

Second Edition

SEPTEMBER 2021 ISSUE

On Second Thought...

Earlier this summer I came across a sermon by the great George Whitefield (1714-1770). Originally a Methodist who eventually became a Calvinist, his impact on the role of preaching in the American church is still felt today. In the sermon, entitled, "Direction: How to Hear Sermons", Whitefield was concerned about how people prepared themselves to hear sermons. I won't recount the whole thing, but here are some of the highlights, along with a little commentary on each.

1. Come ready to hear. The first direction Whitefield gives us this: *Come to hear the sermon not out of curiosity, but from a sincere desire to know and do your duty. To enter [God's] house merely to have our ears entertained, and not our hearts reformed, must certainly be displeasing to the Most High God, as well as unprofitable to ourselves.*

Preaching, at its best, is a give and take between the preacher and the listener. We come not to evaluate the sermon or the preacher, or out of a sense of wanting to hear an entertaining talk, we come to hear the word of God and to learn how to obey it. It doesn't matter if the oration is exciting or flat, if it's 12 minutes or 28 minutes; God's word to us is in there somewhere and we will hear it if we come prepared to receive it. Even the most poorly prepared and discombobulated sermon can be powerful if our hearts and ears are open to the Spirit.

2. Listen for the word of God. This leads to Whitefield's second piece of advice: *Give diligent heed to the things that are spoken from the Word of God.* If a king or a president were to issue a proclamation and our survival depended on whether we listened to it and did what is necessary, we would put aside everything else to listen to it. Whitefield says it should be the same with the Lord: *Shall we not pay the same respect to the King of kings and Lord of lords, and lend an attentive ear to his ministers when they are declaring, in his name, how our pardon, peace, and happiness may be secured?*

3. Focus on the word more than the preacher. Next, Whitefield turns to how we should view the preacher: *Do not entertain the least prejudice against the preacher [but also] be careful not to depend too much on the preacher or think too highly of him [or her] than you ought to think.* One of the difficulties preachers of the modern era face is that we have access to the greatest preachers of our time every day via the internet, radio, and television. If we compare the pastor in our local congregation to those people, surely he or she will be found lacking!



In the end, we are all broken vessels, but we hold the treasure of the Gospel. Every preacher is merely an ambassador, a messenger for Christ. As Whitefield puts it, "[Some] may preach the Gospel better, but no one can preach a better Gospel." If we listen for Christ in the sermon, it won't matter who is preaching. Plenty of people have been converted to Christianity under bad preaching!

4. Apply what you are hearing to your life. Listening to a sermon isn't just about hearing a message, it's about what we will do with that message. Whitefield says: *Make particular application in your hearts of everything that is delivered.* It's so easy to think the sermon we are hearing is for someone else instead of for us. When the disciples were confronted with the reality that one of them would betray Jesus, their first response was, "Is it I?" That's a great question to keep in mind as we hear a sermon. Good preaching will not just stir our hearts, it will move us, under the Spirit's direction, toward a new trajectory.

5. Devote time to prayer before and after a sermon. Last, and perhaps most important, Whitefield says: *Pray to the Lord, before, during, and after every sermon, to endue the minister with power to speak, and to grant you a will and ability to put into practice what [the Lord] shall show to be your duty.* Prayer is the best preparation for worship and for hearing a sermon. We send out the bulletin in advance so you can read the text for that week and know how to guide your prayer. You can also see who is preaching that week so that you can pray for us as we prepare. Believe me, Sarah and I can use the help! Then, after worship, we can pray that God would implant his word in our hearts as he strengthens and encourages us toward transformation.

I pray that our preaching may help you hear God's word to you each and every week, whether it's in-person or virtually!

Grace and peace...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. M.", is written at the bottom right of the page.

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Covid Precaution *Phases*

part 1

At its regularly stated meeting on August 17th, the Session of 2nd Presbyterian Church implemented four Covid Precaution Phases. Since it is clear that Covid is going to be present in our community for some time, the Session felt that it was best to create clear guidelines for Covid precautions that could be objectively measured and clearly communicated to the congregation.

