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OCTOBER 2020

ISSUE 20-10

The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

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Leadership

BOOK REVIEW: POLITICAL VISIONS AND ILLUSIONS

From Pastor Chad

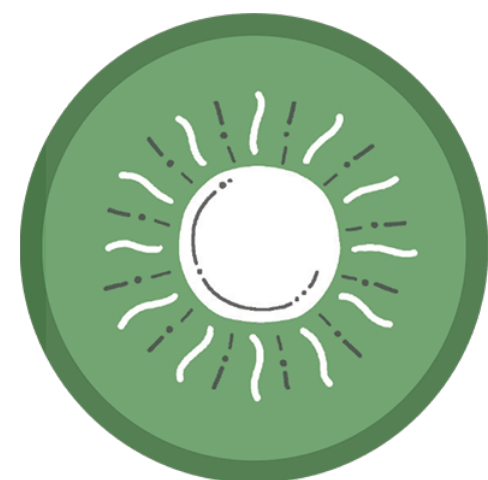
In case you have not heard, November 3, 2020, is Election Day in the United States. We will be voting to elect a President as well as numerous other elected officials. With that day approaching, I want to recommend a book that has helped me understand some of the general political ideologies present in our culture today. The book is called *Political Visions and Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies* by David Koyzis (2003).

Koyzis spends time in the book critiquing five political ideologies: (1) Liberalism, (2) Conservatism, (3) Nationalism, (4) Democratism, and (5) Socialism. His chief premise is that a commitment to the principles of any one political ideology constitutes idolatry. He performs his critique by looking at them through the lens of the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation narrative. He demonstrates how each of the ideologies sees humanity as having certain rights. Depending on the ideology and the place where it is applied, those rights are derived from human philosophy, a divine authority, or some amalgam of the two. The ideologies also differ on the basic human rights and, perhaps more importantly, on what our purposes and goals are as human individuals and societies. Once an ideology has established what constitutes human rights, any human evils or natural ills that limit, prevent, or remove those rights are considered unjust. The people who are suffering injustice then need to be delivered. The political ideologies place the government in the role of deliverer or redeemer. Once the government steps into this role its job is to move its society, and the people within it, toward the consummation of its version of utopia or paradise.

Koyzis takes time in his critique of each ideology to point out its strengths and its errors. He also demonstrates how a single-minded commitment to a particular ideology constitutes idolatry. He shows how such an idolatrous commitment will ultimately be destructive for its citizens and the very societal structures it's trying to establish and maintain. He points his readers instead to the Biblical truth of the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation narrative. God is the Creator of the world, including everything and everyone that inhabits it. His Creation is good. He not only made the world but he also established all within it that is good and right for human flourishing. (God does this, not Locke, Jefferson, Marx, or any other political philosopher.) The Creation, together with all of its people, suffers because of human sinfulness. It is in need of redemption, which has come in the person of Jesus Christ. He will one day return and consummate the redemption he inaugurated with his first coming. He is making all things new, and that newness will have its completion in the New Creation. He will dwell at peace with his people in the New Jerusalem, where there will be no injustice.

Until then, Christians are called to live in this world as the redeemed people of God. We are not to look to any one political ideology to save us from the evils and ills of the world, for we know that Jesus is the only true Savior. However, we are called to pursue love and justice for others while we are here. Koyzis spends the latter portion of his book looking at some possible non-ideological, Christian approaches to living justly in a puriform society. He suggests that the most Biblical manner for doing so is through a form of something called "sphere sovereignty" (a term used by Abraham Kuyper in the 20th Century) or "differentiated responsibility." * This manner of approach sees God as the sovereign over all humanity and the Creation as a whole.

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It acknowledges that God has distributed human authority in a variety of “spheres” - the individual, the family, the workplace, the church, the state, etc. Within each sphere, people have certain responsibilities and measures of authority. There may be some overlap of spheres, but the structure is not hierarchical. For instance, the government has its role, but it should not dictate to individuals, families, churches, etc. how to carry out their God-decreed responsibilities.

