

# CLERGY Connection

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

## Bird Watching

Fred Craddock likes to talk about the time he encountered a nine-pound sparrow walking down the street in front of his house.

*Fred asked the sparrow, "Aren't you a little heavy?"*

*The sparrow said, "Yeah, that's why I'm out walking, trying to get some of this weight off."*

*"Why don't you fly?" asked Fred.*

*"Fly?" said the sparrow, incredulously. "I've never flown. I could get hurt."*

*"What's your name?" asked Fred.*

*And the sparrow said, "Church."*

(CRADDOCK STORIES, P. 128)

I was reading in the paper this morning about the left and right wings of one of our sister denominations getting together to try to find some common ground on contentious issues. And all this talk about the two wings of the church started me thinking of the church as a bird.

Like a bird, the church has two wings – a left wing and a right wing. I don't know if a bird's wings have names, but in the church, those names are "conservative" for the right wing and "liberal" for the left. Apparently, the church has borrowed these names from the political arena. Perhaps this has contributed to the increasing politicization and even polarization of the church.

Anyway, I wonder if birds tend to favor one wing like we humans do. Are some birds, for example, left-winged like some of us are left-handed? And what about the church? Which side does it favor? If I had to choose, I would have to say the church as a whole is a right-



handed, right-winged bird.

It's a pretty conservative institution.

Change, if it comes at all, does not come quickly or easily in the church. But just like a bird needs

both of its wings to work together for it to fly, maybe the church needs both of its wings to work together, too, for it to fly.

Just think: if a bird had only one working wing, it wouldn't be able to fly forward. It would only be able to fly around in circles, if it could even fly at all. The bird needs both of its wings for the kind of balance and equilibrium to bring about the necessary lift that is required for the bird to take off. Maybe the church is like that. Maybe the church needs both of its wings to be working well in order for it to fly.

For example, maybe the church needs the "conservative" right wing to remind it of the importance of its doctrines and disciplines, of its truths and traditions that are very much worth "conserving." On the other hand, maybe the church also needs the "liberal" left wing to lead it in the way of working for human rights and social justice, so that more people in our world experience the "liberating" power of the good news of Jesus Christ.

And rather than these two wings competing against each other, what if they saw the work they do as complementing

*Bird Watching, continued on page 3*

## 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.

In an Alban Institute article entitled *Hearing God's Voice through Change: The Preacher's Role* by Craig A. Satterlee (published October 17, 2005), he writes, "At one point or another, changes force themselves on the life of every church, threatening the status quo but also offering opportunities for growth. The way a pastor approaches such changes in his or her sermons is vital to the congregation's response." The Institute acknowledges and celebrates the vital role a pastor plays in helping congregations come to grip with the fact that life for his or her church is not what it once was. Pastors can seek to avoid this responsibility or expect it to be handled by others all they want, but pastors must accept their



responsibility to lead congregations through change. The author of this article speaks specifically about the importance of preaching as a tool to assist congregations in moving from being irritated by change to seeing change as a God moment that offers favorable conditions which could lead to growth and development.

The author suggests that pastors' preaching needs to be informed or fueled by the following list as they lead their congregations to respond to change.

**Listen.** These threatening changes are simply the voice of God seeking to move us in new and glorious ways. I have discovered that the needed word is often there if we but listen with open ears.

**Keep your preaching faithful to the gospel.** It is as we preach that we offer to people a "God lens" through which to see and make sense out of all that is going on around us. It is akin to what the children of Israel experienced as they fought the Amalakites. Moses held up his staff as a symbol that God was fighting with and leading them. This kind of preaching seeks to galvanize the people around this simple fact, "God has not abandoned us." Satterlee offers what he calls "... five foundational commitments necessary for shepherding congregations through important transitions from the pulpit:"

- *Understand change as an opportunity and not a threat. Make sure you have settled this in your own mind, body, and soul.*

# Preaching and Change

- *Trust in the power, purpose, and place of preaching in transition. Preaching can and will make a difference and offer a place to rally the people.*
- *Welcome the transition into sermon making. Do not ignore or minimize the change, but lift up God's ability to lead us in changing and challenging times.*
- *Practice holy and active listening. We must listen not only to God but to the people and demonstrate in the sermon that their fears and concerns have been heard by us and by God.*
- *Stay anchored in God's presence, grace, and power. As the leader, it is necessary that you are receiving power, nurture, and inspiration from God because you can not, and need not, try to do this without God.*

**Give space and time.** In other words, do not be rushed or seek to get this over with in a hurry. People need time to digest a new direction, and you must help them with more than one sermon.

