

church development:



We do it differently

Starting new churches requires different models. One model will not be effective in every setting. Holston Conference is working with a variety of models for starting new faith communities:

1. In existing churches: a different ethnic group using the same building, or, an additional worship experience targeted to reach a group currently not being reached

2. Churches starting churches (the parenting model): In the Philippines where the Methodist Church is growing faster than in any country, each new church must begin a new church in the third year of its life.

3. 12 x 12 model: The North Alabama Conference has begun 19 new churches by appointing a pastor charged with forming 12 cell groups with 12 people in each before the first public worship service is launched.

4. Buy land and appoint a full-time pastor: Typically first building begins three to five years later.

5. Appoint a pastor to targeted area without initial purchase of land. This model describes Wellspring and Lighthouse.

6. Appoint a pastor to start a new congregation in an abandoned building. Eastdale Village and Virginia Avenue are models.

7. Challenge a community center to plant a new faith community. An example would be Bethlehem Community Church in Chattanooga.

8. Satellite: An existing church starts an off-site worship service to reach a different population group in the community. An example is East Pine Grove Park in Johnson City.

9. Two-site campus: An existing church begins a second campus in another part of town. A downtown church finds a site some distance away in a suburb. A suburban church plants a second site where it is "down and brown" in the urban community or a church relocates and continues a ministry at the former site.

Three leaders from three annual conferences will discuss these and other issues in starting new churches at the Bishop's Conference on Starting New Congregations, Jan. 24-25. Registrations are no longer being accepted. We have reached our maximum attendance of 125. ■

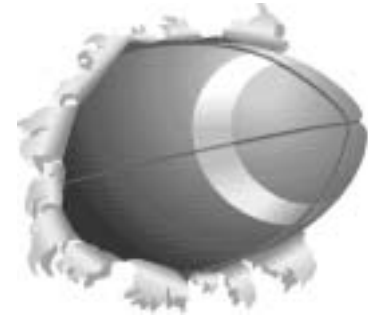
► The Rev. Ripley is the conference's director of new church development.



John Ripley

commentary:

By Nancy Reddy



Don't let football rule your Church Calendar

The colors of the altar vestments change during the liturgical year. The change denotes a new season in the church. From August through the end of the year, we see orange as a primary color in our world. The trees turn orange in the fall. In Tennessee, people (and often their possessions) begin "turning orange." But when the vestments on our altar change, they are never orange.

I believe God understands what the words "It's football time in Tennessee" symbolize for us. I know He wants us to be entertained and have fun. I imagine God enjoys a good, close football game, too. I also believe He wants us to show good sportsmanship and to allow His light in us to shine.

Yet I have noticed that whenever we plan events at the church, our first response is not to consult with our Father in prayer, but to pull out the University of Tennessee football schedule. I realize our aim is to plan activities that everyone can attend; we expect that for an activity to be successful we need lots of people there. I also realize that, as we strive to minister to the unchurched, we want to schedule activities to accommodate our guests.



Now I am starting to question if this practice is a good one. Shouldn't we let God determine our activities instead of the SEC?

I am concerned about the message we are sending to our children. At our church, the children and youth have worked for months on a special Christmas program. The date has been on the calendar for many months. Yet we feel we must change the date because of a football game. We want to have good attendance for the performance because the young people have worked long and hard. But why do we feel people would choose football over our children? Are we in effect saying

to our children, "You aren't as important to me as seeing this football game," when we could easily videotape the game and watch it later? Is the real-time experience that crucial?

What about the message we are sending to our Father? He knows what's in our hearts. He knows and understands the human tendency to rationalize. Are we in effect saying to Him, "A football game is more important than being with your people and celebrating with you"? I imagine God's heart breaks because He wants to spend time with us.

What better witness than to say to a friend, "Can you use my football tickets? There's something great happening at my church that night and I just have to be a part of it." Where is this church that is more exciting than football? Can it be ours?

As this year comes to an end and we plan for 2002, I encourage you to consult with God when you plan church events. Don't let orange rule our year; it's not even a vestment color. We Christians need to make the hard choices before we can expect others to do the same.

Nancy Mason Reddy is a member of Ebenezer UMC, Knoxville District. Reprinted with permission, www.ebenezer-umc.org/vestments.htm. ☉

Snapshots:



▲ NORTON, Va. – More than 75 members of Norton UMC gather with its "sister church," Norton First Church God, to serve a traditional Thanksgiving dinner to the community. By 1 p.m., nearly 300 dinners had been delivered to people's homes, with an additional 50 meals served at the church. Norton is located in the Big Stone Gap District. ☉