Political Visions and Illusions is worth the read. Koyzis is measured in his approach of critiquing the ideologies without coming off as cynical. He gives hope to the Christian in the latter portion of the book, encouraging us to embrace the roles of responsibility and authority that we have from God and to engage in the society in which we live at every level.

* I will be preaching a few sermon series in the coming months that will frequently touch on the concept of sphere sovereignty. The first is a sermon series on Love and Justice (October 25-November 22). The second is a series on the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation narrative in Genesis 1-11 (November 29-January 10). The third will be a detailed look at the Ten Commandments and their applications through various case laws in Exodus 20-23 (January-May 2021). ■

PRAYER FOCUS

OCTOBER 4 - The Church throughout the World

OCTOBER 11 - The Bridge Europe Missions Team

OCTOBER 18 - The Meetings of the General Synod of the ARP Church and the Florida Presbytery

OCTOBER 25 - Stewardship for FPC as a Church and People

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet the fourth Tuesday of each month. The following notes are highlights from the meeting on Sept. 22.

- As a devotional, the Session considered our relationship to a Trinitarian God. Our knowledge of God, and thus our fellowship with him deepens when we better understand his nature as three-in-one. We fellowship with the Father in love, we fellowship with the Son in grace, and we fellowship with Spirit in comfort (2 Cor. 13:14).
- Shane Miller presented a Youth Ministry Vision Statement to guide the Session’s efforts in gospel ministry to middle and high school students. The statement, having been approved by the Youth Council, will be included in the FPCLW Staff Handbook.
- Stewardship and Finance reported that as of the end of August 2020, tithes and offerings toward the church’s 2020 general budget are at 61% of the 2020 budget. This is above the historic average of 57% (2015-2019) our church has received by the end of August. Our expenses were at 64% of the budget. Thanksgiving was offered for God’s continued provision, faithfulness in our use of his resources. A draft budget for 2021 was distributed. The budget will be reviewed and voted upon by Stewardship and Finance, Deacons, and Session in October before being presented to the congregation for approval in December.
- Discipleship Committee reviewed the planned beginning of in-person Ekklesia on Sept 30. This will include adult Bible study, youth groups, children’s program, and nursery.
- Evangelism and Outreach Committee reported that two of their ministries, MOPs and soccer, would more than likely not resume until 2021.
- The General Synod of the ARP is scheduled to meet Oct. 22-23 in Columbia, SC; this is a postponement of its regular June meeting at Bonclarken.
- The chairmen of the committees of the Session gave reports of the work and ministries they oversee. Prayer was offered after each report, asking for the Lord’s guidance and blessing upon the ministries of the church.
- A season of prayer was had for various needs within our congregation, community, and world.

Discipleship

THE SPIRIT OF POWER

From Pastor Mackay

...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

- 2 Tim 1:7

Along our read-through of John Owen's *The Holy Spirit* for the discipleship podcast, one particular aspect of the Spirit's work has captured my attention. The Spirit does many things for God's people. It is his work to comfort and help us (John 14:16), assure us of our salvation (Eph. 1:13-14), and teach us (1 Cor. 2:13). As Paul encourages Timothy, we also see that the Spirit gives us power. What is meant by this?

