



Feb. 14-17:

Ministers' Convocation

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. – Holston clergy are encouraged to attend the 2005 Ministers' Convocation, to be held Feb. 14-17 at Lake Junaluska. This year's theme is "Empowering Leadership" and 2 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are available. Speakers include Lovett H. Weems, professor of church leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary, and Joy Thornburg Melton, creator of the "Safe Sanctuaries" child abuse prevention curriculum. The fee is \$40 and includes a choice of four workshops. Register online at www.convocation.holston.org or call the Wesley Institute office at (865) 690-4080.

Feb. 26:

United Methodist Men's 'Day With Swanson'

MORRISTOWN, Tenn. – Men are invited to participate in the Holston Conference United Methodist Men's "Day With the Bishop" on Saturday, Feb. 26, at First Morristown UMC. The agenda begins at 9 a.m. with registration, followed by business, lunch, and worship with Bishop James Swanson. A \$10 fee is payable at the door. Register by Feb. 19 by calling Jim Ball at (276) 686-5284.

March 6:

One Great Hour of Sharing

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is observed by United Methodists on the fourth Sunday in Lent – this year, on March 6. The OGHS offering supports ongoing work of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Every dollar given to UMCOR goes directly to aid for the affected region. Such 100 percent giving is possible because UMCOR's administrative costs come partly from the OGHS offering. Order free bulletin inserts and other resources by calling toll free 1-888-346-3862. Or visit the OGHS web site at <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/worship/oghs.cfm>. ■

exchange:

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – Church Street UMC seeks college life coordinator: a college student to enable college ministry in planning, organizing, evaluating and implementing programs and activities. Schedule is flexible with approximately 20 hours per week, with emphasis from August through May. Applicants must be United Methodist members and be able to begin work in April and May and resume in August '05. Apply with letter and resume to: Rick Isbell, Minister of Program, Church Street UMC, P.O. Box 1303, Knoxville, TN 37901. Phone: (865) 521-0266. Application deadline is Feb. 25. **L**

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. – Jones Memorial UMC seeks a part-time director of children's ministry. Responsibilities include coordination of children's program during Sunday and Wednesday worship, Vacation Bible School, and volunteer workers. Send resume to Julie Smith, Chairperson SPRC, Jones Memorial UMC, 4131 Ringgold Road, Chattanooga, TN 37412, or e-mail jmcdowellsmith@comcast.net. **L**

BLUFF CITY, Tenn. – Elizabeth Chapel UMC seeks a full-time youth/education director. Salary will be based upon education and experience. Call Walt Simmerman at (423) 538-7821 or e-mail umcpastorwalt@aol.com for more information. Send resumes to the Rev. Walt Simmerman, 1041 Elizabeth Chapel Road, Bluff City, TN 37618. **M**

at lunch

By Annette Bender



Ronnie Collins: Evangelism exploder

Ronnie Collins has only been part of the United Methodist Church for three years, but he's already won the Denman Evangelism Award and is concerned about the denomination's future.

"I had a pastor tell me recently that never, in eight years, did anybody in his charge get saved. That just bothered me," Collins said recently over chimichangas in a Hillsville, Va., restaurant. "I believe our denomination is dying. I think we've lost that zeal to go out and evangelize. We're waiting for them to come to us, when we need to go to them."

Although he realizes that "some United Methodists are hesitant about the word 'evangelism,'" the former Baptist youth minister is anything but hesitant about speaking up for his faith. "I'm a fanatic for Jesus," he admits.

In the last two years at First Hillsville United Methodist Church, Collins has trained 30 church members to visit homes and share their faith. In more than 300 home visits, 98 professions of faith have been witnessed. Last fall, Collins also trained four Wytheville District clergy members in the program known as Evangelism Explosion (<http://eeinternational.org>).

"Ronnie's greatest passion is reaching the unsaved with the Gospel," the Rev. Ramon Torres wrote in a letter of nomination for the 2004 Denman Award for Laity. "Because of what he is doing in our church, men, women and youth are becoming bold witnesses." Collins accepted the Denman Award at last year's Holston Annual Conference.

Unwinding after Sunday worship in a Mexican restaurant, the 39-year-old marathon runner talks about his path to First Hillsville. His 19-year-old son, Michael, whom he adopted three years ago from Joy Ranch Home for Children, listens at his father's side, enjoying the chips and salsa.

A single parent, Collins raised two other sons before Michael came along. His sister was killed in 1989 by her second husband, leaving two boys behind. Today, Collins' nephews are 21 and 24.

Collins worked at hotels and as a youth minister until he became director of development at Joy Ranch. He became executive director in 1999. Three years ago, Collins and son began looking for a church that was closer to home. Collins knew Torres, Hillsville's former pastor, from Rotary meet-



Photo by Annette Bender, *The Call*

HILLSVILLE, Va. – "We hear so many times that faith is a private issue," says Ronnie Collins over chips and salsa. "It's not, really. It's certainly not something we should be ashamed of."

ings. However, he initially resisted Torres' invitations to visit the local United Methodist church.

Finally, the pastor told him, "You're afraid to come to First Church because you're afraid you'll like it."

Collins laughs at the memory. "He was right. It was a dare. So we went the next Sunday, and we've been there ever since." He says he was impressed by the congregation's outreach ministries and welcoming nature.

On Jan. 28, Collins left Joy Ranch to become full-time Ministry Coordinator at First Hillsville. He is attending Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and beginning the process of becoming an ordained deacon.

His dream is to expand his evangelism teachings beyond Wytheville District and into Holston Conference.

"I don't know if I want to preach to the churches as much as equip the churches," he says. "It's the pastor's job to equip his or her people to go out and win the lost. But it's not happening."

Annette Bender is editor of *The Call*, available at thecall@holston.org or (865) 690-4080. ■

numbers

Resurrection, Holston's winter spiritual retreat for youth, was held in Gatlinburg last month. Final stats from the two-weekend gathering:

- 11,771:** Total attendance
- 11,377:** Last year's attendance
- 181:** Largest group: Burks UMC, Chattanooga District
- 401:** Total number of Holston groups
- 44:** Number of non-Holston groups
- \$14,557:** Youth Service Fund offering
- \$6,862:** Tsunami relief offering ■

