

CLERGY Connection

HOLSTON CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
WWW.HOLSTON.ORG

Which WAY Did He Go?

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (JOHN 14:6 NIV) Is this an exclusive or an inclusive statement? If exclusive, it is an absolute that excludes much of humanity. I believe it is inclusive. To understand, let's begin with the question: What exactly is His WAY? For me the answer is that His Way is a way of love, of truth, and of mercy. His way includes an invitation for the outcast Samaritans, harlots, thieves, and the rest of us sinners to find our purpose and peace with God. An inclusive view sees His Way to be the only way that ultimately works. An inclusive-minded person will be content to leave the judgment of others in the hands of a loving God.

Susan Ford Wiltshire, Chair of the Department of Classical Studies at Vanderbilt University, observes: *"The peril of absolutist religious beliefs is that absolutes are abstract ... Life actually lived is far too messy to be subject to human absolutes of any kind, particularly in matters of religion. Absolute premises exclude those who fail to measure up to pre-defined requirements. This leaves two possibilities about the nature of God: a God who is exclusive or a God who is inclusive."*¹ Wesleyan theology is

inclusive in its understanding that God's grace is for all and not just a select few.

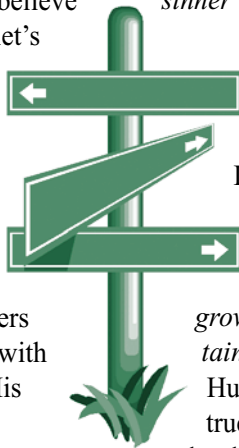
"I know you smoke; I know you drink that brew. I just can't abide a sinner like you. God can't either; that's why I know it to be true that

*Jesus loves me—but he can't stand you."*² The satirical

lyrics of The Austin Lounge Lizards poke fun at those who seem too comfortable in their absolutist views. Will Durant once observed, *"Tolerance grows only when faith loses certainty; certainty is murderous."*

Human history proves this to be true. The current "holy war" waged by the extremist Islamic terrorists is a case in point. The rule of reciprocity is a fact of life and whether we are individuals or sovereign nations, past choices always produce future consequences. For example, the human rights issue of justice for the Palestinian people will not go away. Like God's grace, justice must be for all people.

How does an inclusive view of the nature of God impact our life and ministry? For starters, honest faith appreciates the reality of our ignorance. Faith is, after all, trusting God with the imponderable mysteries of life. The noisiest professing believers often claim far more certainty than I can muster. As Saint Augustine phrased it,



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

Caught in a Mess

We have heard the phrase “catch the spirit;” however, the reality of attempting to do so seems absurd. The spirit of God, yes, God in the third person, is not our object, but our subject. *“The spirit comes and the spirit goes. We do not know where it comes or where it’s going.”* (JOHN 3:8) Why, then, are we determined to bind and conform God to our desires, our understandings, and our expectations?

Christian spirituality is the eclectic process of being in relationship to God. Robert Wuthnow in *After Heaven* describes it as a trajectory that includes all of life as a divine, ever-evolving experience. It is the ubiquitous process of journeying, seeking, perceiving, and expressing. Spiritual engagement supports a healthy concept of self, which is necessarily integrated in communal life. Therefore, the church should be a most effective milieu for the practice of spirituality.

Spirituality and discipleship are inseparable, amorphous processes that empower individuals for living the best life possible. We are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ through unquantifiable means of grace and discipline. Our work includes, but must never be limited to, Sunday school,

Bible study, the church calendar, nor the liturgical year. This opportunity involves yielding to God by faith and obedience. Inner peace is usually one result of this process.

Accepting the reality of our broken, flawed lives is the beginning of spirituality.

