

CLERGY *Connection*

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

Strength for Our Ministry *Identity and Mission*

How many of you remember the television show and movie *Mission Impossible*? Sometimes I feel like those who received the recorded message, especially when I think about our call to be in representative ministry.

And just who are these representative ministers? **Who are we?** The 2000 *Book of Discipline* in paragraph 330 says this, “A pastor is an ordained elder, probationary deacon (according to the 1992 *Book of Discipline*) or licensed person approved by vote of the clergy members in full connection and may be appointed by the bishop to be in charge of a station, circuit, cooperative parish, extension ministry, ecumenical shared ministry or to a church of another denomination, or on the staff of one such appointment”. So in essence *The Book of Discipline* defines persons serving in representative ministry regardless of their setting as **pastors**. What we have here is an acknowledgement that the central role and function of a United Methodist Representative Minister is that of a **pastor**, and an acknowledgement that The United Methodist Church has an expectation that all representative



ministers—regardless of vocational setting—see themselves primarily as **pastors**.

It is out of this understanding as **pastors** that The United Methodist Church calls us to equip the people of God to be a nurturing community and a people in mission through witness and service in the world.

The Book of Discipline in paragraph 331 goes on to say that we have four basic responsibilities: “(1) giving pastoral support, guidance, and training to the lay leadership ... equipping them to fulfill the ministry to which they are sent as servants ... (2) providing ministry within the congregation and to the world; (3) ensuring faithful transmission of the Christian faith; and (4) administering the temporal affairs of the congregation.” Then *The Book of Discipline* lists 17 specific duties under the heading of Ministering within the congregation and to the world. There are an additional 11 specific duties listed under Equipping, Supervising and Administration. These lists are enough to make my head spin just thinking about all that is expected of us **pastors**. Of course, this is not an exhaustive

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The 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.

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

Clergy Health and Wholeness

Learning to be Kind

As a United Methodist clergy, I have been keenly aware of the joy I felt when persons in the churches I served were kind to one another and to me. I have also experienced pain when persons, even with good intentions, say things that hurt. In my experience, those who have helped others without ever wanting to be recognized have touched me. I have also been frustrated when persons have given time or money but it was with strings attached. “I will do this for you, but only if you do what I want you to do.”

Clergy live with the fantasy that somewhere out there is the perfect church or place of ministry. Parishioners also are infected with this same fantasy in that they think that one day they will receive the perfect pastor. We need to remember that clergy health and wholeness are not external but internal. It is not about finding the perfect church; it is about learning to respond to disappointment with kindness. Kindness and consideration of others’ feelings, hurts, and dreams should not be an afterthought but our first thought.

Nothing will bring more joy than a moment of shared delight when you encourage someone else. Nothing will

bring more harm and lasting hurt than negative words you share about another. The reality is that our spouses, children, grandchildren, and parishioners are looking at all of us clergy for guidance and direction. As Rebecca Miles reminds us, we are first and foremost moral guides. Do your children see Jesus in your actions? Could any child tell you are a Christian by the words you have spoken about other people? We need to learn to be kind. We need

Our health and wellness as clergy involve the depth of our relationship with God and how we treat each other.

to remember that the world will meet Jesus in our words and our deeds.

The Apostle Paul suggests a pattern for kindness in his second letter to the Church at Corinth. If we want to be treated kindly, then we have to respond with kindness. If we want people to see Jesus in our words and deeds, then we have to learn to love those we do not like and those who have treated us unfairly. As Paul suggests, we need to

put our lives and relationships in order and remember to listen, even if we disagree. We need to be agreeable with each other and not argumentative. Finally, we need to live in peace with others, and then the God of peace will give us peace (II CORINTHIANS 13: 11-13).

I cannot think of any message that we need to hear and apply in The United Methodist Church that would be more important than that message. We do not need a new neat theology of inclusion. We need the same old theology that we have never applied to our lives. Love God, love your neighbor, and love your enemies. There is a song in the hymnbook that puts it better than I can, “*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*” We know how to be kind. We know how to have a war. We are free to choose either alternative. Our health and wellness as clergy involve the depth of our relationship with God and how we treat each other. Kindness and consideration of others begin with us, and we are called to share that good Word with the whole world.

Gary Mauldin

is Director of the Holston Conference Pastoral Counseling Center.



Strength

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list. I guess we should have added an additional phrase that would read “...and all others duties that may be assigned.”