The phases are tied to the 7-Day Average Covid-19 Percent Positive Tests data provided by the Knox County Health Department each week (currently every Tuesday and Thursday). This metric has been a very good indicator throughout the pandemic as to the danger posed by the transmission of the virus in the community and the Session feels confident in using it as our primary guideline.

The Session anticipates that we will move back and forth between these phases as the presence of Covid rises and falls in our community in the future. These phases will provide for the safety, health, and well-being of our membership and our visitors, given the level of Covid transmission in Knox County.

If the data necessitates a move into a different phase, an email notification will be sent to the congregation and the website will be updated to indicate the current phase. Signs on the doors of the church building and the banner on the top of our website will always indicate the current phase.

Covid Precaution *Phases*

part 2

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Data Indicator</i>	<i>Precautions</i>
Green	Less than 5%	No precautions Everything at pre-pandemic conditions
Yellow	5% - 12.49%	Face coverings optional for those who are vaccinated Physical distancing encouraged People may come and go in the building as necessary Groups may meet in person in the building without restrictions, other than above face covering guidance Offering plates and pew pads in worship will be passed Optional intinction station provided for communion in addition to self-serve option Full choir without face coverings Coffee and doughnut holes in the atrium Receptions allowed in Fellowship Hall or Hudson Hall (family preference)
Orange	12.5% - 19.99%	Face coverings required for all activities in the building Physical distancing encouraged during worship through the taping off of pews Coffee and doughnut holes in the Fellowship Hall All receptions in Hudson Hall Reduced choir (scholarship singers) masked No offering plates or pew pads passed Communion self-serve cups only Groups strongly encouraged to meet via Zoom, but in-person meetings allowed provided face coverings required and physical distancing observed
Red	20% or greater	Virtual or outdoor worship only Building closed to all groups and in-person traffic; staff only Groups not allowed to meet in-person on church property No receptions; outdoor graveside services only

UPCOMING SERMON TEXTS & TOPICS

Our journey through the Book of Acts finds Paul returning home to Jerusalem this month. Paul leaves Greece and heads to Jerusalem, where he is attacked by an angry mob and arrested by the Roman authorities. After a passionate defense, Paul is brought before the chief priests and the governing council of the Temple.

September 5th	Acts 20:1-38	Paul Bids Greece Goodbye
September 12th	Acts 21:1-26	Paul's Journey to and Arrival in Jerusalem
September 19th	Acts 21:27-22:21	Paul's Arrest at the Temple
September 26th	Acts 22:22-23:11	Paul in Front of the Sanhedrin



**The September-October Upper
Room Devotionals are now
available!**

Copies can be found at the
vestibule at the atrium's entrance
into the church.

September Birthdays

Elizabeth Seastrunk 9/01

Jim Ford 9/18

Bill Broome 9/02

Harriet Campbell 9/23

Nan Sweitzer 9/03

Donna Matlock 9/23

Henry Casey 9/04

Elsie Dodson 9/24

Clara Hardin 9/06

Lisa Henley 9/24

Jimmy Cheek 9/07

Brent Beals 9/26

Donna Downen 9/07

Robert Morgan 9/26

Edith Vance 9/08

Pam Turner 9/26

Scott Farris 9/11

Terry Chumley 9/27

Drew Wall 9/11

Brayden Beets 9/29

Nancy Smythe 9/12

Linda Sue Byrd 9/30

Jerry Young 9/15

John Kelley 9/30

Gil Turner 9/17

Please note: We take special care in insuring that all active members' birthdays are included on this list, if you notice a discrepancy, kindly advise the church office. Thank you.

Good News for Mainline Protestants?

From a New York Magazine Article, July 8, 2021 (edited for length)

The new “2020 Census of American Religion” from the Public Religion Research Institute is out, and while it has a number of interesting findings, the most surprising is that among white Christians, mainline Protestants have reversed a long-standing decline in membership and have now surged past Evangelical Protestants. The survey measured self-identification among white Christians, so it is not correlated to institutional membership in a denomination. But generally speaking, “mainline” Protestants are the relatively liberal denominations that belong to the World Council of Churches, including United Methodists, Episcopalians, the Presbyterian Church USA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Meanwhile, “Evangelical” Protestants include Southern Baptists, Churches of Christ, conservative Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Anglican split-off sects, and various Pentecostal and nondenominational but conservative groups.

