

Happy Friday, New South Family!
Welcome to the 92nd edition of the Weekly Word – this for the week ending May 7, 2021.

Announcements

1) First, Some Annual Conference Details:

A) New South Annual Conference Logistics Annual Conference is scheduled for May 21 – 22, essentially noon Friday to noon Saturday, at Wilmore FMC. Business sessions from 12:00 noon to 5:00p on Friday, and 8:00a to noon on Saturday and the ordination service at 7:00p on Friday evening. The complete notebooks will be out soon. This happens to be, unfortunately, the same weekend as Asbury Seminary graduation and also our local high school graduation, so rooms may be difficult super-close to Wilmore. Plan now to attend.

While inside, we will be wearing masks while moving and while singing, but they may be removed at other times. We'll sit in a distanced fashion around tables during business sessions. Visitors and family welcome, especially for the ordination service. We will be livestreaming the ordination service, but not the business sessions.

B) Annual Conference Reports – If you are a reporting entity to the NSC and would like your organization's document / report included in the conference materials booklet, please submit those to [Charlie Fiskeaux by the end of the day TODAY](#).

C) Memorials At Annual Conference Each year at Annual Conference, we take a moment and honor those from our churches who have passed on to Christ throughout the past year. Since we did not really do this last year, we'll honor those this year who have died since May 1, 2019. If you'd like those names included in the conference booklet, please submit the name and church affiliation to [Charlie Fiskeaux by TODAY by clicking here](#).

D) Delegates Names / Contact Information Needed Please submit your delegate's (or delegates') name, address, phone number and e-mail address to Charlie Fiskeaux ASAP for this year's annual conference. [You can do that via e-mail by clicking here](#).

2) Local Church Annual Reports The World Ministry Center has not yet sent the annual / statistical report to local churches. I've promised you that for several weeks, but so far, they've not released it. I'll certainly pass it along when they do, so again, you haven't missed it. 😊

Resources

1. Free Methodist Liturgical Network – an invitation from Superintendent Bruce Cromwell:

Years ago I became one of the first Free Methodists to formally become an oblate at a Benedictine monastery. For me, it was Saint Meinrad in Southern Indiana, where I met with a spiritual director for about 15 years before I moved to Michigan to pastor at Lansing Central. Though I switched directors and continue to see someone every month now that I'm in Kansas, my affinity and appreciation for the structure of the daily office, lectio divina, examen, and other long-standing devotional and worship practices remains strong.

There are many people across our denomination who have similar interests in a life of liturgy. This is part of why the Free Methodist Liturgical Network was formed.

We recently put together a brief video (3 minutes, 24 seconds) to introduce you...to the FMLN. You can watch it [HERE](#). We have slowly been expanding our connections, but hope to become ever more diverse as we spread across the nation and beyond.

I've also attached (attached / below) a .pdf of the Liturgy of Lament we hosted via Zoom on March 21. Several persons across the denomination, including all of our bishops, participated.

For some, the FMLN won't help in their growth in holiness and grace and their ongoing ministry in the mission of God. For others, though, it may be a welcome service and resonate with their spirit as they continue to follow God's Spirit. Thank you for considering how we can reach all those entrusted to our care, no matter what style or affinity of worship may most speak to their hearts.

2. Oakdale Christian Academy Opportunities: Oakdale Christian Academy is looking for short and long term ministry partners. If you are ready for a two-month, a one-year, or a long-term ministry opportunity contact us and explore Oakdale as a place to invest your energies, gifts, and skills! We are hiring for the roles of cook, dorm deans, admissions director, and teachers. <https://oakdalechristian.org/employment/>

In addition to salary, the following living expenses are fully covered:

- Campus Housing
- All utilities (gas, electric, water, trash pickup)
- Lawn care and building maintenance
- High speed Internet
- Washer and dryer
- Home phone service
- Meals in the dining hall for the employee and household while school is in session (10½ months of the year)
- Free tuition for staff children in grades 7-12

Please contact Will Mosier-Peterson (advancement@oakdalechristian.org) with any questions you may have related to the ministry of Oakdale Christian Academy or the attached annual report.

3. The Center for Pastoral Formation The Free Methodist Center for Pastoral Formation presents: [A Brief Introduction to the Center for Pastoral Formation](#) with all FMC-USA Conference personnel. This is a new ministry in the FMC that covers pastoral care of pastors, credentialing and connections. You who are on the MEG and MAC, pay particular attention.

Articles

1) At Wilmore's Society Meeting last Sunday, I referenced the article attached / below from the Wall Street Journal. To me, it contains lots of good information and perspective, but I particularly noticed that it places much of the responsibility for recovering a stable approach to society upon family and community – which is the domain of the Church.