It appears to be overwhelming. Don’t you think? To be honest with you, it is and can be an overwhelming calling to be a **pastor**. But, I am reminded of the affirmation of the Apostle Paul, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” (PHILIPPIANS 4:13) Eugene Peterson in his paraphrase *The Message* says it this way: “*Whatever*

I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.” Our strength, our gifts, our abilities and everything we need to do what appears to be impossible comes out of our relationship with the “... *the One who makes us who we are.*” Listen to the words of Muhammad Ali, whom many believe was the greatest boxer of all times, “*To be a great champion, you must believe you are the best. If you’re not, pretend you are.*” I know the task is a tremendous challenge,

but if you choose to accept this mission please know that—unlike those who called the *Mission Impossible Team*—our leader Jesus will not disavow us but will come alongside us; for Jesus does not send us out alone. “*He walks with me and talks with me and tells me that I am his own.*”

Bishop James Swanson, Resident Bishop of Holston Conference, elected to the episcopacy in July 2004.



Take Care of Yourself!

Take care of yourself! If you don't, nobody else will take care of you. But ... Why?

We pastors and church leaders have to be at our best so we can extend our ministries. We need to take care of ourselves for the sake of our greater ability to lead and be in ministry.

An incorrigible resident of a small town loved to attend revivals. He always went forward in response to the invitation, knelt and cried, "Fill me Lord! Fill me." For several weeks, he was better, but he always returned to his sinful ways.

After one of his "backsliding" episodes, another revival came to town. He went, and, true to form, went forward for the invitation. He cried, "Fill me Lord! Fill me!" From the congregation, an older lady said, "Don't do it Lord! He leaks!"

Don't we all? We leak, and we continually need to be filled. But ... why? Do we just go to the service station and get a full tank, only to leave the engine

running, using up fuel, then go back to the service station for more fuel? Or, do we use the fuel to "Go and make disciples"?

While we are in constant need to "take care of ourselves," we have to remember the purpose for the "care taking." We are "blessed, to be a blessing."

We pastors and other sinners model ministry to our congregations. This causes us to ask some critical questions of ourselves.

Do we know what we are about? *The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church tells us that our purpose is to

"make disciples of Jesus Christ." Also, in Matthew 28, Jesus says, "Go and make disciples ... baptizing ... teaching them to obey." If we don't have a singular understanding of our purpose, we need to reassess everything about our ministry (else we get quickly exhausted and in need of being re-filled).

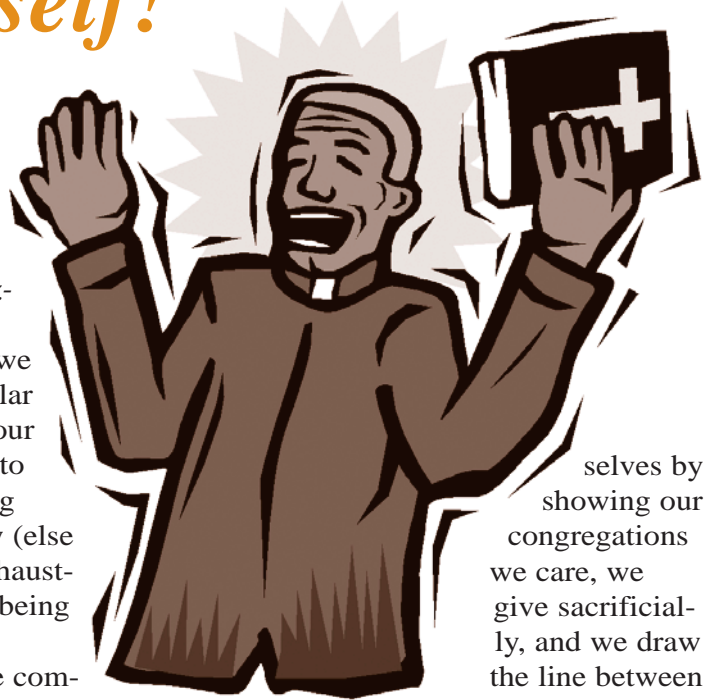
So, what is the compelling, singular focus of your ministry and that of the church you serve? Can you focus on that? Do you know what it is?

Do we have passion for what we are doing? Without passion, enthusiasm, and commitment, we might as well step aside and let more passionate servants

take our place. Sound harsh? Maybe, but if we lack passion for our mission, the mission is doomed to

failure.