Michael Yaconelli refers to this process as *“messy spirituality.”* It is God’s annoying love in a world of realities where the only consistency is inconsistency. *“Spirituality is not about competency; it is about intimacy. Spirituality is not about perfection; it is about connection. The way of the spiritual life begins where we are now in the mess of our lives. Accepting the reality of our broken, flawed lives is the beginning of spirituality. It occurs as we let go of seeking perfection and instead, seek God, the one who is present in the tangled messiness of our lives.”*

An obstacle to healthy spirituality is pretending. Unfortunately, it is an unwritten code in many religious circles. Pretend to believe even when you doubt. Act like God is in control when you don’t believe God is. Hide your

imperfections. It’s the only way to get ahead. Pretend your family’s perfect. Pretend you’re invincible. No wonder spiritual healing has become as intimidating as glossolalia these days. Pretending perpetuates the illusion of authenticity by connecting us on the basis of everything except who we really are.

Being real is synonymous with *“messy spirituality,”* the medium for healthy discipleship. None of us is who we appear to be. We all have issues. We all struggle from time to time. No one is perfect. Not one.

When we cease to pretend and yield to the messiness of what we can’t name nor control, the spirit will come, catch us, comfort us, and move us into healthy discipleship. Only then will we be able to pass it on to others. *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”* (HEBREWS 12:2)

“O let the Son of God enfold you with his Spirit and his love. Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul. O let him have the things that hold you, and his Spirit like a dove will descend upon your life and make you whole.”

(UMH, 347)



Bernice Kirkland
is Associate Pastor at
First Farragut UMC
Farragut, TN

WAY

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“If you have grasped something, whatever it is that you have grasped, you can be sure that it is not God.” We need and should expect more humility from preachers and politicians. Less talk and more walk in His Way! Susan Ford Wiltshire concludes: *“For absolutists, God excludes from grace those who are defined as outside the kingdom. In the more ambiguous and hospitable notion of a loving, inclusive God, there is room in the kingdom for everybody: We are all sinners, and God loves us anyway.”* Amen sister, amen!

I believe Jesus Christ is *“... the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”* From my observation, no other person has ever walked this earth and loved like Jesus. His Way is the way of discovering real peace and hope. His Truth is the ultimate reality. His sacrificial life is the very Word of God made flesh. The greatest challenge for me is to be a follower of His Way on my journey through this world. I believe Jesus is counting on His followers to offer inclusive mercy and love, rather than exclusive condemnation and judgment. There is a lot of room for improvement in this area for most of us. The Gospel

is Good News indeed! It is the story of God’s inclusive and unconditional love for an undeserving world. This is HIS WAY! What a joy and privilege is ours to be God’s messengers of this amazing and life-changing story. Preach on. Friends, Preach on.

¹ Dunbar, A., ed., *Where We Stand: Voices of Southern Dissent* (Montgomery, AL: New South Books, 2004)

² The Austin Lounge Lizards. (1996). *Jesus Loves Me, But He Can’t Stand You*. (Recording). Flying Fish Records.



Ron Matthews,
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Wearing the Garment

It takes confidence to give birth to confidence. One must be a believer before he/she can inspire someone else to believe. It takes more than quoting a word from the scripture to transmit faith to another. The story is told of a man who attempted to sell bullet-proof vests to various police departments only to fail miserably in selling them. He was about to give up when another more seasoned salesman said to him, “*You can give brochures that tell of the merits of your product. You can give long and learned talks about its effectiveness. All that, my friend, means very little until you come to a point when you are willing to go out to the pistol range put it on, and say, ‘Go ahead, shoot!’*” In ministry all of our talk is of little consequence if we are not willing to try on this garment of salvation and trust the Lord ourselves.

I realize that this sounds so elementary and so simple to many. But, until we understand that the purpose of theological education, debate, and reflection is to provide us with tools to help us explain our product, the effectiveness of a relationship with Jesus, the usefulness of scripture as we encounter and are encountered by everyday living. All our personalities are different, but we

must all find ways to stand in front of those with whom we minister and allow them to see the tangible influences of this “**Product**” upon us.

