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feels very comfortable to me. I think I am already subconsciously living my life as a pastor. But I keep thinking maybe there are other careers I should pursue first.”

Majoring in communication and minoring in religious studies, Goad plans to graduate from Virginia Tech with an undergraduate degree in December 2008. He will not immediately enter seminary, but plans to first pay off his college debt and pursue a job in public information, “possibly in local government.”

His communication studies and experience will help him become a better pastor in the future, he says.

Still, he wonders if he’ll be able to resist the call for long, as the people he meets often ask, “Are you a pastor?”

“I’m a little scared,” he admits. “When you’re a pastor, you truly live your whole life for the Lord. I won’t have my own house. Everyone watches what you do. I will be living life in a fishbowl. Am I ready for that?”

As a college student who readily professes his love for Jesus Christ and avoids substance abuse and risky behavior, Goad says he already feels some of the isolation that pastors can experience. His fellow students seem to respect him and they are “nice” to him.

“But there aren’t a lot of telephone calls or invitations. I’m excluded. I’ve made a name for myself by not being a drinker and not being easily influenced.”

Goad grew up in Oakland UMC, now led by the Rev. John Ousley. He is a five-time participant of Resurrection, Holston’s annual spiritual weekend for youth.

In January 2008, he attended Divine Rhythm for the first time. The annual spiritual weekend for young adults included a special workshop for participants feeling the call to ministry, which Goad also attended.

When he’s at Virginia Tech, Goad attends nearby Bethel UMC, where his former pastor, Randy Morris, is now serving. He counts Morris, Ousley, and the Rev. Ric Wright, his teacher at a recent Wytheville District lay speaking seminar, as supportive and influential.

“I’ve preached five or six times,” he says referring to Oakland, Bethel, and Fairlawn UMC, “and it felt very comfortable for me.”

A two-year stint as youth representative on Oakland’s pastor/parish relations committee also gave him insight into his calling, Goad adds. “If I’m ever a pastor, I only want to be about winning souls to Jesus Christ.”

Goad grows quiet again when asked about the baritone player, Ryan Clark, who was shot in his dorm last year. Goad is a percussionist who plays cymbals in the 330-member Marching Virginians band. Clark, he says, was outgoing and well liked by many.

“I wish I had his gift of knowing people’s names,” he says, sadly.

—Annette Spence



Michele Moser answers questions in a “Mental Health Matters” breakout group at Munsey Memorial UMC.

April 23 Experts: Relationships are vital to children with mental illnesses

Rain did not dampen the enthusiasm of participants at the “Mental Health Matters” conference held April 19 at Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church in Johnson City, Tenn.

The gathering was one of four workshops held in four regions of Holston Conference during the “Week of the Young Child” and was sponsored by the Holston Conference Health Care Task Force.

John Paul Abner, a licensed psychologist and keynote speaker, addressed the rise in childhood depression, anxiety, and autism.

“We need to be aware of alarming research statistics. One in five children in America has a mental health problem,” he said.

Abner pointed out that only one in 10 of children with mental illness receives the services they need. Responsibility falls on every congregation and individual to understand why mental health issues exist and to provide the appropriate responses. Data does not begin to address the stress on families facing social stigma and a lack of support, he said.

“The United Methodist Church has heard the whisper of the anguished pleas for help and understanding,” said Paula Postai, a Health Care Task Force member.

“We want to learn how churches can be more hospitable to the community in these matters,” said the Rev. Joe-d DowlingSoka, task force chair and senior pastor at First Bristol UMC.

When asked how church members can better respond to children’s mental health issues in the community, Abner suggested:

- When in doubt, refer.
- Increase your knowledge.
- Keep your eyes open.
- Erase the stigma.
- Advocate for children’s mental health.

Another keynote speaker, clinical psychologist Michele Moser, answered questions on disruptive behaviors. She reminded participants that needs for mental health care are great but accessing services are poor in most areas, including the Tri-Cities area.

Churches and families can offer relationships, one of the most important needs for children with mental health issues, experts said. Abner said we cannot underestimate the value of these relationships in treating mental health problems.

“It hurt our communities when we stopped building front porches and let the TV keep our kids from playing outside,” he said. Abner challenged participants to review their roles in helping children and families with mental illnesses receive support and acceptance in the church family.

Mental health representatives were also on hand to provide local resources and answer questions.

—Linda Compton

April 23 Jubilation: Worship and workshops, massages and ice cream, too

Jubilation, Holston’s annual retreat for older adults, was held April 6-8 at MeadowView Conference Center in Kingsport, Tenn. Approximately 340 attended.

Highlights included the Emory & Henry College concert choir as the opening act; the Rev. Charles Lippse as worship leader; and Robert Ergenbright as music director.

Scottie Mayfield hosted the Mayfield’s Ice Cream Social on Sunday and led a class on the history of the Mayfield Dairies and his involvement as a Christian leader. Maggie Cooper, a member of the Jubilation Design Team and licensed massage therapist, gave complimentary massages.

The Rev. Charles Maynard told stories and taught others to tell them; the Rev. John Ousley played his harmonica and taught others about Appalachian music; and Bishop Richard Looney taught Old Testament stories that are relevant for today’s family units.

Workshops included “Changing Roles or The Sandwich Generation” by Celia Ferguson, and “The Eyes Have It” by Jonathan Sowell. The Rev. Richard Gentzler, General Board of Discipleship director of adult ministries, gave lectures on organizing older adult ministries in the local church. The Rev. William Carter and Roger Redding led a course on “Preparation for Retirement” and “Gifts of Aging.” The Rev. Grady Winegar linked the history of United Methodism to present-day Holston Conference.

Jubilation 2009 will be held March 29-31 at MeadowView Conference Center with Bishop Ken Carder as worship leader.

Visit the Jubilation 2008 photo gallery at jubilation.holston.org. ■