party system. Good, bad or otherwise, that’s the reality in which we live, which means that votes for independents, practically speaking, don’t count for much, and this is especially true on the national stage. This means that if we want our vote to practically matter, and if we are voting for the best party ideology, we have to have something that guides us as Christ-followers in our voting principles.

What should that be? The Bible, of course. Any third grade Sunday school student could tell you that. 😊

But is there one part of Scripture over another that more appropriately applies to this sort of circumstance?

I would suggest the Ten Commandments is the best place to start, and this is why: the Ten Commandments were specifically given as broad, guiding principles to Israel, not only for personal integrity and health and holiness, but more applicably here, for a just and healthy *national* life. They were given for the explicit purpose of guiding a *nation*.

Now, this is not to discount in any way anything Jesus said. But we should remember that Jesus primarily spoke to individuals about individual behaviors and choices that those who follow Him are called, and empowered by His Spirit, to adopt and live. Jesus expanded and applied the Ten Commandments to individual persons, so persons might be transformed, and that by transformed persons, nations might be transformed and His Kingdom would come. That was, and still is, Jesus’ plan: change people from the inside out, so those changed people will change other people from the inside out, and eventually that “changed-ness” impacts whole nations. You see this happening in China today- more and more people are choosing Jesus there, to the point that as these Christians move into places of leadership, godless Communism will be toppled and a new order will appear.

Well-meaning Christians (and even non-Christians) have, at times, however, tried to apply some of Jesus’ principles as government-enforced mandates to whole societies, skipping the middle part of individual, personal transformation. History shows us that that doesn’t work, because unless people willingly embrace Jesus first, they won’t voluntarily embrace His ways. You simply can’t force people to work for the good of others.

That’s, in part, why I consider the Ten Commandments a better principle/ guide for voting ideology: in the Biblical context, they were clearly given to a nation for the sake of the successful governance of a nation.

The question then becomes, “Is there a party ideology best aligns with the Ten Commandments?” Well, that’s where we all have to do our thoughtful and prayerful research and then vote according to the conclusions to which we’re led. Toward that end, here are God’s Ten Words, according to Deuteronomy 5, each followed by a couple comments and / or questions. Obviously much more could be written about each one. I simply offer a starting point for consideration.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you...out of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. Though America is a pluralistic society in terms of faith, this commandment forbids idolatry - the worship of false gods and goddesses, which includes polytheism - the belief in many gods. God insists our belief in one God, and specifically, Him. In light of that, does one of our political parties obviously uphold the One True God over and above other non-gods and religions...and also godlessness?

You shall not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. Idolatry might be loosely defined as the worship of things created instead of the Creator of things. Does one party over the other tend to worship things created and ignore or deny the reality of their Creator?

You shall not misuse the Name of the Lord your God. Jews and Christians are required to honor the name of God, which makes sense: if you're to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, then you're naturally to respect the name of God with passion and vigor. Does one party over another tend to be profane, invoking God's name in inappropriate and / or self-serving ways?

Observe the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded. Does one party over another tend to submit to God by honoring the Sabbath day or even the concept of Sabbath...keeping a work and rest rhythm to life, and the setting aside of time, regularly, to worship and honor God?

Honor your father and mother. Does one party, more than the other, uphold the biblical order of family, where marriage is between a man and a woman, where the family unit is embraced and cherished, where children are taught to be obedient in youth and respectful in age of their parents, and where nurture and engagement are encouraged?

You shall not murder. Some translations of this commandment use the word, "kill," but the better translation from the Hebrew is "murder" — a subtle distinction but an important one to the Church. Killing an innocent person is considered murder. Killing an unjust aggressor to preserve your own life is still killing, but it isn't considered murder or immoral. Does one party, more than the other, stand against murder – the forcible extinguishing of innocent human life – at any age?

You shall not commit adultery. This commandment forbids the actual, physical act of having immoral sexual activity, specifically adultery, which is sex with someone else's spouse or a spouse cheating on their partner. Judeo/Christian history also acknowledges that this commandment also implicitly includes fornication, which is sex between unmarried people, prostitution, pornography, homosexual activity, group sex, rape, incest, pedophilia, bestiality, and necrophilia. Does one party over the other hold that emotional and sexual fidelity in biblical marriage is not only possible but also valuable to a person, couple, family and society, and that sexual promiscuity of all sorts, is detrimental?

You shall not steal. The concept of theft presumes the reality of private property. Does one party believe and practice, more than the other, that there is such a thing as private property that should not be forcibly taken by others? (This is perhaps the most popular place for some Christians to appeal to Acts 2:44-45, where we're told that the believers held all their possessions in common and sold what they had to give to others in need. It's very important to remember, though, that that practice constituted the **voluntary** lifestyle of a group of Christians and was not forced upon them as a policy of state. To be forced to do those things - by individuals or by government - constitutes stealing, breaking God's commandment here for a just societal order. This commandment reminds us that in God's eyes, the ends do not necessarily justify the means.) In light of that, does one party over the other tend to take from some in society in order to give that which they take to others or to keep for themselves? Is one party guilty of stealing more than the other?

You shall not lie. Without a baseline of truth-telling from its leaders, even when the truth is difficult to hear, a society will certainly, eventually implode. Does one party lie about reality more than the other?

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, land, house, or possessions. Does one party, more than the other, encourage discontentment and envy?

Our jog through the commandments here quickly reminds us that both of our political parties fall short of godliness. If there is one that more closely adheres to these commands of God for a just and enduring societal order, however, then that's the one for which we should vote. We vote after prayer, informed by our research, thinking critically, and according to the conviction of the Spirit.

And...we should also all remember, no matter which party / candidate wins, Jesus' position as King is not now, and has never been, up for debate or election. He's still in charge of things here, and as His subjects (and even His brothers and sisters!) we belong to Him. All in Christ are family – no matter what happens in earthly elections, and we move forward together.