Regular Free Methodist Newsletters / Communications (click the links below)

[This Week's Issue of the Light and Life Magazine](#)

[The Latest Issue of the Free Methodist Foundation Financial Newsletter](#)

[The Latest Issue of the FM Pastors and Leaders' Newsletter](#)

New South Conference Calendar

May 21-22	NSC Annual Conference – Wilmore
June 17-20	NSC Family Camp
June 21-27	NSC Teen Camp
June 28-July 2	NSC Kids Camp

May / June Birthdays

Mark Driskill, May 12

Roberta Zent, May 12

Tim Huff, May 17
Scott Clark, June 4
Joy Ireland, June 11
James Demaray, June 19

Sarah Baldwin, June 21
Jan Coleman, June 24
Sharon Bryson, June 27

*I'd love to know your birthday, so the conference can send you an expensive present...or maybe just a "Happy Birthday" wish. If yours is not listed, [please e-mail it to me.](#)

This Week's Passage, Quote and Joke

Passage: This Sunday I return to studying the earthly interactions of the resurrected Christ, looking specifically at Matthew 28:1-10, and Jesus' command that His disciples should go to Galilee.

A Few Quotes and Jokes In Honor of Mother's Day:

"Silence is golden. Unless you have kids, then silence is just suspicious" ~ Unknown

"Sometimes I open my mouth and my mother comes out." ~ Unknown

"It just occurred to me that most of my diet is made up of the foods that my kid didn't finish..." ~ Carrie Underwood

"If evolution really works, how come Mothers only have two hands?" ~ Milton Berle

"The most remarkable thing about my mother is that for thirty years she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found." ~ Calvin Trillin

"If at first you don't succeed, try doing it the way Mom told you to in the beginning." ~ Unknown

"Motherhood: the days are long, but the years are short." ~ Gretchen Rubin

"My mother's menu consisted of two choices: Take it or leave it." ~ Buddy Hackett

"A suburban mother's role is to deliver children obstetrically once, and by car forever after." ~ Peter De Vries

Daughter: "Mom, what's it like to have the greatest daughter in the world?"

Mom: "I don't know honey, you'll have to ask Grandma."

Blessings on your worship this weekend!

D-

THE CONFESSION

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Dear sisters and brothers, let us join in confessing our sins against God and our neighbor:

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

O God, be not far from us.

**Come quickly to help us, O God.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

THE WORD OF GOD

O LORD, we call to you; come to us quickly;

Hear our voices when we cry to you.

Let our prayer be set forth in your sight as incense,

The lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice.

Set a watch before our mouths, O LORD, and guard the doors of our lips;

Let not our hearts incline to any evil thing.

Our eyes are turned to you, Lord GOD;

In you we take refuge.

(Psalm 141:1-4a, 8ab EOW/BCP)

Our psalm of lament comes from Psalm 77:1-3, 7-10. Let us pray together:

We will cry out to God and call for help!

We will cry out to God—and God will pay attention to us.

In our times of trouble we sought the Lord.

We kept our hands raised in prayer throughout the night.

We refused to be comforted.

We said, "We will remember God while we groan;
we will think about God while our strength leaves us."

We tried to make sense of what was happening.

We asked, "Will the Lord reject us forever? Will God never again show us favor?"

Has God's loyal love disappeared forever? Has God's promise failed forever?

Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has anger stifled God's compassion?"

Then we said,

"We are sickened by the thought that the sovereign One might become inactive."

(NET)

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Our Old Testament lesson comes from Habakkuk 1:2-4, 13 (CEB)

LORD, how long will we call for help and you not listen? We cry out to you, "Violence!" but you don't deliver us. Why do you show us injustice and look at anguish so that devastation and violence are before us? There is strife, and conflict abounds. The Instruction is ineffective. Justice does not endure because the wicked surround the righteous. Justice becomes warped. ... Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you are unable to look at disaster. Why would you look at the treacherous or keep silent when the wicked swallows one who is more righteous?

<pause> The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God!

We respond with Silence to the reading of the Word.

Our Gospel lesson comes from The Gospel According to Luke 23:27-46 (CEB)

A huge crowd of people followed Jesus, including women, who were mourning and wailing for him. Jesus turned to the women and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me. Rather, cry for yourselves and your children. The time will come when they will say, 'Happy are those who are unable to become pregnant, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed a child.' Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" They also led two other criminals to be executed with Jesus. When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." They drew lots as a way of dividing up his clothing. The people were standing around watching, but the leaders sneered at him, saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he really is the Christ sent from God, the chosen one." The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him, offering him sour wine and saying, "If you really are the king of the Jews, save yourself." Above his head was a notice of

the formal charge against him. It read "This is the king of the Jews." One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus insulted him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" Responding, the other criminal spoke harshly to him, "Don't you fear God, seeing that you've also been sentenced to die? We are rightly condemned, for we are receiving the appropriate sentence for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replied, "I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise." It was now about noon, and darkness covered the whole earth until about three o'clock, while the sun stopped shining. Then the curtain in the sanctuary tore down the middle. Crying out in a loud voice, Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I entrust my life." After he said this, he breathed for the last time.

