



Managing

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one was, and is, different: It keeps breaking, and breaking, and breaking ...

On Sept. 11, after two hours of an onslaught of images, breaking details and newsroom decisions, I was already feeling overwhelmed.

I spoke to no one as I headed for the side door and the sanctuary of Broadway United Methodist Church across the street. Like

millions of other people, over the coming days I would find the respite of prayer an indispensable part of daily life.

As a Christian, I know the mechanics of response in times of stress: I go to God in prayer. In this situation, it's much too early to describe the response of my heart. I'm still working that out in prayer.

After 16 hours, our first edition of the terrorist attack on America rolled off the

press. Eight hours later, in the light of another day, I returned to the newsroom. As I watched the news continue to unfold on Day 2, another realization hit me: There was another task ahead of me, that of caring for the flock at Pellissippi United Methodist Church. My other job is that of part-time pastor at a small community of worship in West Knoxville.

Phone calls were made to a couple of church leaders. "You've got a big job to do at the newspaper," one of them told me. That is true, but after only 11 weeks on the job at Pellissippi — my first appointment — I wanted to be sure the needs of the congregation were met. Both Pellissippi members assured me they would keep their ear to the ground concerning needs.

Day 2, Wednesday, was another 16-hour day at *The Daily Times*. Early in the day, it became clear that Pellissippi UMC needed to join others in gathering for prayer that evening.

After pouring through some resources, I settled on a "Service of Light" where seven candles were lighted followed by responses. The gathering was small, but heading back to the newsroom I felt refreshed.

As I write this, Day 3, Thursday, remains something of a blur.

On Day 4, the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance on Friday, I prepared another brief prayer service and headed for the church. Driving my wife's van, I was about two blocks away when I heard a "THUMP!" Wondering if I hit something, I looked in the rearview mirror, but saw nothing.

I could see church member Ryan Sat-

terfield's truck when I pulled in to the parking lot. As I got out of the van, he said, "Buzz, do you know you have flat tire?"

I looked at the rear driver's side tire and said, "Now I do."

Ryan said, "You go on, I'll take care of it."

It was another small gathering. Later, I realized that the three candles I had placed on the church altar representing the airplanes should have been four. I chalked it up to exhaustion.

Day 5, Saturday, was another time of respite: Practice with the praise band was a time of prayer and worship. I only spent four hours in the newsroom on that day, then went to an Emmaus Community candlelight service for another time of worship and prayer.

Sunday, Day 6, finally arrived. Part of the worship service involved a ritual of mourning. There were four smaller candles and a Christ candle on the altar, as well as a piece of purple cloth draped around the bottom of the cross. During a liturgy, the purple cloth was torn into four pieces, each representing one of the jetliners. The pieces were draped on the altar.

The service went past the noon hour, but the need was evident.

Returning home, I walked into the den and emptied the contents of my pockets onto their usual place. Donna looked at me and the only words I could utter were, "Now, I can rest."

Rest, and pray that the story will soon end.

Buzz Trexler is managing editor at The (Maryville, TN) Daily Times and part-time local pastor at Pellissippi UMC, Oak Ridge District.



NO REST — Managing editor Frank "Buzz" Trexler, who is also part-time local pastor at Pellissippi UMC, talks with news editor Richard Dodson during a recent shift at *The Daily Times*. Dodson attends Cokesbury UMC, Knoxville.

Photo by Joy Kimbrough/
The (Maryville, TN) Daily Times

Americans

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First Oak Ridge and Kern Memorial United Methodist churches participated in an outdoor service attended by hundreds at Oak Ridge Civic Center.

"Let us be bound by the things that unite us," the Rev. Annette Flynn of Kern Memorial said during an emotional prayer.

Like many churches in Holston and throughout the nation, Church Street UMC in Knoxville kept its doors open for days, accommodating downtown business people or other visitors seeking a quiet place to kneel.

A Hilton Hotel guest, stranded in Knoxville after his Washington-bound plane had been diverted to McGhee-Tyson airport, wandered in one night at 8:30. "Can I really find a place to pray here?" he asked Mae Swanner and Teresa Williams, who were attending a circle meeting at the church. A sign outside the building, "Our church is open for prayer," had drawn him in.

As Williams led him to the prayer room, he said his father had been identified among the dead at the Pentagon crash. "I showed him the room, flipped on the light, asked if he was okay. He said he was fine," Williams said. "He hugged me and said he didn't know what he would have done if this church hadn't been open."

During the denomination's "Open House Month," when United Methodist churches are being promoted with TV commercials and other Igniting Ministry ads, members marvel at the campaign's timing. In addition to creating radio spots with the message, "God is still the power in whom we place our faith, and the power

of love overcomes evil," United Methodist Communications also changed the narration of one of its TV ads. The new narration suggests that viewers "consider the strength of gathering in a community" and "hold prayer vigils with United Methodists in local churches around the world."

"I saw the commercial last night," said the Rev. Steve Sallee, senior pastor at Cokesbury UMC. "What they did to relate the commercial to the crisis is excellent. It shows that we are ready to stand and help people through this. It behooves all of us to be ready."

Sallee and Cokesbury Associate Pastor Rev. Stephen DeFur were among Holston leaders and churches appearing in the media since the terrorist attacks. Knoxville TV stations sought out Cokesbury UMC for at least five local stories, while *The Elizabethton Star*, *Southwest Virginia Enterprise* and other papers quoted other Holston ministers' words of faith.

Portions of a statement by Bishop Ray Chamberlain, released within four hours after the attacks, appeared in several media outlets. (See page C4.) Throughout the nation, prayer vigils and packed worship services were front-page news as America turned to God for solace.

"It's funny that for so long, the church was so marginalized and invisible. Now all of a sudden, we're in the center of everything," said the Rev. Dennis Newman, Christ UMC, Chattanooga. "People are searching for something solid to hold on to. They're turning to the church. I hope we can give them something meaningful and in depth."

SHARING — University of Tennessee students share lunch and concerns with Wesley Foundation Director Enoch Hendry (far right) during a tumultuous week.

Photo by Anne Travis/
Holston Conference



TEARS & HUGS — Worshippers leave an emotional midday service at First Maryville UMC on Sept. 14, designated as a day of remembrance by President George W. Bush.

Photo by A.S. Bender/ *The Call*