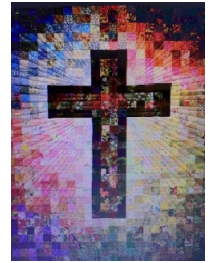




The Center Chronicles



June 2026



For those who are transplants to Tellico Plains and the mountains of East Tennessee, you might have noticed local cemeteries being transformed by newly adorned flower arrangements, LED solar lights placed on the grass in front of grave markers, and maybe even a picture, a shepherd hook, or small statue placed in honor of a loved one who passed.

These cemetery transformation events are common in the Appalachian mountain regions and will take place throughout the summer.

The tradition of Decoration Day has roots in the original Decoration Day, now known as Memorial Day, which began after the Civil War to honor soldiers with neglected gravesites. Over time, each mountain cemetery would have its own sort of Memorial Day remembrance, not just for veterans, but for many of the loved ones who are buried in a particular cemetery. Last month, I participated in the Decoration day at Baker's Creek Presbyterian Church which date back to over 200 years with Native American, Revolutionary War veterans, and the mother of Sam Houston, buried there with hundreds of other stones marking the dates and memories of loved ones passed who have passed on.

We met in the afternoon for worship, the reading of the cemetery history dating back to 100 years, 75 years, and 50 years acknowledging those families who attended, those assigned to take care of the cemetery, and those who led worship on that special day. Now every church or cemetery has their own traditions. Center Presbyterian Church decoration day always takes place on the second Sunday in June. Throughout the weekend, someone will be present to help relatives to find grave sites and receive donations to maintain the cemetery. On Sunday, some of the relatives may even join us for worship and after worship, it is the tradition of Center Church to put on a cover dish meal for the congregation and for visiting relatives who come to decorate family graves. During that time of food and fellowship, old friendships are rekindled and stories are told of family connections.

Over the past decades, participation in Decoration Days has dwindled. Many family members have moved to other places. For others, life has become so busy that taking the time to decorate a cemetery and honor loved one who have passed has become a lost tradition. Still others are not aware of the rich history of Decoration Day.

Therefore, when we have our Decoration Day at Center Church, I want to encourage you to enjoy the meal that will be prepared, but then take some time to walk among the tomb stones. Read the names, notice the dates they were born and when they died, and think about the dash between those dates. Like you, those who are buried lived their lives that experienced joys and sorrows, comfort and chaos, the highs and lows of life. Many of them had some sort of service

that celebrated their lives and reminded all who listened about the hope and resurrection one can have in Jesus Christ no matter happens in life, keeping in mind that one day you might be buried with them with hopes that there will be loved ones who will remember you and tell your story.

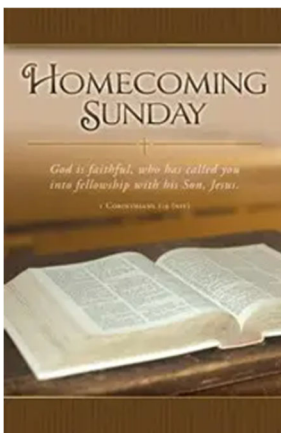


Blessings,
Jon



Summer Youth Retreat, June 6 - 9

The Elementary and Jr. High Youth have gone to Gatlinburg for a Youth Retreat. Along with playing and visiting several places, they will be enjoying time together and sharing in times of bible study. Blessings to them as they have a great time in the mountains.



Homecoming Sunday, June 14

June 14 is Decoration Day and Homecoming for Center Presbyterian Church. Following worship, there will be a special cover dish meal time of fellowship for the congregation and those visiting the cemetery that day.

Church Youth Yard Sale, June 20

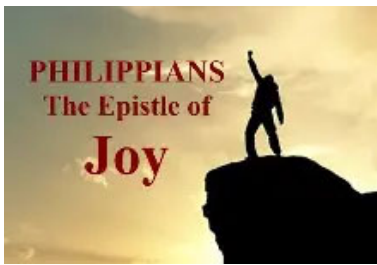


The Youth will be having a Church Yard Sale on June 20 at the church pavilion. They are asking for donations from the congregation that will be sold at the yard sale. Things can be brought throughout the week and put in the fellowship hall until the day of the yard sale. All funds being raised will be for the Christmas Food baskets.



Children's bell practice on Wednesday's at 5:30pm

The kids are doing a remarkable job learning to read music notes and playing on time. Thanks to Becky Stone and her helpers as they instill in our kids a musical gift, they can use to glorify God.



Wednesday Night Bible Study @ 5:30pm

Join us as we begin a study on the Joy letter of Paul, known as Philippians. We are using the Word Go Bible Study app and sharing our answers with one another. Come and join us and be filled with joy.



Monthly Session Meeting

A regular scheduled Session meeting is set for **Thursday, June 18 at 6pm.**



High school and Adult Mission Trip, June 20- 26

The High and Adult mission trip will take us back to Wilmington, NC. We will be staying at the Matthew House located at the Little Chapel on the Boardwalk on Wrightsville Beach, NC. We will begin by worshipping on the beach that Sunday at 8am and throughout the week, we will work with different mission organizations to minister to those in need of care.

A Father's Day Prayer

Lord, I thank You for the gift of fathers. I am grateful for their love, sacrifice, and guidance in our lives. Bless every father with peace, strength, and joy today. Reward their hard work and fill their hearts with encouragement. Where they feel unnoticed, remind them that You see every effort they make. Strengthen them in their responsibilities and surround them with love and appreciation. Let their lives reflect Your goodness and faithfulness. May they continue to lead their families in wisdom, love, and integrity.

Lord, strengthen every father who feels tired or overwhelmed today. Renew his energy and restore his spirit when life feels heavy. Give him the courage to face challenges and the wisdom to make the right decisions for his family. Lift every burden from his heart and replace it with Your peace and strength. Help him not to give up, but to continue leading with love, patience, and faith. Lord, remind him that you are always with him in every situation. Fill him with endurance for his journey as a father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Finally, Lord, grant every father wisdom in all areas of his life. Guide his thoughts, decisions, and actions so that they align with Your will. Help him lead his family with understanding, patience, and discernment. When he feels confused or uncertain, give him clarity and peace. Teach him to rely on Your Word and not his own understanding. Strengthen his ability to make choices that bless his family and honor You. Fill him with spiritual insight and calm confidence in every situation he faces. In Jesus' name, Amen.