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"I never expected it, never wanted it, never wished for it, never dreamed of it," says Coppedge of his superintendency appointment. "But I am delighted, honored, privileged. A lot of my friends and family are now asking, 'How does it feel to eat those words?' There's been a lot of teasing."

He never visited the Big Stone Gap area before, except for a meeting in Gate City, Va. However, a recent tour of his future home left him with a good impression. "It's beautiful," he said. "I'm excited, and I can't wait to get there."

Coppedge and wife Mary, who is finishing her undergraduate degree at Tennessee Wesleyan College, have five grown children, including three birth sons and two adopted daughters. Their six grandchildren range from ages five to 10. His mother, Mary Louise Coppedge, died in Shawnee, Okla., on Palm Sunday, March 16, at age 84.

—Annette Spence

March 27

## Youth report: When you hear God's call, Discovery is a good resource

**D**iscovery is Holston Conference's time to help high school students explore a possible call to ministry. What started out as about 30 people sitting around at Camp Wesley Woods on the weekend of March 14-16, all looking intimidated, quickly turned into a loud, laughing group of teens and adults.

On Friday night, we enjoyed the musical offerings of Ralph Jeffers. The Rev. Charles Maynard also spoke to us about "Discovering Our Call." He related to each person through many personal stories, fables, and everyday life examples. He spoke to us about the "night what-ifs." He said that we, as Christians, sometimes need to slow down our night thoughts, and be still enough to hear God.

Maynard also led us on a "discerning walk" on Saturday morning. It was amazing how nature can relate to a person's own spiritual life. He said that sometimes our own spiritual journeys will fork just as a hiking path does, and at times we will be required to take the path less traveled. He also said the path we are meant to take will not always be evident, similar to a night hike. However, if we listen, we will find the way.

On Friday night, we were paired off into "sharing groups." Each group included about six youth, allowing us to build relationships with each other as well as the adult leaders.

Saturday afternoon included a resource fair. Several seminaries and Christian organizations provided information. After the resource fair, we divided into groups for various workshops. I participated in "Evidence of Calling in Our Lives" and "Facing Our Fears."

Evidence of Calling was my favorite workshop.

It was led by the Rev. David Graybeal, who told us that everyday events in our lives may help us determine a calling. He provided applicable ways for determining our purpose, such as a distraction diary, childhood games and activities, and passions.

Bishop James Swanson joined us for the Saturday evening service. His message was my favorite: "Responding to God's Call." He said: "Christianity since its very inception was a youth movement, and it should stay that way." It was very reassuring to hear the Bishop say that it is important for youth to be involved, to force the church to break away from its comfort zone.

On Sunday morning the Rev. Carol Wilson spoke to us about "Celebrating God's Call." "You don't have to have it all figured out before you even begin," she told us.

Discovery helped us to realize that we share common feelings about the call to ministry, and adults who have gone before us experienced the same. Youth from all over the conference were able to connect, while the adult leaders were open to answering questions about anything. Discovery is an excellent resource for youth on spiritual journeys — even if they don't know where the journey is leading them.

—Remy is a youth member at a Johnson City District church. Some details are withheld to protect the identity of minors.

April 2

## Open delegate meeting: Six of eight speeches on homosexuality

**W**HITE PINE, Tenn. — While the Holston Conference delegation listened without comment, six out of eight speakers pleaded for inclusiveness for homosexual persons at a March 29 opening meeting held at First White Pine United Methodist Church.

The meeting was the fourth for elected persons representing Holston at General Conference later this month in Fort Worth, Texas, and at Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference in July at Lake Junaluska, N.C.

Delegate leaders publicized the March 29 meeting as an opportunity for any Holston member to address any topic. Eight speakers — four from First Oak Ridge UMC, and all from the Oak Ridge or Maryville Districts — signed up for five-minute time slots. Some speakers cited specific resolutions expected to be voted on by the General Conference.

The Rev. Al Shaver, pastor at Mountain View UMC in Maryville District, asked delegates to consider that "God's way could be different than our own."

"The love of Christ for all people is our ultimate goal," Shaver said, referring to resolutions that would alter *The Book of Discipline* to seem more

accepting to homosexuals. "Regardless of our moral thinking on the issue ... we need to consider language that would invite them to come."

"My brother is gay," Shaver added, "and he's had more church doors slammed in his face than I can tell you. Please lift your hearts and be in prayer when the issue comes up, and let God guide you."

Bob Swing, member at First Oak Ridge UMC, said his daughter is a lesbian, living in a monogamous relationship, who recently adopted an infant.

"After I heard our Bishop plead with the Annual Conference for placements of black clergy, and after I talked with female clergy who say they feel rejected, and after I saw the hate-filled circulars sent to General Conference delegates ... it's been dictated to Joyce and me that we can no longer be quiet," Swing said.

Swing distributed a petition he submitted to the General Conference in October, proposing deletion of *The Book of Discipline* statement: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching."

Swing's petition, similar to others submitted to the legislative body, proposes this substitution sentence: "The United Methodist Church embraces sexual fidelity and considers promiscuous, non-covenantal, sexual relationships incompatible with Christian teaching."

Rachel Ryan, member at First Oak Ridge UMC, said she stopped attending the Roman Catholic Church after unsuccessful attempts to discuss with the leadership its non-acceptance of female clergy. While expressing pride in the United Methodist Church as "a church willing to change and evolve," she said the denomination's current language regarding homosexuals is "exclusionary and un-Christlike."

Other speakers included Carol Green of Green Meadow UMC, in support of resolutions strengthening the denomination's peace-favoring principles, and Samuel Duck of First Maryville UMC, asking the United Methodist Church not to boycott companies operating in Israel.

The Rev. Eddie Fox, Holston delegation leader, thanked the speakers for their participation. The Rev. Dennie Humphreys, clergy delegate from Chattanooga, Tenn., closed the session with prayer.

After the forum, Fox said the delegation would consider viewpoints and concerns of church members they represent as well as personal beliefs when deciding how to vote at General Conference.

"We each have our own deep convictions and understandings. That's part of who we are," Fox told *The Call*. "The thing that binds us is our love for Christ and each other. I love this church and want this church to be faithful."

"We had several people speak today, but we didn't hear everyone today," Fox added, noting that other church members had communicated viewpoints and concerns to him prior to the March 29 meeting.

—Annette Spence

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