



Bookwalter United Methodist Church

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January 2026

Bailey Hueser, Choir Director
Todd Spangler, Pianist

Reverend Stephen K. Doyal, Pastor
Betsy Payne, Secretary

Edie Jo Hall, Children's Director
Taylor Stephens, Youth Director

*Sharing God's love with our neighbors,
inviting them to share in the joy of Jesus Christ.*

ARTICLE

It can be difficult to see the extent of all our church is doing while it is happening. When I pause to reflect over the past year, however, it is notable all we accomplished in that time.

Last January, we had nine youths go to Resurrection 2025. We have a group going again this month.

In February, we held a children's book drive, and we collected over 850 new or gently used children's books. These were given to Friends of Literacy who provide books for children visiting Cherokee Health facilities.

We collected snacks and goodies for our local fire station through the month of April and delivered them on May 4th, which is International Firefighter's Day.

We assembled 10 Food Buckets for Zimbabwe as part of the Conference Hands-On Mission in June.

Throughout the month of July, we had Wacky Wednesdays for children. They enjoyed Art Night, Giant Game Night and Tie Dye night. The Water Night finale was postponed until September because of inclement weather.

We had six youth attend both Senior High Youth Assembly and the Youth Rally.

Also, in July we became part of a two-charge circuit with Heiskell United Methodist Church. Rev. Doyal preaches at both churches each Sunday and we hope moving forward, we can share some joint ministries.

In September, as schools geared back up, we collected dorm supplies for UT students at the Wesley Foundation on campus. We also did our annual Pack-A-Backpack at Inskip Elementary School and helped 220 students and their families.

In October, we had our annual community outreach of Trunk or Treat with a steady flow of people for two hours visiting our 17 vehicles handing out treats. This was despite a cold, drizzling rain.

We once again participated in a Thanksgiving collection in cooperation with the "Friends of Inskip" group along with other churches and civic organizations. We gathered 250 boxes of instant stuffing, 250 packets of gravy and 250 Kool-Aid packets.

Our November homecoming speaker was Rev. Aaron Solmon, Director of Spiritual and Community Relations of Wesley House. This marked Bookwalter's 143rd year.

After losing a letter in a storm earlier in the year, we replaced the entire sign on the front of the church.

In December, we enjoyed a multi-generational Christmas party. We put together gifts for twelve homebound members and delivered those. We participated in Wreaths Across America in our cemetery along with the Civil Air Patrol.

We were blessed with two performances of Songs of the Season Christmas concerts directed by Bailey Hueser and accompanied by Todd Spangler. Our choir was joined by students from West High School as we helped them raise funds for a trip to the UK this coming summer.

We also had our fourth annual "Peas On Earth" Dinner on the 28th.

Several members participated in the six-week Candler Foundry Bible study led by the Rev. Larry Varghese, Doctoral Student in Hebrew Bible. The class, entitled "How to Read the Bible for All it is Worth" was held via Zoom and sponsored by Fountain City UMC.

Throughout the year we held Bible Studies on First Corinthians and one on Good and Evil. For a change of pace, we watched season one of The Chosen along with the Youth through Lent. After that, we studied the Twelve Disciples and then Pat Newman wrapped up the year with an Advent study she wrote herself centered on African American spirituals.

We continued our Fifth Sunday "Coffee House Church" tradition in which we invite guest speakers and meet in the more relaxed atmosphere of the Fellowship Hall. In March, we welcomed Megan Lappas who is an advocate for unhoused people and has written a children's book based on some of her experiences. In June, we enjoyed hearing from Don Dare who is a Reporter/Anchor at WATE 6 News, specializing in consumer and investigative stories. In September, our own Jamie Johnson shared his faith journey that eventually led him to our church family.

Some other ongoing ministries at Bookwalter include a Survivors of Suicide Loss Group that provides support for those who have experienced this type of loss in their lives. Contact Care has also sponsored several lunch meetings for a Senior Wellness group with such topics as "Healthy Aging" and "Anxiety." We have started a Small Group with hopes of doing more.

Some other special events we have had during the year include "Sock It To Me" Sunday when we collected socks for students at Inskip Elementary. We also hosted a two-day Hope and Restoration Women's event featuring Dr. Carol Price-Guthrie as our guest speaker on Friday evening, October 3rd and Saturday October 4th.

We were able to complete an Audio-Visual upgrade which has greatly enhanced both our in-person and online worship experience. Most of the cost was covered by a \$10,000 Bridge Grant from the District for which we are very grateful.

We are planning on having Bookwalter Devotional available in early 2026 comprised of entries from our members both past and present.

I find it impressive what our little church can accomplish together. I look forward to what 2026 holds in store for us as we serve this community for Christ.

Steve

CHANGE FOR CHILDREN

Be on the lookout for a little 4X4 brown box on the altar for our Change For Children collection.

