

## Digest?

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# The Call

## Digest

## Back page

Congregations of all sizes are invited to Evangelism Conference, March 14-15.

February 15, 2014

[www.holston.org](http://www.holston.org)

## New chaplain chosen for Appalachian Trail

**A**t age 69, David Smith from Knoxville, Tenn., will be the second United Methodist chaplain sent by Holston Conference to hike the Appalachian Trail.

When he sets off from Springer Mountain on March 6, he will begin an arduous six-month foot journey from Georgia to Maine. His goal is not primarily to finish, Smith says.

"We in the United Methodist Church -- what we're trying to do is put a presence of Christ on the trail," Smith says. "A community of caring."

Last year, Josh Lindamood, then age 26, was the first chaplain to blaze the trail for a new United Methodist ministry which Smith will continue.

Delayed by a debilitating rash, Lindamood completed all but 500 of the 2,200-mile trek from April to October, while serving as an encouraging spiritual presence to other trekkers tendered by nature and physical challenge.

Lindamood plans to master the final 500 miles later this year -- after his June wedding to Jen Blake.

Smith, a retired Macy's executive and grandfather, will begin his journey with more experience than Lindamood, according to the Rev. Alan Ashworth, founder of the ministry now known as A.T.O.M., or Appalachian Trail Outreach Ministry.

"Dave has already had experience in hiking the Appalachian Trail. He's very much aware of what he needs to do to be successful," said Ashworth.

"He's also been injured on the trail, and he's struggled spiritually until he came to the realization of God's love through hiking," Ashworth said. "So Dave is the right person to point the way to others who are looking."

Smith and his wife, Lala, are natives of Elizabethton and Roan Mountain, Tenn. After 36 years of living in Cleveland, Ohio, then Washington, D.C., the couple retired in Knoxville. They are members at Cokesbury United Methodist Church.

Smith wasn't a hiker until 2008. It was the year he lost his four-year-old grandson, Walker, to pediatric cancer.

"God and I had a difficult time seeing eye-to-eye after that," says Smith. "I was pretty mad at God."

Walker died in April 2008, just five months after his diagnosis. The loss was so anguishing that Smith spent his days driving aimlessly from morning 'til night. It went on for months -- until in October 2008 he was driving on the Cades Cove Loop Road in the Great Smoky Mountains, crawling along with the sightseeing traffic.

"I saw all of these cars pulling into a parking lot," Smith says. "So I decided to pull in to the parking lot, too. Then the people got out of their cars and started hiking. I got out of my car and hiked, too."



David Smith, age 69, (right) follows 27-year-old Josh Lindamood as Holston's next Appalachian Trail chaplain.

On the five-mile trip back and forth to Abrams Falls, "I must have talked to 50 people," Smith said. "It did wonders for me."

When he got back into his car, the grieving grandfather realized "that was the best day I had in months." What followed was a hiking love affair that made Smith stronger and stronger, emotionally and physically.

"If we knew of a city or town within our bounds that was unrepresented by the United Methodist Church, we would move heaven and earth to establish a church there," says Ashworth. "I would like to see us approach the 'AT' as that sort of community, as a people deserving of the same kind of services of any other community within our bounds."

As March 6 approaches, Smith is well into preparation for his long and difficult mission.

"I'm trying to hike as much as I can," he says. "I've got my food plan together, and I've already packed 46 re-supply boxes. Lala will mail them to me on a schedule."

Smith's backpack is packed, and on Feb. 17 at Holston's Clergy Convocation, he will be commissioned by Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor.

Smith says he's ready to meet the thousands of hikers who hike the A.T. each year.

"I've been on the trail, I know what's on the way," he says. "It's all about community and the people you come into contact with, the relationships you form. It's a close-knit community that you don't expect. It's just natural for me." ■

## HOLSTON CALENDAR

**Bring a team to Evangelism Conference, March 14-15**

**Aging & Ministry in the 21st Century/ March 1:** For older adults or for people who minister to older adults, this program helps individuals or churches reach the largest age-segment of the UMC. Contact Connectional Ministries at (865) 690-4080.

**Ministers' Spouses Retreat/ March 6-8:** Beth Green will be the speaker at Oak Tree Lodge in Sevierville, Tenn. Contact (865) 705-7654 or bradbeccas@yahoo.com for more information.

**LEAD Kids Children's Ministry Conference/ March 7-8:** For children's ministry workers, this seminar will be held at Fountain City United Methodist Church in Knoxville, Tenn. The speaker is Rev. Leanne Hadley, founder of First Steps Spirituality Center, Colorado Springs, Colo. Register by contacting Karen Wright at karenwright@holston.org or (865) 690-4080.



Rev. Jorge Acevedo will teach congregations of all sizes how to reach their communities at the Evangelism Conference in Knoxville, March 14-15.

**Evangelism Conference/ March 14-15:** Teams from each church of every size are invited to learn more about "Vital Congregations" through this year's speaker, the Rev. Jorge Acevedo. Location: Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Knoxville, Tenn. Discounts will be offered to those who register by March 16. Call Connectional Ministries at (865) 690-4080 or visit Evangelism.Holston.org.

**Discovery/ March 21-23:** Senior-high youth are invited to consider a lifetime call to ministry at Camp Wesley Woods in

Townsend, Tenn. Contact the Youth Ministry office at (865) 690-4080 or visit HolstonYouth.com.

**One Great Hour of Sharing/ March 30:** The United Methodist Church will take a church-wide special offering for the United Methodist Committee on Relief. Write a check to your local church with "OGHS" on the memo line or give online at UMCOR.org.

**Volunteers in Mission Leader Training/ April 5:** This course provides tools to lead a team from your congregation on a mission trip within the USA or globally. Location: Trinity Center Fellowship Hall in Oak Ridge, Tenn. Register by calling Maxine or Bob Schultz at (865) 719-4304 or Rev. Crystal Smith at (865) 483-4357.

**Jubilation/ April 27-29:** Holston's annual retreat for seniors will be held at MeadowView Conference Center in Kingsport, Tenn. Contact Connectional Ministries at (865) 690-4080.

**Native American Ministries Sunday/ May 4:** The United Methodist Church takes a church-wide offering to empower local spiritual development and educate Native American seminary students. Write a check to your local church with "Native American Ministries Sunday" on the memo line or give online at <http://donate.GCFA.org> and search for "Native American Ministries Sunday."

**Annual Conference/ June 8-11:** Leaders of Holston Conference's nearly 900 churches will meet at Lake Junaluska, N.C. Visit [AC.Holston.org](http://AC.Holston.org) or call Connectional Ministries at (865) 690-4080.

**Peace With Justice Sunday/ June 15:** United Methodists will take a church-wide special offering to support peace with justice ministries in Holston Conference as well as within the U.S. and globally. Write a check to your local church with "Peace With Justice Sunday" on the memo line or give online at <http://donate.GCFA.org> and search for "Peace With Justice Sunday."

**Youth in Mission/ June 15-21:** Youth ages 14 and up are invited to a week of mission work and fellowship in Slidell, La. Visit [HolstonYouth.com](http://HolstonYouth.com) or contact the Youth Ministries office at (865) 690-4080.

**Youth Assembly/ June 30-July 4:** Holston's annual discipleship week for junior-high or senior-high students will be held at Emory & Henry College in Emory, Va. Contact the Youth Ministries office at (865) 690-4080. ■

**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](https://www.facebook.com/Holston.org) ● [@TheCall\\_Holston](https://twitter.com/TheCall_Holston) ● Free e-news: [thecalltwo.holston.org](http://thecalltwo.holston.org)