Practically speaking, ministry is very demanding and often is very painful. It is not easy trying to save a drowning person. The drowning one will often fight you and will sometimes pull you down in the water with him/her. Once you accept the Call and especially an appointment, you become a lifeguard sent to rescue the perishing who will hurt

“Go ahead, shoot!”

you even as you seek to rescue them. In my first appointment I was called by one of my leaders in my 4th Sunday church and asked to come by and pray with her mother who was very sick and battling cancer. I went by, visited a few minutes, and before I left I prayed with this woman’s mother. The mother died a day or so later. I tried to minister to this woman who was obviously angry over the death of her mother but was unsuccessful in reaching her. Several months went by and one day she called me to ask me to come and pray for her son who was sick, and it appeared that the doctors were

baffled by his illness. I went over, visited with her and her son, and as I was leaving she said to me, “*I would ask you to pray for him, but you prayed for my mother and she died.*” Well you can imagine how those words stung and cut very deep. I left her house depressed and feeling useless until in desperation a few days later I fell to my knees and confessed my feelings to God. It was only after admitting that I was in need of as much healing as her son, but on a different level, that an answer came for me and for him. Today I thank God for that painful experience because it continues to inform and shape my theology of ministry. I guess the seasoned salesman was right. “*You can give brochures that tell of the merits of your product. You can give long and learned talks about its effectiveness. All that, my friend, means very little until you come to a point when you are willing to go out to the pistol range put it on, and say, ‘Go ahead, shoot!’*”



James Swanson
is Resident Bishop of
Holston Annual Conference

A Book Review ...

Put on Your Own Oxygen Mask First: Rediscovering Ministry

By Bill Easum

Abingdon Press. 2004

I purchased this book based simply on the title for I have been using this quote for several years. However, the basis I had used for this quote was to take care of the physical body in order to care for those for whom we have responsibility. Instead, Easum takes it to a higher level—that of

caring for one’s self spiritually. Easum calls the heart of the book, “*You can’t give what you don’t have,*” and it is repeated over and over with regard to the need for spiritual oxygen daily.

This is a book not only about care of the soul, it is also about leadership and how leaders set the pace for their areas of

responsibility. Easum contends that “No organization, not even a church, ever has more vitality than those who lead it ... When the spiritual oxygen is rich and our relationship with Christ is growing daily, Christians are keenly aware of the following eternal truths about leadership:

- Leaders need leaders who are spiritually ahead of them ...
- Leaders set the tone for the congregation ...

— *Oxygen, continued on page 6*

Celebrating Small Group Ministries

We live in a culture of runaway individualism. In fact, so rampant is our fascination with the individual that Jesus might say to us today, “It is easier for a Humvee to pass through the eye of a needle than for an American to enter into the kingdom.” It’s not because we’re bad people; it’s simply because we don’t naturally think in kingdom concepts.

I had a high school basketball coach who often said, “*There is no ‘I’ in team.*” One day I shared my observation that team has both an “m” and an “e,” and therefore, there is a “me” in team. I remember thinking to myself as I ran laps around the gym that he was less impressed by that insight than I thought he would be.

Several years removed from that experience, I sometimes struggle to remember that there is more than one ‘I’ in ministry, suggesting that there is an “us” in ministry. It’s not hard for me to spot the lone “I” in ministry. I very often use phrases like, “*my appointment,*” “*my church,*” or “*my ministry.*” It is more difficult for me to remember that, in this connectional church, my ministry and your ministry are necessarily intertwined. We’re connected.

It’s not a new idea. Jesus told his disciples, “*I am the vine; you are the branches.*” Paul told the fledgling church in Corinth, “*... just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.*” Wesley understood the difficulty of growing in faith alone, and he organized believers into classes and

bands. We have a rich, covenantal, connectional heritage.

Why is it, then, that we are so tempted to approach pastoral ministry solo? Perhaps we have forsaken kingdom life in community for our culture’s individualism. Perhaps, more terribly, we have succumbed to Satan’s most employed variety of temptation throughout scripture – to exalt ourselves.