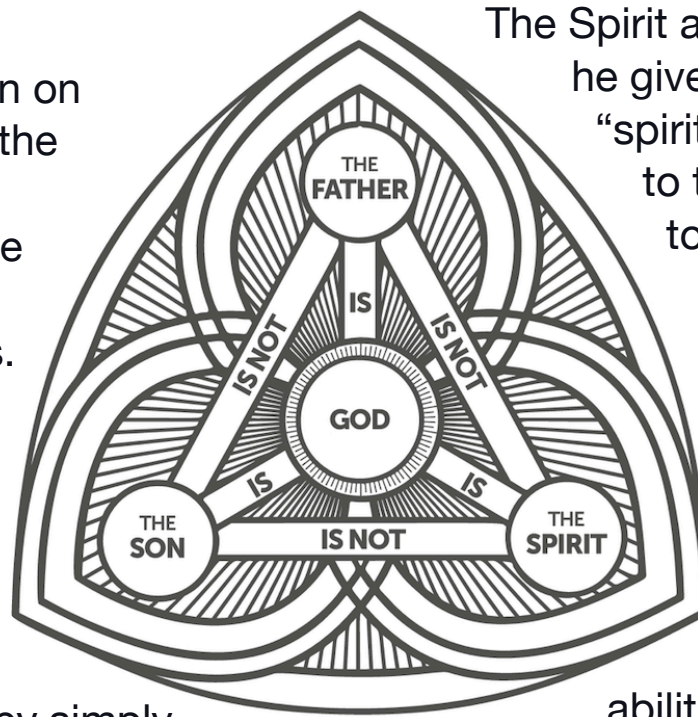
Have you ever watched a magician on television? Maybe you remember the over-wrought stage spectaculars David Copperfield used to produce in the '80s and '90s or the "street magic" performers of recent years. When we watch their incredible performances, we are left with a sense of, "I could never do that!" It seems beyond our capacity. Yet, the truth of the matter is that we could indeed do that. Those performers have no cultic gifts; they simply have perfected the arts of sleight-of-hand and illusion. They have put countless hours of practice into their craft and have come out highly skilled. If we were to devote ourselves to the same life (the wisdom of such a choice being a separate conversation), we could reach a similar skill level. We have what we need to do so.

When Christians consider the commands of God, it is the work of Satan to convince us that we "could never do that!" Think, for example, of Paul's command that there be no coarse joking among believers (Eph. 5:4). Is that really possible for Christians? Think of what we would lose! How many of us have friendships from our school days that are basically rooted in coarse joking? How can we deal with such a change? The truth is, such change is truly beyond us without the help of God. It is God, though, who has given believers not a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power. Believers have what we need in the indwelling

Holy Spirit. Consider the following examples of what this Spirit power enables us to do.

Before anything else, it is the power of the Spirit that enables sinners to repent and believe the Gospel (1 Cor. 2:11-12). Only this divine work of new birth brings faith. So, without Spirit power, even our desire for God and his glory is impossible.

For Christians, the Spirit enables us to live with hope (Rom. 15:13). What a gift in a day such as this. In hope, we continue to worship God, we continue to raise our families, and we continue to love our neighbors. These things are enabled by the Spirit working in us.



The Spirit also enables us to use the gifts that he gives us. You've no doubt heard of "spiritual gifts," but we're often tempted to think that our spiritual gifts are like toys labeled "batteries not included," we get the object, but we have to supply the energy! Not so, in Paul's words of 2 Tim. 2, he is motivating his protégé to stir up the gifts that he has been given. So for us, we are given not just ability by the Spirit, but energy by the Spirit to put those abilities to use.

Lastly, Paul's reference to the Spirit of "self-control" reminds us that the Spirit enables us to resist sin. We can be in a bad habit of thinking that while many sins might be under our control, there's one that we "just can't shake" or is "part of who I am." Maybe it's coarse joking, maybe it's sinful anger, or maybe it's overindulgence in food or shopping; whatever our pet sin, we think that it's a hopeless endeavor. How about our charge to "patiently endure evil," in the hope that some opposed to God will come to know Jesus? (See 2 Tim. 2:24-26) Do we even try to love sinners? God has, and it's possible for us, thanks to the power of the Spirit. We have the ability to resist sin!

It's no wonder that we are encouraged to "walk in the spirit" (Gal. 5), and "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5). As we pray for God's help and seek to live obedience, worshipful lives, we can take confidence that we are energized by a supernatural power! Thanks be to him! ■

EKKLESIA

Our fall adult Bible study is *The Attributes of God*. We meet on Wednesday nights for a fellowship meal at 6 pm, followed by Bible study at 7 pm; the Bible study is also live on Zoom for those who choose to join from home. Please be sure you sign up for your meal by 10 am Wednesday morning. Sign up by using the attendance card on Sunday mornings, going to the church website, or calling the church office.

DISCIPLESHIP PODCASTS

New podcasts continue with our two programs: *Bring the Books!*, each Wednesday morning, and *Nourished and Knit Together*, a show especially for small group leaders, once each month. You can access these short audio programs through our church website. Also, you can now (finally!) find the podcast by searching “FPCLW” on the Apple Podcast app.

