

## Dec. 5 Social networking sites help youth connect prior to Resurrection

Each January, more than 12,000 teens and counselors are drawn to a spiritual retreat they know as “Resurrection.” For two weekends in Gatlinburg, Tenn., participants rock out to Christian music, listen to young-ish preachers, and roam the streets of the popular tourist town.

This year, youth who plan to attend Resurrection (and especially those who don’t) are invited to visit new Facebook and MySpace pages that will get them ready for the Jan. 16-18 and Jan. 23-25 retreats.

Road 2 Resurrection is a MySpace page ([myspace.com/road2resurrection](http://myspace.com/road2resurrection)) that features Remy, a 17-year-old Holston youth. She will blog regularly with updates and news about the upcoming winter weekends.

On Facebook, a Holston Conference Youth Ministries page (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=41925127834&ref=ts>) offers more general information about United Methodist events for young people, but it also provides Resurrection news similar to that of the MySpace page.

“Both pages are basically the same, but MySpace is a little more creative,” said JaNaé Swanson, youth ministry assistant for Holston Conference. “The MySpace page has Remy, and it’s also got songs from Starfield, the band for this year’s Resurrection.”

The “Road 2 Resurrection” page also includes pictures from the ‘08 event, Swanson said.

Meanwhile, the Facebook page has several CCYM members listed as “friends,” and about 420 visitors have already indicated they will be attending Resurrection in less than two months. (CCYM stands for Conference Council on Youth Ministries.)

On both pages, Remy provides info about the district winners of the “Festival of Gifts and Talents.” Every year at Resurrection, young musicians, dancers, and actors -- representing each of Holston’s 12 districts -- take the Gatlinburg Convention Center stage. They offer up their gifts to God before thousands of their Christian brothers and sisters.

“I hope people will look at these pages and get excited about our youth events -- and also, get a little preview of Resurrection,” said Laura Lambert, associate director of connectional ministries.

While older adults are welcome to visit, the pages are targeted for youth and youth workers in the weeks leading up to Resurrection as well as the weeks after. “The walls are there to let people post their reactions and responses to what they experienced,” Lambert said.

The Youth Ministries Office will be delighted if these networking sites promote Christian fellowship and relationships among youth and local churches, or if they attract new participants from inside or outside the conference borders, Lambert said.

Visitors don’t have to be members of Facebook or MySpace to view the pages, but membership is necessary to add messages, rate pictures, or get added as friends. It’s easy to sign up for free memberships.

Newcomers to Facebook or MySpace will find that many local churches, pastors, and church friends have pages on these networks.

In fact, Bishop James Swanson has his own Facebook page, and a former CCYM member, Matt Park, has created a unique Facebook page.

The page is titled, “Bishop Swanson Makes Me Proud to be a United Methodist.”

— Annette Spence

## Dec. 11 Hispanic church expands into new Morristown space

growing Hispanic ministry in Morristown has moved into a new building, and those involved have great expectations for future growth.

In June 2006, the Rev. Arturo Reyna was appointed to the Morristown District from the Wytheville District where he had helped develop Holston’s first chartered Hispanic church, *De La Iglesia Puerta Del Cielo Metodista Unida* (Door of Heaven UMC). Reyna started a new ministry at Liberty Hill UMC. The new congregation was later named *Rios de Agua*, or Rivers of Living Water.

The church has already outgrown Liberty Hill’s facilities, with 85 in average Sunday morning attendance, and 30 more on Sunday evening.

“We have had as many as 130 people at a service,” Reyna explained. “I really am surprised at how quickly the church has grown. I know God is able, and he did it all.”

On Thanksgiving weekend, the *Rios* congregation moved into a building owned by First Morristown UMC. The Rev. Darris Doyal, senior pastor, explained that he has known Reyna for several years.

“Arturo and I have been friends for a long time,” he said. “I have known him since the years I worked in congregational development for the conference.”

When Reyna came to Morristown, Doyal’s congregation was anxious to work with the Hispanic ministry. Twelve to 15 members from First Morristown assisted with the *Rios* congregation’s first Vacation Bible School, Doyal said.

In early 2008, First Morristown purchased adjoining property and a 19,000-square-foot building known as “Cumberland Place” for \$250,000, Doyal said.

“We needed the extra parking and we needed the extra space,” said Doyal. “We then started exploring how to use the building.”

A decision was made to allow the *Rios de Agua* congregation to share Cumberland Place with the Boy Scouts.

“We realized the building would be a great place for the ministry to relocate,” he said. “They will have room to grow, and we expect them to grow. Their ministry will also be more visible and the community will have greater accessibility to the church.”

The portion of the building used by *Rios de Agua* includes a sanctuary, classrooms, kitchen, fellowship hall, and offices. The congregation may also use the First Morristown gym and other facilities as needed.

In exchange, the *Rios* congregation has agreed to make a contribution to First Morristown’s building fund “as they are led,” Doyal said.

“We have a good partnership and relationship,” said Doyal. “We’re excited about the opportunity to work together.”

“Our new sanctuary is about three times the size of the one we had at the other location,” said Reyna. “We definitely needed the space.”

Reyna estimates the new sanctuary can accommodate 250 to 300 people.

“Our goal is to fill the new building in a year,” he said. “Then we’ll think about buying our own place.”

The Rev. Mickey Rainwater has served as Morristown District superintendent for a year and a half. In that time, he has been pleased with the growth and the ministry’s success, he said.

“One of the things we’ve heard, but have not seen, is that with the recent economic downshift a lot of the jobs being filled by the Hispanic community are lost. Therefore, many people might be moving on to other locations,” Rainwater said. “We don’t know what the future holds, but we want to believe this ministry will continue to grow.”

*Rios de Agua* should continue to grow with its more visible location and expanded space, Rainwater said. “If it can be done, it will be done with Arturo’s enthusiasm, energy, and excitement. And, if it is the Lord’s will, the ministry will continue to grow.”

— Kathy Barnes-Hemsworth

## Dec. 18 Maryville church shows Christmas love to children of prisoners

When Patricia came over to get more coffee, she asked for cream. Then she cried.

The 39-year-old mother was one of several attending a Christmas brunch for the children of prisoners, hosted by Middlesettlements United Methodist Church in Maryville District. Patricia came to the party with three of her four children, ages 5, 8, and 16.

But Patricia was troubled, because as she later revealed, she just lost her job. Her ex-husband is in prison, and she is unsure how she will feed their children or provide gifts at Christmas.

By the end of the party, Patricia’s problems weren’t solved, but she was blessed.

On Saturday, Dec. 13, Middlesettlements UMC provided gifts for about 30 children and gave their guardians big boxes of groceries to take home. The children’s names, ages, and Christmas wishes were provided by Angel Tree Prison Fellowship of Blount County.

“We’ve had a ball doing this,” said Luther Goodson, one of 50 church members who organized the party. “To me, Christmas is about Christ in a manager, but to these kids, Christmas is the joy of toys.”

Where ever they are might be incarcerated, parents have opportunities to sign up their children for

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