<pause> This is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise to you, O Christ.

We respond with Silence to the reading of the Word.

Hear our cry, O God.

And listen to our prayer.

Let us pray as Jesus taught his disciples, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We come now to the Prayers of the People. We will begin with laments that have been written on behalf of the church in this season. At the end of each lament, each person will say, "Lord, in Your mercy..." and we will lift each prayer as our own with our response, "**Hear our prayer.**"

LAMENTS (Text at the end of the document)

Calia Rodriguez
Eric Logan
Judy Cox
Marissa Mattox Heffernan
Bruce Cromwell
Celeste Cranston
Dawn Smith Salmons
Soo Ji Alvarez

You are now invited to share a one sentence prayer of lament and intercession. As you close, please end with "Lord, in Your mercy..." and we will lift your prayer as our own with our response, "Hear our prayer."

And now please join me in saying...

God of all mercy ...

**we repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf.**

**Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen. (EOW/BCP)**

Show us your mercy, O Lord;

And grant us your salvation.

Clothe your ministers with righteousness;

Let your people sing with joy.

Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;

For only in you can we live in safety.

Lord, keep this nation under your care;

And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let your way be known upon earth;

Your saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;

Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us clean hearts, O God;

And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in your great mercy defend us through the mercies of Christ Jesus our Savior.

A PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.

Amen.

LAMENTS OFFERED ON MARCH 21, 2021

Calia Rodriguez:

A lament for a year

God of the eternal and the everlasting,
We feel we have lived that.

It has been a year.

It has been a year of panic, a year of uncertainties, a year of struggle.

We lament the losses that have accompanied this year.

We know pain, as we acknowledge the devastating loss of life;

we pray for those whose families have been shattered by death,

and for those who must go through the hard work of recovery.

Send your comfort, Holy Spirit.

We mourn with those who are lonely. We pray for those separated from loved ones by medical necessity, by travel restrictions, and by social distancing. We feel the grief of grandparents who have not seen their children or grandchildren, of the elderly in care, who could have no visitors, of those who have suffered the loss of physical touch with no handshakes or hugs from friends or neighbors.

we pray for those for whom isolation has not provided solace, but long shadows.

Send your comfort, Holy Spirit.

We grieve with those who have lost their stability;

we pray for those who have lost their income, or their homes,

for the students without their schools, and their foundations;

for all those who instead of peace, are experiencing darkness or chaos,

we pray for those longings in the deepest part of themselves.

We lament with those who have found hard places and no respite;

we pray for those who despair that this season is not yet over,

for those who are weary of the heavy burdens that encroach,

those who feel incessant pounding of waves of hopelessness,

who feel the sharp and near edge of panic and despair.

Send your comfort, Holy Spirit.

We lament the damage this year has caused. We pray for the healing of our human hurts.

We pour out to you the multitude of feelings that tear through our hearts each day: joy and sadness, pain and comfort, despair and sorrow, anxiety and peace.

Despite this year, we find our hope in you.

This year has taken much, but you are the giver of good and perfect gifts.

As we lament and cry out for restoration, we seek our grounding in your promises:

that Christ came not to condemn, but to save the world,

that you, Merciful God, return beauty for our ashes,

you are our refuge, and our strength,

our very present help in times of trouble,

and that in all things you are at work for good.

We seek and crave and wait for relief, to rest now in the peace which you grant,
which surpasses all our understanding.

We entrust our laments to your care.

Do not delay to rescue those in urgent need,
liberate us from the never-ending loss of this year,
grant healing that will overflow as praise for your steadfast love.

Lord, in your mercy...hear our prayer.

Eric Logan:

Deception

'Elohei' amen (God of Truth)

Psalm 31 1:5

*"In You, O Lord, I have placed my trust and taken refuge;
Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness rescue me.*

*Incline Your ear to me, deliver me quickly;
Be my rock of refuge, And a strong fortress to save me.*

*Yes, You are my rock and my fortress;
For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.*

*You will draw me out of the net that they have secretly laid for me,
For You are my strength and my stronghold.*

*Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth and faithfulness."*

O merciful God of truth and faithfulness.

We lament at the lies and deceit that have caused harm to your children in the forms of racism, sexism,
and murder.

We lament that too much of this deceit has originated in and is sustained by people who are called by
your name, but fail to follow your teachings.

We cry to you to rescue us and inspire and equip us to bring your healing where there is injury,
restoration where there is brokenness, and hope where there is hopelessness

O merciful God of truth and faithfulness.

We confess that we have been deceitful and faithless.

We have fallen into the snare of those who speak falsehoods to appeal to our fears, or falsehoods that reinforce our complacency.

