



PREDESTINATION AND DIVINE LOVE

When I was a young Christian in seminary, I can remember telling my acquaintances that I was studying to be a Presbyterian minister. Occasionally, the response would be, “Oh, aren’t the Presbyterians the ones who believe in predestination?” Often their question had a dubious tone, implying a discomfort with the idea that God controlled our lives in such a way that humans are deprived of their free will and of their ability to make decisions for themselves. I usually answered, “Predestination is a peripheral belief; it’s not a central belief of Presbyterians. Certainly, however, all Christians believe in some form of predestination; indeed, I have never met a single Christian who believes that evil ultimately prevail and that God will lose in the end. Every Christian believes that God is sovereign and reigns supreme over all of creation.”

Perhaps we balk at predestination because we despise the notion of not being in control of our own destiny. We want to have the freedom to choose, and predestination seems to take away our freedoms, making us little more than mindless puppets, and making God our puppeteer. After all, if God were to judge us on our moral actions, wouldn’t it be the height of cruelty for God to punish a person who was predestined to do evil? Wouldn’t we need to have a morally free will to choose between right and wrong—between good and evil? Aren’t we free to choose the love of Christ for ourselves, or to reject it?

These are great questions, my Christian friends. And I submit to you that perhaps predestination is simply another term for God’s divine love revealed in Jesus Christ. When Christ commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39), when Christ commands us to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34), we assume that we have the freedom to choose either to obey this commandment or not—to love our neighbors or not—to love others or not? But I ask you, is this really the kind of freedom that we are trying to defend? The freedom to hate a neighbor, the freedom to hate another? Is this what we mean by freedom—the freedom to hate?

Are we really free to choose to disobey Christ’s commandments to love? As Christians, don’t we want to love our neighbors? Are we not compelled to love others? We don’t so much choose to obey Christ’s command to love; rather we want to obey such commandments. Indeed, the divine love of Christ within us compels us to love. You might even say that we are predestined to love.

If we are so defined by Christ’s divine love abiding within us, if our actions are so inspired by it, wouldn’t we want to feed our hungry neighbors? Wouldn’t we want to heal the wounded others? Wouldn’t we want to mend the broken world that God so loves (John 3:16). My Christian friends, I ask you, are we really free to do otherwise? Are we not predestined by divine love?

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**First Presbyterian Church
P O BOX 165
Richmond, KY 40476-0165**

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Gratitude

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Healthy Congregations

Healthy Congregations uses the insights of family systems theory to help church leaders become more effective stewards of their congregations. This workshop was developed by Dr. Peter Steinke and is based on the work of Dr. Edwin Friedman, author of *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*. The Healthy Congregations workshop is designed to equip leaders to respond to the presence or potential threat of anxiety in a congregational system in ways that prevent destructive conflict and help the church stay focused on its unique mission and purpose.

This Workshop Will Help You/Your Church...

- Learn how you as a leader can positively influence the health your congregation
- Learn how to keep anxiety from being infectious
- Gain confidence in responding to challenges and opportunities
- Learn how to limit invasive behavior, manage reactivity, and overcome sabotage
- Learn to focus on strengths, resources, options, and the future



Who Will Benefit:

- **Pastoral leaders** who are interested in learning a proactive approach to managing anxiety in their church
- **Church lay leaders** who want to gain confidence in their position and how to best manage challenges
- **Anyone** interested in learning how to manage self and become a positive representative for the church

Logistical Information:

- The workshop will begin at 9:00 am and last until 4:00 pm
- There will be a couple 15-minute breaks and an hour break for lunch

Presented By
Jay Wittmeyer



Rev. Jay Wittmeyer is the Executive Director of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. Jay is an educator, organizational development consultant, and mediator with broad experience, serving conflicted churches and organizations in the U.S. and international settings. Grounded in an Anabaptist peace-building tradition and working from a Bowen family systems perspective, LMPC works to transform conflict in a healthy manner.

Date

September 21st, 2024

Location

First Presbyterian Church
130 Windridge Dr
Winchester, KY 40391

Organizer

Transylvania Presbytery,
PCUSA

Workshop By



630-627-0507 101 W. 22nd St., Suite 206, Lombard, IL 60148 www.LMPeaceCenter.org

RALLY DAY

8/18/24
9:45 AM

COME HELP
KICK OFF THE
NEW SCHOOL
YEAR!

Coffee and Pastries served
at 9:45 in the gym,
program to follow



Evening Women's Circle

Tuesday, August 6th
 6:30 pm in the parlor
 We will discuss the book *Horse* by Geraldine Brooks.
 Sue Chenault will bring refreshments.