Remember, our effectiveness as leaders in the Kingdom of God has *everything* to do with the financial health of God's church. We can deny that, evade that, and try to give that responsibility to others, but it is still ours. The *financial* health of the church is *directly* proportional to the *spiritual* health of the church. And the spiritual/ financial health of the church has *much* to do with our effectiveness. "Take care of yourself!!" means being the example and the leader we are called to be. We take care of our-



... ourselves by showing our congregations we care, we give sacrificially, and we draw the line between our "jobs" and our

personal needs. We cannot preach about giving and tithing with integrity unless we are practicing those disciplines ourselves.

Believe me, your congregations will *know* when you are preaching from experience.

What has this to do with taking care of you? Everything! We model the gospel we preach. We give sacrificially and tithe because we are grateful to God. Are we? If not, why are we here? Responding to God's grace to us is the most faithful thing we can do. It is Biblical, traditional, makes sense, and echoes our experience and trust in God.

Take care of yourself. Nobody else will do it for you. Thereby, you make yourself more enabled to the ministry to which we are called.

Without passion, enthusiasm, and commitment, we might as well step aside and let more passionate servants take our place.

Bill Kilday

is Director of Stewardship and New Church Development for Holston Conference.



On the Other Side of Ministry

Most of us who answer the call to ministry share a love for and/or need for helping others—especially those who are in a time of crisis. While these crises aren't limited to situations of health needs or death and dying, those are the ones we encounter most frequently. We not only feel called by God to “be there” for our flock, we get much fulfillment and satisfaction from letting God use us to bring comfort, hope, and help.

For nearly a year now, I have been in a battle with breast cancer that has put me on the receiving end of this kind of ministry. I know that many of you have also had times like this, and your experiences may be similar to or quite different from mine. What follows here is simply my personal experience of both the dilemmas and joys of being on the receiving end of ministry.

One of the first decisions to be made was do I let the congregation into this part of my life or do I try to keep this private. For me that was an easy one. I consider the congregation family and wanted them to be a part of this. I very much believe in the power of prayer, and I needed the prayers of my congregation. I have experienced tremendous strength, energy, and healing through the prayers of these wonderful people.

The next question to wrestle with was would I continue to work. I knew that I would not be able to fulfill all the responsibilities of my job. Members of the staff parish committee and my senior minister, Darris Doyal, insisted that my new job description was “getting well.” I worked when I could—sometimes a few hours a day, some days not at all. Did I feel guilty? You bet I did! I felt like I was neglecting my job

and putting extra responsibility on other staff members and laity. Some days I accused myself of being just plain lazy such as when walking from one room to another seemed to call for a two-hour nap before I could get up and walk back. I began doing more work from home and still find that both my concentration and energy level are better that way.

I learned that I didn't have to always be the strong one. I have truly experienced that God's grace is sufficient and God's power is made perfect in my weakness. (II Cor. 12:9)

The third major issue had to do with congregational care, which is an important part of my job description as well as a special love. How do I visit the hospitals, nursing and retirement homes or even greet the congregation on Sunday morning when the oncologist says those dreaded words, “Your white blood count is dangerously low—no sick people, no handshakes, no hugs.” I made hospital “calls” by phone and had lots of other folks helping out in person. The difficult part of that was that they wanted to talk about my health instead of their own.

Another issue was just how much do I share. I was surprised to find myself wanting to talk about my condition and treatments all the time—and assuming that everybody wanted to hear about it. If someone said how are you, they surely wanted to hear the whole story! And some did. But like many patients I began to think that my illness was the most important thing in everybody's world. So it's been a challenge to find that happy medium of sharing with folks, without overdoing it. I did

preach one post-Easter sermon about how God was making me a new creature through this cancer experience. Another Sunday, I didn't specifically mention my illness, but I put a chair beside the pulpit and preached sitting down because I didn't have the strength to stand. I always tried to remember that Sunday morning was time to worship God, not talk about my illness. I have written several columns and prayers in the church newsletter about the cancer experience. For me this has been a good way of sharing without imposing.

The joys of being on the other side of ministry are many:

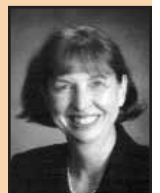
- experiencing the love and concern of the congregation.
- experiencing the power of God through the prayers of the people.
- hearing the affirmation of the congregation that they learned from the way I handled my difficulties to face their own with faith, hope and trust.
- learning that I'm not in control and that's OK.
- getting more comfortable with vulnerability.
- gaining a better understanding of how to minister—especially to cancer patients.
- developing a deeper, closer relationship with God and with the congregation.

