



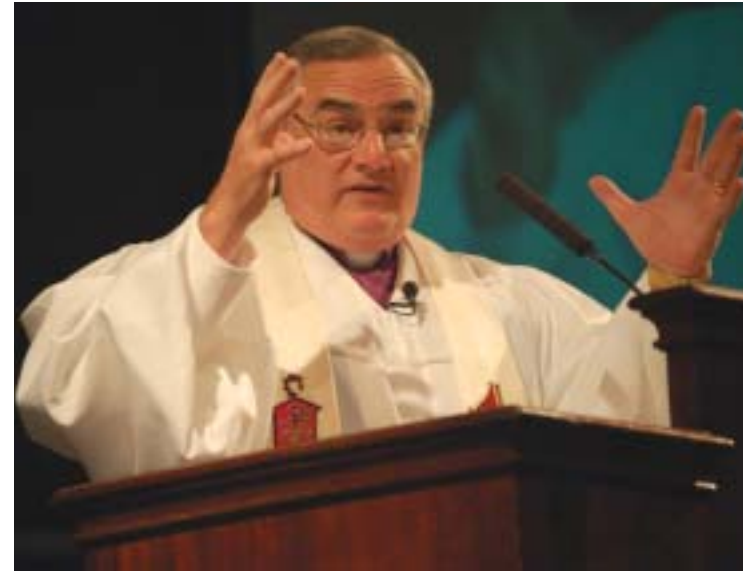
Winners of the Denman Awards were (kneeling, left to right) the Rev. Steve Saltee, Cokesbury UMC; Steve Diggs, Emerald Youth Foundation; and Hannah Williams, Mt. Zion (Dandridge) UMC.



Bishop James Swanson (left) announces the projected appointments of the Revs. Phyllis and Buford Hankins as missionaries to Yei, Sudan.



The First-Centenary UMC Chancel Choir sings for a packed house in Stuart Auditorium during the "Duke Ellington Sacred Concert" on Tuesday night.



Bishop Larry Goodpaster of the Alabama-West Florida Conference preaches both Sunday and Monday night on Wesley's teachings.



The Rev. Tony Collins (front) counts the votes from a homosexuality-related resolution as Holston leaders wait.

Photos by Buzz Trexler and Annette Spence



Members drank oceans of bottled water as temperatures soared into the 90s.



The Conference Council on Youth Ministry seeks donations for their logo cups.



The Rev. Will Cantrell (left) and the Rev. Jimmy Sherrod delight the audience with their "finance guy/ministry guy" parody of a computer commercial.

AC: Not business as usual (it was better)

By Annette Spence

The 2008 Holston Annual Conference raised \$186,234 for its partnership mission in southern Sudan and \$69,244 for children's ministry, for a total \$255,478 in record-breaking offerings.

The Sudan offering exceeded a \$125,000 goal to build a school and clinic, while the "Change for the Children" offering was the conference's highest ever, topping the 2007 Change for Children offering by \$20,000. In addition, the 906 United Methodist churches of east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia sent 7,200 supply kits to Liberia and Zimbabwe, surpassing the 2007 total of 6,300.

The theme was "Offer Them Christ," and members were urged to return to their Wesleyan roots and preach the gospel to break a long cycle of declining membership. Each of the 1,107 clergy and 892 lay members received the book, "Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living," by United Methodist Bishop Rueben P. Job. Three worship services centered on the three rules, with sermons titled "Do No Harm" and "Do Good" presented by guest Bishop Larry Goodpaster of the Alabama-West Florida Conference. Bishop James E. Swanson Sr., resident bishop and presiding bishop, delivered the Sending Forth message, "Stay in Love With God."

Four resolutions were considered. Members quickly approved environment-related resolutions supporting local food self-sufficiency and energy audits for parsonages, new buildings, and renovation projects. The body referred to the Board of Pensions a resolution that would provide treatment for the obese through the conference health insurance plan. However, members rejected a resolution to study and talk about homosexuality through United Methodist materials developed for that purpose. After an emotional debate, the vote was 339 to 314.

On the following morning, the Dialogue Task Force gave its first report after a yearlong study, recommending a conference-wide event for church members to learn how to

"dialogue" on disagreements. Later, a report by the Rev. Randy Frye urged members to "work together in the United Methodist way" – by practicing holy conferencing, learning to disagree in love, committing to true open itinerancy, and staying focused on the mission.