*Dear friends,
 Thank you for all of the
 beautiful cards and phone calls
 to celebrate my 90th birthday!*

*In Christian Love,
 Kay Patrick*



Love Fund—June 2024

Rent - assisted 21 families \$3,455
 Utilities - assisted 29 families \$3,782.46
 Hotel - assisted 1 family- \$210
 Distributed 21 gas vouchers — \$700
 Distributed 48 food vouchers — \$1,822.64
 Love fund Pantry - Assisted 9 families
Total spent - \$9,970.10

Assisted 61 families/52 children



- 1 Connie Reimold
- 4 Will Harter
- 5 T.J. Glass
- 6 Jackie Vance
- 7 Mary Harter
- 13 Abby Perry Freeman
- Aiden Ortteneburger
- 14 Gil Shew
- 18 Lucy Waterbury
- 19 Bonnie Gray
- 20 Jen Deaton
- 21 Sarah Gump
- 25 Coy Weldon
- 27 Marsha Frazier
- 28 Lynn Shearon
- 29 Kyah Brinegar

**BLESSINGS
 ON YOUR
 BIRTHDAY**

- 2 Sue Fain
- 4 George Ferrell
- Randall Gray
- 6 Tracy Lamb
- Joel Stanley
- 7 Amelia Shew Trinh
- 8 Bruce Bonar
- 14 Pierce Johnson, Jr.
- 16 Karen Losson
- 22 Carter Lamb
- 27 Gene Wolf
- 28 Phyllis Gump
- Jeanie Smith
- 30 Bill Carrico
- Jim Ney
- Mandy Owens

News Brief from Session

- Rally Day set for Sunday, August 18 during the Sunday School hour and recognition of Sunday School teachers during worship.
- 2025 proposed budget is being developed for fall Stewardship.
- The church will be participating with the Millstone Festival activities on October 5.
- Property working on sprucing up the outside of the church walkways and railings, landscaping, upgrading the Dover elevator, and repairing the plaster wall in the balcony.
- Fruits and vegetables are thriving in the Community Garden. Check it out!

Clerk of Session



MONTREAT!



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL!



Vacation Bible School!

This year's Vacation Bible School with White Oak Pond was a very big to do! We were transported back to ancient Babylon where we sang some fun songs, played some fun games, ate some new foods and learned a bunch of important things about the Bible. Thanks to everyone who came out to make this event the success that it was!



Teaching With Soul By Joel

For this third installment of our series of articles delving into the 10 commandments, we will be looking at the second commandment using the command divisions of the reformed tradition. We will continue the practice of looking at each commandment from both a negative and positive light. We will accomplish this by spending some time reflecting on what the commandment specifically prohibits as well as some time on what the command gives back to us in return.

The second commandment, the edict against idols and graven images (Exodus 20:4-6), is one that I often have a difficult time remembering when trying to list the ten commandments on my own from memory. It just seems so similar to the first commandment, thou shalt have no other Gods before me (Exodus 20:3), that I often feel like I've already listed it when I haven't. The two commandments are not the same though. There is a subtle difference between them. The first commandment is about WHO we worship while the second commandment is about HOW we worship. The first commandment tells us that we should worship God and the second commandment tells us that we should not use idols to do so.

We can see this play out in the story of the golden calf. Israel is wandering in the wilderness and Moses has left them to speak with God on Mount Sinai and while he is gone the people convince Aaron to melt down their jewelry and make an idol for them to worship. This is not an idol of some other foreign God. It is an idol of Yahweh. We know this because Aaron specifically refers to the idol as "the God who brought you up out of Egypt". So Israel has made a physical representation of the one, true God and God's response is one of anger.

So the second commandment prohibits us from making idols for God, but why? Why is that such a big deal? The prophet Jeremiah gives us a clue when he refers to idols as being "like scarecrows in a cucumber field...they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk" Jeremiah 10:5. Idols are never an adequate representation of the God we know and love. They are reductionist. They take the wild, untamed God that created the universe and turn him into something we can carry around in our pockets. A physical Idol inherently disagrees with the transcendent nature of God and as such any idol we come up with will be displeasing to God.

So the second commandment takes away the use of idols in our worship, but it doesn't just take away. It also gives back and, in this instance, the second command gives to us a God that is beyond our wildest imagination. It gives to us a God that transcends the physical nature of our world and it gives us the permission to worship that God directly and not through idols or other mediums.

Montreat!

Our annual trip to the Montreat Middle School conference was a fun and meaningful time for everyone involved. We had 4 youth and two adults attend. The theme for the week was “In the Middle” and we talked about how God sees us, accepts us and sends us. Thanks so much to our church family for giving us the opportunity to attend!



MONTREAT!!



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August 2024



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

P O BOX 165 Richmond, KY 40476-0165

859/623-5323 (fax) 859/623-5329

www.richmondfpc.com

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 	5 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	6 <i>Tuesday crew 9-11</i> <i>Evening PW 6:30</i> <i>Mission mtg. 7:00</i>	7 <i>Bible Study 6:30</i>	8 <i>Needle Arts Fellowship 11:00</i>	9	10
11 Deacon mtg. noon <i>5 Cents Per Meal Offering</i>	12 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	13 <i>Tuesday crew 9-11</i>	14 <i>Bible Study 6:30</i>	15	16 <i>Johnathan Stanley (Joel's brother) Voice Recital in our sanctuary 7:00 pm</i> <i>Everyone invited!</i>	17
18 <i>RALLY DAY!! 9:45 am</i>	19 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	20 <i>Tuesday crew 9-11</i> <i>CE mtg. 4:30</i>	21 <i>Bible Study 6:30</i>	22	23	24
25	26 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	27 <i>Tuesday crew 9-11</i> <i>Session mtg. 7:00</i>	28 <i>Welcome Wednesday 6:00</i>	29	30	31