



The VINE

The newsletter of Soddy United Methodist Church



When the Holidays Aren't Happy

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REAL LIFE

This will be the first Christmas without two of our grandfathers. My wife lost the pillar of faith and booming presence of her Grandpa Dick after several medical complications. I lost my steadfast, hardworking, consistent Grandpa Wendel just weeks before him over the summer. So, Christmas will feel a little different this year.

We all probably have friends and family who will struggle to embrace the celebration, decadence, and excitement of the holidays this year (even if we don't realize it). Not because they don't want to, but because loss, divorce, strained family connections, illness, and financial insecurity (to list a few) have cast a large shadow over the lights and splendor. All of these things, but especially loss, can trigger a multitude of thoughts and feelings that may make this year more of a "get-through-it" kind of Christmas.

Just this week, I have met with three individuals fighting for hope and joy while the holiday festivities ensue all around them: A 30-year-old father who just tragically lost his two week old baby to pneumonia; an Army wife with four children whose husband is deployed serving our country in the Middle East; and a young woman who lives most days in "survival mode" after having been ravished by such profound and unimaginable childhood trauma that depression seeks to steal any joy that she can muster.

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From Pastor Todd, continued

We need to be sensitive to situations like these as the body of Christ. We need to be sensitive as lovers of people. Whether you are struggling yourself, or you know someone who is hurting right now, here are a few helpful and practical things to think about when interacting with someone for whom the holidays may not be as happy:

1. BE HONEST WITH FRIENDS AND EXTENDED FAMILY. STATE YOUR LIMITS AND ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT.

It's understandable you may not be ready to be surrounded by people, and that's okay. You have permission to request some space. You are released to set your own level of celebration. Allow yourself the opportunity for quiet reflection. You are invited to do something that is comforting and restful. On the other hand, you may feel like you are lonely and need to be surrounded by people. If this resonates with you: ask for this, seek out community at a church or a gathering of friends. Your needs are very important.

If you are on the receiving end, try to respect the asking person's boundary. Be gracious and flexible. I know that you want them to be included your desire is that they'd feel the joy that you do. You may think that if they could just get to the party or gathering that they would feel better. Most of the time, people know their limits and if they're asking for some space, the most loving thing you can do is to honor that and ask/offer them if there is anything else they might need (i.e. quality time the day after or a few days after Christmas, a home-cooked meal, a gift for them to be able to treat themselves (i.e. spa gift certificate or offering to watch the kids for a few hours)). If someone you know is struggling with loneliness, make a space at your table for them this Christmas. Flex your plans to include this individual. Shower them with generosity and kindness.

2. DON'T FORSAKE MEANINGFUL TRADITIONS

Our tendency when we experience tragedy or loss might be to do away with anything and everything that serves as a reminder, because we feel searing pain when we encounter these things. But avoidance can sometimes increase and intensify our pain. You are allowed and able to hold both pain and joy. There are traditions that your family may have passed down for generations. Meaningful and special: faith traditions (i.e. attending a candlelight service, reading the Christmas story in the Gospels, or singing hymns and carols), homemade foods and desserts, readings, outings, movies, decorations, gifts, and games. Give yourself permission to participate in these things as a way to celebrate the life of the one you may have lost. Dedicate a dinner or activity to them.

If you are the family member, support person, or friend for this individual... be sure that you are not pressuring and that if they chose not to participate, that is okay. They are not rejecting you. They may be feeling overwhelmed and anxious about bringing attention to themselves with their participation.

3. TALK ABOUT FEELINGS

Some of us have grown up with a perspective that sharing feelings/emotions is too vulnerable and that the risk of feeling minimized, rejected, or judged by sharing is not worth it. Most of us have learned that stuffing our emotions is equally (if not more) harmful and that these feelings find other ways of getting out (whether we want them to

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From Pastor Todd, continued

or not). Acknowledge the things you are thinking and feeling and find someone safe to process them with. Or, start by journaling or writing them out. Being honest about what you are feeling is a huge step in the grieving process.

If you are the listener in this dynamic, be an active one. Active listening means that you are providing the one sharing with: quality eye contact; validation of what they are feeling by reflecting back to them what you are hearing; some form of physical touch as a reminder of connection; and/or nonverbals that suggest that you are present with them (verses distracted and disengaged). Remember to use age-appropriate descriptions and language if you are talking to children. Express your support and reject the temptation to offer trite or clichéd words that may come across as insensitive or hurtful. The goal is connection and empathy, not problem-solving.

4. PLEASE DO NOT FORGET ABOUT THE REASON WE CELEBRATE THESE HOLIDAYS IN THE FIRST PLACE

Blogger Bob Russell, when speaking to church leaders states: *“We would do well to remember the first Christmas. Mary and Joseph faced the stress of finding a place to stay. They spent the night in a stable. Their child was born without any professional medical care, anesthesia or sterile conditions. This must have been a far cry from what Mary had imagined that day when Gabriel informed her she was going to give birth to the Son of God.”*

When we remember the story of Jesus’ birth, we are reminded that Christmas has always been a bit messy. But, it is a time to emphasize, recognize (and celebrate) the message of perfect Love being sent as the gift to trump all other gifts. One of my favorite Christmas tunes articulates this beautifully: *“till He appeared, and the soul felt its worth.”* When we feel sad and hopeless, when we feel like our heart has been ripped apart, and when we experience loss or face tragedy that feels like being trapped under wave after wave of pain... we can find Him in the midst of this and allow our souls to feel valued, worthy, and prized. He is the light that cannot be extinguished, even by darkness and death. In Him we find our hope and the strength we need to carry on.



Wednesday. BINGO NIGHT November 6

Join us the first Wednesday in November for an evening of food, fun, and fellowship!

