



White Oak Witness

June/July 2025

Memories from the Lake

From Pastor Amy's Desk

Serving as a Pastor in the United Methodist Church translates as a lot of responsibility. There are tons of education requirements, many lifelong goals, and more blessings than you can count as a Shepherd to a flock. It requires being on call 24/7, managing a multi-million dollar “business”, employees, and volunteers. I love having the pleasure of meeting so many people through our “Connectional” system and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, every day, not just on Sundays.

One of the most fun aspects of being a Methodist Pastor is going to Annual Conference “Holy Conference” with the other clergy and laity in your Conference. Here is just a little bit of history and information.

- John Wesley desired Annual Conference to be a means of God’s grace through Christian “conferencing.”
- The Holston Annual Conference of The Methodist Church was organized in 1824.
- Historical – John Wesley initiated the practice of having a “Conference” with the first Methodist clergy. The practice has continued and expanded. Annual Conferences are mandated by the United Methodist Constitution as outlined in Division Two – Organization of The Book of Discipline.

Upon my commissioning as a Licensed Local Pastor in the Holston Conference in 2006, this year made 19 years I have had the privilege of attending our Annual Conference at Lake Junaluska, NC. Except for two years due to COVID restrictions.

Every year I look forward to our time together at “the Lake” as we affectionately call Lake Junaluska. Not only is Lake Junaluska a beautiful campus, and the facilities are always maintained with excellent care, but it is the memories of the sacred space that draws me back each year.

Memories of powerful, Spirit-filled messages delivered. Memories of the holiness of ordination services, miracles shared of the transformation of lives through the power of Jesus Christ, and celebration of missions that expand from Jerusalem, (local) to the very ends of the Earth. Memories of when Bishop James Swanson laid hands on me for my commissioning as a Licensed Local Pastor. I truly remember the heat and power coming from his hands that came through the Holy Spirit.



Memories of Bishop Debra Wallace Padgett laying hands on me in 2023, in my ordination of becoming an Elder in the United Methodist Church. Truly a high and holy day for me!

As I sit in Stuart Auditorium each year for Annual Conference, I am filled not only with memories but with a sense of pride to be a pastor in Holston Conference representing White Oak UMC. Truly the best part of the Annual Conference is on the last day of the Conference when the Bishop “Fixes and Approves the Appointments” and my name is called, once again to serve the White Oak congregation!! Thank you, God, for this blessing, and thank you, White Oak for allowing me such an honor to serve alongside each of you. July 1st will mark the beginning of my 10th year of serving White Oak, and I truly believe God is just getting started and the best is yet to come!

As I reflect on the past decade serving as your pastor, my heart is filled with gratitude. It is hard to believe that ten years have passed since I first stepped into this role, and I want to take a moment to celebrate this journey we have shared together.

Throughout these years, we have experienced countless blessings—joyful celebrations, challenging trials, and everything in between. Together, we have grown in faith, forged deeper connections, and strengthened our community. Each moment has shaped not only this congregation but also my journey as a pastor, and for that, I am profoundly thankful.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for your unwavering support, encouragement, and love. Your dedication to our mission has been a constant source of inspiration. As we have navigated through changes and embraced new opportunities, your commitment to our shared vision has illuminated the path ahead.

As I look toward the future, I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for our community. With faith and community at our core, we will continue to reach out to those in need and spread kindness and compassion throughout our neighborhoods. I am eager to see how God will continue to lead us in our mission to serve, love, and grow together.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your lives for these past ten years. I am truly blessed to walk this path with each of you and believe that the best is yet to come!

With heartfelt gratitude and blessings,

Pastor Amy



Sermon Series

“Dear Children of God”

Have you ever imagined what Jesus, or his disciples would say if they had access to our modern-day technology? What would St. Paul write? What would he text? Something clever, profound, and to the point, no doubt.

Some of the writings of Paul or attributed to Paul in the New Testament are some of the most eloquent and beautiful prose in all of scripture. But these texts were about getting the point across, arguing for faith, and inviting the readers or hearers to a deeper experience of the risen Christ.

So, what are those core elements, those essentials that would bring the desired outcome? What would Paul text to open the conversation and get readers to claim the faith he presents? That’s what we hope becomes clear as we engage in the conversation we call "Dear Children of God."

