

Air Force Chaplain David Knight ministers in a combat zone during his recent deployment.

# DAVID KNIGHT: BACK HOME FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

By HOLLY CRAFT

FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla. – Air Force Chaplain David Knight Jr. believes that his experience in Holston Conference prepared him for four months in the Middle East.

He spent July through November 2003 serving as the only Protestant chaplain to 1,000 troops in an undisclosed area of the Middle East. Although he primarily served Air Force troops, he also served members of the Army and Navy.

Knight kept busy by performing four worship services every weekend and leading four Bible studies during the week.

“I also had the opportunity to preach at one of the few openly Christian churches in the Gulf region,” Capt. Knight said in a telephone interview from Florida. The church he referred to was established by British missionaries for Christians from India and Pakistan who work in the area where Knight was deployed.

Fourteen years of serving as a civilian pastor and interaction with other chaplains from Holston prepared Knight for his military experience: “I value the example of every chaplain from our conference.”

The Rev. Knight, age 41, is a Holston clergy member whose pastoral record includes Wellspring UMC (Maryville District), Hixson UMC (Chattanooga District), and Carpenters UMC (Maryville District). His father is a retired Holston clergy member, the Rev. David Knight Sr., currently living in Big Stone Gap, Va.

“God called me to this,” Knight said of his role in the Air Force. “The time I spent in Holston helped me

prepare, and I have an incredible amount of respect for Holston. I feel that I am representing the United Methodist Church as an ambassador of Christ.” Knight described his role during deployment as being a “voice of calm in a chaotic atmosphere.”

When anxiety crept into the minds of troops, Knight was there to help by listening and counseling. He spent a lot of time supporting soldiers who were worried about their families at home. “Family separation was the biggest issue,” he said.

“I had to tell a 20-year-old that his father died of a heart attack in the states. There was a sense of helplessness among the troops because they were away from their loved ones.”

Knight is thankful that his family had an outlet for their fears and worries at the chapel located at Eglin Air Force Base in Ft. Walton Beach, Fla. His wife, Stacy, was able to get the support she needed, much like the support Knight offered to troops overseas.

Knight ministered to many young service people who never attended church or chapel at home. The stresses of war forced many of them to confront questions about spirituality.

“We were flying air lift missions into both Afghanistan and Iraq,” Knight said. “Planes did get shot at ... Many troops were in a moment of crisis and began to question things. Several atheists or agnostics began to

question whether or not there may be a God.”

He believes it was easier for the troops to come to him for answers because he was a fellow member of the military. There were at least 12 soldiers that confided in him. While stationed close to the coast, Knight was able to baptize seven soldiers in the Arabian Sea. Three of those had no prior relationship with the church.

His relationship with the troops was one of significance, and he enjoyed working with so many at one time. “I think it was fantastic,” he said.

Knight lived and preached in tents, but he had hot meals and some air conditioning. “It wasn’t as bad as it could have been,” he said. He was willing to stay longer than four months but also more than ready to come home. “You have to know that’s what you’re getting into when you go into the military,” said Knight. “There’s always a chance that you’ll have to stay longer.”

Knight is currently serving a Protestant church at Eglin Air Force Base. He also is involved with a youth program and provides counseling and family support.

If there is anything that Knight wants to communicate to those of United Methodist faith, it is that they should value their roots. “The roots of the faith are experiencing God’s grace,” he said. “I’ve seen it work in other cultures. I’ve seen it work in the military.

“Value your connection,” he said. “I have a good sense that I have backup.” ■

Holly Craft is a free-lance writer living in Maryville, Tenn.



While stationed close to the coast, Knight (above, far right) baptized seven soldiers in the Arabian Sea.

# ROY REESE: Remembering a lifetime of ministry

By ANNE DUKES  
Wesleyan Christian Advocate

ATLANTA – At 98 years of age, the Rev. Roy Reese is taking things a little slower these days. He’s accepted the physical decline of his health and is in hospice care, but his obvious love for his Lord and his new wife Bettye keep him a vibrant gentleman who enthusiastically shares the knowledge he’s accumulated.

One of the eldest ministers in the Holston Conference (having served 75 years), Reese now calls Wesley Woods Center in Atlanta home. In addition to teaching Sunday school, he also has lent his talents in serving Holy Communion at the facility, speaking to Candler School of Theology students, addressing Emory Medical School students and offering opinions to elder-care experts. On top of all this, he practices the ancient art of Tai Chi to help with his balance.

“How great God was when he set this great universe in place. He had to have had it all in mind,” marveled Reese as he reminisced about the people, places and things that have made so rich a life. “I can sit here and look out at the trees, and each one has a story to tell.”