**Name the problem.** Jesus modeled this when he had the man, possessed by demons, tell him his name. There is a certain amount of power that comes when we name our challenge.

**Keep it Bible-based.** The challenge is best met through a utilization of the **Word**. This builds the body and empowers them. We need to start with, and never move from, the Scripture as the foundation of our preaching.

Satterlee calls pastors to realize they have a powerful weapon that they so seldom use, and that weapon is preaching. We need to hear and learn from him.



**James Swanson,**  
is Resident Bishop  
of Holston Conference.

one another and completing – in the sense of making more complete, more full, more whole – the gospel message? What if they saw themselves, and each other, not as an angel on one shoulder and a demon on the other, whispering contradictory words into the ear of the church, but as two angels? Angels supposedly have wings, don't they?

For a bird, as well as it seems for the church, the left and right wings need to work together for the thing to fly. But it seems as though there has been this historical prejudice against the left side, at least in the human world (I can't speak for the avian world). I don't know where it came from, this preference for right-handedness. Maybe it came from the fact that more people are right-handed than left-handed, and the majority rules.

I've noticed that this prejudice against the left is reflected even in our language. Do you know what the Latin word for left is? Sinister. As in evil, malevolent. Bad. But do you know what the Latin word for right is? Dexter. As in dexterity and dexterous, which are good things. So even our language suggests that right is good and left is bad; that right is right and left is, well, wrong.

I wonder if birds (or angels) ever think about this sort of thing, which wing is stronger, which wing is better. I don't know. But what if the church quit worrying about which wing was stronger, better, truer than the other wing? What if each wing quit trying to beat up the other wing? Would the bird then be able to fly again?

And what about the parts of the bird that aren't wings? I've noticed that the wings like to think they're the most important part of the bird. Why, without them, it wouldn't be a bird! But in truth, the wings make up very little of the bird's body mass. Most of the bird is in the center, in the chest cavity. That's where the bird's major organs are – its heart, its

lungs, its breast. And that's where those parts of the bird that we humans love the most reside – its bright and brilliant colors and its beautiful songs.

Isn't the church like a bird? Isn't most of the body of the church in the center?

**Isn't the church like a bird?  
Isn't most of the body of the church  
in the center? Isn't that where the  
church's heart is, its core, its passion?**

Isn't that where the church's heart is, its core, its passion? Isn't that where its lungs are, its breath, its spirit? Isn't that

where the fullest spectrum of colors is, the rainbow of splendor and glory? Isn't that where the church's song comes from? Not from the wings, but from the body.

Studies suggest that, if members of the mainline churches were placed along a liberal-conservative continuum, only about 10 percent would reside at each pole, each "wing." The rest – 80 percent of us – occupy the middle, the main body, where the church's heart, spirit, and song are. (Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church*, Alban, 2004, p. 76) Of course, some might say that the very problem with the massive middle majority is that it can be lukewarm, tepid, instead of either hot or cold. And the massive middle also might be what is weighing down Craddock's nine-pound sparrow, keeping it grounded.

But it also might be the case that the middle is weighed down by its wings, and it's simply waiting. Maybe it's waiting for the wings to put to flight the old way of putting up dukes and being fists and instead to be what they were called and created to be: wings. Wings that were meant to work together to lift the church into the heavens and carry it to ever new soaring heights. Wings that were meant to make the church fly again.

I don't know. Am I being too flighty? Is this just a bird-brained idea? Is all this for the birds? Who knows? Maybe we'll just have to wing it and see for ourselves.