SMALL GROUPS

Looking for a small group? We currently have groups meeting on campus and virtually. Speak with Mackay if you would like to explore this discipleship ministry.

HAPPY FALL!



Missions & Outreach

LETTER FROM MISSIONARY CANDIDATE: **Ilyssa Harrington TO JOIN BRIDGE EUROPE**

From Ilyssa Harrington

I write to you with the exciting news that through God's grace, I am a World Witness missionary candidate to serve on the Bridge Europe ministry team. The purpose of Bridge Europe (BE) is to see Muslims in Europe come to faith in Christ and become established in healthy, gospel-centered churches. As a Bridge Europe member, I will create ways to use art ministries for outreach and trauma counseling, as well as help other BE sites integrate art ministries into their ministries.

Because of the church's faithful teaching and guided prayer for missionaries to rise out of our church, I come humbly before you as a World Witness candidate. The Lord has been at work in my heart since I was in the youth group. A seed was planted by leaders who poured gospel ministry into me and by the annual missions conferences held at our church. Through college, the Lord continued to prepare me and give me a vision for what he was calling me to do. This church has been foundational in learning about mission and understanding my call. That is why it is with great joy that I come to you asking for your support in prayer, conversations, and finances to pursue serving the Lord with the BE team.

The word chiaroscuro is a Renaissance painting term that means stark light against stark darkness. This term has helped me apply the truth of Christ's light to the call to shine his light in the world (John 1:5) and I use the word chiaroscuro as an acronym to define my mission: **C** for Christ, that my ministry is Christ-centered; **H** for humanitarian, that I can promote the general wellbeing of people with whom I am working; **I** for intentionally being a good steward where God has placed me and to whom he has called me to be on the mission field; **A** and **R** for practicing art therapy with refugees as I minister to them; **O** and **S** that I can open doors to share about our Savior, Jesus Christ; **C** and **U** to use creativity to lead to understanding for one another; and finally, **R** and **O** to have restoration



and oneness between the missionaries, Muslims, and French people in Jesus.

For this calling, I am seeking your support in two ways. First, please pray for me as I go into this season of fundraising, for the Lord to guide me from the smallest to the most significant decisions, and for my spiritual community to grow so that I will have the prayer support of the church with me when I am ready to go to Europe.

Secondly, I am seeking financial support for my ministry. I have started fundraising and look forward to meeting with you in small groups and individually to share more of my vision, mission, and financial goals.

The support of my church family is much appreciated and tremendously important to me. I continue to be blessed by this Christ-centered community who personally pours love and guidance into me and remains a vibrant church family serving Jesus Christ in this community and far beyond!

Thank you and peace be with you,
Ilyssa Harrington
World Witness Candidate

PAIN AND HOPE

From Vince Treadway

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.

-Psalm 116:15

Having been at FPC for more than ten years now, I have come to know many wonderful brothers and sisters in the Lord who have gone to be with the Lord. This seems especially poignant when you truly grow to love and appreciate those dear ones, and a giant hole is left in your heart when the Lord calls them home. Yet death is as much part of life as birth, and the only alternative is that the Lord may come back before he calls us home, too. For the Christian, for the one who truly has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, we need not fear death. We have an eternal hope that we will be with the Lord the moment we die.

I recall reading when Jesus was on the cross, and the criminal on one side cried out, "Why don't you save us?" to Jesus. Then the criminal on the other side of Jesus said to him, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." (Luke 23:40-43) Then he turned to Jesus and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."



and Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." Just this week, a dear brother in our men's Tuesday morning prayer group lost his beloved wife of many years, and we all grieve with him. But his wife knew the Lord, and one day he will see her again! There are so many wonderful hymns and songs that express this hope that we have through Christ! One of my favorite songs on this topic is by Don Wytzen (b. 1942) and L. E. Singer entitled *Finally Home*. Here is one of the verses and the chorus:

When engulfed by the terror of tempestuous sea,
unknown waves before you roll;
at the end of doubt and peril is eternity,
though fear and conflict seize your soul:

Chorus:

But just think of stepping on shore and finding it heaven!
Of touching a hand, and finding it God's!
Of breathing new air and finding it celestial!
Of waking up in glory and finding it home!

