

CLERGY

Connection

HOLSTON CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
www.holston.org

Honoring the Christ That Goes Before You

Celebrating more than thirty years in ministry through the Holston Conference Pastoral Counseling Center

by
Gary
Mauldin

Some of the best advice I ever received was to always “honor the Christ that went before you.” I doubt the person that shared that wisdom with me over 20 years ago had any idea what a lasting impression it would make. As we move into new places of ministry, we are often tempted to believe we will do what has never been done before. Our ego gets involved and we start to think that “I” am the answer to the worlds’ problems. It might help to remember that Jesus was here long before we arrived, and will be here long after we are gone. It is the chorus that states rather profoundly, “Jesus is the answer for the world today...” and thank God we are not.

With that thought in mind, I want to celebrate with you over 30 years of ministry of the Holston Conference Pastoral Counseling Center. We are indebted to the work and ministry of Dr. Bill Balch as a representative of Christ among us. His gifted leadership and counsel have been a source of continuing inspiration. His counsel and advice to me during these days of transition have been most helpful, and I want to thank him publicly for all he has done. I also want to applaud the conference and the conference leadership in recognizing the importance of continuing this vital ministry.

The Center will continue to seek to integrate professional counseling services and our United Methodist understanding of Christian faith and theology. This service exists for the mission of aiding and supporting the emotional, theological and relational well being of the clergy and clergy families of the Holston Annual Conference. You can continue to expect your understand-

ing of your own spirituality to be valued and welcomed as an important and vital resource for our lives and the counseling process. Indeed an important area for our growth as humans is to locate ourselves spiritually and theologically within our families, places of ministry and the broader covenant community of the whole Church.

One of the most important dimensions of the Holston Pastoral Counseling Center is that it provides a safe and confidential place for clergy and clergy families who self refer to receive counseling and to explore their own spirituality as we deepen our walk with Christ. Our conversations together will remain confidential as they have been in the past. Historically the Pastoral Counseling Center has operated under the assumption that the only limitations to this confidentiality are situations that involve dangerousness to self or others, child abuse or by written consent. In all other cases your confidences in me will be maintained.

I have been a minister in the United Methodist Church since 1980. I come from a United Methodist parsonage family. My father is a retired United Methodist minister from the Northwest Texas Annual Conference. I have been married to Janet Mauldin since 1980. We have two college age children: Josh who is a junior at Texas A&M University and Chuck who is a freshman at the University of Tennessee. I have served in a variety of ministerial appointments that include urban, rural and suburban congregations.

I have a Ph.D. degree from Texas Woman’s University in Family Therapy, a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and History from McMurry University and a Master of Divinity degree from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. I also have a Master of Education degree in guidance and counseling from Tarleton State University. I am licensed by the State

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Clergy Connection is a communication produced and written by the Clergy of Holston Conference for the purposes of deepening relationships, encouraging spiritual growth, increasing awareness of challenging opportunities, imparting useful information, stimulating theological exploration, providing a forum for honest expression and sharing the joys of creative ministries.

of Texas as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). I am also a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) in both Texas and in Tennessee.

The majority of my experience is in the area of relationship and family therapy. I also see individuals for spiritual direction, counseling and life coaching. You do not have to have a “problem” to call me. Many persons utilize the office as a sounding board and a safe place to try out new ideas. I am also available as a resource person for your local Church. I am available for workshops, conflict resolution, couple retreats, staff development and spiritual renewal events.

I make all my own appointments and keep my own

calendar. I am looking forward to meeting and sharing with you. I have an office in Knoxville, Tennessee. However, I have established satellite-meeting places at Emory and Henry College in Virginia; Johnson City, Tennessee; and Cleveland, Tennessee. My prayers are with you in your ministry with others. I also covet your prayers for the ministry of the Counseling Center. Together we will make a difference in our world for Jesus Christ.



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Offering Bread for the Journey to Those Who Share the Bread of Life:

What the Wesley Institute Is All About

by Caryl Griffin

The people are hungry and needing bread for the journey. And Jesus responds to the disciples, “Give them something to eat.” The disciples reply, “We have here only 2 loaves and 5 fish.” “Bring them to me,” Jesus says... And then looking to heaven he gives thanks and breaks the loaves. Then He gives the loaves and fishes to the disciples and the disciples give them to the people (Mt 14:19). Jesus spent the rest of his life feeding his disciples and teaching them how to feed the people.