We have failed to stand against deceit in high and low places and we have comforted evildoers with our silence and complicity.

We have reinterpreted Your teachings to align with our feelings and in doing so, deceived ourselves.

We have deceived ourselves into believing that personal piety can substitute for demonstrated love and justice.

We have deceived ourselves into believing that seeking justice **only** is proof of personal piety.

We have failed by not seeking holiness AND righteousness.

We confess our sins in sorrow and in pain. We cry for help and rescue in our sorrow and in our pain.

We cling to you, ***O Lord, the God of truth and faithfulness.***

Lord, in your mercy...hear our prayer.

Judy Cox:

Holy God, we cry out to You in despair.

Professing to feed Your flock, shepherds have fed their own appetites—for power, for sex, for glory, for influence. Leaders across the Church Universal claim to hear the Bridegroom's voice, while the clay of their feet fouls the wedding garments of Your Bride. From predators to self-oblivious users, they leave trails of wounded people in their wakes. Those damaged "little ones," and their siblings, turn in revulsion from a Church that complicitly responds in silence, avoiding truth. Disillusionment, grief and despair tempt us all beyond what we can bear.

In our anger, we long for millstones! But You, Holy One, are the God Who redeems in love. So we cede our longing for judgement to You; we beg instead a clear-eyed self-awareness and deep repentance for these failed and failing shepherds. And we confess our own idolatrous leanings, our too-easy movement from admiring "hero-worship" to uncritical, idolatrous adulation. With our "little ones" in this disillusionment we struggle to regain trust in Your Church, and in Your care, while owning our need for self-awareness and repentance.

Redeem this dead-end of our disillusionment, we pray! May Your Spirit bring the purifying mercy of Your dis-illusioning in place of our ignorance, naiveté and illusions. And may that Divine dispelling of illusions become a gateway opening to the way of wisdom. For You Who became Wisdom from God for us are Yourself the Way, and the Truth and the Life.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Marissa Mattox Heffernan:

The Wound

During my time in ministry, working through ordination I was aware of a pain but couldn't find the source. I wasn't aware that I was working so hard to adjust my movements so as to avoid irritating it. Each time I felt a prick, a poke, a scrape I'd look...

what did I bump into? was that sharp edge?

Clueless, I'd slap on another bandage, adjust my blinders and turn my nose back to the grindstone.

Even before ministry, there had already been a few band-aids there...but the layers piled up so much more quickly the deeper I moved into spaces I didn't know weren't made for me. Eventually, the layers of bandages became so thick and bulky I was finding it hard to move. Before I could remove the bandages, I had to figure out what was causing the injuries...the invisible thorns, splinters and burrs.

After looking through a magnifying glass and began to see what was there, and where they were coming from. Removing myself from that particular space, standing still for a moment, I began taking layer upon layer of bandages off...assimilation, people-pleasing, taking up less space, tempering my words, checking my tone, staying in the box, trying to fit into a mold that just wasn't made for me...

Underneath it all, was a wound. A wound I didn't know was there. A wound that was the result of paper cuts...thousands of splinters, a lifetime accumulation of scratches I never actually saw happen.

All acquired from walking through the field of white supremacy and patriarchy.

The field is unavoidable. But, I'm learning to walk a little more slowly, to be more aware of what I bump up against. I'm learning to expect splinters from unexpected sources. Most of all, I'm learning to replace the bandages with salve - the salve of honesty and lament, authenticity and grace, confidence and humility

I know this mission towards healing, reconciliation and justice is the call on my heart...but this work is hard. This work is painful. This work means relying on God because you don't know how long your friends will last standing beside you. Relying on God because you don't know when you've finally worn out your welcome; when your shiny token newness has worn off and your prophetic voice is no longer novel...

It is hard because you are purposefully exposing yourself to pain. You try to absorb the history to find the patterns, so that you can speak with confidence and clarity things that should be obvious...

That the words hurt, that the oppression is heavy. But so many of my white siblings treat it like I'm chasing them with a worm at the end of a stick.

There's a layer of comfort to knowing the wound is shared...

Relief in knowing that I belong somewhere because of my shared experiences. But at the same time with each shared story of offense, with every body that's been abused, with every breath that's been stolen, with every thought that's been manipulated, with each tear shed, the wound deepens

With every interaction with a "brother or sister" in Christ that shows themselves to be more invested in their comfort than my safety, that is more practiced in niceness than in actual kindness, - it is like edges of that wound getting caught and pulled, picked at, the scab being torn.

It is easy to become reticent towards building relationships: When you've learned that you can't necessarily take your church mates at face value. When you learn that the label "Christian" means little in describing a person's character. When your pain is too inconvenient for your white co-laborers and "friends".

I wish you could hear what people of color don't feel safe enough to tell you.

I wish you would listen to what they have already said.

I wish you would hear what is said over and over and over again.

