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## FAITH LEADER: Ministry is a family affair for pastor and his wife



The Rev. David Holladay

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My father, Frank Holladay, was senior vice president of plant engineering, Southwire Co., in Carrollton, Ga. My mother, Anne, was for a time a high school English teacher. My older brother, Jim, is pastor of Linden Baptist Church in Louisville, and my younger sister, Cindy, works for AT&T in Atlanta. In 1978, I married Mary Conley of St. Albans, W.Va. We met at seminary (she asked me out). Mary is also an ordained Baptist minister.

It has been our rare privilege to work together in the same churches throughout our careers. We have shared everything, once even the same desk. Mary is currently associate minister and organist/choirmaster at Riverside Baptist Church. We have two children, Sara Holladay-Tobias, who this past May graduated from the University of Florida School of Law. Her husband, Ben, is a police officer in Gainesville. Our second child,

### The Rev. David A. Holladay

**Title, church, city:** pastor, Riverside Baptist Church, Jacksonville  
**Age:** 51  
**Education:** bachelor's degree, music, Oklahoma Baptist University, 1976; master's degree, church music, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1978

John, is a graduate of Stanton, and will be attending the University of North Florida this fall. He plans to major in business (and minor in surfing).

### How did you find your calling?

I do not recall having a "blinding light" experience of calling like the Apostle Paul, but rather a growing awareness that working in a church was what God wanted me to do and that that was how I could best serve God. At some point in my junior year of high school, I became convinced that God was calling me into music ministry. I went to college and seminary to study church music, and for 25 years was a minister of music (and other duties) in three Baptist churches. My second career calling began to take shape in 1992 when, again, I sensed God was calling me to a different form or avenue of ministry. In each of the three churches I have served, I have had the opportunity to develop and use skills beyond music. I began to sense these opportunities were leading in a particular direction - toward a shift from music ministry to being an associate pastor or pastor of a church.

### Did you ever consider or pursue another line of work?

There have certainly been times when I wished that I knew how to do something else - I surely might have done it. But, no, I have never pursued another line of work.

### What is the most rewarding about your ministry?

To observe the transformation God's spirit makes in people's lives; to share with them in coming to a greater understanding of what it means to be the people of God; to witness their acts of love for one another; and to know that I personally have been used by God in some particular way.

### What is the most frustrating about your ministry?

It has been my observation and experience that when you are not trying to meet the needs of people in the church, you are pushing, pulling and prodding at their commitment. It is frustrating what must sometimes be overcome and the pace with which some things, particularly change, take place. It requires patience.

### What book are you reading or recommending lately?

I just finished, *The Dance of Life Weaving Sorrows and Blessings into One Joyful Step*, by Henri J. M. Nouwen in which he discusses the notion that the spiritual life is a process of embracing our imperfections and finding God's transforming power at work within us.

### Have you ever doubted your faith?

I do not think I have ever truly "doubted" God's love and care for me, but I have, on a number of occasions, wondered why God was silent, or seemed distant. I have voiced my anger to God and questioned why some things happen as they do.

### How were those doubts resolved?

These have been the times of deepest faith development in my life. They have called for greater reliance and dependence on God. When I have had to trust and depend on God more than before, faith has grown deeper. These experiences have not usually resolved themselves the way I thought,

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anticipated, or wanted them to, but they have made me grow. At times I have had to exercise patience and wait. Some times have involved perseverance or stretching my mind - to think differently, and at other times to accept silence.

**What is your favorite saying, motto or verse of Scripture?**

I have two. Proverbs 3:5-5: "Trust in God with all your heart; and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge God, and God will direct your paths." The second comes from a book by James Fenhagen, *Invitation to Holiness*: "To be faithful in a relationship is to honor it by the way we live."

**The Faith Leader is a weekly feature profiling men and women, lay and ordained, who are leaders in First Coast religious communities. To recommend someone, e-mail Times-Union religion writer Jeff Brumley at [jeff.brumley@jacksonville.com](mailto:jeff.brumley@jacksonville.com). Please include the daytime phone number and e-mail address of the person you are recommending.**

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