

Although I'm very grateful to have had the opportunity to teach at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville for five years, I really didn't enjoy the role of "expert" in which I was expected to know ever more about less and less. I am indeed grateful for those whose calling it is to specialize in very specific areas of knowledge and research, and all of us benefit from that labor, but I myself am much more of a generalist. I like the craziness and unpredictability of congregational work, and I enjoy the fact that it engages so many different life situations through so many different kinds of activity.

I find that this "generalist" approach is my nature when I'm not at work, too. Jill and I are going on vacation at the Massanutten ski resort outside Harrisonburg, VA next week, and as I thought about that, I was reminded about my "generalist" approach to free time as well as work time. It's obviously not going to be ski weather next week, but we don't vacation at Massanutten for the skiing. I like the outdoor possibilities there and in the area.



In the spirit of getting mentally ready for some time away, I thought it might be of some small interest to you to know something about what I like to do when I'm not at work. If that doesn't interest you, you can stop reading at this point, but I do want you to know that Pastor Neville will be leading and coordinating our worship for the next two Sundays, and that there will be no *Laptop* next week.

I've discovered over the years that I pursue nine interests that rise more-or-less to the level of "hobbies." I rotate among them fairly randomly as moods and weather change, but I've listed them here in the order of the amount of time I'm spending with each these days.

Computers & Technology. It's handy that my work requires a lot of time with iPhone and laptop, because both of these are really almost play for me. I'm not into coding and such really hard stuff, but I'm fairly adept as an end user of apps and applications. Doing the PowerPoints for worship, for example, is fun for me, since I'm a visual learner.



I enjoy looking things up on the Internet (a modern version of "window shopping"), and most recently I've been reading up online about bird photography, horology (time keeping), and spring air guns. I like playing with various kinds of apps on my iPhone, particularly things having to do with email, calendaring, and time management. One of the computer programs that I've used more and more

over the past year is Dragon Naturally Speaking, which allows me to talk to the computer and it turns the speech into text.

Reading. I've always liked to read, and I'm a pretty fast reader, which is handy in my work. Years ago, I preferred to be reading only one book at a time, but now my "generalist" tendencies have led me to be reading several books at a time, depending on my mood. I read a lot for preaching and teaching responsibilities, most recently three books on the Ten Commandments and five commentaries on Romans, and I just finished "reading" (it's kind

of an encyclopedia) *Jane's Space Recognition Guide* (Peter Bond; HarperCollins, 2008) very kindly given to me by Dr. Dr. Ben Davis. Here's the list of other books I'm currently reading:

- David Anderson and Brent Zuercher, ***Letters Across the Divide: Two Friends Explore Racism, Friendship, and Faith*** (Baker, 2001);
- Thomas P.M. Barnett, ***Great Powers: America and the World after Bush*** (Berkeley, 2009);
- Adam Barr and Ron Citlau, ***Compassion without Compromise: How the Gospel Frees Us to Love Our Gay Friends Without Losing the Truth*** (Bethany House, 2014);
- Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, ***Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*** (InterVarsity, 2005);
- Maria Garriott, ***A Thousand Resurrections: An Urban Spiritual Journey*** [about Baltimore] (Riott, 2006);
- Diana Hayes, ***Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality*** (Orbis, 2012);
- Jason Mandryk, ***Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*** (InterVarsity, 2010);
- Nik Ripken, ***The Insanity of Obedience: Walking with Jesus in Tough Places*** (Broadman & Holman, 2014).

Adventuring with Jill. As you know, Jill and I have an unusual living arrangement at the moment, with me here and with her living and working in Winchester, Virginia. Actually, she lives in Cross Junction, which is the northernmost village in Virginia.

Our house is on Lake Holiday, and one of the things we enjoy doing there is canoeing on the lake. I'm always on the lookout for interesting things to do with Jill when she comes to Columbia, and pretty



much anywhere within 100-150 miles of Columbia is fair game. We especially enjoy visiting interesting places on both sides of the Bay.



Bird Watching. As with most of these hobbies, I'm hardly more than a novice birder, but I do enjoy walking the woods, wetlands, and beaches with my binoculars and camera. If you're interested in beginning to identify the birds you see, one of the most helpful apps for your phone is "Merlin" from Cornell. It's really quite good, and it's free.

Photography. I've enjoyed photography since I was on the yearbook staff in high school. I did a lot with darkrooms and enlargers in those days, using a twin-lens reflex camera. Since then, my photography has been much more occasional. These days, I mostly use a Canon SX50 superzoom to take bird photos. This bald eagle photo was taken at the Eastern Neck Wildlife Refuge on the other side of the Bay.



Astronomy. In my opinion, one of the difficulties with astronomy is that one has to be outside where it's cold. Most of my outdoor observing is done with Canon 15x50 image-stabilized binoculars. Indoors, I'm a fan of NASA's Astronomy Photo of the Day, which is usually the first thing I look for when I turn the computer on in the morning.¹ And I enjoy using the astronomical software *Starry Night*, which allows me to see pretty much anything in the sky, from any point on the earth, at any point in time . . . without being cold.



Geocaching. One of my favorite things to do in the woods is to pursue the high-tech hide-and-seek known as geocaching. This "sport" became practical once the GPS signal was declassified sufficiently to allow civilian GPS receivers to locate coordinates

within just a few feet. While it used to be necessary to purchase fairly expensive receivers for this purpose, now you can get an app on your smartphone that is better than anything I ever had on a dedicated receiver. Geocachers are mostly looking for small boxes and containers of various sorts, hidden so that "Muggles" (non-geocachers) won't find them. You can learn more at www.geocaching.com.



GEOCACHING.COM

Shooting. I've been a fan of target shooting since I was eight years old. I was a member of a large gun club in Bristol, and I'm a member of a smaller club near our house in Cross Junction. I enjoy target shooting with rifles, pistols, and revolvers, and I enjoy trap and skeet shooting with a shotgun. Maybe I'm weird, but I just like to smell gunpowder. I even have a shooting range of sorts for my pellet pistol in my upstairs hallway here.



Golf. Of all these pursuits, I am least skilled at golf. I am still not proficient enough to play without embarrassing myself, so I mostly practice on the driving range at Fairway Hills. It is quite rewarding to get off a good hit on those

rare occasions when it happens, and I can imagine that someday I might not be embarrassed to play with others ☺.



So there you have it. This is what I do "off the clock," and I'll be doing several of these at Massanutten next week.

Dave

P.S. Four months from today will be CHRISTmas Day (just in case you forgot).

¹ <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>