I learned that I didn't have to always be the strong one. I have truly experienced that God's grace is sufficient and God's power is made perfect in my weakness.

(II CORINTHIANS 12:9)

Ellen Fisher

is Associate Pastor of First United Methodist Church, Morristown, TN.



Hobbies and Clergy Self-Care

For those who completed seminary or the Course of Study in the decades of the sixties and seventies, very little was said about clergy self-care. If you were like I was, about the only help came through an occasional class on pastoral care or the work of the minister. For most of us, taking care of ourselves in the midst of the rigors of ministry was by trial and error, if at all. Some have suggested that much of the clergy burnout may have been due to lack of self-care.

Certainly with the changing role of ministry in the nineties and the new century, and with new paradigms for leadership, clergy became even more

vulnerable to the stresses and expectations of serving in the church.

One way that I have found to help with this stress is by developing hobbies that allow both a respite from the work of ministry and an opportunity to enlarge my worldview.

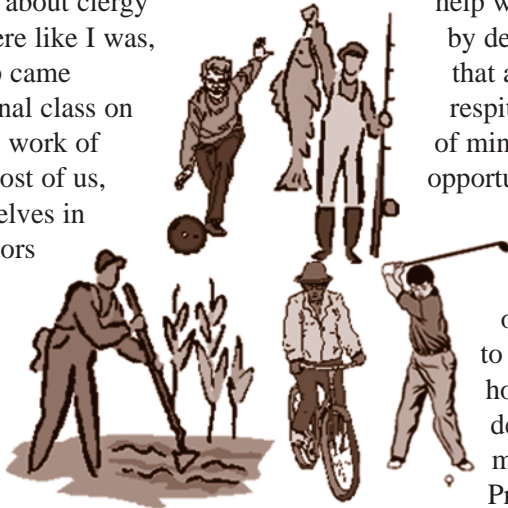
I was one of the fortunate ones who brought to ministry several hobbies that I had developed during my teen years.

Probably the most notable was amateur radio. From my junior year in high school, I have held a “ham” radio license and have built equipment and erected antennas everywhere I have lived. Another hobby that I developed

much later in life was that of beekeeping. Across the years I have dabbled in other ventures such as golf, tennis, hunting, fly fishing, and gardening.

I suspect that one of the chief obstacles to clergy devoting time to hobbies and leisure activities is a Puritan/fundamentalist view that we ought to be engaged in ministry 24-7. One wonders how much of this is the result of a “messiah complex” often attributed to those who serve. As if that weren’t enough, we have examples of Wesley, Asbury and other early leaders of the Methodist movement who were inexhaustible in their efforts for Christ. As a young minister I recall ministers who were never off duty, always at the beck and call of parishioners in need, never taking a day off, being lifted up as the role models.

Getting a holistic view of life is the first step in developing ways to



Hobbies, continued on page 8

How Well Do You Keep ‘Sabbath Time’?

In their book *The Spiritual Leader’s Guide to Self-Care*, Rochelle Melander and Harold Eppley offer a quick checklist to help readers examine how well they keep “Sabbath Time.”

Check each statement that is true for you:

- I always take off one day each week.
- I try to take off two consecutive days a week.
- I always take all of my vacation time each year.
- I do not return from the midst of vacation to work. I do not call in while on vacation.
- I take all of my study leave each year.
- I am planning for a sabbatical.
- I take a spiritual retreat each year.
- I screen phone calls (cell and home), pages, and e-mails on my day off.
- I politely decline nonemergency work invitations for my day off, reminding colleagues and parishioners that it is my sabbath time.
- I have advocates in my ministry setting and colleagues who support and encourage me to take time off.
- During time off, I am able to refrain from thinking about my work.
- During time off, I seek to be nurtured spiritually as well as physically.
- When I cannot take a day off due to an emergency, I take a compensation day off.
- I regularly take compensation days for the holidays I work (examples include Christmas, Easter, and Memorial Day).
- I take time off each day for myself and for my family or significant others.

How did you rate?

Turn to page 7 to see.

Life Coaching

A Means of Grace and Empowerment

Few things have changed my life as drastically as my discovery of life coaching. That day eight years ago, I realized that I had found the organizing principle for my life's work. My life and my ministry have been transformed through receiving coaching myself as well as coaching a number of other persons.

