



Bookwalter United Methodist Church

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July 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

As we prepare to celebrate our country's 250 years of independence, I find myself looking back to 1976 when we were celebrating America's Bicentennial. Every night there was a "Bicentennial Minute" broadcast that featured a celebrity sharing a bit of history from that day 200 years ago. You can find many of these on YouTube.

I also remember 212 sailing ships coming into New York Harbor to pay tribute to this milestone in our nation's history. I was especially impressed by the tall ships. This included vessels from 34 other countries such as Denmark, Argentina and Germany. Set against the backdrop of the Statue of Liberty, it left a lasting impression on me.

Amidst the revelry, President Gerald Ford addressed the nation. He spoke of the Liberty Bell which was inscribed with the Scripture from Leviticus 25:10 – "*Proclaim LIBERTY Throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants Thereof.*" He pointed out that this refers to the ancient Jewish Year of Jubilee which every 50 years restored the land and the equality of persons prevailed. He said, "And both gifts came from God as the Jubilee regularly reminded them."

He continued, "Our founding Fathers knew their Bibles as well as their Blackstone. They boldly reversed the age-old political theory that kings derived their powers from God and asserted that both powers and unalienable rights belong to the people as direct endowments from their Creator."

I did not understand the depth of meaning of his words as an 11-year-old boy, but I certainly have a much greater appreciation for them now. 250 years into the great American experiment, I realize how strong and yet how fragile is the foundational idea that a diverse society can successfully govern itself through a democratic republic, rather than being ruled by a monarch or aristocracy. This is and has been something worth fighting for.

At its core, America is an ongoing test of whether Enlightenment ideals - such as liberty, individual rights, and the equality of all people - can sustain a strong, united, and free nation. I for one believe this is how God "Blesses" America. Not through prosperity or material wealth per se, but through the perpetuation of these ideals that also align with His Will.

Steve

WACKY WEDNESDAYS

For four weeks in July, we will have Wacky Wednesdays for the Children. The focus this year will be on fun science and engineering projects.

Depending on the weather, these will include: "Tie Dye and Bubbles – Creation"; "Water Rockets – Under Pressure"; "Slime and Bouncy Ball – One Thing Changes Everything"; "Stained Glass Art – We are part of the bigger picture." There will also be a back-to-school celebration tentatively scheduled for August 9th. Stay tuned for details

PACK-A-BACKPACK

This year we are collecting for Inskip Elementary students the following: cap erasers and folders (plastic with pockets) of the following colors: red, orange, yellow, green, black, and blue. Also, we can collect glue sticks.

The distribution date will be announced closer to back-to-school time.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Holston Annual Conference concluded on June 3rd with Rev. Doyal and Mary and Ken Mahoney in attendance. Mary is our Charge representative, and Ken was there as an at-large District rep. Here are some highlights:

91-year-old Rev. Bob Hayes registered for his 70th Annual Conference representing Broadway UMC in Maryville. The biggest change in annual conference, he notes, is that pastors used to find out on the last day if they were going to move to another appointment or not. "When you went to annual conference, you still didn't know. You went into a room with your district superintendent, and he told you where you were going. That's the way it was."

Sunday evening, 14 clergy were ordained Deacons or Elders and 7 were licensed as Local Pastors. One lady was commissioned as a deaconess.

On Monday afternoon, the Memorial Service lifted up the ministries of 19 clergy members and 17 clergy spouses. On Tuesday, Annual Conference celebrated the ministries of 21 retiring clergy, representing 594 years of ministry.

Fresh off a 110-mile run to support a mission in his home country of Kenya, the Rev. Dr. Robert Kariuki Nyaga captivated the Holston Annual Conference on Monday night with his passion for children in need. The Mission Celebration would eventually raise \$78,000. We also raised \$27,000 for virtual buckets to Zimbabwe and 3,582 actual mission kits for schools in Liberia.

On Tuesday evening, there was a special worship service recognizing two anniversaries — the 70th anniversary of the ordination of women in the United Methodist Church and the 30th anniversary of the order of deacons.

After an hour of discussion and debate, the Conference delegates voted in favor of a resolution "upholding human dignity, due process, and compassionate immigration reform" on June 2. The resolution can be found on the Conference webpage.

The Conference voted to sell the central office located in Alcoa. Holston leaders are currently seeking a new location for conference operations. "The sale proceeds will allow the conference to retire its debt and have liquid funds to properly purchase or renovate new space without financing," Jason Gattis said. The property, located at 217 South Rankin Road is expected to be listed for \$3 million, according to Gattis.

The Holston Annual Conference approved a budget of \$6,045,878 for 2027. Bishop Wallace-Padgett noted that although the 2027 budget is one-third less than it was in 2012, income had been decreasing incrementally for many years and seems to have "bottomed out" in 2024.

The final order of business at the conclusion of Annual Conference was for the Bishop to "set" the appointments for the 2026/2027 years. With the tap of the gavel, Rev. Doyal is officially returning to Bookwalter/Heiskell for another year.

CONFIRMATION CLASS

Rev. Doyal and youth leader Taylor Stephens continue to lead Confirmation class for several young folks through July on Wednesday evenings. We hope to have a church picnic in August in the mountains or by a river to celebrate their decisions for Christ by baptism. Stay tuned for date and location.