CHURCH POTLUCK begins at 5:30 PM. Bring your favorite dish!
The church provides meat and drinks.
BINGO NIGHT begins at 6:30 PM.

Upcoming Birthdays!

November

- 2 Shirley Adams
Jim R. Posey
- 8 Hugh Lyons
- 9 Liam Mullins
- 16 Claudia Inwood
- 17 Karen Ward
- 23 Alan Gram
- 25 Karah Carson
- 26 Judy Horton
- 28 Nancy Woodall
Teresa Jordan
Pat Ricketts



December

- 1 Skip Sheeks
- 5 Angie Carson
- 13 Teresa Lynch
Patti Dennis
- 22 Corbin Jolly
- 23 Karen Elliott
- 30 Savannah Pollard

Upcoming wedding anniversaries!

November



December

- 21 Scott & Barbara Musgrave
- 25 Tom & Teresa Lynch
Gene & Heidi Knipp

- 8 Ron & Trish Jordan
- 15 John & Martha Bramlett
David & Sandra Winkles
- 24 Ron & Ann Reahard

"Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childhood days, recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth, and transport the traveler back to his own fireside and quiet home!"

- Charles Dickens

THE NEW SODDY UMC FALL FESTIVAL!



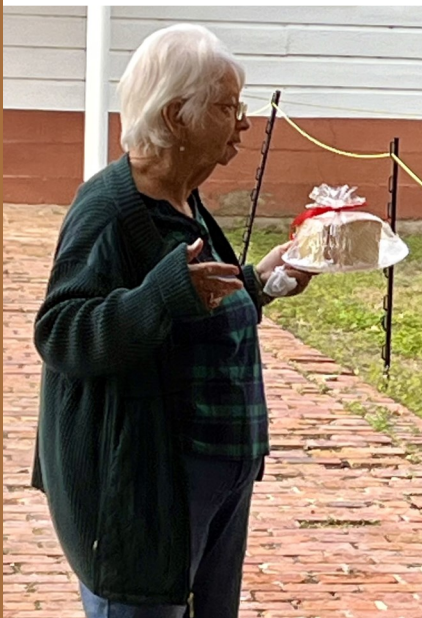
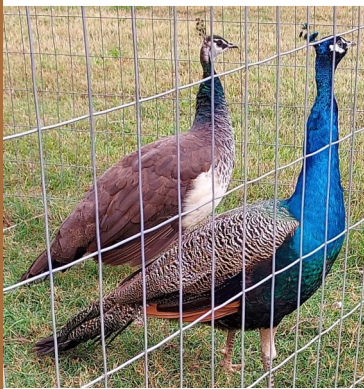
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Christmas Cantata

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8

Our Charge Conference will be held on Monday, November 4 at 6:30 PM in the fellowship hall. The Rev. Dr. Adam McKee, Scenic South District assistant superintendent, will preside. All church members are invited to attend.



Pastor Todd and Felicia will leave for vacation after church on Sunday, November 10th. They'll be visiting family in North Carolina and Tennessee, and will return on November 17th. If you have any special needs during this time, contact Cindy Cunyngnam at (423) 645-4539.



The Keep Soddy Daisy Beautiful Fall Festival will be Saturday, November 23rd. We'll have a booth and petting zoo! *If you'd like to volunteer to help at the booth, contact Marylu McDonald at (423) 596-9236.*



The final administrative board meeting of the year will be on Sunday, December 8, at 5:00 PM. All church members are welcome to attend and participate.



ADVENT SERMON SERIES: WHAT CHILD IS THIS?



SODDY DAISY
FOOD BANK

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner
Friday, December 6 6:00 PM
in the fellowship hall



Sunday, November 3rd

SERMON SERIES: PROBLEMATIC PASSAGES 3
"All Guilty But Not All Saved?"

Monday, November 4th

CHARGE CONFERENCE
6:30 PM at Soddy United Methodist Church

Tuesday, November 5th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Wednesday, November 6th

Potluck dinner (5:30 PM)
+ Bingo night (6:30 PM)

Thursday, November 7th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, November 10th

SERMON SERIES: PROBLEMATIC PASSAGES 3
"Judgey, Aren't We?"

Monday, November 11th

VETERAN'S DAY

Tuesday, November 12th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Thursday, November 14th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, November 17th

GUEST SPEAKER KATHY JONES

Tuesday, November 19th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)
United Methodist Women (12:00 PM)

Thursday, November 21st

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Saturday, November 23rd

SODDY DAISY FALL FESTIVAL

Sunday, November 24th

SERMON SERIES: WHAT CHILD IS THIS?
"The Eternal One"

Tuesday, November 26th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Thursday, November 28th

Thanksgiving Day



DECEMBER

Sunday, December 1st



First Sunday in Advent

SERMON SERIES: WHAT CHILD IS THIS?
"The Prophesied One"

Tuesday, December 3rd

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Thursday, December 5th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Friday, December 6th

Soddy Daisy Food Bank Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

Sunday, December 8th



Second Sunday in Advent

Choir Christmas Cantata

Administrative board meeting (5:00 PM)

Tuesday, December 10th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Thursday, December 12th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, December 15th



Third Sunday in Advent

SERMON SERIES: WHAT CHILD IS THIS?
"The Incarnate One"

Tuesday, December 17th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

United Methodist Women (12:00 PM)

Thursday, December 19th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, December 22nd



Fourth Sunday in Advent

SERMON SERIES: WHAT CHILD IS THIS?
"The Dual One"

Tuesday, December 24th

CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION (8:00 PM)

Wednesday, December 25th



CHRISTMAS DAY

Sunday, December 29th

GUEST SPEAKER CINDY CUNNINGHAM