

## Digest?

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# The Call

## Digest

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All-female leadership helps Abingdon church celebrate 230 years.

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# How should we respond to political conflicts?

## How should United Methodist Christians have responded during the recent U.S. government shutdown and related political drama? At *The Call's* request, four Holstonians gave it some thought.

In October, the Rev. Brenda Carroll watched the evening news as another attempt to end the U.S. government shutdown fell apart.

"I guess I responded by being amazed at the protective bubble the legislators live in that allows selfish and immature behavior," said Carroll, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church in Maryville, Tenn.

"But someone close to me once said, 'Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.' A Christ-follower whose stuff I love to read once wrote, 'Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

Late on the evening of Oct. 16, the 16-day shutdown and debate over the national debt limit finally ended. However, it did not stop citizens from expressing dismay and disgust at their elected leaders and sparring with friends and co-workers over which political party was most at fault.

What is the appropriate response for United Methodist Christians during these harmful, divisive conflicts played out before the U.S. public?

"There is so much evil to overcome in this world, and there are so many opportunities to invest in my life in lifting up the downtrodden, bringing hope to dark places, and speaking the name of Jesus into parched and dry hearts," Carroll said.

"It is a sad day when intelligent people who have been entrusted to represent all of us would rather 'have it their way' than to find a compromise. But the best of what I wish for them is also what I need to live out in my own home, my church, and my community."

Del Holley is Holston Conference lay leader and a member at Colonial Heights United Methodist Church in Knoxville, Tenn. He is also Knox County assistant district attorney.

"My first reaction," Holley said, "is that as United Methodists, we live and worship within a context of ongoing debate and a constant process of discernment. So we probably understand better than any other denomination within mainline Protestantism how to live out our Christian lives in disagreement."

"My prayer has been that our government leaders will stop the finger-pointing and name-calling and listen to each other as we United Methodists are called to do," Holley said. "When people are involved in a debate, whether you agree with them or not, they are all children of God and they all have value in his kingdom."

The Rev. Gordon McBride, pastor of North Tazewell United Methodist Church and Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in North Tazewell, Va., said that all Christians should pray during times of conflict – for national and world leaders, but also, to look for commonalities and "seek God's face in all things."

"Christ teaches us that if we have disagreement, we need to reconcile, come face-to-face, put aside our differences and not focus on our personal agendas but seek our common goals," McBride said.

"It's a wonderful time for the church to promote Christ," he added. "Our hope is not in the government or any other entity. Our hope is in Christ."

McBride said that Christians need to offer "a voice of unity and hope" instead of division. "We need to respond as peaceful people who look to our Creator for hope and to say to a world that doesn't know Christ: 'Look, here is your greater hope. And there is nothing greater than our God.'"

JaNae Swanson, administrative assistant on the Holston Connectional Ministries staff and member at Cokesbury United Methodist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., also said Christians should respond to government trials with prayer.

"Let's stop pointing fingers and playing the blame game," she said. "Pray for our government, both sides. Pray that they will let the Lord guide their decisions and do what's best for our country."

Partisan politics "are not good for our country," Swanson said. "What is good is for our representatives to always consider the needs of the people above the desires of their political party or special-interest groups. ■"



# All-female leadership helps Abingdon church celebrate 230th anniversary

**ABINGDON, Va.** -- On Oct. 13, Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor preached for the 230th anniversary of Abingdon United Methodist Church.

The congregation began in 1783 when they were served by a circuit rider who traveled through six counties in Tennessee and five in Virginia. In 1826, the church became the first station church in Holston Conference.

Twelve sessions of the Holston Annual Conference have been held in Abingdon. During the 1835 annual conference, a plan for an agricultural college was proposed. Tobias Smith, a prominent Methodist layman suggested a 500-acre farm and volunteered to give \$500 toward the purchase. Rev. Creed Fulton and his committee agreed. Emory & Henry College, named for Bishop John Emory and statesman Patrick Henry, now stands on that site.

During the Oct. 13 anniversary celebration, Bishop Mary Virginia "Dindy" Taylor shared with the congregation historical details about Holston Conference and Abingdon United Methodist Church.

The service was led by Bishop Taylor, the Rev. Sandra Johnson, Abingdon District superintendent; the Rev. Sherry Boles, senior pastor; and the Rev. Liz Hamilton, associate pastor.



Abingdon United Methodist Church commemorates its historic past with (left to right) Rev. Sherry Boles, Bishop Dindy Taylor, Rev. Sandra Johnson, and Rev. Liz Hamilton.

"With a female bishop, a female district superintendent, a female senior minister, and a female associate pastor all on stage, I'm pretty sure we made history," Hamilton said. ■

## HOLSTON CALENDAR

**United Methodist Student Day/ Nov. 24:** Each year in November, United Methodist churches celebrate and support their college students by giving to an offering that provides scholarships and loans. Give online at [UMCgiving.org](http://UMCgiving.org) or write a check to your local church with "United Methodist Student Day" on the memo line.

**Giving Tuesday/ Dec. 3:** After Thanksgiving, there's Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday. On Tuesday, Dec. 3, United Methodists and others are encouraged to participate in "Giving Tuesday." Gifts made online (at [UMCmission.org/give](http://UMCmission.org/give)) through The Advance will be matched dollar for dollar by the General Board of Global Ministries. Multiply the impact of your gifts to

Hope for the Children of South Sudan or other Holston Conference ministries supported through The Advance. For more information, visit [UMCmission.org/give](http://UMCmission.org/give) or call the Connectional Ministries office at (865) 690-4080.

**South Sudan Reunion & Dinner Update/ Dec. 6:** Church members involved with or interested in Holston Conference's ongoing partnership in South Sudan are invited to a special gathering on Saturday, Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m., at Bearden United Methodist Church in Knoxville, Tenn. Fred and Libby Dearing will share updates. Cost is \$10. Make reservations by contacting Lori Sluder at (865) 293-4146 or [lorisluder@holston.org](mailto:lorisluder@holston.org).

**The Call** is the news source for Holston Conference. ● The Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church includes 897 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia. ● Our resident bishop is Mary Virginia Taylor. ● Our executive assistant is the Rev. Carol Wilson. ● Our office address is P.O. Box 850, 217 South Rankin Road, Alcoa, TN 37701. ● (865) 690-4080 ● [www.Holston.org](http://www.Holston.org) ● [thecall@holston.org](mailto:thecall@holston.org) or [info@holston.org](mailto:info@holston.org) ● [Facebook.Holston.org](http://Facebook.Holston.org) ● Twitter @TheCall\_Holston ● Free e-news: [thecalltwo.holston.org](http://thecalltwo.holston.org)