

# DCA DAILY CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE FRI

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## MEET OUR NEXT EPISCOPAL LEADER Bishop David Graves

Bishop David Graves' passion is sharing Jesus, seeing the overlooked, joining God in transforming lives, and changing the world one person at a time. His study of leadership influences his work as a pastor, district superintendent, and now bishop.

Bishop Graves has served as the episcopal leader of the Alabama-West Florida Conference since 2016, having been elected out of the Holston Conference. In addition to serving Alabama-West Florida, Bishop Graves began overseeing the South Georgia Conference in September 2021.

As an episcopal leader, Bishop Graves' primary focus has been to equip pastors and laity to win people to Christ and make disciples. He believes that the annual conference exists to support the local church, and he has put his time and efforts into helping churches maximize their impact in their communities.

Bishop Graves' service to the General Church includes the General Board of Global Ministries, Finance Chair for the Council of Bishops, and part of both the Council of Bishops' Executive Committee and Anti-racism Leadership Team. In August,

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## TWK's next bishop focuses on equipping clergy, laity



Bishop David Graves will begin as resident bishop of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference on Sept. 1. He has served as resident bishop of the Alabama-West Florida and South Georgia conferences. PHOTO COURTESY SOUTH GEORGIA CONFERENCE

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he will begin serving on the General Council on Finance and Administration.

Bishop Graves is a native of Knoxville, Tennessee, and graduated from the University of Tennessee with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, and Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, with a Master of Divinity. He and his wife Nancy have two children, Casey and Gregg. Casey is married to Bryan, and they reside in Kingsport with their son Brooks and daughter Lucy. Gregg resides in Chattanooga.

As a pastor, Bishop Graves led a small-membership church to become a medium-sized congregation and later a medium-sized church to become a large-membership congregation. He has a heart and hands for missions and has led several short-term (local, national, and international) mission teams. The Acts 1:8 model for missions came alive in the churches he has served. These churches raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for mission work, plus trained laity in hands-on ministry.

As a district superintendent, Bishop Graves implemented a district strategy that empowered both clergy and laity with leadership tools for effective and vital ministry. This strategy revitalized several churches that experienced growth in worship attendance and membership; Sunday School and small group discipleship; missional giving and professions of faith. On Christmas Eve 2014, through a district offering, the Kingsport District generously gave more than \$230,000 for the District Partnership with Giru, South Sudan.

Prior to being elected a bishop in 2016, Bishop Graves served as the Senior Pastor of Church Street United Methodist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. Before that, he served six years as the district superintendent for the Kingsport District of the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church. In 2011 and 2012, he served as Dean of the Cabinet. He has been an ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church for over 35 years and previously served as Senior Pastor of Ooltewah United Methodist Church, a large-membership church in Chattanooga, Tennessee, for 11 years. Prior, he served as pastor of two Kingsport area churches, St. Matthew and Mountain View United Methodist. He was on staff and was given his first appointment at Hixson United Methodist Church in the Chattanooga area where he served for 11 years.