



## A Most Unusual Annual Conference

By the time you read this you should have received an email or letter about our plans to reopen for worship. As the Grateful Dead once sang, “What a long strange trip it’s been”! This year feels like some surreal fever dream. If the pandemic trends downward we’re hoping to reopen on Sunday, August 2.

One of the many things affected by the COVID-19 pandemic was Annual Conference. Originally scheduled for the second week of June it had to be canceled, just as this year’s General Conference had to be pushed back to next year. Yet the conference still had business to conduct. So in these peculiar and uncertain times Holston Annual Conference was held *virtually* on Saturday, June 27.

Many of the reports normally presented in Stuart Auditorium at Lake Junaluska had to be left out of the ZOOM event (although those reports are in the Book of Reports as always). Those things that the *Book of Discipline* requires annual conferences to do—conducting a memorial service, asking the historical questions of new ordinands, setting a budget, and ordinations, among others—were either conducted during the virtual gathering, or were scheduled for a different time (for example, the Clergy Session was held virtually on June 8). There was no voting since voting requires the ability to have discussions on the floor, and we certainly didn’t have that! What follows are some of the items that took place during the ZOOM annual conference:

*continued*

- Bishop Taylor and Conference Lay Leader Del Holley presented the State of the Church report. Both reflected upon the ups-and-downs of ministry in the midst of a pandemic, and the need to continually reflect and address issues of racism and social injustice.
- The commissioning and ordination of new clergy could not be held virtually. However, the clergy session approved two persons for associate membership; four persons for provisional membership; two persons for full connection membership and ordination as deacons; and seven persons for full connection membership and ordination as elders. A video was shown of Bishop Taylor asking the historic questions of the new ordinands and their responses.
- The conference approved the closure of eight churches.
- An operating budget of \$ 8.74 million (down from last year's \$9.1 million) was approved for the upcoming conference year.
- Downloads of the Book of Reports and Appointment Book, as well as videos of this year's Memorial Service, Holston's response to the opioid epidemic, and the Sexual Abuse Task Force's video on the abuse of clergy women, can be found at <https://www.holston.org/annual-conference>.



*I am delighted to be reappointed to Soddy UMC for another year! I look forward to all that we will accomplish together. Thank you for making these past six years the best I have ever had in ministry. Enjoy your summer, stay healthy, and thank you once again!*

~Pastor Todd

Pastor Todd will be in Virginia visiting his parents from July 20th - 27th. ***If you have any special needs during that time please contact Cindy Cunnyingham.***

**I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH  
CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME**

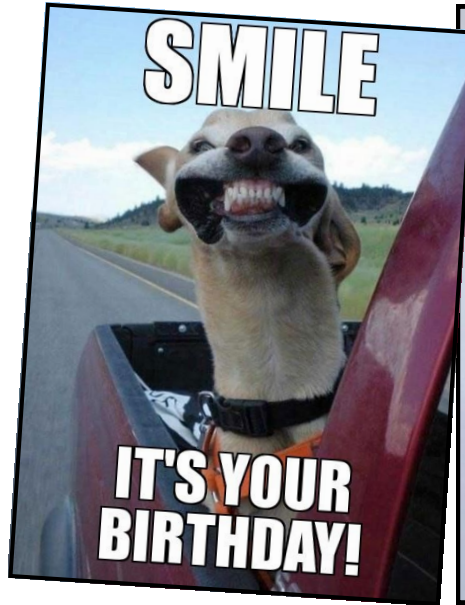
**PHILIPPIANS 4:13**

# July Birthdays

# July Anniversaries

- 1 Hazel Grace Gardener
- Rod Musgrave
- 7 Kyle Anderson
- 8 Vicki Hardesty
- 10 Patsy Irwin
- 11 Mike Anderson
- Trudy Harper
- 15 Arnie Stulce
- 21 Tripp Mullins
- 24 Buck Johnson
- Virginia Gill
- Thomas Wood
- Ron Jordan
- 26 Paige Hendrix
- Preston Hendrix

- 17 Joseph & Marti Hendrix
- 29 Sid & Vivian Parrott



# August Birthdays

# August Anniversaries

- 5 Nell Smith
- 11 Gene Elliott
- 12 Ann Reahard
- 13 Paul Ed Parrott
- Brynlie Dotson
- 16 Brody Dotson
- Linda Reagan
- 17 Michelle Musgrave
- 18 Eleana Mullins
- 20 Kristen Woodall
- 21 JoAnne Posey
- Caleb Nelson
- 26 Bob Wright
- Allison Ellis

- 1 Carlos & Barbara Wilson
- 2 Paul Ed and Suzanne Parrott
- 14 Skip and Martha Sheeks
- 25 Kay & Vicki Hardesty



# Church re-opening news

As you're probably aware, the Holston Conference released a lengthy document with a set of protocols and procedures that churches must observe before they can re-open for worship. As part of that process, we've had a Planning & Preparation Taskforce reviewing that material and discussing how best to implement it at Soddy UMC.

Due to the number of COVID cases in Hamilton County, the majority of our congregation's vulnerability to the virus, and the number of people who've expressed their discomfort with reopening too soon, **the Taskforce recommended to the Administrative Board that we postpone our opening until Sunday, August 2.**

When we resume, our service will be held in the fellowship hall. This was chosen by the Taskforce for a number of reasons. We can seat more people there (following mandatory six-foot social distancing). It will already be open for restroom access. It will be easier to clean and sanitize than the sanctuary. And we've conducted worship services there before.

