

## Reading List

What books are lying on the nightstands of these Holston ministers?

● **James Bennington**  
Pastor, Grove UMC  
Radford, Va.

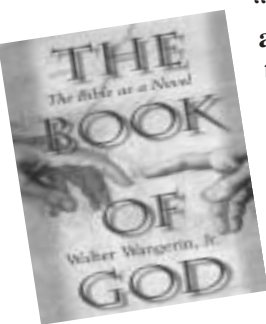
“**Revolution in Leadership: Training Apostles for Tomorrow’s Church**,” by Reggie McNeal (editor) & Lyle E. Schaller

● **Kim Goddard**  
Director, Wesley Institute  
Johnson City, Tenn.

“**The Poor and the People Called Methodists: 1729-1999**,” by Richard P. Heitzenrater (editor)

“**Calling & Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life**,” by William H. Willimon

“**The Book of God**,” by Walter Wangerin Jr.



● **Frank “Buzz” Trexler**  
Pastor, Green Meadow UMC  
Alcoa, Tenn.

“**The Pursuit of God**,” by A.W. Tozer & James L. Snyder

## Numbers

**2.5%** Percentage of income in U.S. that goes to charitable giving today

**2.9%** Percentage of income that went to charitable giving during the Great Depression

**2.4%** Percentage jobless rate in Knox County, Tenn., in November 2002

**10.3%** Percentage jobless rate in Scott County, Tenn., in November 2002

**355** Number of “Asbury Advocates” recruited conference-wide

**61** Number recruited in Morristown District

**1** Number recruited in Wytheville District

Sources: AP, Employment Security Department, Asbury Place Inc.

## At Lunch With

# Cynthia Pennington: Hiwassee chaplain

By Kevin Slimp

**T**wo thousand and two wasn’t an easy year at Hiwassee College. The year began in euphoria with the announcement of a \$20 million anonymous gift to the two-year institution. Exhilaration soon turned to despair as it became apparent no gift was coming. Shortly after, Hiwassee was without a president and faced an uncertain future.

That’s the environment the Rev. Cynthia Pennington found herself in when appointed to Hiwassee in June. While some ministers might have been disillusioned, she learned to appreciate the uniqueness of the situation.

“There has been too much negative publicity around Hiwassee this year,” Pennington said between bites of squash casserole and baked apples at the campus cafeteria. “Sure, the problems at Hiwassee didn’t happen overnight, but there is a lot to be thankful for.”

Pennington, 42, believes Hiwassee may be misunderstood. “We should try to sell our uniqueness. We have low teacher-student ratios. We’re a family-friendly kind of safe haven.” She adds that Hiwassee “need(s) to operate out of a sense of

abundance rather than a fear of lack.”

Pennington’s enthusiasm for life is well earned. Once a professional working for AT&T, her dream life – which included a five-bathroom house and substantial 401K plan – began to seem unfulfilling. Through a series of events she started to ask, “Why am I here?”

“I basically just walked away from everything I had,” says the daughter of

Holston minister, the Rev. Lawrence Clark. Within six months, she went from living in a big house to living in a 1983 Dodge Colt. Sleeping on friends’ sofas – and some nights in the Dodge Colt – she worked her way through seminary.

Now, as Hiwassee chaplain and pastor of Bucker Memorial United Methodist Church in Madisonville, Tenn., Pennington feels that female

ministers face more obstacles than male ministers. “I try not to let that be the focus of my ministry. I just try to be with people and love them and not take things so personally.”

Her favorite personal story is about a little boy who attended a church she pastored several years ago. One Sunday a guest preacher was giving the message. The boy asked his parents, “Who is that guy?” When they told him he was the preacher, the boy responded, “No, he can’t be. You have to be a woman to be a pastor.”

Even after the resignation of Hiwassee’s president and the nervous days since, Pennington says she still feels encouraged by the students. “They are so sincere about their love for Christ. That’s the common ground we’ve been able to build wonderful relations on.” ■



Photo by Kevin Slimp

Chaplain Cynthia Pennington gets an impromptu drum lesson from a Hiwassee student: “We’re a family-friendly kind of safe haven.”

## Stewardship

### Electronic giving now available

(UMNS) Giving to your local church has just become easier. United Methodists throughout the United States can now make their church contributions through electronic funds transfers.

The United Methodist Electronic

Funds Transfer program allows participants to contribute to their local congregation by means of an authorized, recurring financial transfer directly from their checking or savings account to the church account. The program was sponsored and tested by the denomination’s financial agency, the General Council on Finance and Administration, headquartered in Evanston, Ill.

Such fund transfers are familiar to many church members who already use this technology for making recurrent payments for their monthly mortgage, car loans or other regular financial commitments.

The new service will make it easier for United Methodists to honor their pledges, the council says. Information about the program is available on the council’s Web site, [www.gcfa.org](http://www.gcfa.org). ■