

Happy Friday, New South Family!

Welcome to the 99th (and last) edition of the Weekly Word – this for the week ending June 25, 2021.

## Announcements

**1) The Last “Weekly Word”** – With Superintendent John Lane officially beginning his duties on July 1, this will be my last Weekly Word. Watch for Supt. Lane’s e-mail / newsletter coming to your inbox next week, which will include all necessary contact information, etc. as we begin this new chapter of life together. Of course, all of our boards and committees will remain in place for now. Also, Charlie Fiskeaux ([newsouthconference@gmail.com](mailto:newsouthconference@gmail.com)) will remain as New South Conference Administrator and Patti McPeake ([Finances.NSC@gmail.com](mailto:Finances.NSC@gmail.com)) will remain as our Conference Financial Consultant for the foreseeable future, so administrative and financial questions can be directed to them as normal. I’d encourage you to copy your correspondence / questions / issues / comments to Superintendent Lane ([newsouthsuper@gmail.com](mailto:newsouthsuper@gmail.com)) to keep him in the loop.

Thank you very much for the privilege you’ve given me of serving in this way these past couple of years. You have been so very patient with me – I’ve learned a lot and we’ve done our best. I’m convinced, however, that the best is yet to come for our churches, our denomination, and for the Kingdom of God in our little corner of the world.

## Resources and Articles

**1) The Global Prayer and Praise Guide** for July, 2021, published by Lois Huff, is attached / below.

**2) Baylor’s Dilemma** (by Janie Cheaney, World Magazine)

The pastor of the Presbyterian Church (USA) we had begun attending admitted he was in a bind. Though he had inhaled some of the mainline denomination’s liberal breezes, he wasn’t comfortable with the rumors of sexual liberation from higher-ups in the General Assembly. “I’ve put in a lot of years,” he told us during a pastoral visit. “But if they start ordaining homosexual pastors, I don’t know what I’ll do.” We understood. He was less than 10 years away from retirement. Without coming out and saying so, he was hoping to reach that milestone before the liberals reached theirs, so he could retire with a clear conscience and a pension.

That was 1988. We left the PCUSA a few years later and lost contact with the pastor, but he got his wish: The more conservative elements of the denomination held the line until 2011, when the 219th General Assembly voted to allow ordination of homosexuals as pastors, elders, and deacons. If the decision had come a couple of decades earlier, what should our pastor have done?

Easy to say he should transfer his congregation to a more traditional (i.e., Biblical) Presbyterian denomination, surrendering his retirement fund and plunging into a legal maelstrom over church property. Easy to say, “Just step out of the boat and walk toward Jesus—He’ll hold you up.” But out of 12 loyal disciples in that dramatic test case, the only one who was willing to try failed. How many of us would even try?

I was reminded of that pastor by the Baylor University Board of Regents’ recent decision to charter LGBTQ student groups. The board’s action was a long time coming, yet entirely predictable. Cultural imperatives, both inside and outside the university, have been leaning hard, and the administration finally caved. Or they accommodated, depending on one’s perspective.

“A Guide to the Decision of the Baylor Board of Regents To Strengthen Care for LGBTQ+ Students on Campus” may shed more light on that perspective than it means to. In the online document, the board insisted the university remains “firmly grounded in its beliefs, statements and policies related to human sexuality.” Yet “Baylor is a place where the health and wellbeing of students come first.” (We outsiders might have thought that the students’ education came first, but perhaps that’s an outmoded concept.) The guide referenced high rates of suicide among LGBTQ youth as a concern for all Christian institutions, as well as their human need for community, respect, and support. “Community” trumps all, receiving six mentions in a two-page document.

What about community with Christ? The only mention of Christ is where “Baylor administrators will approach this work with a spirit of grace and truth, just as Jesus did.” The goal of “this work” is an LGBTQ student group “consistent with the core beliefs and values of the University.” Meaning what, exactly?

The last paragraph may be artlessly revealing: “Additionally, federal and state guidance continues to evolve”—just as moral standards do. Guidance leads to rules and rules to funding, and Baylor is in the same unhappy position as other Christian institutions now feeling the heat. The Board of Regents did not suddenly wake up and realize there were LGBTQ students on campus. For years it rejected requests for charter from the Sexual Identity Forum, a student advocacy group. What changed is the growing rumble of pressure. Rather than wait for a lawsuit, or loss of accreditation or withdrawal of federal student loans, the administration of the world’s largest Baptist university is attempting to protect itself.

And from a practical point of view, who could blame them? The survival of an institution is at stake, much more than an individual pension or small business, and I don’t know the answer. I do know that chartered LGBTQ student groups on campus won’t satisfy the activists. The boat will be swamped, and Christian institutions, if they remain Christian, will have to brave the storm and step out. The only question is when.

### **3) Oh God, Bring a Revival!** (by Shane Idleman, Christian Post)

*“Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!” — Isaiah 64:1–2*

On April 24th, 2021, an Indonesian submarine sank in the southern Pacific Ocean. The news reported that the crew may have run out of oxygen and quickly sank below the crush depth—the pressure on the outside was greater than the strength on the inside. It is thought that it went down quickly because of an internal leak.

This parallels exactly what is happening in America today as waves of confusion and chaos overcome the masses. Many are being crushed by the external pressures of life because the strength on the inside (their relationship with God) is not greater than the pressure on the outside.