I have discovered that I need covenant partners in ministry. For me, covenant relationships with other clergy are not luxuries; they are necessities. For nearly five years now, I’ve met weekly with a pretty eclectic clergy group in the Johnson City District. Among us, there are

licensed local pastors, associate members, elders in full connection, probationary members, senior pastors, associate pastors, men, and

women. Ours is a “lectionary” group. The quotation marks indicate that we spend less time in theological study than in caring for each other. We share. We encourage. We laugh. We cry. We pray. In short, we are connected. The 11:00 hour on Tuesday mornings is Sabbath time for me.

Since September, deacons and elders of the Johnson City District have met in spiritual formation groups throughout the district. A committee designed the opening retreat, selected spiritual formation curriculum, recruited facilitators



(clergy members of other denominations), and assigned us to groups. My group meets every three weeks, and interestingly, three members of my “lectionary” group are also covenant partners in this spiritual formation group. We three confess that we consider the assigned spiritual formation group our secondary group, but we value the experience nonetheless. It is a group experience that has allowed me to love some neighbors I wouldn’t have gotten to know so well otherwise, and we’ve enjoyed educating our facilitator about United Methodist life.

My prayer is that every clergy person would take the idea of covenant seriously enough to enter into a covenant group on his or her own initiative. If that’s not happening around you, maybe your district clergy will consider entering into a covenant in which groups are assigned. Either way, remember this—there’s more than one ‘I’ in ministry. I take that as a sign from God that we need each other.

For me, covenant relationships with other clergy are not luxuries; they are necessities.

Jonathan Jonas
is pastor at Sulphur Springs UMC in Jonesborough, TN.



A BALANCING ACT:

Reflections of a Part-time Local Pastor

Balancing responsibilities and setting realistic priorities and goals are constant battles for every person engaged in pastoral ministry. The first time I met with the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, Reed Shell asked a question that caught me off guard, which, quite frankly doesn't happen very often. His question was, "How do you approach personal care?" After contemplating my response, the only reasonable answer I could come up with sounded something like this: "I try to shower and shave every day, wear clean clothes, and chew a breath mint after eating any meal with garlic in it." Needless to say, I missed the point! During subsequent years that question has taken on more meaning.

As a part-time Local Pastor (if someone could please define that for me, it would be appreciated), there are many responsibilities to juggle. In the local church there are sermons, orders of worship, congregational care, visitation, newsletters, etc. There are connectional requirements: Charge Conference, year-end reports, meeting with the DCOM, sexual harassment education, Course of Study. There is the responsibility to our family. For many of us there is that other small thing called a full-time secular vocation. And I almost forgot ... personal care. Did I take a shower? Are my clothes clean? Did I eat garlic? Have I taken time to recharge my batteries?

Are the expectations from the small membership congregations served by bi-vocational pastors any less than those larger churches served by clergy in full connection? Some would say they should be, but tell that to a family who needs their pastor in a moment of crisis! Dr. Ed Eldridge

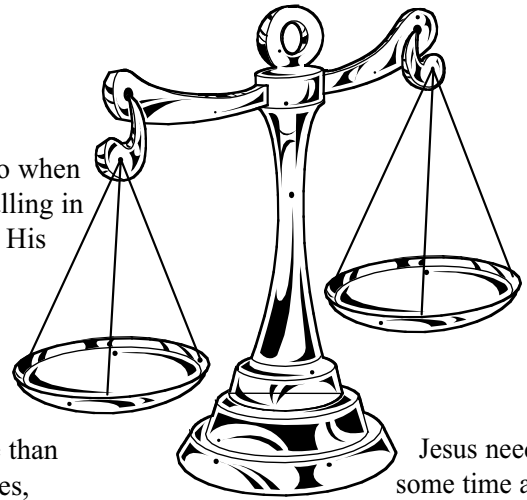
counseled me several years ago when I was struggling with God's calling in my life and ministry direction. His words are ones that have often reminded me of an undeniable truth: "There is a need for qualified, competent leadership in the small churches of Holston Conference now more than ever before." Are these churches, which make up a majority of the membership in the Holston Conference, less deserving than the congregations to which many full connection pastors are appointed? Do we view our role as bi-vocational pastors as part-time? If the answer to either of those questions is "yes," then shame on us!