How many times as a pastor have I felt I didn’t have enough bread (energy, time, spirit) to feed the people? I felt that way last year as I went to Convocation, but as I came away I realized the little bit of “bread” I brought with me had been multiplied. The worship had been a much needed “Sabbath,” and the words of Ed



Caryl Griffin is director of the Holston Conference Wesley Institute

Zeiders put a new perspective on pastoring the church, giving me hope and a vision of how things could be. During the August 5th Wesley Institute sponsored seminar, Preaching for Renewal, Zan Holmes explained that we pastors must become part of the sermon, that we must be convicted by the Gospel message we are exhorting; otherwise we can’t expect others to be convicted by it. We must receive Christ, the Bread of Life, in order to

have the bread to feed the people. Dr. Holmes’ inspiring, practical teaching—words of wisdom over a lifetime of ministry and preaching—gave us pastors and lay speakers and leaders new perspective and energy—bread for the journey.

That is what the Wesley Institute is all about: providing opportunities for spiritual renewal, education, and practical tools for clergy and laity in order for

us to return to the local church to empower people to find meaning and direction — to find Christ — in today’s complex society, and to build vital community with one another; in short, to make disciples of Jesus Christ. According to John Wesley, this process called sanctification takes a lifetime of commitment,

renewal, and action. Wesley balanced his life by pursuing spiritual disciplines “religiously” even as he poured out his life preaching, teaching, and developing structure and function to spread Scriptural Holiness throughout the world. He surrounded himself with colleagues who shared the journey and from whom he learned and implemented ideas.

Our mission in the United Methodist Church is to make fully devoted disciples of Christ. How do we do this? In the words of Bishop Chamberlain, the conference resources the congregations by sending them equipped clerical leadership...pastors who are “mentally alert, spiritually formed, and theologically trained ...pastors who are abreast of changing society and the implications for our understanding of God at work in our world today

— changes that are happening in the midst of our lifetime of ministry.” We must provide pastors bread for the journey.

John Wesley surrounded himself with colleagues who shared the journey and from whom he learned and implemented ideas.

It is my vision that the Wesley Institute is becoming such a place...a place where you and I will love to learn for the sake of learning to love...a place to receive bread for the journey.



A joint publication of the Holston Conference Office of Clergy Concerns and the Office of Communications.

Jim Green, Editor
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What in the World Am I Doing?

by Dennie Humphreys

I am glad to have the opportunity to share my thoughts and perspective on my new appointment in Holston called the Office of Clergy Services and Conference Secretary.

I came to this office on June 16 and have been learning something new about the position each day. It is a job that is both bureaucratic and pastoral; which means that it is it involves working with people and their needs in light of the Book of Discipline of the Church and the Gospel. Some folks think that the above is an oxymoron, but that does not have to be the case. As all of you know, we have both a method and a warm heart. I hope to be able to combine the two in the performance of this ministry.

The most obvious task of this position is its association with the Board of Ordained Ministry and the credentialing of those entering ministry. It seems to me that to be the resource person for the board is a primary consideration for this job. Sheila Knowles and I will provide support to the board and its divisions through interpretation of the Discipline, communication with the General Board in Nashville, discussion with counterparts in other annual conferences, and attendance at SEJ and General Church meetings. I also believe that being available to clergy in the licensing, commissioning and ordination process is vital. In that regard, the door to my office is always open to those with questions, concerns, or problems. We may not be able to always do what you want done, but we will make every effort to respond to you within a reasonable time and with rationale for whatever decision is to be made.

Along with those entering ministry, this office also maintains files for all clergy. We will make every effort to see that the files are accurately kept with the cooperation of the clergy and the district superinten-

ents. We will also keep records of the status of all surviving spouses of clergy, all clergy on honorable location, and all clergy who have had their membership in the conference terminated. All transfers in and out of the conference, all interim appointment changes, and all interim leaves of absence are kept in the office. In other words, much that is related to the clergy of Holston Annual Conference is related to this office.



Dennie Humphreys is conference secretary and directs the Office of Clergy Services

It is my desire to stress Clergy Services as we seek to work together. I expect that you will want to make suggestions that you believe would make this office more efficient, more responsive, and more effective. Please feel free to do that by phone, letter, email, or

by a personal visit. I need your input and help in order to provide the best service possible to you, the members of the conference.