As I recently wrote, “America’s stage four cancer has metastasized to the family and the church. We are more depraved than ever before. But believe it or not, I am hopeful.”

How can I be hopeful amid such darkness and depravity? Because God is sovereign and controls the affairs of men. He often revives His people at very dark moments in history. Before an awakening broke out in Wales in 1904, for example, one observer noted, “It is ever the darkest hour before the dawn. The decay of religious faith, the deadness of the Churches, the atheism of the well-to-do, the brutality of the masses, all of these, when at their worst, herald the approach of the Revival.”

Do we not see similar indicators today—dead churches, the decay of religion, the rise of rebellion and brutality? Don’t give up! Instead, prepare the soil of your heart so that God can rend the heavens and release a spiritual downpour.

Isaiah 64:1 indicates that desperation, along with repentance and humility, capture God’s attention: “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence.” Rend means to burst, to blow out, to explode. What an awesome verse about an awesome God. Like any parent, He hears the cries of His children as they cry, “Oh God, would you rip heaven open and come down and help us? We are lost without you.”

Yes, God is omnipresent. So how can God come down if He is already here? The prophet is pleading for more of God’s presence and for the overwhelming power of the Spirit to come upon us.

There are times when God seems distant, hearts feel dry, and evil is praised throughout the land. But when God comes down (literally, upon His people), we experience the joy of His presence—evil is overturned because praying men and women seek Him like never before.

As the old-timers used to say, “God heard our cries and showed up today.” This is revival. This is God coming down! Would be to God that the nations would tremble again at His presence (Isaiah 64:1–2).

Think for a moment: Who can stop God almighty? Like Joshua and Caleb, we too can say, “We are well able to take the land” (Numbers 13:30). Like David, we too can cry out, “Who is this enemy who dares to come against the living God?” (1 Samuel 17:26). And like the three Hebrew men in the fire, we can also declare, “My God will deliver me, but even if

He doesn't, I will not bow to you" (Daniel 3:17–18). And like Elijah who told 850 false prophets that God would answer by fire, we too can be assured of victory (1 Kings 18:24). God plus one is the majority!

What entity can ruin His plans? What leader can overpower Him? What government can override Him? What army can defeat Him? "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Isaiah said that "even the mountains shake and tremble in His presence." He no doubt had Exodus 19 in mind when he penned those words. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke when the Lord's fire descended on it. The whole mountain trembled violently.

God often shakes the physical to get us to respond in the spiritual. Are you being shaken today? Is our nation being shaken? Do you see the calamity, decadence, and perversion all around you? If so, then why are so many "Christians" stagnant, inactive, and lifeless? Why aren't churches packed and adding more services to accommodate the hunger of God's people?

The need to rend the heavens has never been greater.

Do we really believe that all this evil will simply reverse itself? No, it's only going to get worse unless God's people pull down heaven. We must cry out, "Oh God, would you rip heaven open and come down?" We must wait on God and seek Him like never before, because He "acts for the one who waits for Him" (Isaiah 64:4).

This type of waiting expects something to happen and waits patiently for it. When we wait, anger doesn't influence us, impatience doesn't drive us, and fear doesn't stop us. The disciples prayed in the upper room until heaven opened and the Spirit came down. The filling of the Holy Spirit forever changed them. They wanted more of God. Can you say the same?

Nationwide revivals begin with personal revivals—believers one by one begin to seek God again, and before long, there are family revivals, and then churchwide revivals, and then community revivals. Yes, it can happen, but the seeds must be planted by individual members of the body. In other words, it begins with you.

It's time to break up our fallow ground and seek the Lord while He still may be found (Hosea 10:12). We provide the sacrifice; He provides the fire.

## **The Latest Free Methodist Newsletters / Communications** (click the links below)

[From the Free Methodist Historical Society](#)

[From the Free Methodist Chaplains](#)

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

[From the Free Methodist Foundation](#)

[FM Pastors and Leaders' Newsletter](#)

## **New South Conference Calendar**

June 21-27 NSC Teen Camp

June 28-July 2 NSC Kids Camp

September 22-24 New Room Conference, Nashville, TN – [Click here for Information](#)

March 10-12 WHWC Conference – Grapevine, TX – [Click here for Information](#)

## **Upcoming Birthdays**

Sharon Bryson, June 27

Tony Headley, July 4

Dale Hale, July 10

Rick Boyd, July 19

Daryl Diddle, August 1  
Stanley Dyer, August 6

Ed Bryson, August 27

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

**Passage:** This Sunday, we continue in our Turning Point series by looking at the call of Moses (Exodus 3) and the ways his life changed because of his willingness to listen to the Lord.

**Quote:** "It is unnatural for Christianity to be popular." ~ Billy Graham

**Joke:** As Bill was approaching mid-life, not only was he going bald, but he also had a large pot belly. The last straw came when he asked a woman co-worker out on a date, and she all but laughed at him. Determined to change his life, he joined a gym, started eating right, and got an expensive hair transplant and new clothes. Six months later he asked his female co-worker out, and this time she accepted.

All dressed up for the date, looking better than he ever had. He stood poised to ring the woman's doorbell, when a bolt of lightning struck him and knocked him off his feet. As he lay there dying, he turned his eyes toward the heavens and said, "Why, God, why now? After all I've been through, how could you do this to me?"

From up above, there came a voice, "Bill? Is that you? I didn't recognize you."

Blessings on your worship this weekend!

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