



# SOUTHSIDE MIDWEEK NEWSLETTER 9.9.20

## Front Yard Fellowship – Barrett

I want you to check out the picture of these incredible cornhole boards. Pretty cool, right? They were hand crafted by a friend of mine who works at Trader Joes. His name is Jon. He works full-time at the grocery store and makes these boards on the side. He will custom make them to reflect your home. Since we are a family who cheers for Georgia football and Kentucky basketball, we had him make one of each. If you are interested, I can help connect you with him. He needs a couple of weeks to make your order. My kids actually bought these for me for Father's Day. It was quite a step up from the usual handmade cards with hearts on them. I have talked about purchasing a nice pair of cornhole boards for years and my hard-working kids finally made it happen. We have already had some epic battles on these boards and for some reason I always do better when I toss the bags onto the Georgia board.

There are many reasons to like the game of cornhole. It is a lot of fun, it brings the family together, and it gets us outdoors. But the main reason I like the game of cornhole is because it gets my family into the front yard. During this time of social distancing and wearing masks, we have been spending a lot more time in our front yard. It has become a safe haven for us. When we have friends and family to the home during this time, we now visit and eat in our front yard. The dinner parties in the front yard and the family games of cornhole have drawn us into the front yard and provided us with many opportunities to interact and connect with our neighbors. Instead of secluding ourselves in our house and wondering if things will ever get back to normal, on most evenings we find ourselves escaping to our front yard with plenty of opportunities to fellowship with our neighbors.

I preached a sermon series back in the fall of 2018 titled "The Church Building is For Sale." One of the challenges of this series was for the church to follow the incarnational movement of God away from our buildings and into our neighborhoods. I find the message timely because two years later a pandemic has forced us into that situation. May we be encouraged to front yard fellowship and by the many opportunities to love our neighbors during this time.



## Halt or Hiatus – Evan

As has been mentioned on a couple recent Sunday mornings, a large percentage of us at Southside function in greater rhythm with the academic year than with the calendar year. August tends to usher in a season of change more so than January. Personally, I find that living in such a rhythm creates opportunities for fresh starts in both August and January, rather than simply transferring that “new year” feeling from January to August.

Of course, fresh starts sparked by the beginning of a new year aren’t very well regarded for their tendency to last, though. In fact, what I (and I suspect many of us) experience is that new seasons might be more likely to squeeze us out of sync with existing habits than to offer space for building new habits. For our family, the beginning of the school year is frenzied, and important things I normally do can fall by the wayside. Having more evening activities makes me want to stay up later to unwind, which usually comes at the expense of starting the next morning the way I’d like. As my schedule changes and friends’ schedules change, our (normally) weekly meetings with each other dwindle. Trips to the gym—which were already pretty infrequent—start to become more infrequent.

Even outside the changing of seasons, we all tend to lose touch over time with practices that we would be better off maintaining. It’s easy to feel disappointed or even disillusioned for letting these things slide, but little good can come from leaning into such feelings. The question we must ask ourselves is whether we will view what’s happened as a halt or as a hiatus. Is the habit dead and lost, or does it just need to be revived?

I am reminded of Lamentations 3:22-24, a favorite passage of mine:  
“The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.  
‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’”

God offers us steadfastness and fresh starts. We may get swept up in the noise and busyness of everyday life and lose sight of what’s most important, but God stands before us as the ultimate constant. His unchanging love and character remind us of the need for some constants that will point us back to Him in our lives. And His mercy, new every morning, reminds us that He can give us the fresh start we need.

## A Shepherd’s Prayer – Tom

My midweek encouragement to us is taken from Jude’s letter: “But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.” The call to continuing to grow in our individual faith (whether through Bible study, other spiritual reading, or listening to sermons or faith-building songs), devotion to prayer in the Holy Spirit, growing in holiness, and being merciful to others is always our mandate. Stagnation shows we are forgetting the Lord’s mercy to us, and stale or check-box prayers do not denote a growing closeness to our Heavenly Father or compassion to those around us who are struggling or lost. A lack of mercy – first of all to one another in deliberate acts of love and encouragement, and secondly to those around us being swallowed up by this fallen world – is being idle.

My prayer for the Southside family is to keep ourselves in God’s unfathomable love by building ourselves up in our most holy faith, praying in the Spirit, and being merciful – as we wait for our merciful Savior to bring us to eternal life.