**Dave Graybeal**  
is pastor of Englewood  
and Mars Hill UMCs.  
Cleveland District.



## Clergy Sexual Ethics Training

### Dates:

September 27-30, 2006

### Locations:

Multiple sites throughout  
Holston Conference  
(To be announced soon.)

### Leader:

**M. Garlinda Burton**  
General Secretary  
*The General Commission on the  
Status and Role of Women  
The United Methodist Church*

## Clergy Gatherings

### Dates/Location:

October 23 – State Street  
Church, Bristol

October 24 – Cokesbury  
Church, Knoxville

### Leaders:

**Dr. Gregory L. Jones**  
Dean, Duke Divinity School  
**Rev. Susan Pendleton Jones**  
Director of Special Programs, Duke  
Divinity School

### Sponsors:

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# Keys to Effective Ministry

After thirty-something years in the ministry, what have I learned? I share some reflections.

**It's a long journey; travel with friends.** I usually travel home from conference on a bicycle with a few other pastors.

Somewhere along those trips I learned

how to lead my church through a stewardship campaign; I experienced both grace and guilt. I figured out how to deal with difficult issues. I learned to think like a pastor.

The ministry is a journey; travel with friends. They can help you think through the questions.

They can help you “*gird up your loins*” when the battle waits. They can help you walk through the mine fields like a Christian.

**When in doubt, err on the side of contact.** This applies to church members and to District Superintendents.

Church people get angry – sometimes because of an issue; sometimes with a person. Most often, the best approach is to reach out. Occasionally, people have turned down my offer of a visit, but most often it is accepted. As we visit, we can practice forgiveness “*seven times seventy times.*” We can demonstrate that “*a soft answer turns away wrath.*” When we keep our distance, we leave their anger and our own to boil.

For different reasons, this applies to District Superintendents, too. When my Superintendent offered pastors the option of coming to talk in January, I jumped at the chance. It was not really an option for me. The way I see it is this: If someone (like the Bishop) asks my Superintendent what Ferguson thinks he is doing, I want my Superintendent to know how I feel about ministry and this church. It is a foolish preacher who

leaves the Superintendent to guess. Contact!

**Let your spouse and family be just that – your spouse and family.**

We clergy must walk a fine line between sharing our hopes and dreams

with our spouse (a good thing) and dumping

the latest church blow-up on our spouse (a bad thing).

Clergy spouses love us, BUT they have to keep their mouths shut. As spouses they hear from their clergy-spouses about the events and relationships at church. Naturally, our spouses wonder how events at church will affect them. “Will my spouse have a job tomorrow?” “Will we have to move in June (or before midnight)?” Knowing too much about what is going on at the church is a constant source of uncertainty.

The problem is that we pastors tend to have rich relationships with our parishioners. A problem on one day gets resolved on another. Or that problem is put into a much larger context by the unfolding events of our life together. As pastors, we move on; our spouses may not have the luxury of those rich relationships. They might be stuck, replaying the old problem. Let your spouse be your spouse.

**Be clear about your ministry and don't give it away.** After Jesus fed the 5000, people tried to make him king ... thinking that he could feed them like that every day. Jesus replied that feeding people bread was not what he came to do. He was clear about his ministry. We preachers need to be just as clear about our ministry, too.

Over the years, I have been invited to be a substitute school teacher, join the volunteer fire department, serve as a social worker, and more. There is no



doubt that ministry touches all of these activities. But, what is our ministry? Be clear about your ministry and then focus on that.

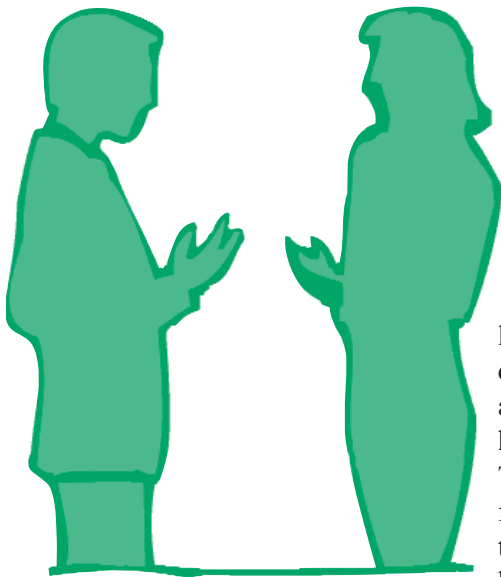
**Study our United Methodist doctrines and *The Book of Discipline*; they will serve you well.** Lately, it seems that church controversies jump out at the most unexpected places. Events erupt at Junaluska or General Conference or at the neighboring church in town. Oddly enough, as pastors, we feel obligated to have an answer to any religious question our people might ask. We can take comfort from knowing that Jesus lived with the same expectation. “What do you say, Preacher?”

