

SEEING THE LIGHT

From Pastor Amy's Desk

Dec / Jan 2025

Finding Holiness in the Hardest Season

Dear Friends,

As December settles in around us, the days grow shorter, the shadows longer, and the nights seem to stretch on endlessly. The winter solstice reminds us that these are, quite literally, the longest nights of the year. For many of us, those long nights echo something inside; heaviness, grief, a quiet ache that doesn't fit neatly into the bright and cheerful images that often define the Christmas season.

Over the years, I have learned, sometimes slowly, sometimes painfully, that grief does not take a holiday. Depression does not pause for Christmas carols. The heart does not always feel "merry and bright" just because the calendar tells us it should. I know this personally. I live with it personally. And if you do too, I want you to hear this from your pastor's heart: **It is okay if this season is hard. It is okay if you are not okay.**

One of the questions I hear often, and have asked myself in difficult seasons, is:
"How can the holidays still be holy when my heart is hurting?"

And the answer that keeps rising softly, gently, persistently is this: holiness is not the absence of sorrow. Holiness is the presence of God *within* our sorrow. Holiness is God showing up in our darkness with a light that is steady, tender, and unforced. Holiness is Emmanuel "*God with us*" especially when the nights feel overwhelming.

To know Jesus is to know community. When we come to Jesus, He invites us into the deep and loving fellowship of His family, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The holy community of God is not a community of pretending but of presence. A community that sits with us in our tears, stands with us in our questions, and holds us when we are too weary to hold ourselves.

If Jesus draws us into that kind of community, then surely, we are called to be that for one another as well. **We were never meant to grieve alone, especially on the dark days.**

That is why I want to offer a heartfelt invitation to our **Longest Night Service on Thursday, December 18th, at 6:30 PM in the Sanctuary**. This service is created especially for those who struggle during this season, for those who find the darkness a little too familiar, the memories a little too sharp, or the festivities a little too heavy.



SEEING THE LIGHT

The Longest Night Service is gentle.
It is quiet.
It is honest.

And it is a sacred space where you can bring every part of yourself, your grief, your longing, your fatigue, your questions, and your fragile hope.

We come together not to “fix” anything, but to tell the truth about our lives, to rest in God’s presence, and to remember that the Light of Christ shines *in* the darkness, not after it, not around it, but right in the very middle of it.

My prayer is that this service will be a place of refuge for you, as it is for me.
A place where your aching heart can breathe.
A place where the holy draws close, even when happiness feels far away.
A place where community holds us gently through the longest nights.

With love and grace,

Pastor Amy

Prayer Focus Team

Would you like to take a deep dive into God’s word? Would you like to hear from God, help others hear from God, and see God move in our church and community?

Would you commit to a weekly prayer/study hour once a week, for nine months? Would you gather with other committed members to seek the vision, and the mission from God for our church and community?

This body of believers will seek to listen, learn and love more deeply and intentionally to fulfill God’s mission for White Oak UMC and the Kingdom.

This Prayer Focus Team will meet **weekly on Wednesdays at 11 AM** in the prayer chapel, beginning Wednesday, January 7th.

Please contact me at whiteoakpastor@epbf.com if you are interested in this deep dive with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

SEEING THE LIGHT

Sermon Series

“The Promise” - *Advent Sermon Series Continues...*

Sunday, December 14 th – Zechariah – JOY	Luke 1:8-20, 57-66, Isaiah 40:3-5
Thursday, December 18th @ 6:30pm – “The Light of Hope” The Longest Night Service	Psalm 40, Luke 2:1-7, Psalm 121
Sunday, December 21 st - Mary – LOVE	Luke 1:26-38, Isaiah 7:14
Wednesday, December 24th @ 5pm- Christ Child Candle Christmas Eve	John 1:6-15
Sunday, December 28 th – “No Room”	Matthew 2:13-23

“Glory Revealed”- *New Sermon Series*

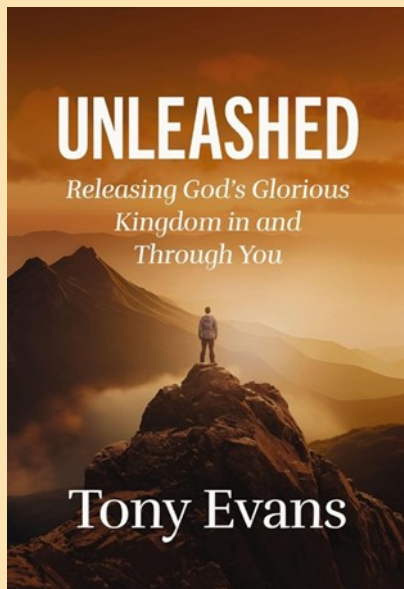
In this new sermon series, we begin with Epiphany. Epiphany Sunday is a celebration of the light that was revealed to the world. That joyous recognition reminds us of the gift that incarnation made known to us and to all of creation. So, the question becomes for the season that follows Epiphany, is so what? What does that light do for us and to us and what do we do because that light has been revealed to us? I invite you to embrace the gift of light that is Jesus the Christ, and to extend an attitude of gratitude as we stand in the promise of glory.