It is also the responsibility of the office to serve as the Conference Secretary. The requirements of this position include preparing the pre-conference booklet, working with the secretarial staff of the annual conference, serving as secretary when conference is in session, preparing and working with

staff to publish the conference Journal, and performing other functions assigned by the Discipline. As this article is being written we are in the process of editing the Journal and Directory.

Another part of the position is to serve as advisor to the conference nominations committee. This entails maintaining the complete roster of agency and team members, their panel and their dates of expiration of eligibility. The secretary works with staff and committee to develop a list of potential nominees and works with the cabinet to care for any interim changes in membership. While not the staff representative to the Commission on Archives and History, the secretary is a member of it and provides information as needed.

As you can see, there is a great deal of bureaucracy involved in the work to be done. That does not preclude the “human” side of the tasks that are to be done. As I have already indicated, I hope and trust that clergy (and laity as well) will take advantage of the “open door” to this office. We are in this work together and need each other if we are to do the work of ministry effectively. I look forward to this conference year and to the work we share.

New Staff Continue Vital Ministry

How are clergy supported and resourced in Holston Conference? A large part of the answer lies with the three new staff persons who write in this issue of *Clergy Connection*. The offices held by Dr. Gary Mauldin, Rev. Caryl Griffin, and Rev. Dennie Humphreys are not new. There is, however, a renewed sense of mission and cooperation as they build upon the supportive ministries of the past.

The Steering Committee of the Orders and Fellowships, chaired by Rev. Carol Wilson, is a major player in planning and responding to the needs of clergy. The Steering Committee of the

Pastoral Counseling Center, chaired by Rev. David Brannock, represents the geography and diversity of Holston Conference.

The Wesley Institute Board, chaired by Rev. Janice Robertson, is providing a growing variety of helpful and formational experiences for clergy.

The Board of Ordained Ministry, chaired by Rev. Fred Dearing, fulfills their multifarious responsibilities with outstanding dedication to the tasks.

The most meaningful sources of encouragement and growth have been and will be with us, namely, prayer and each other. - JRG

Letter to the Editor

Dear Brother Green,

I am a retired, fourth generation Methodist preacher visiting churches in Holston Conference as my wife, Eva, and I look for a place to locate. We have decided that when we find a church to our liking, we will locate in the surrounding community. Our search is not as easy as we first thought.

If we has been led blindfolded into some of your churches we would have thought that we were listening to Jerry Falwell quoting Rush Limbaugh. Good grief! Somebody needs to tell some of your preachers that Methodism and John Wesley are synonymous. John Wesley understood that it is God's will that everyone be saved and that it was for the total world that Christ died. This business of God favoring a race, a culture, a gender, a nation, a political party over another is nonsense as far as the Bible is concerned. It seems to this humble preacher that one clear message of the Bible is that no one is to have domination over anyone else whether it is a man dominating a woman or race dominating another race.

Further, my brother, I believe that if we as a church reject anybody for any reason we have destroyed our reason for being. Some of us preachers get more fired up over texts which seem to exclude persons than we do over the myriad of texts which call us to Christ and to community. It is a shame that some persons will not experience the grace of God because of the attitude of a few preachers. Salvation begins at home.

On the other hand, some of your folks are right on. I hear grace, repentance, growth, real salvation. It warms my heart. What really moves me is when I go to a church which is truly relating the Christian Gospel to the ways folks talk, relate, give, and work. I despise pigeonhole religion. Sunday and Monday have got to be related. The heart, head, and hand really need to be in harmony. Some of your preachers, men and women, are working to that end.

When I can get away with it I saunter into a pastor's study. It can be a very telling place. Almost all have computers which can be a real curse at sermon time. Some are well-stocked with material which inspires and brings change. I have been in a few studies which should be bundled and sent to the landfill. Books on John Wesley and solid biblical commentaries are often missing or left behind.

I could go on, but I need to share one more thought with you. When the pastor and I have a few moments to talk I often look into lonely eyes. I want to ask about his or her friends. I get curious about prayer and reflection.

Frequently, I want to ask about satisfactions and motivation, but there is seldom time. I do love it when I stand before a confident and courageous pastor. What I want to say to such pastors is, "Go find a pastor not so convinced as you. Establish a relationship."

I've got to run. Eva is getting impatient. We have got to find a home. Any suggestions? Later.

Sincerely,

Rev. I. C. Brimstone, D.D.

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*Clergy Connection exists to call clergy into deeper covenant with God through Christ
and to call clergy to live in covenant with each other.*

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