As he talked, he admired the view from the tower apartment he shares with his second wife; he met her at Wesley Woods as they shared a songbook in the choir. They married almost five years ago. Reese was married to first wife Helen (a preacher’s daughter) for 68 years. She shared a life in the ministry with him before she died in 1998.

Like many older Americans who have lived

varied, interesting lives, Reese has a lot to look back on and a lot to be thankful for. He recalls with pride his home church, Emerald Avenue UMC in Knoxville, Tenn., where he was baptized and later preached. His Scottish great-grandmother had his future career in mind even when he was a baby, but it took him 22 more years to hear his call. In 1927, he preached his first sermon at Emerald Avenue, and he also preached there during his 97th year. “My home church was always my spiritual guide – our church was just everything to us,” he recalled.

Reese’s service record dates back to 1930 when he became a probationer. In 1933 he became a deacon in full connection; in 1935, an elder. He pastored many churches, including First Sevierville, Harriman, Jones Memorial, and Gate City.

One accomplishment that Reese is most proud of, in addition to his preaching, was his participation in Holston Conference camping. Although he hadn’t been directly involved in camps before, one day someone from the education branch of the church approached him and said, “Roy, the Lord’s calling you to a different kind of work.” Reese replied, “That’s funny, he didn’t say anything to me about it this morning.”

Later, at the 1948 Annual Conference, Reese was selected to serve on a newly formed Con-

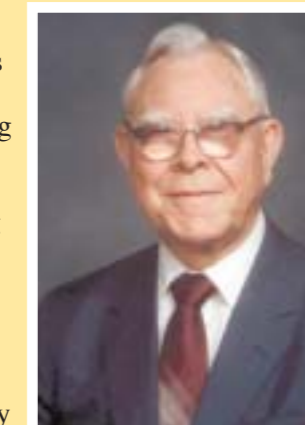
ference Camping Commission. After studying organization, purpose and goals of Christian camping, the commission produced a widely used camping manual in 1949. Reese’s reports on camping’s “significant role in the educational program of our conference” were published in the 1950 *Journal* and excerpted in Charles Maynard’s 1988 historical book, “Where the Rhododendrons Grow.”

Reese retired from active ministry in 1970 due to failing sight, but he has been anything but retiring since. Recently, Reese was invited to Emory Medical School to talk with the incoming class of physicians about aging and what older people need from the medical profession. Reese made two important points in his talks. The first one: Older people want to be treated like people and they don’t want to be “talked around” as if they are objects. His second point: Older

people should have a part in decisions about their treatments. In his own experience, he praised his own doctor for her care and honesty in discerning that due to his ailing heart, hospice care is right for him now.

As he looks out the window of his apartment, today Reese is glad to be at Wesley Woods Towers. “This is next to heaven,” he said. ■

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Rev. Roy Reese, age 98, in a recent photo

# NEW STAFF: Plugging up the holes in Holston

By ANNETTE BENDER

Holston Conference directors recently announced the hiring of four staff members to fill vacated or newly created positions.



■ **Bob Bostick**, coordinator of older adult ministries Bostick retired from Holston in June 2003 and is now returning to the conference staff in Knoxville. “With older adults as the fastest-growing segment of our population, we need Bob to work part-time as a dedicated resource to help local churches,” said Anne Travis, director of connectional ministries.

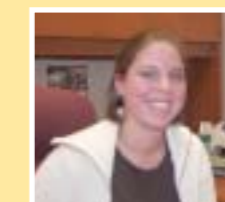
■ **Heather & Chuck Jones**, Camp Dickenson co-directors

The husband-and-wife team assumed leadership of Camp Dickenson, in Fries, Va., on Feb. 1. “We’re excited about what they both bring to the ministry,” said Randy Pasqua, camp & retreat ministry executive director. “Chuck brings a pas-



tor’s heart, and Heather brings a degree in early childhood education.” Look for an article about the Rev. John Ousley, former Camp Dickenson director, in a future issue.

■ **Millie Meese**, print media specialist Meese joined the communications staff full-time in Knoxville on Feb. 1. She prepares the *Journal*, brochures, “Clergy Connection,” and other publications. “With the heavy volume of print communications, it’s imperative that we have someone with her expertise and skill,” said the Rev. Gordon Ridenour, executive assistant to the bishop. Meese is a



Cokesbury UMC member in Knoxville District.

■ **Kristi Willocks**, accounts receivable administrative assistant A recent Carson-Newman graduate with a B.S. in business administration, Willocks has been employed full-time in the Knoxville office since Feb. 16. “She exhibited a great eagerness to put the skills she learned in school to good use,” said Controller Rick Cherry. Willocks is a member of Williamson’s Chapel UMC, Maryville District. ■