Let your response be informed by *The Book of Discipline*. The longer I live under *The Discipline*, the more I appreciate the work of those who hammered out the carefully chosen words in that book. While you may not be able to escape the controversy, at least you'll be standing on solid ground.

Obviously, this list is not finished. Add your own, then, share them with me – [faferguson@earthlink.net](mailto:faferguson@earthlink.net).

**Andy Ferguson**  
is Senior Pastor of  
Broad Street UMC,  
Cleveland, TN.





# Learning Leadership

My friend, Dr. Mike Dalton, is a career educator and the Superintendent of Maryville City Schools. On more than one occasion, I've heard Mike say that a lot of people feel like they are experts on what makes a good public school because they attended one. I'll bet a lot of people think they are experts on what makes a good church because they attended one, too. I doubt either assumption is entirely true.

Many factors contribute to making a good school or a good church or any kind of good organization. But all good organizations seem to have one factor in common – all enjoy good leadership. And while we can read and study about leadership, I believe we really learn about leadership from others.

My earliest personal memory of a truly effective leader dates to the beginning of my military career. I was a newly commissioned second

lieutenant assigned as the commander of a squadron. This must be somewhat akin to a young seminary graduate who has received his or her first appointment. The training is over, and now you are finally being allowed to go to work in the "real world." The squadron had not had a First Sergeant for two years. As soon as I was assigned, they got one. The new First Sergeant was Chief Master Sergeant Hugh J. McCool. He was the fourth ranking Chief Master

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**... all good organizations seem to have one factor in common – all enjoy good leadership.**

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Sergeant in the entire United States Air Force. He had been wearing a uniform for 27 years. I was 23 years old. Mac had been serving four years longer than I had been alive.

Two days after we met, Mac explained that he and the other NCOs – non-commissioned officers – in the office were good at their jobs. He promised they would do all they could to ensure we were successful. He went on to explain that there were some

things which only I could do. Mac suggested that if he and the other NCOs promised to do their jobs, and I promised to do mine, we all would be successful. I agreed. Thus, I completed my first real world lesson in leadership.

What were some of the leadership lessons I learned?

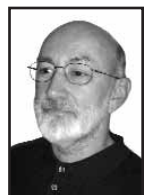
- ◆ *With leadership, sometimes we're the teacher and sometimes we're the student.*
- ◆ *If I expect other people to do their jobs, then I need to do my job.*
- ◆ *We probably will be more successful if we work together.*
- ◆ *We have to be willing to start somewhere.*
- ◆ *Leadership is a lesson that never ends – for any of us.*

In every job since, in uniform and out of uniform, I have continued to learn leadership from the very people with whom I work, and follow, and sometimes even lead. I hope that has been your experience in Holston Conference – that we are helping you continue to learn to lead in the same way that Mac first helped me. I pray that every time each of you goes to a new church you find a mentor, and a teacher, and a friend to help you get started and to help you keep going. I want you to find people to help you learn, and grow, and succeed. Each of our churches needs your pastoral leadership. And all of us in Holston Conference need to invest in your leadership learning together.

## **CLERGY** Connection

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# CLERGY MENTORS AND HEROES ...



## Leading by Example

For over twenty years, Ron Matthews has been a pastor, mentor, and friend to me, and most recently, my District Superintendent. I have had the opportunity to observe him in a variety of leadership roles, and he consistently demonstrates the qualities of pastoral leadership that I have tried to emulate in my own ministry.