Sunday, January 4 th – Epiphany of the Lord <i>Holy Communion, Family Worship</i>	John 1:1-18
Sunday, January 11 th – Baptism of the Lord	Matthew 3:13-17
Sunday, January 18 th – “Becoming Part of the Light”	John 1:29-42

SEEING THE LIGHT

Bible Study

Wednesday, Zoom Only at 6:30 PM



“Releasing God’s Glorious Kingdom in and Through You”
By Rev. Dr. Tony Evans

Experience life to the fullest with an intentional alignment to God’s rule and power. In this six session series, bestselling author and pastor Tony Evans teaches about the Holy Spirit’s power that is within us and how we can release it to greatly impact the kingdom of God both now and for eternity. As followers of Jesus, we have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of Christ. We live in this world but are now informed by another. It’s time for kingdom people to unleash kingdom work for the glory of God.

Study begins on Wednesday, January 7th at 6:30 PM on ZOOM

Please join us via Zoom

Meeting ID: 423 877 6042 followed by #, followed by our password 6042#.

You can also join by phone at 1-646-558-8656, then put in meeting ID 4238776042 followed by the # (you can expect a few seconds delay before the next prompt).

You will be prompted to enter the participant ID, just hit # and then you will be prompted for a password, you will enter 6042# and you will hear that you have been joined to the meeting.

SEEING THE LIGHT

What's Happening

Sundays

9:30 AM– Sunday School

10:45 AM– Worship in Sanctuary (Zoom & Facebook Live)

*Every 1st Sunday Holy Communion

*Children's Church (Ages K-5th)- *except the 1st & 5th Sundays*

*Every 5th Sunday, Holston Children's Home Offering

Trustee's Meeting every 2nd Sunday of the month in the Library @ 12:30 PM

Mondays

Church Office Closed

Tuesdays

AA Meetings @ 7:30AM in the Fellowship Hall

Church office hours 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Church Council Meeting Every 3rd Tuesday of the month in the Library @ 6 PM

Women's Prayer Time on Zoom Only @ 7 PM

Wednesdays

Church office hours 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

6:30 PM Adult Bible Study on Zoom Only

6:30 PM Adult Small Group in Fellowship Hall

Youth Small Group @ 6:30 PM with dinner in Fellowship Hall

Thursdays

Church office hours 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Every other Thursday Girl Scout Troops Meet from 6 – 7:30 PM in the Children's Area

AA Meetings @ 7 PM in the Fellowship Hall

United Methodist Women of Faith (formerly UMW) meet every 1st Thursday of the month
in the Library @ 11 AM

Fridays

Church office hours 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Saturdays

Church Office Closed

Every other Saturday Girl Scout Troops Meet from 3PM – 4:30 PM in the Children's Area

SEEING THE LIGHT

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for December/January – Receiving and Giving Love

*“A new command I give you: **Love** one another. As I have **loved** you, so you must **love** one another.” As Jesus shared and recorded by John 13:34 NIV*

Week of December 14th

Prayers for those that God will send to White Oak for the Longest Night Service on Dec. 18th! May we show Love in the name of Jesus!

Week of December 21st

Praises for the Love of the Christ Child that we can share with Everyone!

Week of December 28th

Prayers for our Houseless friends battling the elements of cold weather.

Week of January 4th

Praises for a new year filled with Love, Peace, Joy and Hope, all because of the Love of our Savior, Jesus the Christ!

Week of January 11th

Prayers for the Youth Leaders and volunteers as they finalize plans for youth and their annual trip to Resurrection

Save the Date

Sunday, December 21st– R.A.K. event after worship service making fruit baskets to deliver for the elderly.

Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24th will be a Candlelight Service @ 5pm in the Sanctuary. *Nursery will be provided.*

*The **Church office** will be **CLOSED** December 24th-26th, December 31st, and January 1st.

SEEING THE LIGHT

In Prayer For...

- Praise for our Christmas Celebration and all the guest on our campus.
- Prayers for the families attending the Longest Night Service, Thursday, December 18th
- Prayers for Mrs. Celia Hill and her eyesight
- Prayers for Josh Wadel dealing with some health issues.
- Prayers for Maddox Gilliam, grandson of Susan and Craig Borum, as he was tentatively diagnosed with Legg-calve-Perthes disease.