The role of bi-vocational pastors is nothing new. Paul worked as a tentmaker in Corinth as the first missionary. Where would the Wesleyan movement have gone if it were not for those who recognized God's claim on their lives to proclaim the sacred Gospel message, while providing for a family in a secular vocation? How were all

who came before us able to set realistic goals and priorities in their ministries? Forgive me for being simple, but I believe the answer to that question is by following Jesus' examples and teachings.

After being rejected in His hometown, hearing that His cousin had been murdered, and tending to the spiritual and physical needs of 5,000 people, Jesus needed a break! He secluded Himself on a mountain to pray. We should carve out that sacred time to speak to and listen to God.

Likewise, after having His authority questioned by Pharisees, restoring the sight of a blind man, and being recognized as The Christ by Peter,



Jesus needed some time away.

He ascended Mount Hermon and was transfigured, transformed, was re-affirmed as to who He was and found strength for the trials of the coming days. We too need to be reminded of whose we are and seek our strength for the days ahead from the very One who claims us and calls us.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I pray that each of us will find the balance in our lives that will allow us to "... run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (HEBREWS 12:1-2) and serve our God's people in His name.

Gregg Bostick

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Have a Suggestion

for a topic or theme of an article, essay, story ... that might be published in *Clergy Connection?*

If so, send it/them to:

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Steward of Clergy Concerns
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or

e-mail: dougsmith@holston.org.

Will You Be Able to Retire ... When You Want to Retire?

Hopefully your answer to the above question will be a resounding “YES!” But have you planned your work and are now working your plan to make sure that you will be able to retire when you are ready? A recent survey revealed that most people spend more time and money on their annual vacation than they annually spend in planning and putting aside savings for their retirement years. The younger one begins financial and retirement planning, the better it is. It is important for all persons, but it is vital for ministers!

Clergy families have all of the same financial needs and problems as do the people in their congregations. However, clergy families have additional financial planning needs that are unique. Due to time spent in, and the costs of, graduate school, most clergy start earning salaries later and have more school debt than do their lay counterparts. The beginning and continuing salaries of ministers are disproportionately low compared with those of the lawyers, doctors, and other professionals who may have accumulated similar amounts of indebtedness. Many clergy are middle-aged before they finish paying off these loans. The parsonage system is both a blessing and a curse. Having a furnished home provided at no charge is obviously an advantage early on. But unless a minister starts paying monthly “rent or house payments” to herself/himself to be invested, she/he becomes worse off each year as inflation pushes the cost of housing higher. Therefore, pastors often get to retirement with no equity and with income dramatically reduced. Under such circumstances, she/he has to make possibly the largest purchase of a lifetime.

For active ministers, moonlighting is seldom a possibility. The itinerancy limits spousal career options. The

double whammy of the 15.3% self-employment tax on all ministers just adds to the already heavy financial burden.

For centuries priests have taken a “vow of poverty.” They were completely dependent upon the church to provide for their current needs and for their retirement years as well. Seemingly some protestant ministers have had the mistaken impression that the church is

responsible for providing them with a comfortable retirement also. True, the church does make provision for a part of its ministers’ financial needs in retirement through its pension and health care programs. But it was never intended that the church would provide enough pension income to cover all of the minister’s financial responsibilities and needs in retirement.

For clergy and laity alike, retirement security has long been based on a “three-legged stool” or three fundamentals of: (1) Pension; (2) Social Security; and (3) Personal Investments. All three are essential. The “retirement stool” cannot adequately stand on just one or two of its intended three legs. The church has provided Leg One—The Pension. The Government has provided Leg Two—Social Security. YOU must provide Leg Three—Personal Investments.

Hundreds of your retired brother and sister clergy persons have faced these same obstacles and are doing just fine in their retirement years. Unfortunately, others are not doing quite so well. Is your plan in place? Is it working? Do you need help? You must take charge of your finances, or they will take charge of you!

Bill Rodgers

is a retired clergy member of Holston living in Wytheville, VA.