According to PRRI, mainline Protestants now account for 27 percent of white Christians, while Evangelicals make up 23 percent. While white Christians as a whole have been steadily declining as a portion of the population for decades, the most recent number shows a reversal of trends between mainliners, who are experiencing an uptick in affiliation, and Evangelicals, who continue to decline. There was a bit of a harbinger of this development in 2013, when a Brookings/PRRI study of millennials showed a significantly larger share identifying as “liberal” or “moderate” Christians as opposed to “conservative” Christians. As I observed at the time: “The idea that non-conservative Christianity is outmoded is itself outmoded.”

Still, the news that mainliners are growing as Evangelicals decline will be shocking to those who have been told for many years that liberal Protestantism is “dead” or “dying,” condemned by lax theology and too much tolerance of sinfulness (you know, women having nonmarital sex, using birth control, and having abortions; divorced people remarrying; and LGBTQ people coming out of the closet in defiance of God’s plan).

Are the PRRI findings just a blip that will be forgotten when the long-standing decline of liberal Protestants and the triumphant rise of conservatives resumes? Possibly, but maybe not. The PRRI census will also get attention for showing that the steady rise in the percentage of Americans who have no religious identification has slowed and even reversed. It’s possible this trend is “circumstantial evidence” that suggests over the last two years, white mainline Protestants seem to have absorbed at least some folks leaving white evangelical and other churches who may have otherwise landed in the religiously unaffiliated camp.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNER & BIBLE STUDY

**Wednesday night dinner and Bible study will resume
in-person on Wednesday, Sept. 8th!
[Covid phase permitting]**

This fall we will be studying *The Kingdom Parables of Jesus*, those parables in which Jesus says, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like...” The format will be lecture/small group discussion. Pastor Tim will review the story for 20 minutes or so in the Fellowship Hall, then we will break into small groups for discussion questions together. The makeup of each group will change from week to week and the discussion questions will be provided.

When we are in Covid Phase Yellow or Orange, a Zoom link will also be provided in the Friday email and on the website for those who are not comfortable joining us in-person. This will allow you to watch the review of the parable in the Fellowship Hall live, then discuss the parable with the others who are on the Zoom meeting.

If we are in Covid Phase Red, the class will move entirely onto Zoom and we will use the Breakout Room feature for the discussion.

Dinner is at 6:00 p.m. and Bible study starts at 6:30.

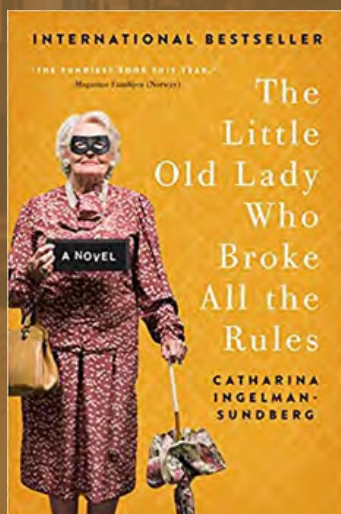
The Second Readers Book Club

The Second Readers Book Club would love to welcome new members! We will read *The Little Old Lady Who Broke All the Rules*, for our September 8th gathering and *The Keeper of Lost Things* for our October 13th gathering.

The September meeting will be held at noon in the Mary Chambers Room, if the current Covid Phase permits. Attendees are asked to bring their lunch.

The time for our October meeting will be announced at a later date.

Call Margaret Sullivan at 865-588-3103 if you have any questions about Second Readers!



Service & Outreach West View Work Day

THANK YOU to everyone that helped prepare West View Elementary last month for the opening of school and for the student's school supplies!



School Coupon Book Sales

TO BENEFIT WEST VIEW SCHOOL!

West View is a small school located "almost within eyesight" were we to climb to the top of our belltower. But, what a difference it makes to travel from Kingston Pike to Mingle Avenue! Night vs. Day! 98% of the children in this school receive free breakfast, as well as lunch.

Likewise, many children take home backpacks of food on weekends (as Second members know from recently participating in the generous \$10,000 gift to Second Harvest to cover this expense for the school year.) Now we ask that you consider the annual purchase of **School Coupon Books**.