Ron is able to balance the art of encouragement and caring while allowing creativity to flow. He initiates change while maintaining his compassion for those involved. Leading by example, Ron

initiates that change by inspiring others to share the vision while enabling and empowering them to take leadership roles.

One of the things I admire about Ron Matthews is his ability to initiate change. Change can sometimes be difficult, and, as pastors, sometimes we are challenged with “we’ve never done it that way before.” Ron demonstrates how “we might.”

**Gaye King**

is Pastor of Immanuel UMC, Louisville, TN.



## Under the Influence

I admit that I have been involved in ministry while “under the influence,” and it has been without shame or guilt. Having grown up in the church, some of the influences in more formative years were my pastors. In those years, when I was paying attention, the role of preacher was the most visible. I listened to and watched Gordon Sterchi, Sam Varnell, George Harr, Jimmy Ball, Jr., and Frank Trotter set the bar in the area of public worship. These were knowledgeable and compassionate pastors. While he was not my pastor, the late Arthur Jones, whose family I got to know in Athens, left his mark on me as well.

After entering the ranks of the Holston Conference, there were others toward whom I looked for counsel and example in personal attempts to navigate the many demands of

ministry. They each brought differing gifts to their call and seemed to know how to manage their strengths and weaknesses. I am indebted to these persons who have contributed to my ministry over the years: Bill Balch, Bob Bostick, Ron Hammond, Gordon Ridenour, and Doug Smith.

In addition to the personal gifts and graces of all those names above, their effectiveness in ministry has involved a firm belief in what they were doing, diligence in their duties, compassion in their relationships, a clear sense of call, and a steadfast commitment to the cause of Christ. I have been blessed to be under their influence.

**Reed Shell**

is Senior Pastor of State Street UMC, Bristol, VA.



## We Just Called Him, “Rev.”

Among the most formative periods in my life were my college years, in particular my two years at Hiwassee College (1981–1983). During that time, John Farmer was the college chaplain (of course, to think of John was to also be mindful of his wife Mary Lou’s partnership in ministry with him on the college campus).

John was a part of my discerning the call to ministry during my freshman year. I can still remember the afternoon I sat in his office and shared with him my sense of calling. He leaned back in his office chair and with a broad grin said, “I have no doubt about it!” Over the next year he would be my candidacy mentor, as well as mentor in all things spiritual and personal. John had the gifts of encouragement, discernment, and wisdom. As a college student, I thought of him as the wisest person I had ever met. He nurtured many of us who were experiencing a call to ministry in a climate that was both comfortable and challenging as we reflected on Scripture and the world around us.

The last time I was on St. Simon’s Island, I called John and said, “Do you have time for a walk on the beach?” He did have time, and he’s still a very wise person.

**Mickey W. Rainwater**

is Senior Pastor of Tyner UMC, Chattanooga, TN.



## Restored to Ministry

In January 1991, I resigned as an associate pastor of an inter-denominational church. After hearing the senior pastor state that he did not want a person on staff who was going through a divorce, I felt I had no other options. Deeply wounded by this, the ensuing divorce, and feelings of failure, I left the pastoral ministry.

It was late 1993 or early 1994 when my fiancée suggested we try Christ United Methodist Church in Halls. I was skeptical; however, I missed the church and all it offered. After visiting the church, Marion and I requested a visit from Bruce Marston, the pastor. We were honest with Bruce about our experiences and disappointments regarding church life. Bruce was candid and transparent. He shared his story

with us. We learned about Methodism, and we returned to church. Pastor Marston married us on August 3, 1994.

Due to Bruce's encouragement, it wasn't too long before I entered candidacy and went on staff with Christ United Methodist as a part-time Program Director. I worked closely with Bruce and learned to appreciate his making expectations very clear and his holding me accountable. I felt the freedom to question things and dialogue with Bruce. In 1996, I became a licensed local pastor and received my first appointment. My relationship with Bruce did not end there. I was fortunate that we were in the same district, although he might not have felt that way. I telephoned him quite regularly, asking questions regarding ministry.

