



The Call

HOLSTON

CONFERENCE

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MINISTERS PROVIDE 'CALMING PRESENCE' FOLLOWING VIOLENT CRIME

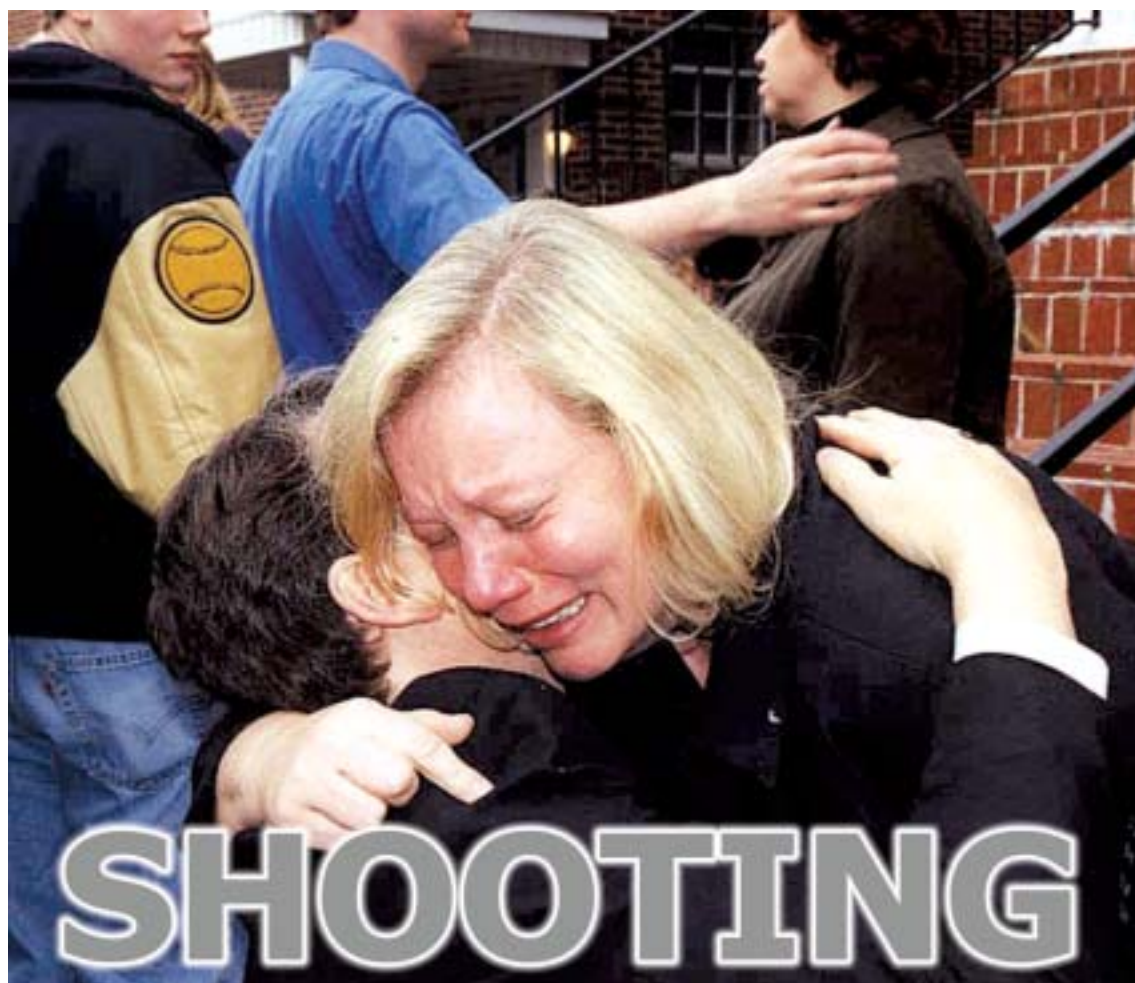
GRUNDY, Va. – At least two Holston ministers were among the clergy comforting survivors of a fatal shooting at the Appalachian School of Law last month.

The Rev. Paul McNalley, pastor at Grundy United Methodist Church, rushed to comfort the family of Anthony Sutin, one of three people killed by a disgruntled student on Jan. 16. Sutin's wife, Margaret Lawton, has attended Grundy UMC for three years.

The Rev. Dennie Humphreys, Big Stone Gap District superintendent, met with the law school's president hours after the shootings and also helped counsel students and faculty. School president Lu Ellsworth attends an unchartered United Methodist church, Appalachian Prayer Fellowship, located in Humphrey's district.

McNalley said he learned of the shootings after a neighbor with a scanner left a message that he should immediately go to the hospital on Jan. 16.

"I saw cars at the law school but I didn't know what was going on," said the Buchanan Parish pastor. At Buchanan General Hospital, McNalley learned that three people had been killed, three injured, by a student suspended for poor grades.



SPREE IN GRUNDY

▲ *Tale of Tears: Alumnus Patti Church gives a hug to current student Dink Shackelford following the horrific slaying of two faculty members and one student at Appalachian School of Law.*

© 2002 Photo by Cathy St. Clair; Virginia Mountaineer

Among the dead was the college dean, Anthony Sutin. McNalley was told to meet Sutin's widow at the law school library.

For the next several days, McNalley stayed by Margaret Lawton's side as she made funeral arrangements, accommodated as many as 15 relatives in her home, and faced the grief of losing a husband in a violent crime.

"Margaret has been one of the strongest people I've ever seen in my life," he said. She and her husband left careers as government lawyers in Washington, D.C., when they came to teach at Appalachian School of Law in 1997.

The couple had recently adopted a child in China, arriving back in Grundy on Jan. 2. Clara Li is 18 months old. An older son, Henry, 4, attends Grundy UMC's preschool.

Because Sutin was of the Jewish faith, McNalley asked Rabbi Stanley Funston from nearby Bluefield, W.Va., to co-officiate a memorial ser-



▲ *The shootings occurred in Grundy, Va., located in the Tazewell District. Tazewell is one of 12 districts in the Holston Conference.*

vice with him at Grundy Senior High School. The Jan. 20 service was attended by an estimated 700 people.

Lawton is an Episcopalian by faith, McNalley said, but attends Grundy UMC because it is nearby. "Our church is two doors down from her house."

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