June 22nd

“Now that Faith has Come”

Galatians 3:23-29

June 29th

“Called to Freedom”

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

July 6th

“A New Creation is Everything”

Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-1

Holy Communion celebrated with family worship



What's Happening

Sunday

9:30 AM Sunday School & 10:45 AM Worship in Sanctuary, Zoom & Facebook Live
 9:45 AM Youth Sunday School, on the 3rd floor in the youth hall
 Every 1st Sunday Holy Communion
 Every Sunday Except the 1st Sunday & 5th Sunday, During Worship, Children Ages K-5th grade go to Children's Church
 Trustee's Meeting every 2nd Sunday of the month in the Library @ 12:30 PM
 Every 5th Sunday, Holston Children's Home Offering

Monday

Church Office Closed

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

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

Thursday

Church office hours 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
 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

Friday

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

Saturday

Church Office Closed
 Every other Saturday Girl Scout Troops Meet from 2 PM – 4 PM in the Children's Area
 New Covenant Hispanic Prayer Time in the Fellowship Hall from 6 PM -8 PM

Save the Dates

Thursday, June 17th

Church Council

Sunday, July 13th

Church Trustees Meeting

Saturday, July 26th

Church Workday at 10am w/ a focus on the playground– Lunch provided



Bible Study

Wednesday, Zoom Only at 6:30 PM

"Follow" by Andy Stanley



Lots of people think Christianity is all about doing what Jesus says. But what if doing what Jesus says isn't what Jesus says to do at all? Jesus' invitation is an invitation to relationship, and it begins with a simple request: follow me. Religion says, "Change and you can join us." Jesus says, "Join us and you will change." There's a huge difference. Jesus doesn't expect people to be perfect. He just wants them to follow him. Being a sinner doesn't disqualify anyone. Being an unbeliever doesn't disqualify anyone. In fact, following almost always begins with a sinner and unbeliever taking one small step.

In this eight-session video-based Bible study, bestselling author and pastor Andy Stanley shows you that Jesus' invitation to his first-century audience was really an invitation to relationship. And it began with a simple request-follow me. Join this transformational journey through the Gospels as Andy traces Jesus' teaching on what it means to follow-and prepare to see your faith radically changed. Study will begin on Wednesday, June 11th and run through July 30th, each week at 6:30 PM on ZOOM only, facilitated by Kiley Gunter and Pastor Amy.

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.

Right Now Media

Get Right Now Media access for personal use :

1. Go to the website (**rightnowmedia.org**).
2. Register with your personal email account and put organization (**White Oak United Methodist Church**).

They will send you an email to set up your account and how to get the app for your phone.

*If you have issues, you can contact the church at **whiteoakchurch@epbfi.com**.





Prayer Focus – The Mission of the Church

Acts 1:8- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

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| Week of <u>June 15th</u> | Prayers for restoration of relationships between Fathers and Sons and most importantly reconciled relationships to our Heavenly Father. |
| Week of <u>June 22nd</u> | Praises for the ministry of New Beginnings reaching out to the houseless of Chattanooga and those who serve on this team. |
| Week of <u>June 29th</u> | Praises for the freedom to worship our God freely and the opportunities that we are afforded to share the “Good News” with others in our “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Ends of the Earth.” |
| Week of <u>July 6th</u> | Prayers for the recipients of our Food Pantry Ministry. |
| Week of <u>July 13th</u> | Prayers for the missional efforts with our ministry partners in Kentucky, at St Paul Baptist Church with Pastor Tinsley and wife Mrs. Sherry. |

Annual Conference *Lay Leader - Paige Walker*

The Holston Annual Conference took place from June 1 to June 4 at Lake Junaluska, NC. Pastor Amy and I had safe travels to and from. Thank you to everyone who kept us in your prayers during our travels and meetings. Thank you for letting us represent White Oak UMC.

The theme of this year’s conference was “Together in New Beginnings”. Throughout all the business that took place, the debates and votes that occurred, and the decisions that were made, the atmosphere was positive. Below I will give a summary of the Bishop’s State of the Church address, the proposed budget, the restructuring plan for districts, the four amendments that were ratified at the 2024 General Conference, and a statement.

In Bishop Wallace-Padgett’s State of the Church address, she made connections between the Annual Conference theme, “Together in New Beginnings”, and the truths of Holston Conference. In her words, we are “defined not by our differences but by what we hold in common” and that “we are together in our discipleship”. We were *together* in our long, hard journey that included a pandemic, a postponed General Conference, and churches disassociating from the conference. We are *together* and seeing God at work: 463 professions of faith, 2,456 campers, 331 confirmations in the past year, to name just a few. The Bishop defined *in* as linking a time span. “We remember our past – recent and long ago. We have a glimpse of the future, but none of us know exactly what is ahead. We do know what is in this moment. We are together. We are experiencing new beginnings.” She explained that the last two words in this year’s theme, *new beginnings*, refers to the recalibrations being made that we continue to make adjustments as a conference. These adjustments are explained below. Bishop Wallace-Padgett ended her address by encouraging Holston that “in our current culture, we can be a positive witness to Jesus.”

The Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) did very well presenting their information and reasoning for why the proposed budgets were reduced again. Their goal is to balance what we spend to the income levels that our churches are able to give. (Remember, the conference lost churches to disassociation prior to and following the 2024 General Conference. Less churches means less members, which means less money being tithed to the Holston Conference.) The CFA reported that in 2021, tithes collected were \$8 million but in 2023 tithes were down to \$6 million. Last year the conference had \$1.3 million more spent than in tithes received, which meant they had to pull from reserves to pay for things. He said that there are still funds available, but that we cannot do this forever or there won’t be anything left in reserve.

The CFA explained that we have to right-size the budget to live in to the new beginning that we are in together. Spending has to be in line with our income. The proposed revised 2025 budget was \$6,248,660 (a decrease of about \$500,000) and the proposed 2026 budget was \$5,979,878. Personnel resources and congregational resources took the biggest cuts. These two budgets passed. The CFA representative left us with a good takeaway: He doesn't think we will always have less to work with. This is just our current season. He believes Holston will grow again.

I, Paige Walker, will say that I heard many reports from Holston committees and groups that are doing great work in God's name on behalf of our conference. I would encourage White Oak UMC to dedicate the appropriate tithes to our Holston Annual Conference.

There are currently nine districts in the Holston Conference. The Conference Strategy Team presented their rationale for moving from nine districts to six districts in the Holston Conference. The vote at this annual conference was just to approve moving from nine districts to six districts. Boundaries of those districts can still change in the planning stages. The team followed seven strategic drivers in all of their researching and planning: strengthening our connectional systems, supporting clergy and churches, right-sizing the districts, revitalizing conference and local ministry structures, exercising good financial stewardship, staffing strategically on the district and conference level, and enhancing communication. The strategic purpose of six districts, as the team presented, would be: sustainable workloads for District Superintendents and staff, equitable asset distribution, district-directed resources, and promoting local innovation. Each district will absorb some of the costs that have been the responsibility of the annual conference. These include District Superintendent travel and education, technology cost, and each district will help finance the part-time District Superintendent for the Virginia districts. This passed unanimously.

At the 2024 General Conference, four possible amendments to the UMC constitution were approved. For these amendments to make changes to the UMC constitution, the next step is that they must be voted on at all Annual Conferences and that, in the end, they must pass with a 2/3 majority vote. At each annual conference, we were voting to pass or not pass the proposed amendments as written. No changes can be made by annual conferences. We will not know how Holston or other conferences voted. Each conference's votes will not be shared. We will all know whether these amendments passed with a 2/3 majority after all annual conferences have met, which will probably be November. [I have a wonderful summary of each of these that was given to us. Let me know if you want a copy.]

Ballot #1 – Regionalization: This has to do with the structure of the UMC, as it is a world-denomination. Currently (smallest to largest), we are set up as: charge conferences, district conferences, annual conferences, central conferences, jurisdictional conferences, and general conference. Jurisdictional conferences are only in the United States. Central conferences include bodies outside the United States. In short, Regionalization will eliminate Central conferences and provide for future ability to eliminate jurisdictional conferences. Central conferences will become known as Regional conferences AND the United States will become one Region. So, the structure would become (smallest to largest): charge conferences, district conferences, annual conferences, jurisdictional conferences (for now), regional conferences, and general conference. Regional conferences would be able to draft/publish their own regional Book of Discipline, hymnals, and books of worship. They would be able to set requirements for ordination and licensed ministry with respect to their needs and resources. They would be able to develop practices around marriage ceremonies, funerals, and other rites that align with cultural context and laws in each country. The biggest positive that I heard was, that if there were Regions and the United States was a Region, then cultural matters pertaining to the United States could be solved at their Regional Conference rather than taking up a lot of time at General Conference. (And vice versa for other countries' regions.) This was approved at the 2024 General Conference by 78%.

Ballot #2 – Inclusiveness of the Church: Currently the paragraph in the Constitution explicitly names race, color, national origin, statues, and economic condition as social categories that clergy cannot use to discriminate. The amended portion of the Constitution adds **gender** and **ability** to the existing social categories that clergy in the UMC cannot use to discriminate against a potential member. Said another way, a pastor may not deny a person membership in the church because they have a disability, are female or male, married or single, young or old. This may seem obvious to us, but in reality, across the world, people do discriminate based on gender and ability. This puts in writing that our UMC does not stand for this type of exclusion because we are one body in Christ. This was approved at the 2024 General Conference by 90%.

Ballot #3 – Racial Justice: Article V of the Book of Discipline serves as a pivotal framework for the UMC's commitment to addressing and eliminating racism in all its forms. Proposed changes have strengthened this commitment by explicitly recognizing the church's role in combating racism, racial inequity, colonialism, white privilege, and white supremacy both within the denomination and in broader society. These changes reflect a critical shift in the church's acknowledgement of and response to deeply entrenched racial injustice. This was approved at the 2024 General Conference by 91%.