What a glorious thing to imagine! What a precious hope we have because of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross! A great hymn in the *Trinity Hymnal* that speaks about our hope in death is *Jesus Lives, and So Shall I*, hymn 706. The text is by Christian Gellert (1715-1769). Here is one of the verses:

Jesus lives and so shall I. Death! thy sting is gone forever!
He who deigned for me to die, lives, the bands of death to sever.
He shall raise me from the dust: Jesus is my hope and trust.

One of my favorite gospel songs that is full of the joy of hope is *I'll Fly Away* by Albert E. Brumley (1905-1977). Here is a verse and the chorus:

Some glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away.
To a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away.

Chorus:

I'll fly away, O glory, I'll fly away.
When I die, hallelujah, by and by,
I'll fly away.

My hope and prayer for all of you are that you know the ONE who gives ETERNAL hope and completely removes the "sting of death!" Praise the Lord! ■

High School & Middle School

WEDNESDAY NIGHT YOUTH MINISTRY PLAN

From Shane Miller

September 30 was our return date for youth ministry at First Presbyterian Church in Lake Wales. We are beyond thrilled to start hanging out with students again, discipling them in the gospel of Jesus. Every week, I've been using the quarantine-cast to give some updates on what to expect on Wednesday nights. I want to use this opportunity, for those who might have missed some of the podcasts, to portray the plan for Wednesday night youth ministry in full.

First off, masks and social distancing will be required. You can wear a standard face mask, a gaiter, or a bandana. Students will be checked-in as they arrive. Youth ministry at First Pres will start at 5:00. We will not be playing sports in the gym. We want the students to have a good time, but we also want them to do so in a safe and healthy environment. That being said, students

will be allowed to play the sports they would play in the gym on the green across the street. The green will have boundaries, and youth leaders will be hanging out with students there. Although the Family Life Center will not be used for sports, the gym, the game room, and even the darkroom will be available for students to hang out.

At 6:00, we will have a meal as always. If students would like to purchase a First Pres meal, the cost will be \$5, and students have to sign up on the church website before Wednesday at 10 am. Every Monday, I will be sending out a message on Remind with a description of what is being served and the link needed to sign up. Students who sign up will have a Styrofoam box with their name on it containing their meal. For anyone who has not signed up for a meal, there will be pizza available at \$1 a slice. Middle schoolers will be eating outside under the overhang of the driveway entrance of the FLC and high schoolers will eat in the game room; youth leaders will be present for both groups, eating dinner with students.

After dinner, I am going to teach the middle schoolers in a big open area in the family life center from 6:30-7:00. Afterward, they will break up into small groups. From 7:00-7:30, I will be teaching the high schoolers in the darkroom. At 7:30, parents are free to pick up their students.

Again, we are excited to start ministry with the youth of our church and community. Please be in prayer for leaders as they seek to disciple students in the gospel of Christ. Please pray for students that in such trying times, they might find hope in the gospel of Christ. Most of all, pray that Jesus would be glorified through it all.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns. My email is shane@fpclw.org. ■

Children's Ministry

EKKLESIA KIDZ FALL 2020: PROCEDURES AND PARABLES

From Kelly Harrington

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.
-Matthew 13:16-17

I am eager to meet with the children again for Ekklesia Kidz (K-5th grades) on Wednesday evenings! With several volunteers willing to help lead our kids and a few modified procedures to help safeguard us from sharing germs, we are ready to move forward in our pursuit of discipleship together! Here is a look at what you can expect for your children this year in Ekklesia Kidz:

Sign In & Gathering Game: At 6:30, we will meet outside (weather permitting) in the breezeway entrance of the Family Life Center. Please have your child go to the restroom before joining us there to wash their hands with soap and water and put on a clean face covering. Our volunteers and students will wear face coverings throughout our time together. Our volunteers will be ready to receive your child(ren) with a gathering game while you check your child in with us. This year, we will ask you each week to check a box on our sign-in sheet that states that your child is COVID-symptom-free.

