

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009 REPORT

# Tough decisions, large offerings prepare Holston for changing world



Hix Bondurant (left) receives the Francis Asbury Award from Leanna Robertson, Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry chair.



The Faith Singers Youth Choir from First Sevierville UMC sing at the Retirement and Commissioning Celebration Worship.



The Rev. Mark Flynn (standing), senior pastor at Chattanooga's Christ UMC, answers questions about one of his two resolutions.



The Holston Annual Conference made tough decisions by passing the long-debated "direct invoicing" action and considering three finance-related resolutions. They absorbed the practical teachings of the Rev. Adam Hamilton and raised \$173,497\* for mission work in Sudan.

Led by Bishop James E. Swanson Sr., leaders of 904 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia met for the second year under the "Offer Them Christ" theme. They also took an offering for Yei, Sudan, for the second year. This year's offering brought Holston's two-year total to about \$347,000, exceeding a \$250,000 goal to support a covenant partnership with the East Africa Conference.

Members approved a \$15.16 million budget for 2010 – about five percent less than the 2009 adopted budget. After a lengthy discussion, they overwhelmingly approved a direct invoicing report that will remove pensions and health insurance from the apportionment formula, instead allowing local churches to pay directly for those costs beginning in 2011.

Three resolutions were addressed. A resolution to base conference finances on tithing was referred to the Council on Finance and Administration. A resolution to reduce the number of districts from 12 to six was referred to the appointment cabinet. A resolution to eliminate the pastor's salary as an element in the conference apportionment formula was rejected.

The Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., led three teaching sessions entitled "Beyond the Walls." The Rev. Tyrone Gordon, senior pastor at St. Luke "Community" United Methodist Church in Dallas, preached at the opening worship service. Retired Bishop Marion Edwards, bishop in residence at LaGrange College, preached at both the ordination service and the retirement/commissioning service.

### In other conference action:

- The Rev. Buford Hankins and the Rev. Phyllis Hankins were ceremoniously sent forth on a two-year assignment in Yei, Sudan, where they will oversee and implement Holston's mission with the East Africa Conference.
- Churches joined in collecting 7,647 kits for United Methodist missions in Zimbabwe and Liberia, stuffing two ocean carriers with food, clothing, school, health, and vocational supplies. (See page 12.)
- An offering of \$59,014\* was collected for "Change for Children," about \$8,000 above the 2008 offering. The money will be divided to benefit children's ministry in Holston and in Sudan. Thirteen Holston groups received grants from last year's offering.
- The Francis Asbury Award for higher education was presented to Hix Bondurant, member at Grove (Radford) UMC in Wytheville District. He was recognized for his work with Emory & Henry College and Radford University Wesley Foundation.



Sudan bound: Boo and Phyllis Hankins

- The Denman Evangelism Award was presented to the Rev. Brian Taylor, senior pastor at Munsey Memorial UMC in Johnson City District; Bob and Judy Cavanah, lay members at White Pine UMC in Morristown District; and Laura Holderfield, youth member at First Hillsville UMC in Wytheville District.
- The Congregational Development Team announced that 15 churches will be started in the next five years, with an immediate goal of one church in 2009 and three churches in 2010.
- Members learned that Holston's four camps hosted 3,241 campers and recognized 1,304 faith decisions in the 2008 summer season.
- The Witness Ministry Team announced the goal of offering an evangelism conference in early 2010 and baptizing 3,000 on Pentecost Sunday.
- The Conference Council on Youth Ministries celebrated the second straight year as the top United Methodist conference in giving to Youth Service Fund.
- The conference celebrated nine Hispanic communities and the formation of a new African American Ministry Team and Poverty Action Team.
- Holston Home for Children will move into its second newly constructed House of Hope this month, providing a residence for 10 adolescents. A \$4.5 million fundraising campaign is 92 percent complete and includes funding for the first House of Hope and campus renovations.
- The Sudan Action Team sold more than 170 T-shirts and 50 photos to fund a Toyota Land Rover for Boo and Phyllis Hankins' use in Sudan.
- The Discipleship Team announced the development of Leadership Holston, a nine-month training program for 12 clergy and 12 lay members. Adam Hamilton's teaching sessions at Annual Conference is a Leadership Holston initiative, according to DT Chair Deb Holly.
- Effective January 2010, the Board of Trustees has secured a self-insuring program providing workers compensation for pastors and church employees. The program is United Methodist Property & Casualty Trust (PACT).
- In all but one of 32 ballots for constitutional amendments, about 75 to 95 percent of members voted the same way. Most voted against the 23 amendments changing the name "central conference" to "regional conference." Most voted in favor of Amendments 6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 19, and 22, and most voted against Amendment 2. Members were more divided on Amendment 1, with 63 percent voting against the "Inclusiveness of the Church" statement.

- Swanson recognized 22 newly certified local pastors, commissioned 11 provisional elders and two provisional deacons in addition to ordaining 16 elders in full connection and two deacons in full connection. The conference celebrated the retirement of 13 clergy and memorialized a record number of 32 deceased clergy.

- Membership stands at 166,805, down 326 from the previous year. Average worship attendance stands at 71,677, down 265. Church school attendance stands at 38,034, down 732.

\*Totals as of July 2

— Photos by Frank "Buzz" Trexler, Annette Spence, and Dennis Loy. Report by Annette Spence.



The Rev. Tyrone Gordon preaches at opening worship.



The Sudan Action Team sells T-shirts for a Land Rover.



Rebekah Geitner Allison of Trinity (Knoxville) UMC's praise band plays in the Tuesday evening session.



Prior to the Service of Ordination, Bishop James Swanson (far right) questions soon-to-be elders and deacons in full connection.



Gary Grogg (left) and Deb Holly give the Finance and Ministry Report.



Mark Hicks (left) and Jim Fetzer recruit for the Early Response Team.



The Rev. Adam Hamilton teaches leadership "Beyond the Walls."