Ballot #4 – Educational Requirements for clergy members: This amendment brings greater clarity and consistency to the voting process for clergy delegates while allowing for necessary contextualization within central and regional conferences. (Currently in Article IV of the Constitution, it states the shorthand "M. Div. degree". The change spells it out as "Master of Divinity". This was approved at the 2024 General Conference by 85%.

The Committee on Petitions and Resolutions presented a Statement against Christian Nationalism, which was crafted by UMC Next Holston. This is a resolution calling the church to oppose Christian Nationalism. The statement can be found on page 229 of the Book of Reports, as it was submitted for annual conference. After a few debates on wording, a section was amended to clarify the difference between normal patriotism and Christian Nationalism. I can find the amended copy once it is released for anyone who is interested. I felt that the entire statement was a very positive thing for Holston to stand behind. The two lines I want to share in my report are: "The Holston Conference of the UMC denounces Christian Nationalism as a distortion of the Christian faith and commits to opposing it wherever it appears" and "The Holston Conference of the UMC commits to educating itself and its constituencies about the societal and spiritual dangers of Christian Nationalism, how to talk about it theologically, and counter it in ecclesial and public life, for the sake of the gospel and the good of human life". This statement was approved.

These are the items that I feel are most important to know about; however, you can watch all four days' of business on the Holston website or I am happy to send my pages of notes to you! If you have a question, I will do my best to answer or find the answer. We will also have a Town Hall meeting on June 29th following the worship service.



In Prayer For...

- Prayers for Sandra Parker as cancer has returned in her Liver. Sandra is seeking a treatment plan with her team of doctors.
- Prayers for Brigid Tussey as recovers from a fall and fracture on her right ankle.
- Prayers for Anne Jay, as she is scheduled for outpatient surgery on Monday, June 30th to remove a cancerous spot on her head.
- Prayers for Carol Standifer as she continues to heal from foot surgery.
- Prayers for Effie Nesin as she continues to heal and get strong from her hip surgery and upper respiratory infection.
- Prayers for Lauren Byrne daughter of Kristine Johnson.

Youth Group

Join us this summer for Summer Fun at Youth Group! Each Wednesday will be a different summer fun activity from water games to Pickle Ball. 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.

Ivarie Grayce

Welcome our newest Baby to the White Oak family, Ivarie Grayce. She was born on Thursday, June 12th at 7:04pm. Ivarie weighed 7 lb. 13 oz. and was 19 inches long.

Mom, Modesty, and dad, Trevor are elated that she was born healthy. Congratulations and we are so excited for this new blessing to join our tribe!





Financial Update

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

Thank you for your faithfulness through the PLATE, the MAIL, our REALM app, or our TEXT to give. Thank you!.

Thank you for your continued faithfulness to our Tribe during the flood cleanup and restoration. We received the Flood insurance money and are moving right along in restoration. The Flood restoration should not have any monetary impact on our other church funds.

Overall, the finances of the church are solid and a tip of the hat to you for that.

More at the Town Hall meeting June 29, 2025.

Thanks,
Lynn / Pat / Chuck

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

Trustees Update

Renovations are almost complete on the first floor of the church. You will notice an updated floor throughout the whole first floor of the building. Thank you to everyone who volunteered and gave of their time and talents to help make flood renovations a priority. We are truly small but mighty!

The next church workday will be on Saturday, June 26th at 10am. We will be focusing on the playground and exterior of the church building. All are welcome and encouraged to come. There is no job too big or small for us to tackle together. Lunch will be provided!

Connection Card



Name(s): _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

Mailing Address: _____

I am interested in...



Starting a relationship w/ Jesus



An appointment with the Pastor



Joining a Small Group



Baptism



Volunteering at the Church



Joining this Church

White Oak UMC
2232 Lyndon Ave.
Chattanooga, TN 37415
423-877-6042
whiteoakchurch@epbf.com



Thank you for
visiting our
church!

Comments - Prayer Requests:

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

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,
24 hours a day, completely confidential**

Resources

8 Week Grief Recovery Groups

Mondays from 3:30-5:30 pm starting June 23rd or
Tuesdays from 11:30-1:30 pm starting July 1st

4 week Helping Children with Loss Group

Wednesdays 6:30-8:30 pm starting July 9th

If you have of anyone interested and the dates don't work, please let me know. I can often create a group or offer individual sessions.

988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. While some areas may be currently able to connect to the Lifeline by dialing 988, this dialing code will be available to everyone across the United States starting on July 16, 2022.



When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.

The current Lifeline phone number (1-800-273-8255) will always remain available to people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis,



April Nesin

423.271.9878 april@truenorthts.com

Mary Vassar Hitchings

423.271.9879 maryv@truenorthts.com

Melissa Gonzalez

(423) 271-9839 mgonzalez@truenorthts.com



Phone: 423-877-6042
Email: whiteoakchurch@epbfi.com
whiteoakumc.org

2232 Lyndon Ave
Chattanooga, TN 37415

<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>