

## in this issue:

### ■ Best of 2001

A collection of the conference's most memorable photos from the past year.

Pages 4, 5 & 8

### ■ Shoes & More Shoes

Holston churches gather more than 100,000 pairs of shoes to help Afghan refugees.

Page 3



### ■ Nation & World

Methodist news from outside the conference.

Pages 6 & 7

### ■ C-Mail

They love us, they love us not. More from our readers about *The Call's* recent change in format.

Page 2

### ■ Bishop's Conference

The Bishop's Conference on Starting New Congregations will take place Jan. 24-25.

Page 2

The Legacy of Commitment campaign's purpose is to raise \$7.8 million to fund Holston's liability for pre-1982 pensions. Progress as of December 19, 2001:



## new year's perspective:

*Good news is here,*

# Hope is Strong

By Ray W. Chamberlain Jr.

Resident Bishop



During this Christmas season I sang with a Holston congregation the hymn, "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear." I've sung it many times before but far too casually. This time the words stunned me with incredible witness:

*And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, look now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing, O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!*

Those words speak to my soul. My awakened heart cries out in affirmation. What good news for those "beneath life's crushing load." What hope for those "who toil along the way ... with painful steps." What comfort to be invited to "rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!"

My dear sisters and brothers, I pray in this New Year that

you will always listen to voices of angels. There will be other voices – harsh, hateful and spiteful voices. But God has a message for us. The angels sing it: "There is rest. There is hope and joy. There is comfort along the frightful path we tread."

If we really believed the words of this song, it would be difficult to sing them, offer the benediction and go home as the same people.

I was tempted on that Sunday to stand on the pew and urge the congregation to sing those words again, as if for the first time. To believe them. To be transformed by them. To incarnate them and share them. I wanted to cry out, "It's not business as usual. God has come! Angels are singing. Good news is here. Hope is strong."

I affirm again, unabashedly and confidently, that there is good news for those beneath life's crushing load. God invites us to join the angels in spreading the message. ■

## Galax congregation becomes Holston's first chartered Hispanic church

GALAX, Va.— The Wytheville District chartered the conference's first Hispanic church on Dec. 16 during a festive bilingual service marked with Latino music, clapping and dancing.

Twenty-eight charter members stepped forward to form *De La Iglesia Puerta Del Cielo Metodista Unida*, translated as the Door of Heaven United Methodist Church. Of the 28 charter members, 21 transferred membership from West Galax UMC, the parent church. Seven of the 28 were new members who joined during the chartering service.

"This is the day I've been waiting for, and I give thanks to God for that," said the Rev. Arturo Reyna, Door of Heaven pastor. He has led the emerging congregation since 1998.

► See 'Galax Congregation,' on page 3

**Charter Members:** José Mazariegos signs a list for charter members as Delmy Sexton (left) and Salvador Gutierrez (right) look on.

