

Amid tensions, Doris Smith is pastor and police

by [Sam Hodges](#) in the [November 8, 2016](#) issue

She's a plainclothes cop, but on Sunday mornings she wears a uniform: her clergy robe and stole.

Doris Smith, 49, works full time as a Dallas police detective while serving as a part-time licensed local pastor, leading Warren Chapel United Methodist Church in Terrell, Texas.

When not solving cases or working on her studies in the part-time education program for local pastors, she's preaching, teaching, counseling, and visiting the sick.

"With anything you do, it has good and bad, ups and downs," she said of pastoring on top of policing. "Mostly, it's a lot of joy."

Warren Chapel is an African-American church with 34 members, a strong vacation Bible school, an annual women's conference, and a college scholarship program.

Ruby Shaw, a Warren Chapel member, said Smith's police background is an advantage.

"She can counsel with us and tell us a few things about safety," she said. "I appreciate that."

When four Dallas police officers and a transit officer were killed in an ambush in July, Smith was working nearby, and one of the victims was a good friend and former patrol partner.

"In my whole career, that's the worst thing I've ever experienced," said Smith, who is in her 27th year as an officer.

One of the slain officers, Sgt. Michael Smith, was no blood relation, but they had been young officers together.

“I just cried,” she said. “He was a family guy: loved his daughters, loved his wife. And he was a church man. He loved God.”

She was called to be among those guarding the large crime scene through the night.

“She texted us when she could that she was OK,” said Hilda Braggs, a member of Warren Chapel. “I stayed up until daylight watching the news. It was devastating, and even more frightening because I knew somebody that was in the midst of that.”

Despite all that happened, Smith preached the following Sunday.

“I had a lot of support from clergy,” who contacted her or came that Sunday, she said. —United Methodist News Service