If you have a **PRAYER REQUEST** you can fill out one of the **Purple** papers in the pews and drop it in the plates during worship service on Sunday, or email it to the church office. (whiteoakchurch@epbf.com)

2026 Leadership

White Oak UMC Church Council Leadership for 2026

Church Council Chair	Bill Fetherolf
Church Council Secretary	Dena Johnston
SPR Chair	Randall Tussey
Trustee Chairs	Co-Chair- J.D. Calhoon
	Co-Chair- Sandy Cunningham
Treasurer	Chuck Darsey
Financial Chair	Lynn Roden
Financial Secretary	Pat Stephens
Worship Leader	Kiley Gunter
Lay Leader	Paige Walker
Lay Member -Alternate	Cris Darsey
Church Historian	Celia Hill
Young Adult Representative	Modesty White

2026 Leadership Continued

Staff Parish Relations Committee

Randall Tussey- Chair
Heather Hankins
Michaela Calhoon
Sheldon Richardson
Dustin Riddle
Debbie Hayes
Gail Smith
Jim Cunningham

Finance Committee

Chuck Darsey	Treasurer
Lynn Roden	Finance Chair
Pat Stephens	Finance Secretary
J.D. Calhoon	Trustee Co-Chair
Sandy Cunningham	Trustee Co-Chair
Bill Fetherolf	Church Council Chair

Larry Billingsly Scholarship Committee

Sandy Cunningham
Maddy Easterly
Kaz Sawyer
Paige Walker

Additional Leadership Positions in the Church

Altar Guild/Worship
Camp Lookout Advocate
Children's Ministry Coordinator
Church/Sunday School Superintendent
Church Operations Coordinator
Nursery Coordinator
Outreach Ministries Chair
Usher Coordinator
United Women in Faith
Youth Ministries Coordinator

Ministry Partners on Site

Downside Up
Family Justice Center
Grief Recovery Institute
True North Therapeutic Solutions
White Oak Bicycle Co-Op

Outreach Ministries

Congregational/Community Care Team
Food Pantry
Hem Boutique
New Beginnings (Houseless Ministry)
AA

Trustees Committee

J.D. Calhoon- Co-Chair
Sandy Cunningham- Co-Chair
Chris Nesin
Alan Hayes
Solomon Frimpong
Lindsay Miles
David Schwabenbauer
Craig Borum
Brooks Kennedy

Nominations Committee

Pastor Amy Nutt- Chair
Mike Johnson
Iva Richardson
Jim Cunningham
Lyndsi Holland

Certified Lay Ministers

Mike Johnson
Frank Parker
Iva Richardson
Sheldon Richardson
Mike Wadel

Mary Alice Thomas
Blake Easterly
Hope Neal
Linda Parker
Liz Robertson
Cris Darsey
April Nesin
Ed Hudson
Mary Alice Thomas
Blake & Maddy Easterly

Theresa Nix
Quincy Walker
Karen Sarnosky
April Nesin
Blake Pierce

Laura Whitson
April Nesin
Pastor Amy Nutt
Iva & Sheldon Richardson
Jared



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Youth Group

GLORY! With your help 50 shoeboxes were delivered to the children and youth in Barbourville, Kentucky! Thank you!

Mary Aho has graciously given us more delicious honey! \$10 a jar. All proceeds go to the youth fund. Contact Maddy Easterly if you are interested.

Youth group will be taking winter break. Youth group will resume on January 7th. We meet from 6:30pm- 7:30pm in the fellowship hall. Dinner and transportation are provided.

Youth group (6th grade-12th grade) meets on Wednesday nights from 6:30pm-7:30pm. Dinner is provided each week. Transportation is available. Contact **Maddy Easterly** at maddy.easterly@gmail.com for more details.

Thank You!

Thank you so much to all of the people that made the **Community Christmas Celebration** on Sunday, December 7th a huge success!

We had over 45 volunteers and we could not have done it without all of you and your giving heart for our church and the community.

If you have any feedback or suggestions on how to make next year even better email whiteoakchurch@epbf.com

Financial Update

TEXT Tribe to 73256 and go directly to our Realm Giving App.

Thank you for turning in your Estimate of Giving 2026 cards. If you forgot you still have time to turn yours in.

There are times God speaks the "language of abundance."
Is your tummy full? Are your bills paid? Got a jingle in your pocket?

Don't be so proud of what you have that you miss what you need to hear.

Could it be you have much so you can give much?

"God can give you more blessings than you need. Then you will always have plenty of everything - enough to give to every good work."
Count your many blessings!!

Thanks,
Chuck/Lynn/Pat
Treasurers- White Oak United Methodist Church

*We are committed to being open and transparent. More detailed reports available upon request.
Email whiteoakfinance@epbfi.com*

Trustees Update

Thank you so much to those who served on the 2025 board!
Blake Easterly, Jim Cunningham, Dustin Riddle, Ed Hudson, and Liz Robertson we appreciate all you did for White Oak UMC this past year.