Oxygen

continued from page 3

- In the absence of strong leadership, leaders leave and dysfunctional people take charge ...
- Leaders always take responsibility for whatever situation in which they find themselves. . .
- Leaders set their own agendas and set out on the journey to make it happen ...
- Leaders get what they look for.”

The book is divided into four sections, the last being eight Appendices to which the reader is referred at different points. The chapters challenge the reader to evaluate both his/her call as well as leadership style and how the two relate to each other.

I bought this book to help me understand how to care for myself physically. Instead, I had an opportunity to do some personal evaluation with regard to both my call and my leadership style. My personal opinions are:

1) This would be a good resource for an accountability group to study together.

2) ALL persons considering ministry in the local church (whether ordained or not) should put this at the top of their “To Read” list AND READ IT. Then find someone (mentor, counselor, pastor, etc.) with whom to discuss it.

3) ALL persons in ministry in the local church (whether ordained or not) should put this at the top of their “To Read” list AND READ IT. Then find someone (mentor, counselor, pastor, etc.) with whom to discuss it.

I wish I had read this book twenty years ago!!

Reviewed by

Sue Lynn Johnson,
Minister of Congregational
Care at Kingston UMC
in Kingston, TN.



Partners in Crisis ...

911 For Emergency Clergy/Family Care

It has been nearly ten years since a group of Holston ministers' wives met for a brainstorming session. Some had had a long-time concern about the effects on the spouse (usually the wife) when a clergy marriage broke apart and sometimes separation and divorce occurred.

Our discussions had to do with "being there" and helping when needed. The emotional upheaval of a broken marriage is traumatic in itself, and added to that are very urgent needs: where to live (how far or near to family and friends); children (their school and where to live while making such decisions); where to find lodging and furniture; start utilities. Where? What? How? Who?

Out of a struggle with these concerns, *Partners in Crisis*, a unique ministry within Holston Conference, was born. We knew we could not solve all the problems involved, but we could do something. We could provide a few nights lodging (either in another clergy home or a motel). We could provide meals for those few days. We could have a list of attorneys up and down the Conference to assist with that first emergency counsel and refer the individual to the proper legal advisor. We could arrange for a financial counselor to give immediately needed information and planning. We could pay the deposit for an apartment and utilities. Providing these kinds of practical things could ease some of the stress. But even more, we wanted to be there for the person(s) in need. We had a "shoulder" to offer and persons in crisis were not alone, not cut off from all the contacts and friends they had known before. We wanted persons in these situations to know they were loved and cared for.

We compiled booklets and placed them in every District Office. These provided information concerning

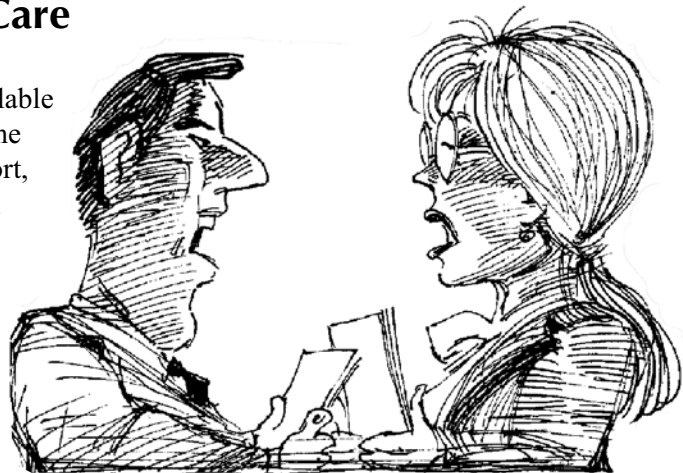
resources available in that area. The spiritual support, housing, legal, personal, and financial counseling resources are all included. Since we are not geographically

located in just one state, Holston has unusual problems with legal matters. There are different local, county, and state laws to be followed, thus we have legal personnel listed in every District.