I wish you could hear the conversations of people of color deliberating how much longer they can stay, deliberating if they should even be there in the first place, deliberating whether it is even safe enough to enter, trying to decode what a church really means when they say they "value diversity"; debating whether change is worth the investment or if we're better off doing our own thing, weighing how much assimilation is too much and when it crosses the line into erasure. Each deliberation and hesitation whispers again and again...

you're hurting me, you're hurting me, you're hurting me, you're hurting my friend, you're hurting my brother, you're hurting my sister, you're hurting my father, you're hurting my mother, you're hurting my child

you're hurting, my child...you're hurting yourself.

This supremacy doesn't just hurt those that it's marginalized. It hurts everyone. It hurts everything. It dims your light. It diminishes the witness of the Church. It weakens the Body. It wounds.

A copy of this spoken word can be found on Marissa's blog: [The Wound](#).
You can find a recorded reading of this piece [HERE](#).

Bruce Cromwell:

Lord, we ask forgiveness for the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual violence inflicted upon God's children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other, by what we have done and in what we have failed to do.

We lament that we have too often been complicit in silencing LGBTQ+ persons by not speaking out on their behalf.

We lament when we have stood by while hateful language has fueled homophobia, exclusion, and disrespect.

We lament when we have failed to come alongside sisters and brothers who are vilified and attacked, abused and afraid, and who carry marks on their bodies or spirits born of isolation, prejudice, victimization, or ignorance.

We lament that too often we have not shown Christ-like love to our sisters and brothers whose awareness of their sexuality and gender may be different than ours.

The Word of God is living and active, and calls us to righteousness and justice, to holiness and to purity, and often through your Spirit will cut us to the core in its call to repentance.

We lament when we have taken that role upon ourselves and shamed other persons, wrapped in the robes of judgment rather than the mantle of love.

Lord, in your mercy...hear our prayer.

Celeste Cranston:

Lenten Lament: on behalf of those in ministry

How Long O Lord?

Loss, isolation, frustration, anger. Vacillating between fear and fatigue.....between numbness and high alert. We grieve, we live, we lament all this.
AND Lord, at the same time we grieve and live and lament the WEIGHT of loss for OTHERS....the sense that maybe to even hear, or hold, or pray or care for those who are in such pain is more than we can bear. How long, O Lord? It's too much:

To hear the desperation in the mother's voice, to see the vivid terror in his eyes, to sense the hopelessness of being unseen, dismissed, marginalized. The shame of being unemployed, sick, addicted, the weight of being unable to bury her husband of 53 years, or unable to tame the frightening anger that erupts at home. To hold with them the pain of not being to give their child a safe place to sleep tonight. We hear, we see, we sense, we hold....and it's too much.

There is a name for it: 2nd hand trauma. Second-hand trauma. It sounds so clinical, so measured, so precise.

How do we live out our calling to bring "good news" when we're overwhelmed by quiet desperation?

How do we heed the wisdom of Wendell Berry to "practice resurrection" when we can't even touch, or name the dead places in our bodies, hearts, communities? When numbness and fatigue collects and compounds until it lays like a heavy blanket, smothering our souls? When we can't celebrate the eucharist or taste your broken body or receive your shed blood? When trying to love those on both sides of this HUGE divide grinds us into powdered irrelevance? When it may even seem that death might be better than this nothing-like life?

How long O Lord? It's too much.
Come Lord Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy...hear our prayer.

Dawn Smith Salmons:

Divided.

On every side, divided.
Even the facts seem to have sides.
Competing narratives leave us in totally different realities.

Pay attention to our pain they say.
To the dead black bodies in the streets.
Listen when we tell you that our chances have been cut short. We are attacked and kept out at every turn. Redlined. Sidelined. Our experiences invalidated and explained away.

Divided.

"But those black bodies are stealing our country" others say. Invading our land. Stealing our elections. We have no privilege. We want to get back to the way things used to be.

Divided.

The church, rather than offer shalom, takes sides. Justice has become an explosive rather than a mandate. A left-wing propaganda rather than a biblical imperative. Salvation without implication.

How do we worship together? How do we move forward? How can we build a kingdom when we have no alignment? Do we even share the same God?

Divided.

But God, you are not divided. You are whole. You are life and peace and love. Shalom. Show us your tears. Give us your eyes. And your heart. Make us undivided.

Lord, in your mercy...hear our prayer.

Soo Ji Alvarez:

God of justice and mercy, we cry out to you today
We turn to you as we lament the brutal attacks and deaths of my fellow Asian Americans

We lift up our pain to a God who draws near to the brokenhearted and speaks liberation and life into our hopelessness.

