



First  
Presbyterian  
Church  
of Waynesboro, Virginia

# The Columns *Online*

January 11, 2022 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

## In praise of mischief

*Is there is something sacred in mischief, even as it is sometimes annoying?*

By Andrew Taylor-Troutman – My two sons each have a best friend in their elementary school class. They come from awesome families and these boys are kind, funny and respectful. And what I also love about these best friends is that, with my sons, they get into mischief.

Let me be clear — I don't condone any behavior that puts anyone in harm's way or seeks to hurt others, including their feelings. A good rule sets a limit on behavior for everyone's safety and leads to an environment that can foster well-being. But mischief can be seen in a positive light. Mischief makers are found in mythologies across the world from Chinese legends about the Monkey King to



Indonesian folk tales of Kancil, a tiny deer. True enough, Loki was a troublemaking Norse god. But the spider Anansi was the hero of many Ghanaian stories. And while Jacob, the heel-grabber of the Old Testament, was outright devious, it's also true that there was a larger good that came out of his schemes. In terms of "good-hearted" mischief, I have in mind actions that prompt an adult's immediate eye roll but later make a humorous story. We chuckle, "Those two are thick as thieves!" Think of Fred and George Weasley and their schemes at Hogwarts!

*continued*

# A little good-hearted mischief helps to seal friendships.

I didn't have a lot of friends as a child. I was the type of kid who tried to follow all the rules all of the time. That's a lot of pressure to put on yourself. As I grew up, this rule-following morphed into a desire to please people. To riff on the great Bob Marley, you can't please all the people all the time. There are conflicting expectations in the adult world. One of the positive roles of mischief is to poke fun at rules that exist merely for the sake of rules and help us take ourselves less seriously.

What's more, a child's process of maturation is based, in part, on self-differentiation, meaning one needs to push boundaries for self-discovery. I am in no way advocating dangerous behaviors like alcohol or drug abuse. But the desire to be different is not wrong — it's holy to be who you were created to be, uniquely and wonderfully you (Psalm 139:14). A dear friend can help that process of self-discovery. There is comradeship in making a little mischief, rather than always falling in line. I like to see kids wiggling room into the rules. And I suspect many wise educators would agree.

At the most recent parent-teacher conference, my younger son's teacher made it clear that our child needed more reading practice, and so she was going to separate him from his best friend at certain points in the day when schoolwork was expected. But first, she led with appreciation: "I'm so glad that those two have each other. They make us all laugh!"

As I see my childhood rule-following tendencies in both of my sons, I'm grateful that each one has a buddy who helps him loosen up a little. Color outside the lines! They share their secrets with their friends, and that is healthy, good-hearted, even sacred mischief.



*Andrew Taylor-Troutman is the author of Gently Between the Words: Essays and Poems. He is the pastor of Chapel in the Pines Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He and his wife, also an ordained minister, parent three children and a dog named Ramona.*





# Music Notes for January 8

This week's service is filled with music inspired by the Holy Spirit. The opening hymn, *Come Down, O Love Divine*, comes from a poem written c.1390 by Bianco da Siena, a mystical poet and member of the Jesuate Order, so named because of their habit of calling loudly on the name of Jesus at the beginning and end of their spirited sermons. The tune, DOWN AMPNEY, was composed by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), inspired by the hundreds of English folk tunes he collected around the turn of the 20th century.

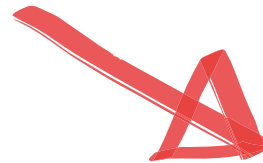
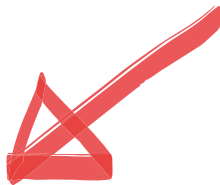
The music for the closing hymn, *Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove*, was composed by John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876). The English composer was the precentor and choir director at Durham Cathedral, where he reformed the choir by insisting on consistent attendance (!), increasing rehearsals and initiating music festivals. Dykes composed over three hundred hymns over the course of his career. He called the tune to Sunday's closing hymn ST. AGNES, after the young Roman Christian woman who was martyred in AD 304.



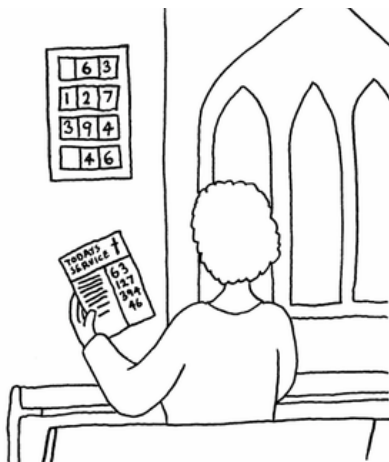
Dykes.

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PEOPLE UNCLEAR ON THE CONCEPT-



SHE COULD HARDLY BELIEVE SHE HAD WON ON HER FIRST VISIT TO CHURCH

## SIMPLE MEAL



**January 22, after Worship**

# This Week in History.



U.S. regulators break up the telephone monopoly. American Telephone & Telegraph is forced to divest its local subsidiaries, known as the Bell System, into seven regional companies. This anti trust action would usher in an era of competition to the U.S. telecommunications.

**January 8, 1982**



Glenn Curtiss pilots the first successful flying boat, the Model E "Flying Fish" on Keuka Lake, near Hammondsport, NY.

**January 10, 1912**

*John Hancock*



Colonial businessman, American statesman and patriot John Hancock is born in Braintree, MA. Elected president of the Second Continental Congress in 1775, Hancock was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence, and went on to become the first elected governor of the State of Massachusetts.

**January 12, 1737**



Construction begins on the Aswan High Dam, one of the world's largest embankment dams. Spanning the Nile River in southern Egypt, the dam eliminated the annual flooding of the Nile while irrigating over 100,000 acres of surrounding desert. Much of lower Nubia was flooded, creating Lake Nasser, one of the world's largest reservoirs, and prompting the movement of the entire Abu Simbel Temple complex to higher ground.

**January 9, 1960**



**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, and May Complicate Pregnancy.**

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Luther L. Terry releases his breakthrough *Report on Smoking and Health*, one of the most significant and far-reaching in the history of public health.

**January 11, 1964**



The population of the coal-rich Saar region voted for incorporation into Hitler's Reich. The 737 sq. mile area on the border between France and Germany was ceded to France following Germany's defeat in World War I.

**January 13, 1935**



American film pioneer Hal Roach is born in Elmira, NY. He produced nearly 1,000 movies, including the classic 'Laurel and Hardy' and 'Our Gang' comedies.

**January 14, 1892**



Elizabeth Tudor, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, is crowned Elizabeth I.

**January 15, 1559**