Of course, help is needed to fund such a program. We depend entirely on donations and are so very grateful to individuals, churches, districts, UMW groups, UMM groups, Sunday School Classes, etc. to support this ministry. About two years ago, the Holston Conference Foundation came "on board" to accept our donations and work with us. We are so pleased for all its assistance and generosity.

We are not the first Conference to have such a group, but we are one of the earliest and have been able to assist other Conferences as they begin programs of their own. By sending petitions to the 2000 and 2004 General Conferences, we urged the birth of such ministries in every Annual Conference.

Partners in Crisis might be considered a "911 for emergency care" in early days of dealing with many urgent situations faced when there is a crisis within a clergy family. We want to provide all the assistance we can when these spouses and/or families are in such unsettling circumstances. We offer our love, concern, and fervent prayers. If you or a member of your family would



like assistance from *Partners in Crisis* or more information regarding this ministry, contact:

Your District Superintendent;
Betty Hurlock (865) 531-7501;
Chris Bowles (423) 870-2339;
Judy Burnett (865) 579-5932; or
Doug Smith (865) 980-2023.

Editor's Note: This article was written by Mrs. Hurlock at the request of Chris Bowles and Judy Burnett, Co-Chairs of Partners in Crisis.

Betty Hurlock
is the wife of a retired
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of the founders of
Partners in Crisis.



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Fully Alive:

Clergy Sabbath Experiences

“The glory of God is the human person fully alive.”

—ST. IRENAEUS

This year’s Gathering of the Orders and Fellowships might be more accurately called a *Diaspora* of the Orders and Fellowships.

Since 1997, when the first Gathering was held at First UMC, Morristown, we have come together for a time of fellowship, worship, and learning. Some years it was one Conference-wide event, other years we have divided by region, having two, three, or more events around the Conference.

In those experiences, we concentrated our efforts on the Disciplinary mandate *“to: (1) provide for regular gatherings ... for continuing formation in relationship to Jesus Christ through such experiences as Bible study, study of issues facing the church and society, and theological exploration in vocational identity and leadership;”* and *“(3) develop a bond of unity and common commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and the annual conference.”* (¶307, 2004 DISCIPLINE)

This year, in response to the expressed need of pastors for “time away,” the Orders/Fellowship Steering

Committee wanted to address two other Disciplinary purposes of the Orders and Fellowships, two purposes that we perhaps have neglected: *“to ... (2) assist in plans for individual study and retreat experiences;”* and *“(4) enable the creation of relationships that allow mutual support and trust ...”* (IBID.)

To that end, the plan for this year’s event will be a time for retreat. Elders, deacons, licensed local pastors, and associate members will be able to choose a time (between October 10 and 16) and a place (from a wide variety of locales, settings, and price ranges) to get away either alone or with family or friends.

A survey (by e-mail and on-site at Ministers’ Convocation)—with possible facilities and dates—was conducted by the Orders/Fellowship Steering Committee in mid-February, asking for preferences and thoughts on this model. Pastors were invited to identify their first and second choices of places and times.

Based on the responses to the survey, arrangements will be made for the most popular facilities (including Conference camps, bed and breakfast inns, golf resorts, and retreat centers) to hold a block of rooms for the use of Holston Conference during one week

in October. **Please note that each clergy person or family must make his or her own specific reservations at the facility chosen.** Pastors may elect a one- or two-night package. The only planned, scheduled activity for the retreat will be a worship service at some time during the retreat.

Pastor/Staff Parish Committees will receive a letter asking them to arrange for a lay speaker on October 16 (Laity Sunday) to eliminate the pressure of sermon preparation and the need to be present at the local church on that day. Each church also will be asked to assist its appointed clergy with the cost of the retreat. The Cabinet has lent its support to this effort.

Pastors will need to register their planned retreat with the Conference so that the Steering Committee may track participation. A brochure will be sent to each clergy person outlining options and giving registration information.

This *“Diaspora of the Orders”* is designed to meet the needs of the clergy—for rest, for rejuvenation, for fellowship, for solitude, for fun, for study time, for prayer—for Sabbath. It is our prayer that this experience will help us glorify God by being fully alive!

Lynn Hutton

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