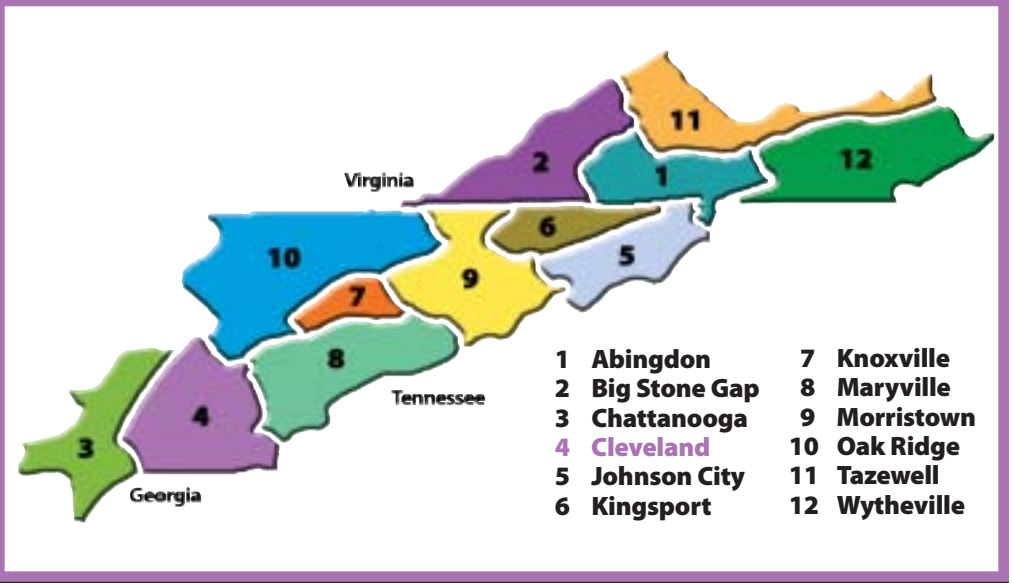


# mydistrict CLEVELAND



Casey Graves, age 22, has been a member of Ooltewah UMC since age 13. (Her dad is the pastor.) She's a recent graduate of Lee University and Holston's youngest delegate to General Conference. This is her district.



Whitewater Rafts | Sugar Creek | Copper Mining | Dindy Taylor | Mexi-Wings | Calhoun | Eloise Reed | Tasso | Tennessee Wesleyan | Grace Street | Polk County | Lay Speakers

**Cleveland District is** one of 12 districts in Holston Conference. It includes 48 charges, 72 churches, and 1 preaching station. Located in Tennessee, the district includes all or most of six counties: Rhea, Meigs, McMinn, Hamilton, Bradley, and Polk.

- **Largest membership church:** Broad Street, with 1,228
- **Largest average worship attendance:** Ooltewah, with 502
- **Smallest membership church:** Cooke Memorial, with 1
- **Smallest average worship attendance:** Trinity (Dayton), with 5
- **Oldest church:** Calhoun, founded in 1820
- **Youngest church:** Asbury, founded in 1977
- **Congregation with largest growth:** Sugar Creek, with 87.5 percent

**Who's the boss?** Superintendent is the Rev. Mike Travis, who once served as pastor at Tasso UMC (1982-'86) before returning to the district as chief in 2005. Serving as administrative assistant for the past nine years is Carol Underdown, a Baptist who good-naturedly tolerates the denominational jokes tossed her way. "I just laugh it all off," she says. The district office is located at 1500 Grace Street S.W. in Cleveland – in the former Grace UMC building. The church was built in 1944, closed in 1959, and has housed the district office since 1967.

**It's a godly place.** Interesting that when asked about celebrities connected to the area, people could only think of religious leaders:

- Bishop Mary Virginia "Dindy" Taylor served as Cleveland District superintendent from 1999 to 2004, until she became the first female bishop elected from Holston, and the first female resident bishop of South Carolina Conference.
- Billy Graham reportedly preached at Charleston UMC in 1936, while he was a student at Bob Jones College, which was then located in Cleveland at present-day Lee University.
- Speaking of godly, the international headquarters for the Church of God is in Cleveland. Lee University is the Church of God's oldest and largest educational institution. But before it was Bob Jones or Lee, the college was Methodist! Centenary Methodist Female College operated there from 1885 to 1929. A renovated "Centenary Building" still exists on campus.

**Scopes and floats:** Go get your shorts wet with Ocoee River whitewater rafting or kayaking, a huge tourist draw in the area. Located in Ducktown on Highway 64, the Ocoee Whitewater Center was the site of the canoe,



The Holston Conference cabinet takes on the Ocoee.

## What's cool in mydistrict



A recycled district office



Scopes Monkey Trial



Preaching stations

kayak, and slalom events of the 1996 Summer Olympics. Back in 1925, the nation's eyes were on Dayton, where schoolteacher John Scopes was convicted in the "Scopes Monkey Trial" for teaching evolution. Eloise Reed, now 95 and a member of First Dayton UMC, is one of the last living witnesses of the trial.

**An ecological story:** From the 1820s to 1987, upper Polk County had the largest metal mining operation in the southeastern United States. Every available tree was cut down for copper smelting, creating an acid rain that killed more than 60,000 acres. The area was described as a "red moonscape." Today, the mines are closed and a reclamation plan is restoring life around Copperhill and Ducktown.

**Best-kept ministry secret:** Several churches with tiny memberships and minimal finances have bonded together to form "preaching stations," sharing the services of lay speaker teams and the backing of pastors from larger churches. The idea was hatched by former longtime Conference Lay Leader Jean Henderson (member, Wesley Memorial) with the help of former District Superintendent Charles Lippse (2004-'05) and featured in the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*.

**Best place to eat after church:** Casey Graves likes chicken fajita nachos at Los Potros in Ooltewah. Mike Travis takes his grandchildren to Kim San in Cleveland, where Nathan and Natalie nibble Sweet and Sour Chicken, while "Pop Pop" downs Kung Pao Chicken (extra spicy). Almost every Sunday in Athens, Jeff Wright leads a group of about 20 from Allen Memorial UMC to Mexi-Wings on Decatur Pike. Pastor Wright especially likes the Texas Fajitas, with shrimp, steak, and chicken.

**Remember our connections:** The district is home to Tennessee Wesleyan College, located in Athens. ■