In other actions, the conference:

- **Learned** that the Rev. Buford Hankins will be appointed to serve as Yei District superintendent in Sudan, along with the Rev. Phyllis Hankins, for a minimum of two years beginning June 2009.
- **Welcomed** Bishop Daniel Wandabula, resident bishop of the East Africa Conference, who thanked Holston for its work in southern Sudan through a covenant agreement signed in February 2008.
- **Endorsed** the Rev. Jerald Russell, senior pastor at Fairview United Methodist Church of Maryville District, as a candidate for bishop.
- **Approved** a \$15.9 million budget for 2009, reflecting a .77 percent increase over 2008.
- **Presented** Denman Evangelism Awards to the Rev. Steve Saltee, senior pastor, Cokesbury UMC in Knoxville District; Steve Diggs, executive director, Emerald Youth Foundation, Knoxville, Tenn.; and Hannah Williams, age 12, member at Mount Zion (Dandridge) UMC in Morristown District.
- **Presented** the Francis Asbury Award for higher education to Rachel Nall Cochran, member of Church Street UMC, Knoxville District.
- **Learned** that Cokesbury UMC will start a new church in west Knoxville this fall, on 22 acres purchased by Holston Conference and Oak Ridge District for \$1.55 million.
- **Approved** a Board of Pensions recommendation to provide three levels of coverage in the conference health insurance plan, with a new "employee/spouse" category added to the existing "family" and "single" categories. Participants will choose their coverage levels and plans by Nov. 1, for implementation on Jan. 1, 2009.
- **Heard** a Direct Invoicing Task Force report that presented a plan to communicate and discuss direct invoicing of pastors' benefits to churches. The recommendation for direct invoicing will be voted on by the 2009 Annual Conference, with planned implementation by Jan. 1, 2010.
- **Learned** that three churches had been discontinued and two had merged, bringing the total number of churches from 910 to 906. Closing churches included Trinity (Dayton), Moore's Chapel, and Cooke Memorial, all of Cleveland District. Trinity (Oak Ridge) merged into First Oak Ridge UMC.

What's online

- **Annual Conference photo gallery** ac.holston.org
- **Daily AC on-site editions of The Call** <http://holston.org/about/communications/the-call/volE/num20/download/>

- **Ordained** 11 as elders in full connection and two deacons in associate membership; commissioned 16 as probationary elders and four as probationary deacons; and licensed two as associate members and 16 as local pastors.
- **Recognized** 15 retirees.
- **Welcomed** two Holston natives back to the Lake Junaluska stage: Bishop Richard Looney, preacher for the Retirement and Commissioning Service, and Evelyn Laycock, leader of the "Offer Them Christ" Bible studies.
- **Received** a Memorial Worship Service message on the "aroma of memory" from the Rev. Angela Hardy Cross.
- **Rejoiced** in the music and dance of the Hope for Africa Children's Choir during the Sending Forth service.
- **Worshipped** through the Duke Ellington music of First-Centenary UMC Chancel Choir, Chattanooga Choral Society, and Scenic City Chorale.
- **Worshipped** through the music of First Richlands UMC (Tazewell District); the combined choirs of John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and Ebenezer UMC (Abingdon District); a Clergy Choir; and Doug Richesin and Beth Burkey.
- **Prayed** for Jay Garrison, elected as first alternate to the denomination's Judicial Council during the 2008 General Conference.
- **Learned** that the Stewardship Team and Holston Conference Foundation are making a new Bible study, "Living for Giving," as presented by Bishop Ken Carder, available on the conference Web site.
- **Celebrated** that Holston Conference youth rank first in the denomination for Youth Service Fund giving.
- **Celebrated** that Maryville District, one of 12 districts in Holston, paid 100 percent of its 2007 Fair Share apportionment.
- **Gave** a total \$35,000 in Change for Children grants to 19 groups representing 10 districts, with an equal amount presented to children's ministries in Sudan.
- **Received** a \$14,166 gift from United Methodist Publishing, which will be forwarded to the Central Conference Pension Special (providing retirement security for non-U.S. clergy and spouses).
- **Recognized** outgoing Conference Lay Leader Bob Lockaby, following eight years of service, and incoming Lay Leader Mary Ruth Richards.

Membership stands at 166,987, up 172 from the previous year. Average worship attendance stands at 71,886, down 1,226 from the previous year. ■