

Web site. The prayer provides a way to support chaplains as they depart for active military service.

The worship section has created an order of service for men and women mobilized or deployed and an order of service for a reserve chaplain called into active service. The worship section also has additional written resources for worship, including "Praying for Peace in the Face of War." All are available at [www.gbod.org/worship](http://www.gbod.org/worship).

For Hill, supporting chaplains is a primary concern, and he said United Methodist churches and leadership should put pastoral care ahead of politics.

"During the Vietnam War, there were soldiers who felt that they were not welcome in the church," he said. "I pray that we not exclude military members, none of who had anything to do with the decisions made by our national leadership."

"We ask that the United Methodist Church be grateful for the faithful service our military provides. We also ask that leadership and general membership of the United Methodist Church pray for all the leaders of the world, that they may make decisions that are best for their nations' people which should result in peace."

For more information, contact the Section of Chaplains and Related Ministries, United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministries, P.O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203-0007; call (615) 340-7411; or e-mail Hill at [ghill@gbhem.org](mailto:ghill@gbhem.org). ■

## Holston members weigh in

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Probst, pastor at East Ridge UMC in Chattanooga District, is married to Tennessee National Guardsman Chris Probst. He is stationed at Fort Campbell in Kentucky and deemed "deployment ready," according to his spouse.

"I never really expected his National Guard service to put him in harm's way in a war-time situation," Probst said of her husband. However, the Chattanooga minister said that the world has "changed in so many ways" since Sept. 11, 2001, "we have both been willing to make this sacrifice. In the end, we both feel like it's worth it."

When the Rev. Ron Matthews wrote a commentary for Holston's website earlier this month, he seemed to strike a chord among clergy and lay members who do not completely agree with the opinions of some United Methodist leaders.

Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, recently urged President George Bush to "listen to the voice of hundreds of thousands of Americans and citizens of other countries who demonstrate for peace and ask your utmost restraint."

Bishop Melvin Talbert, appearing in a 30-second commercial for cable television, asserted in late January that an attack on Iraq "violates God's law." Talbert is the ecumenical officer for the United Methodist Council of Bishops. The TV spot was sponsored by the National Council of Churches.

A U.S. Army chaplain and Desert Storm veteran, Matthews expressed a contrasting opinion in his website commentary.

"While I pray for peace, I do not believe we can or should try to avoid a war at any cost," Matthews stated. "In every generation, there has been a time when the principles of freedom and human rights have to be defended from evil."

Matthews' commentary, which included his personal experiences with Iraqi soldiers in 1991, appeared online at [www.holstonconference.com](http://www.holstonconference.com) as a Feb. 5 "Wednesday on the Web" feature. The opinion piece was reprinted by *The (Maryville) Daily Times* on Feb. 8. Matthews is Holston Conference treasurer and director of finance.

When visitors to the conference

website were invited to add their opinions on a website forum, Holston ministers responded.

"I understand the struggle that my brother Ron feels," replied the Rev. Buzz Trexler, pastor at Green Meadow UMC in Maryville District. "How do I bring about an understanding that we must pray for peace, and are called to be peacemakers? (And then explain) that being a peacemaker – protecting our own freedoms, as well as those suffering elsewhere in the world – can mean the need to engage in war?"

"Can Ron do a commercial?" asked the Rev. John Grimm, pastor at Morgan's/Rockford UMC in Wytheville District. "With the mud applied to the United Methodist Church by a particular United Methodist bishop via the National Council of Churches, we are due some good press. Ron's comments were right on."

Bill Skeen, immediate past Holston Conference lay leader, wrote that he trusts President Bush and prays daily for "Godly wisdom in his decisions."

"I don't know anyone personally who wants war and its consequences," the East Stone Gap UMC member stated in an e-mail. "However, I do recall vividly 9-11 and our country's firsthand tragic experiences with the evil that is in this world – something many seem to have forgotten ... I am not opposed to war with Iraq, or any other country with weapons of mass destruction, as a means of preventing another 9-11."

The Rev. Rick Franco, pastor at Tazewell District's Pearisburg Circuit, e-mailed that he "tends to lean on our social principles as quoted from the 'Book of Discipline.'"

"However, when a nation seeks to use nuclear weapons and nerve gas to kill other human beings, then I believe we as Christians need to ask ourselves, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' If a nation doesn't completely disarm its weapons of mass destruction, then we as a people have the right to go to war to make it a better place, even though people will be killed on both sides." ■

**Ron Matthews' commentary is available at [www.holstonconference.com](http://www.holstonconference.com) by clicking on "War: What Do You Think?"**

## War 'objector' info available through pastors

The days of the draft may be behind us, but Holston's Peace With Justice Team is offering assistance to young adults wishing to declare themselves "conscientious objectors."

"Clearly the passages from the 'Book of Discipline' indicate that the church supports the right of people who believe that they in conscience and because of their faith object to participation in war," says Steve Hodges, Peace With Justice coordinator.

It's unlikely that a draft would be reenacted in this country, Hodges says. However, if a draft was declared, it might be too late for would-be objectors to accumulate the necessary paperwork to successfully avoid participation in a war.

"So while a draft doesn't seem imminent," Hodges says, "it's prudent to plan. And it's never a bad idea for a person to wrestle with their conscience and thoughts."

Anticipating that young adults may approach their pastors seeking information about conscientious objector status, the Peace With Justice Team has prepared worksheets and a Q & A for Holston clergy. The documents are available online at <http://holston.org/outreach> or by calling Hodges at (423) 733-4195 or e-mailing [hodges@overhome.net](mailto:hodges@overhome.net).

Once prepared, the conference's Connectional Ministries Office will keep official documents on file for "objectors" within the Holston Conference, Hodges said.

—Annette Bender

**Wednesday Web**  
Check out what's new every Wednesday at [www.holston.org](http://www.holston.org)

## Who Said That?

**"It's not my responsibility to worry about the boy. My job is to protect the bishop and the church."**

— an official for the Diocese of Rockville Centre in New York, responding to a parish employee's expressed concern for a sexually abused boy. The official's statement was included in a 181-page grand jury report accusing the Roman Catholic Church of protecting abusive priests while failing to safeguard children.