For those that will continue to be on the board of Trustees (Alan Hayes, Chris Nesin, and J.D. Calhoon) and those new to the board (Sandy Cunningham, Lindsay Miles, Solomon Frimpong, David Schwabenbauer, Craig Borum, and Brooks Kennedy) thanks for being so generous of your time and talents.

If you have any church building questions or concerns you can let Sandy Cunningham (co-chair) or J.D. Calhoon (Co-chair) know or simply email the office.

whiteoakchurch@epbfi.com

Random Acts of Kindness

R.A.K. event, for all families, will be on Sunday, December 21st immediately following the worship service. This month's mission outreach will be making Fruit Baskets for our Shut-ins and Elderly. Please contact Pastor Amy for more information.

whiteoakpastor@epbfi.com

White Oak is turning

100!

... in 2027.

It's time to start planning now!

We are looking for **THINKERS** and **DOERS** to join the

Centennial Committee!

This is a family celebration, so we would love to have many members bringing ideas and carrying them out.

Some ideas are time sensitive like interviewing long standing members.

If you are interested contact **Paige Walker** (901) 355-0623.

Get Connected!

Join In-Person, on ZOOM or Facebook Live for Worship!

Topic: White Oak UMC Worship

Time: **Sunday 10:45 AM EST in the sanctuary.**

You can also join using the Zoom information below or on Facebook Live

Meeting ID: 423 877 6042 followed by #, followed by our password 6042#

You can also join by phone at 1-646-558-8656, then put in meeting ID 4238776042 followed by the # (you can expect a few seconds delay before the next prompt). You will be prompted to enter the participant ID, just hit # and then you will be prompted for a password, you will enter 6042# and you will hear that you have been joined to the meeting.

SMALL GROUPS

- The Hilander Class meets in the Chapel at 9:45 AM with rotating teachers of Mary Alice Thomas, Pauline Howard and Frank Parker.
- The Women's Group is meeting in the HEM Ministry classroom on the 2nd floor at 9:30am with Hillary Morgan leading.
- The Men's Discipleship Class is lead by Bill Fetherolf in library at 9:45 AM
- Children's Sunday School is meeting on the 2nd floor at 9:45 AM with Adelaide Weaver.
- Women's Prayer Time is meeting on Tuesday's at 7:00 PM Zoom Only
- Bible Study is meeting on Wednesday's at 6:30 PM on Zoom Only
- Adult Small Group is meeting on Wednesday's at 6:30 PM in the Fellowship hall
- Youth is meeting in person on Wednesday's at 6:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall, dinner provided.

Please FILL OUT a Connection Card and drop in the offering plates to get more connected.

Our website is up and running!

whiteoakumc.org

Ministry Partnerships

Have you experienced a loss, and you now carry the weight of Grief?

You are not alone. Our center offers **The Grief Recovery Method**; an evidenced based program to help you understand and process the emotions of Grief.

Individual and group classes are available.

- Grief Recovery Method
- Helping Children with Loss
- Pet Loss



For more information, email, call, or text

Karen Sarnosky Adv.GRMS, CPC

karen@griefchatt.com

423-888-7322 www.griefchatt.com

The Family Justice Center of Chattanooga, TN 423-643-7600

The FJC serves residents of Hamilton County and the City of Chattanooga by co-locating services in a trauma-informed environment to:

- Address intimate partner and family violence
- Address abuse of older adults through elder justice services
- Address human trafficking

All services provided at the FJC are **FREE and confidential** -- no appointment is necessary during regular business hours.

We also have bilingual staff to serve the growing Hispanic/Latino population.

Services provided:

- Assistance in creating a personal safety plan
- Help finding a safe place for you, your children, and pets
- Education and awareness regarding domestic violence, elder abuse, and human trafficking
- Referrals to services available in Chattanooga
- Civil Legal services and help with obtaining Orders of Protection
- Personal support in court appointments
- Emotional support

**LOCAL Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
CRISIS HOTLINE 423.755.2700**
Available 7 days a week,

Downside Up Inc.

We help children with disabilities and their families build community through our creative spaces and experiences.

- Theresa Nix, founder & CEO
- downsideupinc@gmail.com
- downsideupinc.org



White Oak Bicycle Co-Operative

The White Oak Bicycle Cooperative is a volunteer-run non-profit 501(c)(3) community bicycle organization that provides free access to bicycles, repair services, and safety

education to schools, partner organizations, and communities across Southeast Tennessee.

P.O. Box 15102
Red Bank, TN 37415

contact@whiteoakbicycle.org
<https://www.whiteoakbicycle.org/>



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<i>Monday:</i>	<i>Office Closed</i>
<i>Tuesday:</i>	<i>9:00-4:00</i>
<i>Wednesday:</i>	<i>9:00-4:00</i>
<i>Thursday:</i>	<i>9:00-4:00</i>
<i>Friday:</i>	<i>9:00-12:00</i>