Bruce helped me have a successful first appointment. He has helped me have very successful finance campaigns at two different churches.

It's been ten years since I left Christ United Methodist Church and returned to pastoral ministry, and I still telephone Bruce when I need someone to talk to about ministry. Bruce has been my pastor, boss/supervisor, mentor, friend, and colleague. Most importantly, Bruce helped restore a very wounded shepherd to ministry. What a gift! I'll be grateful forever.



**Eric Rieger**  
is Pastor of First UMC,  
Gatlinburg, TN.

## Reflections Can Be an Added Blessing

A look back over my life often brings a smile and/or a tear. This moment of reflection brings both.

When I was twelve years old, my home church received a pastor that loved the youth as well as the elderly. He made every group feel important. The best part of this placement, for me, was that his tenure lasted through the formative years of my spiritual walk.

That awesome man was The Rev. Frank Lynch. Rev. Lynch has always been a person through whom I heard that Jesus loves me. Through the MYF Confirmation Studies, we learned who we were as Christians, as United Methodists, and as God's children. Rev. Lynch became a part of every family at Hale's Chapel Church.

As I grew, I committed my young life to Christ, was baptized, and learned Jesus would be the best thing that ever happened to me. When I started to Morristown College, Rev. Lynch was there for me. He drove me, with trunks

and luggage, to college the first of each year I was there. As we drove, many memorable miracles happened. One was a discussion about the Lord. Rev. Lynch told me how Jesus wanted the best of me and the rest of my life for him. Not until finishing UVC Graduate School, being a teacher, surviving a failed marriage, and raising two babies did I realize my life was incomplete, and I understood Rev. Lynch's "pearls of wisdom from God." I came off the "rim of life" (just enough given to God, but not all) and said to God, "Here I am, LORD...the rest of me".

As I serve God in His ministry as a Local Pastor, I know the truth of the song's words, "Please be patient with me, God is not through with me yet!



**Rochelle Maxwell**  
is pastor of Pruitt Hill  
and Tate's Chapel UMCs,  
Greeneville, TN.

## Editor's Note

These "testimonials" are from clergy persons within Holston. Each was invited to write a brief article celebrating a clergy mentor or "hero" ... a licensed or ordained colleague and friend who has had a profound and lasting influence in shaping her/his life and ministry. These are very personal, touching, and instructive. After reading these, you may want to reflect on a special clergy mentor or hero who has helped shape your life and ministry. If you do, why not write that mentor a note sharing what she or he means to you.

*DS*

# THIS TEST IS WORTH THE TIME!

Good managers of time tend to know that they do well with scheduling. Poor time managers tend to know how badly they do. But, if you're not sure how well you're doing, here's a brief quiz to help you think about your time-management skills. Mark the following statements **true** or **false**. The more you answer with **false**, the more your time-management skills need a tune-up.

- T F My sermon is always substantially finished before Saturday
- T F I am rarely, if ever, late for meetings.
- T F I visit members, those in nursing homes and those who are homebound, on a regular schedule.
- T F I take my day off weekly, except for genuine emergencies.
- T F I have a regular daily time for devotion and prayer.
- T F My secretary knows the day I prepare my sermon.
- T F I think that I spend most of my time on the most important things.
- T F I'm confident that I visit hospital patients often enough during their stay.
- T F I almost always attend my children's school and sports events.
- T F Our family takes at least two weeks' vacation every year.
- T F I seem to have enough time for myself.
- T F My sermons are usually planned several weeks in advance.
- T F I sleep eight hours a night.
- T F I exercise half an hour or more several days a week.
- T F My spouse and I set aside time to be with each other.
- T F Church people feel that I'm accessible.
- T F I am home four or more evenings per week.
- T F My desk top is cleaned regularly.
- T F I list the tasks I hope to accomplish each day.
- T F I get adequate time each week for study and prayer.
- T F I try never to do things someone else could do just as well.

Time management is not an exact science. Nor is it the same for each person. But good time-management can make the difference between a successful, fulfilling ministry and one that seems to splash about aimlessly in the shallows. Most important, time management is a skill that can be learned, and learning it is worth the time!

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