Through being coached, I'm accomplishing more and doing it with more passion because my efforts are more in line with my values. My purpose in life is clearer, which is energizing. I'm living more from the source of what is calling within me rather than the external "shoulds," even those "self-imposed" external pressures. Frequently I'm reframing things through multiple perspectives, which heightens my awareness as I experience something and allows for more breakthroughs in my personal and professional life. There are now fewer loose ends that feel like constant overload. I've even had a leap forward in terms of weight loss and better exercise patterns. My life is lived more in the sense of a "flow" with God.

One clergy person I have coached wrote to me reflecting upon her experience saying: "...coaching has been about focusing my life, my options, my gifts, my power, my opportunities, and maximizing them to serve the purpose of wholeness, which serves the purpose of my being in the world and making a difference here."

So, what is life coaching? In a nutshell, it is a designed alliance in which a coach works with an individual, group, or organization to:

- 1) clarify their purpose/passion/calling based in their core values,
- 2) then focus on what is really important for them,
- 3) discover and create more ease and flow in their life, and
- 4) ultimately to move into a state of grace.

Coaching is a sister to mentoring, therapy, spiritual direction, process consulting, and educating. It offers unique ways of calling forth a person committed to a co-active coaching relationship. The goal of coaching is empowerment of the client in his/her whole life—mind, body, and spirit—as well as vocational and avocational goals.

Coaching is a better metaphor for ministry than the therapeutic model we have been using for the last two generations. Coaching is less about "fixing" and moving away from the "negative" and more about responding to our "call" and using gifts to move toward the passion that empowers us to make our own unique contributions. It provides a sense of flow and resilience that enables us to become more effective and fulfilled as we seek to *be* agents of God's grace.

I have been formally coaching persons for five years. I have seen clergy

*Through being coached,
I'm accomplishing more and
doing it with more passion
because my efforts are more
in line with my values.*

and lay persons become more focused, energized, and fulfilled. Some have also discovered and secured employment that better suits and demonstrates their gifts. I have a 64-year-old client who has gone through many life challenges and said recently that, thanks to our coaching work, she feels more empowered now than any other time in her life.

One of the advantages of coaching is that it most commonly takes place over the telephone. You arrange 3 or 4 sessions per month, with an average duration of 30 to 40 minutes per session. The coach I have worked with most lives in California. The telephone sessions allow you to overcome the

obstacle of distance and to save the time of traveling to see a coach in person.

To learn more about coaching, check out these websites:

www.coachfederation.org

www.thecoaches.com

www.coachville.com

Sign up for our free e-zine to learn more about coaching, teleclasses, etc. at www.tigc.ws. Most importantly, get some coaching. Call me about individual or group coaching. I have a referral network of coaches. Also, watch for group coaching opportunities announced through our e-zine. E-mail me for a copy of my PowerPoint presentation entitled "Coaching for Life Change."

Coaching is the most effective means that I know of assisting individuals, groups, and organizations to reach their full potential. Indeed, you could argue that the genius of early Methodism – the Wesley Class Meetings – were early forms of coaching. They certainly asked/lived powerful questions (a characteristic of coaching), such as, "How goes it with your soul?" In addition to the meetings, the class leader visited every member each week to "coach" them individually.

Life coaching with a spiritual perspective can be transformational for individuals, groups, congregations, and other organizations within the life of the church. Life coaching can help us avoid the haunting challenge depicted by the poet Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote: "The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day. /I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument. /The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart."



Larry Ousley
is Director of the
Intentional Growth Center,
Lake Junaluska, NC.

General Conference Action

Changes in Ministry Legislation in 2004

The 2004 *Book of Discipline* will contain several important changes in terms of ministry legislation made by General Conference. The highlights which follow are my notes from the most recent Ministry Legislation Draft.

