

Tuesday: Hamilton hits close to home with no-fluff lesson

Adam Hamilton came to Stuart Auditorium yesterday to uphold The United Methodist Church while dismantling humdrum worship and thoughtless leadership.

He came with a warning of where stagnation and declining participation could lead, but also offering hope that the same methods that elevated his own church could transform others.

The Rev. Hamilton, 44, is author of nine books and founding pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. The church has grown from four people in 1990 to more than 12,000 adult members with an average weekly worship attendance of more than 7,500. The congregation's budget is the same size as Holston's budget (\$15 million) and they pay 100 percent of their apportionment.

Hamilton led two teaching sessions based on his 2002 book, "Leading Beyond the Walls: Developing Congregations With a Heart for the Unchurched." He spoke on "Effective Church Leadership" in the afternoon and "Ideas for Preaching and Worship" in the evening. On Wednesday morning he will teach, "Strategies for Reaching the Unchurched."

Hamilton challenged church leaders to change by calling out their tired patterns. He said pastors should spend at least 10 hours in sermon preparation (Hamilton spends 15 to 25) instead of writing a "Saturday Night Special" that is uninspired and "full of fluff." Worship should aim for relevance and an experience with God. Worship should not be driven by last week's bulletin and the routine plug-in of new information from the lectionary, he said.

Leaders must "set the tone" with passion and a willingness to make decisions that are risky and changes that provoke criticism, Hamilton said. He recalled a sermon that caused 800 members to leave his church. (The sermon is addressed in his 2008 book, "Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White: Thoughts on Religion, Morality, and Politics.")

He cited studies showing that many young people are not drawn to the church because Christians are viewed as "anti-homosexual," "hypocritical," and "judgmental."

Other activities at yesterday's session:

- The ballot results for Monday's constitutional amendment vote were announced. In all but one of 32 ballots, about 90 percent of Holston members voted the same way. Most Holston members voted against changing the name "central conference" to "regional conference" – a decision involving 23 amendments. Holston members were most divided



The Cowan Chapel Praise Dancers set the mood for last night's motivational session. "I want you to leave her troubled," Bishop James Swanson said of Adam Hamilton's lessons. "I want you to lose sleep, trying to figure out what God is calling you to do."

on amendment 1, which clarified that all people are eligible to attend worship services and receive the sacraments. Sixty-three percent voted against the amendment. For a complete ballot count, see future editions of *The Call* 2 weekly e-news.

- 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.

- 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 Service of Retirement and Commissioning recognized 13 retiring clergy, 12 commissioned probationary elders, and two commissioned probationary deacons. In his sermon for the afternoon service, Bishop Marion Edwards urged listeners not to "just sit there."

- The presidents of Holston's three related colleges each came to the Stuart stage with updates and a witnessing college student. Rosalind Reichard reported that Emory & Henry was recently ranked in the top 100 colleges by Forbes Magazine. She introduced Alison Waugh, a rising senior from Reynolds Memorial UMC. James Noseworthy updated the conference on Hiwassee College's financial progress and accreditation struggles. He was accompanied by recent graduate Mia Sage Lowry, whose parents also graduated from Hiwassee. Stephen Condon introduced rising junior Laura Swallows, who reported a record 2008 enrollment of 988 and a projected 2009 enrollment of 1,050 for Tennessee Wesleyan College.

- The Sudan Action Team tent was a busy place, with members stopping by to chat with the Revs. Boo and Phyllis Hankins and to seek information about covenant support relationships. More than 170 T-shirts and 50 framed photos were sold – to help fund a vehicle for the Hankins family to use in Sudan.

- For the next two years, the Holston Conference Foundation will enroll founding members of a newly formed Circuit Riders Society, according to Executive Director Roger Redding. Society members will demonstrate the call to support ministries through their wills, trusts, retirement plans, life insurance, endowments, or other lasting gifts.

- Holston Home for Children will move into its second newly constructed House of Hope, providing a residence for 10 adolescents, reported President Art Masker. A \$4.5 million fundraising campaign is 92

percent complete and includes the first House of Hope and campus renovations.

- The Witness Ministry Team announced seven grant winners for new ministries that bring in new people. Chairperson Ronnie Collins encouraged church groups to submit applications for 2010 grants by the Sept. 15 deadline. This year's winners include: Broad Street, Cleveland District, \$2,500 for a Sunday ministry reaching the 22-45 age set; Fairview, Maryville District, \$4,800 for an off-campus worship for young adults; First Gatlinburg, Maryville District, \$4,000 for life-skills classes for a needy community; Kodak, Knoxville District, \$4,000 for a special needs ministry; Marion East Circuit, Abingdon District, \$4,500 for a Saturday night alternative worship; Pleasant View, Abingdon District, \$10,000 for a free medical clinic; and Wauhatchie, Chattanooga District, \$4,000 to publicize a new contemporary service.

- Winners of Change for Children grants totaling \$34,050 were presented to 13 groups, including; Anderson Street, Abingdon District, \$1,100; Bookwalter, Knoxville District, \$1,500; Cherokee, Johnson City District, \$5,000; Green Meadow, Maryville District, \$4,000 and \$5,000 (for two separate ministries); Heiskill, Oak Ridge District, \$2,500; Hiltons Memorial, Big Stone Gap District, \$1,500; Hixson, Chattanooga District, \$3,250; Hope for Healing, Morristown District, \$500; Martel, Oak Ridge District, \$200; McFarland, Chattanooga District, \$1,000; Mt. Olive, Cleveland District, \$1,500; State Street, Abingdon District, \$4,000; and Wesley House, Knoxville District, \$3,000.

Parting announcements

- *The Call*'s daily Annual Conference reports are now available online at www.holston.org. A final report will be posted by Friday, June 19.

- Sign up for *The Call* 2, Holston's free weekly e-news at www.thecalltwo.holston.org. ■



Adam Hamilton: "Our fundamental Methodist DNA is the right DNA, but we're going to have to change some things."

Plenary Monitoring Snapshot (6/16/09)

Female participation – 45%
 Male participation – 55%
 Racial/ethnic participation – 0%
 Lay participation – 75%
 Clergy participation – 25%
 Youth/young adult participation – 30%
 Older adult participation – 30%

Presiding officers not included. Provided by CCORR and COSROW.