

This is **not** your daddy's church

By **Jeannine F. Hunter**
Knoxville News-Sentinel

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — A new ministry has opened in Knoxville's Old City commercial district, and it's not your father's church.

The sounds from a live, contemporary band greet visitors as they cross the threshold to Soulworx, a ministry so named to describe the desire to be a good work in people's lives.

Soulworx, headed by Cokesbury UMC associate pastor the Rev. Stephen DeFur, targets the 20- and 30-somethings of Generation X.

Located at 125 S. Central Avenue where once a curio shop operated, Soulworx for now will entail Friday night worship services beginning at 7 p.m. The first service was Nov. 9.



Brent Ronald, youth minister at Cokesbury UMC, serves as Soulworx worship leader.

The worship service is a multimedia experience with three video screens, a six-piece band playing secular music and contemporary Christian songs and a coffeehouse as you enter. Dress code is come as you are. Child care is provided.

"It's definitely a ministry that falls more along the lines of our age group," said Ken Pelletier, 20, a graphic design student at the University of Tennessee who attends Fellowship Evangelical Free Church in West Knoxville. "It has excellent backing from the church, and when a church backs up a program, that speaks volumes."

Its mission is to find relevant and creative ways to connect people to God, to each other and the world. On the second Friday night meeting, the

community-building spirit was evidenced by communal song and time to meet-and-greet after the service ended.

Amy Cowden, 31, who attends Cokesbury UMC, said she enjoyed the past two Soulworx services, which has embarked on a series studying Jesus.

"I love it. It rocks," Cowden said. "It gives us something to do Friday nights without getting into trouble, and I think it draws people in who wouldn't ordinarily go to church."

Contemporary Knoxville-based Christian band Leave 99 was performing that evening. Though band members attend various churches, Brent Ronald, one of the lead singers, serves as worship leader of Soulworx.

On this particular Friday night, a few people walking on the sidewalk in front of the ministry paused and were greeted by ministry supporters. Once inside, there are finger foods and literature explaining the mission of Soulworx.

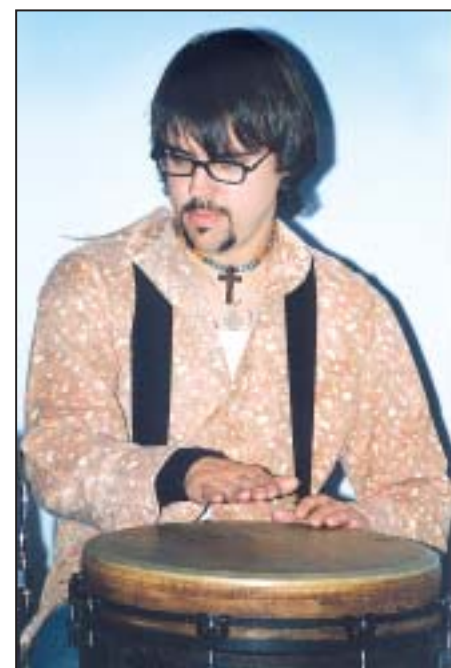
There are plans to feature blues and bluegrass artists in the spring and to open on Sundays during football service. "We're calling it Sundays at Soulworx; it's not about church, it's about football," DeFur said. "It will be a smoke-free environment where people can enjoy the game together." ■

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SOULWORX OPENS IN KNOXVILLE



Mark McFall performs during a worship service designed for Gen-Xers.



Donovan Swick is a member of the band at Soulworx on Friday nights.

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Kingsport congregation receives Igniting Ministry honor

First Broad Street United Methodist Church is one of 10 churches in the denomination to be designated as an official "Welcoming Congregation," according to United Methodist Communications.

The Kingsport District church was recently notified of the honor after meeting several criteria set forth by Igniting Ministry organizers. In addition to receiving special recognition on the denomination's website for non-attenders (www.unitedmethodist.org) First Broad Street also received a plaque.

A worksheet for applying for the "Welcoming Congregation" distinction was provided in Igniting Ministry kits, but Holston members may also visit www.ignitingministry.org to see if their congregations meet the criteria. ■