1. The Candidacy Process will no longer make the same careful distinctions between inquiring, exploring, and declared candidates. Candidates are only encouraged to use the Ministry Inquiry Handbook.
2. Criminal background and credit checks are now required.
3. A notarized statement is required from the candidate with details or denial of any conviction or written accusation of sexual misconduct or child abuse.
4. Local churches are encouraged to assist candidates with the expenses of candidacy.
5. At the request of the appointed pastor, retired local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may annually request a License for the purpose of sacramental rights in the local church where they hold membership.
6. Associate Membership is restored for Local Pastors who meet the requirements. (Removed since 1996 *Book of Discipline*).
7. Candidates who have completed one-half of seminary may be commissioned as probationers, but they still must complete three years of probation after completion of educational requirements. For 2005 Annual Conference, Holston and most other conference Boards will not offer this, as per action of the Executive Committee.
8. Under the duties and responsibilities of a pastor, the 2004 *Book of Discipline* says: "No pastor shall re-baptize." They may offer the rite of Re-affirmation of Baptismal Vows.
9. Written and oral doctrinal exams will include three new questions: the understanding of evil in the world, how to affirm and teach the Doctrinal Standards and our Theological Task (Part II of *The Book of Discipline*), and the role and significance of the sacraments in the ministry to which you have been called.
10. With the approval of the Bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry, licensed Local Pastors may receive training to be Candidacy Mentors. Clergy mentors for probationers must be in Full Connection.
11. Transitional Leave may be granted to Deacons in Full Connection who are between appointments.

12. The new category of Certified Lay Minister is introduced to enhance the quality of ministry to small membership churches or to expand ministry in larger membership churches. Educational requirements are to be developed, and these Lay Ministers will be under the supervision of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.
13. Prior to commissioning and election to Probationary Membership, a person shall have been a Certified Candidate for at least one year and no more than twelve years (reduced from two years).
14. The two-year service requirement before Commissioning and Probationary Membership now reads, "...shall have demonstrated gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry."

My office is open to any who seek clarification of any of these provisions. Our Board of Ordained Ministry will be working to train Candidacy Mentors, guide candidates through the process, and implement these changes.

Grady Winegar
is Director of Clergy
Services and Holston
Conference Secretary.



Sabbath Time

continued from page 5

How did you rate?

- 0-5** Make sure your health insurance is up-to-date!
- 6-10** You have room for improvement!
- 11-15** You are getting there!
- 16** You did it!

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A Plea for Tolerance

“Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.” I’ve sung those lines since I was a kid in Sunday School, and to me they express a vital truth about Christ’s Church. Regrettably, a divisiveness that is polarizing our church threatens to sever those ties of Christian love that I think are meant to bind us together in a unity that prevails despite differences over controversial issues.

We all have strongly-held, well-thought-out convictions on social, political, moral, and theological issues which we have formed through careful study of scripture plus consideration of tradition, experience, and reason. It’s easy to conclude that our convictions are so scriptural, so logical, so sound that they should be embraced by every serious believer. It’s been my experience, however, that whenever I reach such a conclusion regarding one of my cherished convictions, I encounter an equally devout follower of Jesus who holds a different, even contradictory view. I may still cling to my conviction as strongly as ever, but I can no longer assume that every Bible-believing Christian will reach the conclusion that seems so logical to me.

Some issues seem to divide the church into warring camps; yet neither side is saying, “We know this is

wrong, but we want the church to condone it anyway.” People on both sides of even the most divisive issues want the church to follow God’s direction at this time in our history. The difference lies in an understanding of which direction God wants the church to take.

Embracing tolerance does not require us to abandon our moral discernment or to take an “anything goes” attitude, nor does it mean that we compromise strongly-held convictions. To me it means that I’ll remind myself that we all “...see through a glass darkly...” and I’ll recognize that people who are as eager as I am to see the church follow God’s direction may not reach the same conclusion that I’ve reached in regard to what that direction might be.

Yes, the issues that divide us are of the utmost seriousness and prompt us to passionately defend our convictions; but my plea is that we don’t allow our sincere differences to polarize the church in a way that severs those ties of Christian love that are meant to bind us in an eternal fellowship with God and all of God’s people.

Bob Hayes
serves as Chaplain
at Asbury Place in
Maryville, TN.



Hobbies

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take care of one’s self. If Jesus had hobbies, we are not told. However, he seemed to know something about a lot of things other than carpentry and ministry. As to Wesley, his dabbling in medicine, economics, and social issues, while contributing to the efforts of his ministry, may have provided the kind of respite that enabled him to do the enormous amount of work he did.

I have found that my hobbies pay tremendous dividends in terms of my mental health, self-image, and worldview. Hobbies tend to be and perhaps should be consistent with our personalities. As an only child, I learned to play alone and found later I required time alone in order to be recharged. Thus my hobbies are mostly those one can do alone.

For those who are recharged around other persons, you may want to look for hobbies that allow you to interact with others. Hobbies should not produce more stress, but serve as natural outlets for one’s interests and skills.

To change the old adage, “get a life” just a bit, “get a hobby.” It may be a step to providing care for yourself and the dividends aren’t bad either.

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