To my Asian American and Pacific Islander families
You are not alone, you are not invisible
We stand with you, we grieve with you, we weep with you

You are more than just the model minority
You are my brothers and sisters
You are more than an immigrant or a foreigner
You are made in the image of God and

You belong here in this country

To my Asian American elders who have been the most vulnerable
We stand with you, we grieve with you and we weep with you
We long to protect you and fight with you and for you

To the families of the victims of the egregious attacks in Georgia
We stand with you, we grieve with you and we weep with you
We lament the loss of these beautiful souls, your sons and daughters
who were objectified and seen as less than
We say their names to loudly proclaim their humanity and dignity.

Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng, Delaina Ashley Yaun Gonzalez, Paul Andre Michels, Soon Park, Hyun Grant,
Suncha Kim, and Yong Yue.

God of victory, lead us in the fight against white supremacy, misogyny, the hyper-sexualization of AAPI
women, and anti-Asian racism, we pray.

Lord, in your mercy...hear our prayer.

THE SATURDAY ESSAY

How a More Resilient America Beat a Midcentury Pandemic

In 1957, the U.S. rose to the challenge of the ‘Asian flu’ with stoicism and a high tolerance for risk, offering a stark contrast with today’s approach to Covid-19.

By Niall Ferguson

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“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,/But to be young was very heaven!” Wordsworth was talking about France in 1789, but the line applies better to the America of 1957. That summer, Elvis Presley topped the charts with “(Let Me Be Your) Teddy Bear.” But we tend to forget that 1957 also saw the outbreak of one of the biggest pandemics of the modern era. Not coincidentally, another hit of that year was “Rockin’ Pneumonia and the Boogie Woogie Flu” by Huey “Piano” Smith & the Clowns.

When seeking historical analogies for Covid-19, commentators have referred more often to the catastrophic 1918-19 “Spanish influenza” than to the flu pandemic of 1957-58. Yet the later episode deserves to be much better known, not just because the public health threat was a closer match to our own but because American society at the time was better prepared—culturally, institutionally and politically—to deal with it.

The “Asian flu”—as it was then uncontroversial to call a contagious disease that originated in Asia—was a novel strain (H2N2) of influenza A. It was first reported in Hong Kong in April 1957, having originated in mainland China two months before, and—like Covid-19—it swiftly went global.

Unlike Covid-19, the Asian flu killed appreciable numbers of young people. The age group that suffered the heaviest losses globally was 15- to 24-year-olds.

Like Covid-19, the Asian flu led to significant excess mortality. The most recent research concludes that between 700,000 and 1.5 million people worldwide died in the pandemic. A pre-Covid study of the 1957-58 pandemic concluded that if “a virus of similar severity” were to strike in our time, around 2.7 million deaths might be anticipated worldwide. The current Covid-19 death toll is 3 million, about the same percentage of world population as were killed in 1957–58 (0.04%, compared with 1.7% in 1918-19).

True, excess mortality in the U.S.—now around 550,000—has been significantly higher in relative terms in 2020-21 than in 1957-58 (at most 116,000). Unlike Covid-19, however, the Asian flu killed appreciable numbers of young people. In terms of excess mortality relative to baseline expected mortality rates, the age groups that suffered the heaviest losses globally were 15- to 24-year-olds (34% above average mortality rates) followed by 5- to 14-year-olds (27% above average). In total years of life lost in the U.S., adjusted for population, Covid has been roughly 40% worse than the Asian flu.

The Asian flu and Covid-19 are very different diseases, in other words. The Asian flu’s basic reproduction number—the average number of people that one person was likely to infect in a population without any immunity—was around 1.65. For Covid-19, it is likely higher, perhaps 2.5 or 3.0. Superspreader events probably played a bigger role in 2020 than in 1957: Covid has a lower dispersion factor—that is, a minority of carriers do most of the transmission. On the other hand, people had more reason to be afraid of a new strain of influenza in 1957 than of a novel coronavirus in 2020. The disastrous pandemic of 1918 was still within living memory, whereas neither SARS nor MERS had produced pandemics.



High school students in Washington, D.C., September 1957.

PHOTO: EVERETT COLLECTION

The first cases of Asian flu in the U.S. occurred early in June 1957, among the crews of ships berthed at Newport, R.I. Cases also appeared among the 53,000 boys attending the Boy Scout Jamboree at Valley Forge, Penn. As Scout troops traveled around the country in July and August, they spread the flu. In July there was a massive outbreak in Tangipahoa Parish, La. By the end of the summer, cases had also appeared in California, Ohio, Kentucky and Utah.

It was the start of the school year that made the Asian flu an epidemic. The Communicable Disease Center, as the CDC was then called, estimated that approximately 45 million people—about 25% of the population—became infected with the new virus in October and November 1957. Younger people experienced the highest infection rates, from school-age children up to adults age 35-40. Adults over 65 accounted for 60% of influenza deaths, an abnormally low share.

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What do you think the U.S. can learn from its handling of past pandemics? Join the conversation below.

