

A Word from our General Presbyter

Ed Thompson

“No more pencils. No more books. No more teachers’ dirty looks.” Perhaps like me, you chanted that little ditty at the end of the school year. I liked school, but I also looked forward to summer vacation. There was an incredible sense of freedom. You could sleep in. You could stay up late. You could watch TV. But perhaps more importantly, you could read for fun – whatever you wanted, not just what was assigned in class. It was heaven.

As adults, we may still look forward to vacation, but summer no longer holds the same thrill it once did. For many, there will be grass to mow and perhaps gardens to weed. And, unfortunately, the meetings don’t stop. Nor do the emails.

So what can we do to recover the freedom and joy of summer? Here are some ideas.

We can turn off our phone and unplug from the internet for an hour each day. I realize that won’t be a challenge for some because they don’t have a cell phone and they don’t use the internet. (Part of me wants to say, “Good for you.” But part of me thinks, “That just wouldn’t work for me.”)

We could unplug and turn off for lunch or dinner. Or – here’s a thought – we could do it for two hours a day – lunch and dinner. Some may shudder at the idea of being disconnected from the world for that long, but the emails will still be waiting for you and if the calls are important, they’ll leave a voice mail or call back.

This would allow us to relax. We could have a conversation with our spouse, children, parents or friends. We could pray. We could dream. We could look at the sky. We could look at other people. We would have the freedom to focus on whatever or whoever is right in front of us. Nothing is stopping us from temporarily putting aside our electronic leash. That would be freedom.

Another thing we could do – and this may seem counterintuitive or a contradiction to my last thought – would be to spend an hour each week intentionally searching the internet. One of things I enjoyed as a child was going to the library and picking out a book at random because it sounded interesting. It might have been a book about a particular time period or maybe something about the cover or the title grabbed my attention. I learned a lot of different things that way. I seldom get to do that – or perhaps I should say I seldom allow myself to do that – anymore.

Taking an hour a week to randomly search the internet draws on that impulse. What I’m thinking of doing is looking at other presbytery’s websites just to see what they’re doing and what policies they have and how they compare with ours. I acknowledge that’s not completely random, but you’ve got to start somewhere. It seems to me that carving out this kind of time will be helpful. I’m not looking for anything in particular, but I’m curious as to what I might find.

You might also look up things about the town where you live or the town where you grew up. You could research potential vacation spots or look at other church’s websites. Doing this for an hour each week gives you freedom but also provides some focus.

Finally, once a month, you could worship at a different church, perhaps looking for one that has a different style of worship than you’re accustomed to. It may not be your cup of tea, but maybe you could learn something or maybe you would experience God in a different way. If nothing else, it might make you appreciate the worship style of your church even more.

As adults we may never experience the same kind of freedom we did when we were kids. That doesn’t mean we can’t try to have some fun and do something different this summer.