1. *Books cost \$10.00 each and \$8.50 of that amount may be kept by the school.*
2. The money raised by book sales is used for technology, "Good Rewards" (each teacher can determine how to use these to encourage good behavior, better participation skills, better grades, etc.) and additional school supplies.

Sale Dates: September 9 – 29

Sandra Butler will be taking orders! *Contact her directly at 865-584-4397, 659-4416 (cell) or sandyb446@comcast.net.*

Photos from the Habitat House Dedication Ceremony!



UPDATES FROM THE SESSION

Highlights from the August 2021 Stated Session Meeting

- Received reports from the Preschool and Ministry Teams as information.
- Received the Treasurer's Report.
- Approved the Covid Precaution Phases.
- Approved for the Sacrament of Baptism: Faye Jean Penmore, daughter of John and Rachel Penmore, and Finley Nelson Homer Kennedy, son of Geoffrey and Patricia Kennedy on Sunday, August 22, 2021 .

JULY BUDGET REPORT

	JULY	YTD	BUDGET
TOTAL GIVING	\$54,903.88	\$500,928.52	\$788,556.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$61,294.89	\$390,110.69	\$788,556.00
EXCESS/(SHORTAGE)	(\$6,391.01)	\$109,817.83	---



		1 2p Compassionate Cuisine (FH)	2	3 Church Office Closed	4
5 Communion Sunday 9 ⁴⁵ a FSF Sunday School Class (Barbour Room) 11a Worship	6 Labor Day <i>Church Office Closed</i> <i>Preschool Closed</i> 	7 9a Staff Meeting 5p Facilities (Zoom) 6p Care & Compassion (Barbour Room) 7p Boy Scouts 7p Service & Outreach (Barbour Room)	8 12p 2 nd Readers Book Club (MCR) 6p Wednesday Night Dinner/Bible Study (FH)	9	10 Church Office Closed
12 9 ⁴⁵ a FSF Sunday School Class (Barbour Room) 11a Worship	13 6p Discipleship (Zoom) 6 ³ p BSF (All Facilities)	14 6p Worship Ministry Unit (Zoom) 7p Boy Scouts	15 2p Compassionate Cuisine (FH) 6p Wednesday Night Dinner/Bible Study (FH)	16 10a Arts & Crafts (Room 227) 12p Budget & Finance Comm. Meeting (Zoom) 4 ¹⁵ p Mobile Meals (Parking Lot Use)	17 Church Office Closed
19 9 ⁴⁵ a FSF Sunday School Class (Barbour Room) 11a Worship	20 2nd Edition Deadline! 12p Preschool Board Meeting (Zoom) 6 ³ p BSF (All Facilities)	21 9a Staff Meeting 6p Session Meeting (MCR) 7p Boy Scouts	22 6p Wednesday Night Dinner/Bible Study (FH)	23	24 Church Office Closed
26 9 ⁴⁵ a FSF Sunday School Class (Barbour Room) 11a Worship	27 <i>Audrey Out of Office</i> 6 ³ p BSF (All Facilities)	28 9a FISH Pantry (FH) 7p Boy Scouts	29 6p Wednesday Night Dinner/Bible Study (FH)	30	



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THE SECOND EDITION
SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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*Responding in gratitude to God's love and grace,
we are a welcoming, faithful, and hopeful community,
following Jesus and serving him in the world.*

ELDERS

CLASS OF 2022

Dean Farmer
Margie Gill
Patricia Kennedy
Marty McLean

CLASS OF 2023

Tracy Horton
Neal Peebles
Charles White
Tim Wright

CLASS OF 2024

Ileen Cheek
Joe Clarke
Angela Jones
Mary Kay Sullivan

MINISTRY TEAMS & MODERATORS

Worship & Celebration

Margie Gill
Ileen Cheek

Discipleship

Patricia Kennedy
Angela Jones

Service & Outreach

Tracy Horton
Tim Wright

Care & Compassion

Marty McLean
Joe Clarke

Stewardship

Dean Farmer
Neal Peebles
Mary Kay Sullivan

Preschool Board

Charles White