



The Call

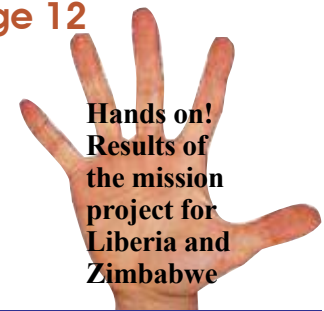


Photo by Buzz Trexler for The Call

The Cowan Chapel Praise Dancers offer their liturgical gifts at Annual Conference, leaving the audience mesmerized.

Dance!

There was a lot to dance about at the 2009 Holston Annual Conference, held June 14-17 at Lake Junaluska, N.C. Diverse groups including the Cowan Chapel Praise Dancers of Oak Ridge District, “The Bridge” Praise Band from Knoxville District, and a choir comprised of Greeneville-area churches from Morristown District enriched all worship experiences. Bishop James Swanson, Bishop Marion Edwards, and the Rev. Tyrone Gordon offered motivation and scripture for sending 2,000 church leaders on their way for another challenging year in ministry.

The Rev. Adam Hamilton of Kansas, leader of the nation’s largest United Methodist church, may have put an “800-pound gorilla on our backs” (to quote Swanson) with his

no-fluff teachings. But he also gave hope that his practical, UMC-devoted methods could help 904 Holston congregations of all sizes reach their communities for Christ with thoughtfulness and inclusion.

Many came to Annual Conference with concern that a stressful financial year and controversial decisions could lead to less-than-Christianlike behavior. In the end, members listened to each other even in disagreement and voted their hearts even in uncertainty. For all the challenges and changes they face, the Holston Annual Conference made these things clear: They love God, they love each other, and they will offer Christ all over the world.

— Editor, *The Call*

See the “Annual Conference report” on pages 6-7.

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\$173,497 By July 2, the Sudan missions offering totaled \$173,497 – officially surpassing last year’s Sudan offering of \$173,421. The two-year total is \$97,000 above Holston’s original \$250,000 goal to support a covenant partnership with the East Africa Conference. (See pages 6-7.)

\$59,014 By July 2, the Change for Children offering also had exceeded last year’s total. At \$59,014, this year’s offering is \$8,000 higher than the 2008 total and will be distributed through grants to support children’s ministry in Holston and in Sudan. At Annual Conference, 13 groups received grant money from the 2008 offering. (See page 5.)

7,547 The Hands-on Missions Project gets bigger each year, providing food, health, school, and other supplies for Liberia and Zimbabwe. This year’s total number of kits, 7,547, is another Holston record. All districts exceeded their goals. Johnson City *tripled* its goal. Knoxville, Morristown, and Tazewell came close to tripling. (See page 12.)

5% The Council on Finance and Administration and Board of Pensions reported that reserve funds had been tapped to cover shortfalls in apportionment giving and to withstand the recession. On the final day, members overwhelmingly approved a “direct invoicing” report that will remove pastor pensions and health insurance from the apportionment formula, instead allowing local churches to pay directly for those costs beginning January 2011. Members subsequently approved a \$15.16 million budget for 2010 – about 5 percent less than the 2009 adopted budget.

32 Annual Conference voted on 32 proposed amendments to the constitution of The United Methodist Church. For all but one amendment, most Holstonians voted the same way. They were more divided on Amendment 1, with 63 percent voting against the “Inclusiveness of the Church” statement. ●

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