Why were young Americans disproportionately vulnerable to the Asian flu? Part of the explanation is that they had not been as exposed as older Americans to earlier strains of influenza. But the scale and incidence of any contagion are functions of both the properties of the pathogen itself and the structure of the social network that it attacks. The year 1957 was in many ways the dawn of the American teenager. The first baby

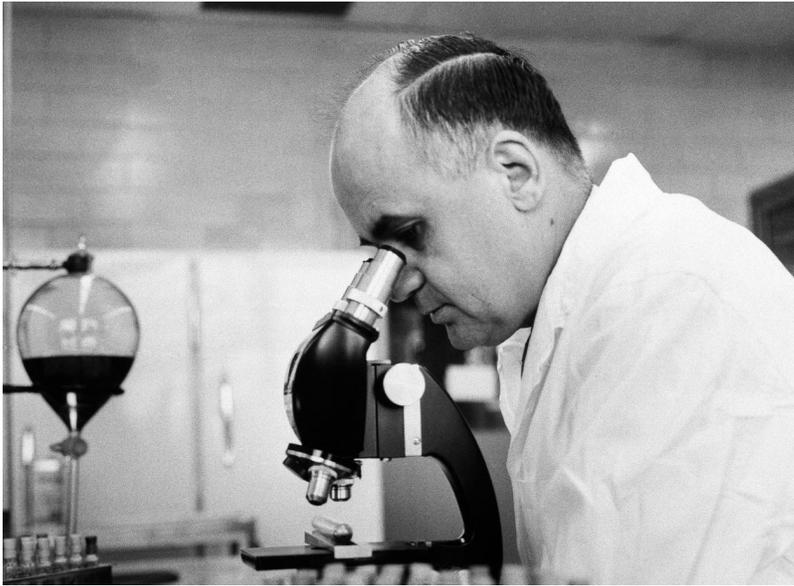
boomers born after the end of World War II turned 13 the following year. Summer camps, school buses and unprecedented social mingling after school ensured that between September 1957 and March 1958 the proportion of teenagers infected with the virus rose from 5% to 75%.

The policy response of President Dwight Eisenhower could hardly have been more different from the response of 2020. Eisenhower did not declare a state of emergency. There were no state lockdowns and, despite the first wave of teenage illness, no school closures. Sick students simply stayed at home, as they usually did. Work continued more or less uninterrupted.

With workplaces open, the Eisenhower administration saw no need to borrow to the hilt to fund transfers and loans to citizens and businesses. The president asked Congress for a mere \$2.5 million (\$23 million in today's inflation-adjusted terms) to provide additional support to the Public Health Service. There was a recession that year, but it had little if anything to do with the pandemic. The Congressional Budget Office has described the Asian flu as an event that "might not be distinguishable from the normal variation in economic activity."

MORE SATURDAY ESSAYS

President Eisenhower's decision to keep the country open in 1957-58 was based on expert advice. When the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) concluded in August 1957 that "there is no practical advantage in the closing of schools or the curtailment of public gatherings as it relates to the spread of this disease," Eisenhower listened. As a CDC official later recalled: "Measures were generally not taken to close schools, restrict travel, close borders or recommend wearing masks....ASTHO encouraged home care for uncomplicated influenza cases to reduce the hospital burden and recommended limitations on hospital admissions to the sickest patients....Most were advised simply to stay home, rest and drink plenty of water and fruit juices."



Dr. Maurice Hilleman, seen here in the lab in 1963, played a key role in the development of a vaccine for the Asian flu in 1957.

PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

This decision meant that the onus shifted entirely to pharmaceutical interventions. As in 2020, there was a race to find a vaccine. Unlike in 2020, however, the U.S. had no real competition, thanks to the acumen of one exceptionally talented and prescient scientist. From 1948 to 1957, Maurice Hilleman—born in Miles City, Mont., in 1919—was chief of the Department of Respiratory Diseases at the Army Medical Center (now the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research).

Early in his career, Hilleman had discovered the genetic changes that occur when the influenza virus mutates, known as “shift and drift.” It was this work that enabled him to recognize, when reading reports in the press of “glassy-eyed children” in Hong Kong, that the outbreak had the potential to become a disastrous pandemic. He and a colleague worked nine 14-hour days to confirm that this was a new and potentially deadly strain of flu.

Speed was of the essence, as in 2020. Hilleman was able to work directly

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with vaccine manufacturers, bypassing “the bureaucratic red tape,” as he put it. The Public Health Service released the first cultures of the Asian influenza virus to

manufacturers even before Hilleman had finished his analysis. By the late summer, six companies were producing his vaccine.

It has become commonplace to describe the speed with which vaccines were devised for Covid-19 as unprecedented. But it was not. The first New York Times report of the outbreak in Hong Kong—three paragraphs on page 3—was on April 17, 1957. By July 26, little more than three months later, doctors at Fort Ord, Calif., began to inoculate recruits to the military.