As you might expect, there are a number of requirements that we must follow when we reopen. These do not come from the pastor or the Taskforce; they're mandated by the conference. Some (but not all) of the things that must be observed when we reopen are:

★ *Face masks must be worn at all times by anyone over the age of two (2).*

Please bring your mask from home.

★ *Families must sit together during worship.*

★ *Once worship begins everyone is asked to remain in their seats.*

The services will obviously be shorter so we're asking that trips in and out of the fellowship hall be minimized.

★ *There will be no congregational singing and no passing of the collection plates.* You will be directed where to leave your offering and you may continue to give online if you wish.

★ *The fellowship hall, classrooms, bathrooms and hallways will be professionally sanitized during the week.*

★ *Bulletins will not be handed out but will be available to pick up. We will have Children's Time but the children will remain in their seats.*

No treats will be distributed.

★ *Entering and exiting the fellowship hall will be done following social distancing requirements.*

★ *Bring your Bible from home.*



**Saturday, July 4th**

**INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**Sunday, July 5th**

**SERMON SERIES:  
LIVING A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE**  
*"The Victory Of A Seeking Heart"*

**Sunday, July 12th**

**SERMON SERIES:  
LIVING A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE**  
*"The Victory Of Suffering"*

**Sunday, July 19th**

**SERMON SERIES:  
LIVING A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE**  
*"The Victory Of Full Obedience"*

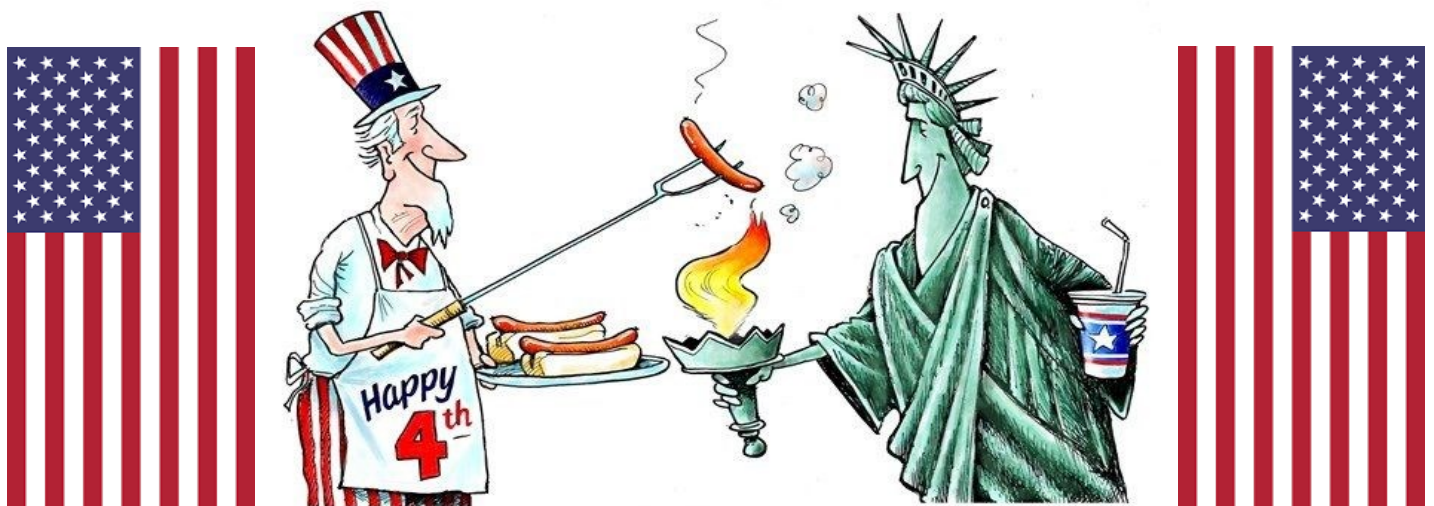
**JULY 20th - 27th**

**PASTOR TODD WILL BE VISITING FAMILY  
IN VIRGINIA**



*"We on this continent should never forget that men first crossed  
the Atlantic not to find soil for their ploughs  
but to secure liberty for their souls."*

*~Robert J. McCracken*





**Sunday, August 2nd**

**PROJECTED REOPENING FOR WORSHIP**

*"Resources For Rough Times"*

**Sunday, August 9th**

*"Winning The War Over Worry"*

**Sunday, August 16th**

*"A Life Repeated"*

**Sunday, August 23rd**

*"On Trial, Part 1: Paul Before Felix"*

**Sunday, August 30th**

*"On Trial, Part 2: Felix Before Paul"*



Suzie Weber received a call from Evelyn Caldwell, asking that a big THANK YOU be put in the next "Vine" for all of the birthday cards she received. It really brightened her day and she was touched that so many sent her cards. It made her day very special!

*Dear Friends,*

*Thank you so much for your prayerful support during Arnie's dad's final illness and passing. In these strange times we felt your love. We so appreciate the sandwich tray, fruit and cake. It fed us just when we needed it. It was perfect. We miss all of you. God bless.*

*Sincerely, Arnie & Becky*

August rain: the best of the  
summer gone, and the new fall not  
yet born. The odd uneven time.

Sylvia Plath