Ekklesia Kidz Program: Our program will take place in the children's department, the downstairs-level of our vintage building; we will not begin in the gym as we have in the past as the youth will be using that space. We will meet together in our largest classroom to introduce our lesson, then divide into designated small groups for prayer, Bible lesson exploration, and games. Small groups allow our kids to be individually and closely involved in the lesson and with their leaders!

Parables of Jesus: This year, our focus is on the parables of Jesus. Why did Jesus speak in parables? How can we, specifically our kids, possibly understand what he is talking about when even his disciples were confused by his stories? Jesus used simple stories to tell profound truths of himself, the Father, and the kingdom of heaven. We want our kids to know more than the words of these stories; we want them to understand the life-changing messages of Jesus' parables deeply. Author Sinclair Ferguson explains it like this: "Jesus tells these parables to probe inside us to see whether we really understand the gospel and whether the gospel is really beginning to transform our lives." Pray with me that the Holy Spirit will be at work in the understanding of our children as they learn the messages of the parables of Jesus!



Finishing Games and Check-Out: Once students and leaders have wrapped up their lessons, they will stay in their small groups for some finishing games of their choosing. During this time, we expect parents to arrive downstairs to check out their child(ren). Parents will sign out their child(ren) and wait in the main hallway for their child(ren) to come out. Once you have your child(ren), please head back upstairs as soon as possible as our space is small, and we want to have room for everyone to check out their kiddos comfortably.

I know that there is a wide spectrum of cautiousness and frustration with returning to regular activities because of COVID-19; I find my own feelings on it are very fluid and fluctuating almost daily. However, I remain prayerful for the necessary reasonableness and wisdom I need in these matters, and hopeful in the protection and help of God as we meet to grow in our knowledge of him, his Word, and his kingdom! Please feel free to contact me for clarification, if you have questions, or if you would like to volunteer with us; my email is kelly@fpclw.org. ■

Church Family

MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

October 1, Morgan Roe
October 2, Kermit Richert
October 2, Sue Dolan
October 3, Susie Bellamy
October 5, Margaret Hunt
October 7, Rob Thullbery
October 7, David Ullman
October 7, Carter Ullman
October 7, Michael Berkau
October 7, Tony Thomas
October 10, Ashley Cockrell
October 12, Rilee Bennett
October 12, Sofia Moyer
October 13, Kaitlyn Nelson
October 14, Judith Adams
October 15, Joe Martin
October 16, Maxcy Henry
October 16, Brystal Michalkiewicz
October 17, George Corcoran
October 18, Teresa Bass
October 18, Kathleen Krpata
October 19, Catherine Ullman
October 20, Emma Geils
October 21, Harry Nelson
October 21, Richard Fugate
October 22, Mariam Clough
October 22, Bea Meeker
October 22, John Yarbrough
October 23, Sara Grace Freeland
October 24, Jan Kahler
October 24, Dana Lewis
October 25, David Crews
October 27, Milford Myhre
October 31, Autumn Moyer
October 31, Eli Reynolds
October 31, Jeff Herman

ANNIVERSARIES

October 7, Paul & Mary Benner
October 18, Chuck & Kay Clegg
October 21, David & Teresa Bass
October 22, Bob & Bea Meeker
October 24, Larry & Judith Adams



CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2020

John Dubois
Stewart Hurst
Ed Lamb
Fox Rawlings

2021

Mike Berkau
Paul Benner

2022

Frank Hunt III
John Matteson
Vince Treadway

2023

Scott Crews
Doug Pace

DEACONS

2020

David Bass
Lynne Hulen
Rob McCollum
David Kennedy Nelson

2021

David Caldwell
Michael Kahler
Carl McCollum
Tony Thomas

2022

Bea Meeker
Aaron Nelson
Mary Youmans

Moderator: Rev. Chad Reynolds

Vice Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith

Clerk of Session: Ed Lamb

Chairman of Deacons: Rob McCollum

Deacon Secretary: David Kennedy Nelson

Chm. of the Congregation: Jake Cockrell

Treasurer: Michelle Hurst (2020-2021)

Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt (2020-2021)



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