

Happy Thanksgiving, New South Family. Welcome to the 71st edition of the Weekly Word – this for the week ending December 4, 2020.

-----**Announcements and Resources**-----

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- 1) **FM History and Polity** The conference is planning to offer FM H & P in Wilmore or via Zoom this spring in a Friday evening / Saturday format for two weekends. If you are interested, [please email me for more information.](#)
- 2) **MEG Interviews** The MEG Board will be conducting Zoom interviews in early December. If you need or want an appointment with the MEG, [please email me.](#)
- 3) **December Global Prayer and Praise Guide Attached** “Although Thanksgiving is an American holiday, Advent is celebrated by Christians around the world. Think of the world Jesus entered: no atonement yet because of the cross; no miracle of the resurrection; no power available to every believer because of Pentecost. Our neighbors spent hours yesterday decorating their yard for Christmas. I'll enjoy their lights, but even more I look forward to this special God-with-us time of year. May we enter the Holy of Holies together with both adoration and intercession. What a privilege!”
~ Lois Huff, Conference Missions Promoter
- 4) **The Latest Light and Life Magazine** – Digital Edition, [is available by clicking here.](#)
- 5) **Center For Pastoral Formation** The Free Methodist Church USA is entering a partnership with Greenville University to host a new, donor-funded Center for Pastoral Formation. Working directly under the Board of Bishops and in close relationship with Annual Conference Superintendents and Boards of Ministerial Education and Guidance, the Director of the Center will oversee our nationwide system of identifying, mentoring, educating and equipping candidates for ministry. The position of Director is open. If you would like more information about the position, [contact Superintendent Daryl.](#)
- 6) **December EPP Reimbursement** Pastors, you and/or your treasurers should have received a note from the Conference Finance Office which included two important things.

The first is the announcement that, due to lower conference expenses (and especially travel) the BOA approved the Finance Team's proposal to waive every church's December 2020 EPP payment. You will NOT receive an invoice for December EPP nor will your bank account be drafted on December 15th (if you are set up for auto-draft payment.) Also, the proposal came with a request that the “saved” December EPP money might be used to bless your pastor(s) in what has been a challenging and stressful year and / or sending a year-end love gift to a missionary you support. In other words, please consider “passing it on” however the Spirit would lead you.

The second item included in that note was your church's EPP monthly amount for next year, 2021. That amount is calculated using annual report data submitted to headquarters for calendar year 2019.

- 7) **Living and Leading in Difficult Days** If you are like me, you have friends...people in your church and family...who disagree with just about everything concerning this virus: masks or no masks, gather or don't gather, shop or don't shop, shake hands or don't, and on and on. The news shows don't really help either, since, as I've mentioned before, no matter what your opinion, you can find a talking head or an article on the internet or TV that will substantiate it.

These are difficult days for any leader, so I hope you pray for all the leaders of people that you know, first and foremost, your pastor. No pastor enjoys disappointing people, but every decision a pastor makes these days seems to disappoint someone

Just the same, these are difficult days for anyone who is in relationship with other people – which, of course, includes all of us. So as we relate with others, please remember that followers of Jesus are to be peacemakers. Now, that

doesn't mean that we pursue peace at any expense, and especially at the expense of truth. We are to be seekers of truth.

But being a peacemaker and unifier in these days includes, **1) recognizing that just about everyone is under added stress right now**, and people usually react rather than respond when they're stressed. This moment in time is something of a perfect storm for reactions out of stress. Family issues, the holidays, politics, job issues, lockdowns...all of these are coalescing to affect people. Simply remembering that will help us offer grace.

And speaking of grace, being a peacemaker also includes, **2) choosing to give people more room for those reactions**. Show grace – unmerited favor – and patience with others, which may involve, **3) simply ignoring some peoples' comments or posts**. It's a very freeing thing to recognize that we don't have to respond to everything other people say. The fact is, they may soon regret saying or posting it. (I mean, don't we all wish we could take back some dumb words we've said in days past?) Sometimes the most gracious thing we can do is just let something someone said or posted go...or maybe let whole of social media thing go for a season.

Also, it's important for us all to **4) remember that our opinion may be the one that is proven wrong over time**. Especially regarding the virus, everyone has been wrong in one way or another over these past months. I want others to bear with my errors, so I'd better be ready to bear with theirs. Humility is a foundational Christian virtue, and we all are being challenged to practice it.

Followers of Jesus are called to be bridge-builders whenever possible, but right now the tone and tenor of our nation is to destroy bridges. A builder of bridges will always shine brighter in that kind of darkness.

8) Covid and the Church Knowing how to respond to the virus numbers and managing these lockdowns and governmental requests in the church is a tricky business. Since it's all quite different from state to state, about the best advice I can give you is this: try to keep in balance 1) the biblical instruction in Romans 13 to honor our civil authorities, 2) the encouragement of Hebrews 10 to not neglect gathering for worship, and 3) the biblical mandate to love others – which includes giving up our rights and privileges at times for the sake of, in this case, those who are especially vulnerable to COVID and all those who care for them.

Again, the number I keep a close eye on is the hospital headroom percentage – how much room hospitals have for COVID patients. To me, that tells the story better than mere case numbers or even deaths. I also take into consideration the health of hospital staffs. Just last night, a hospital nurse and member of Wilmore FMC, told me that hospital staff is stretched thin due to Covid cases and quarantines in the staff itself. Doctors and nurses need to stay healthy too, in order to treat all who are hospitalized and need care, and sometimes how the church responds affects their ability to do so.

December Birthdays (*that we know of)

John Swaim	12 / 9	Joe Wang	12 / 17
Randy Scarborough	12 / 19	Dwight Winter	12 / 20
Al Buckta	12 / 21	Chris Cole	12 / 21
Bea VanValin	12 / 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: This week we continue our Advent series, "Here Comes..." which looks expectantly for Jesus' birth, and noting all the different roles He fills in His coming to earth as a baby to save us from our sins...this week looking at John 6 and Jesus' claim to be the Bread of Life.

Quote: “Millions call themselves by His name, it is true, and pay some token homage to Him, but a simple test will show how little He is really honored among them. Let the average man be put to the proof on the question of who or what is ABOVE, and his true position will be exposed. Let him be forced into making a choice between God and money, between God and men, between God and personal ambition, God and self, God and human love, and God will take second place every time. Those other things will be exalted above. However the man may protest, the proof is in the choice he makes day after day throughout his life.” ~ A. W. Tozer

Joke: A young man asked an old rich man how he made his money.

The old guy fingered his worsted wool vest and said, “Well, son, it was 1932, the depth of the Great Depression. I was down to my last nickel.

I invested that nickel in an apple. I spent the entire day polishing the apple and, at the end of the day, I sold the apple for ten cents.

The next morning, I invested those ten cents in two apples. I spent the entire day polishing them and sold them at 5:00 pm for 20 cents. I continued this system for a week, by the end of which I’d accumulated a fortune of \$6.40.

Then my wife’s father died and left us two million dollars.”

Blessings on your worship this weekend!

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