Surgeon General Leroy Burney announced on August 15 that the vaccine was to be allocated to states according to population size but distributed by the manufacturers through their customary commercial networks. Approximately 4 million one-milliliter doses were released in August, 9 million in September and 17 million in October.

This amounted to enough vaccine for just 17% of the population, and vaccine efficacy was found to range from 53% to 60%. But the net result of Hilleman's rapid response to the Asian flu was to limit the excess mortality suffered in the U.S.

A striking contrast between 1957 and the present is that Americans today appear to have a much lower tolerance for risk than their grandparents and great-grandparents. As one contemporary recalled, "For those who grew up in the 1930s and 1940s, there was nothing unusual about finding yourself threatened by contagious disease. Mumps, measles, chicken pox and German measles swept through entire schools and towns; I had all four....We took the Asian flu in stride. We said our prayers and took our chances."

D.A. Henderson, who as a young doctor was responsible for establishing the CDC Influenza Surveillance Unit, recalled a similar sangfroid in the medical profession: "From one watching the pandemic from very close range...it was a transiently disturbing event for the population, albeit stressful for schools and health clinics and disruptive to school football schedules."

Perhaps a society with a stronger fabric of family life, community life and church life was better equipped to withstand the anguish of untimely deaths than a society that has, in so many ways, come apart.

Compare these stoical attitudes with the strange political bifurcation of reactions we saw last year, with Democrats embracing drastic restrictions on social and economic activity, while many Republicans acted as if the virus was a hoax. Perhaps a society with a stronger fabric of family life, community life and church life was better equipped to withstand the anguish of untimely deaths than a society that has, in so many ways, come apart.

A further contrast between 1957 and 2020 is that the competence of government would appear to have diminished even as its size has expanded. The number of government employees in the U.S., including those in federal, state and local governments, numbered 7.8 million in November 1957 and reached around 22 million in 2020—a nearly threefold increase, compared with a doubling of the population. Federal net outlays were 16.2% of GDP in 1957 versus 20.8% in 2019.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare was just four years old in 1957. The CDC had been established in 1946, with the eradication of malaria as its principal objective. These relatively young institutions appear to have done what little was required of them in 1957, namely to reassure the public that the disastrous pandemic of 1918-19 was not about to be repeated, while helping the private sector to test, manufacture and distribute the vaccine. The contrast with the events of 2020 is once again striking.

It was widely accepted last year that economic lockdowns—including shelter-in-place orders confining people to their homes—were warranted by the magnitude of the threat posed to healthcare systems. But the U.S. hospital system was not overwhelmed in 1957-58 for the simple reason that it had vastly more capacity than today. Hospital beds per thousand people were approaching their all-time high of 9.18 per 1,000 people in 1960, compared with 2.77 in 2016.

In addition, the U.S. working population simply did not have the option to work from home in 1957. In the absence of a telecommunications infrastructure more sophisticated than the telephone (and a quarter of U.S. households still did not have a landline in 1957), the choice was between working at one's workplace or not working at all.

Last year, the combination of insufficient hospital capacity and abundant communications capacity made something both necessary and possible that would have been unthinkable two generations ago: a temporary shutdown of a substantial proportion of economic activity, offset by massive debt-financed government transfers to compensate for the loss of household income. That this approach will have a great many

unintended adverse consequences already seems clear. We are fortunate indeed that the spirit of the vaccine king Maurice Hilleman has lived on at Moderna and Pfizer, because much else of the spirit of 1957 would appear to have vanished.



Despite the pandemic, people thronged the beach and boardwalk at Coney Island in July 1957.

PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

“To be young was very heaven” in 1957—even with a serious risk of infectious disease (and not just flu; there was also polio and much else). By contrast, to be young in 2020 was—for most American teenagers—rather hellish. Stuck indoors, struggling to concentrate on “distance learning” with irritable parents working from home in the next room, young people experienced at best frustration and at worst mental illness.

We have done a great deal over the past year (not all of it effective) to protect the groups most vulnerable to Covid-19, which has overwhelmingly meant the elderly: 80.4% of U.S. Covid deaths, according to the CDC, have been among people 65 and older, compared with 0.2% among those under 25. But the economic and social costs, in terms of lost education and employment, have been disproportionately shouldered by the young.

The novel that captured the ebullience of the Beat Generation was Jack Kerouac’s “On the Road,” another hit of 1957. It begins, “I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won’t bother to talk about.” Stand by for “Off the Road,” the novel that will sum up the despondency of the Beaten Generation. As we dare to hope that we have gotten over our own pandemic, someone out there must be writing it.

This essay is adapted from Mr. Ferguson's new book, "Doom: The Politics of Catastrophe," which will be published by Penguin Press on May 4. He is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

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