

The Call

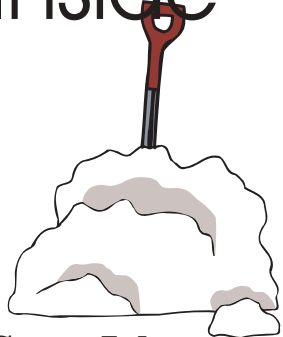
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HOLSTON CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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When flakes fall, Holston pastors keep the church doors open (and the sidewalks shoveled).

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- Announcing our hands-on mission project for Annual Conference 2003
- A "Connectional Reflections" column on older adult ministries

TEN CHURCHES GATHER FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN CELEBRATION



Photo by Annette Bender, The Call

Choir members representing Chattanooga District African-American congregations sing at a special service at Wiley Memorial UMC.

By Annette Bender

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — When 10 African-American pastors in the Chattanooga District began praying together every Thursday, they did not know where God would lead them.

On Feb. 16 at Wiley Memorial United Methodist Church, about 200 people took part in what some of the pastors believe is the fruit of their prayers. Ten churches gathered to present "When God's People Dream," a two-hour service of music, dance, drama and preaching from the participating congregations.

The Black History Month event included an energetic dance and drama presentation by youth from Bethlehem UMC; a flugel horn solo by Erskine Peoples of St. John UMC; and preaching by the Rev. Walter Cross of Washington Hills UMC.

An offering introduced by the Rev. Lurone Jennings, Bethlehem pastor, reaped \$378 for leadership development and scholarship funds for African-American congregations in Chattanooga District.

The 10 pastors organizing the event were united at the third Convocation for Pastors of African-American Churches in Houston in early January, according to the Rev. Sandra Johnson, pastor at Hurst UMC.

The convocation's theme was "Rooted, Reaching, Transforming" and was designed to inform and encourage clergy of African-American United Methodist congregations. About 500 pastors representing 450 congregations attended the convocation in Texas.

"We were inspired by what we could do with the presence of the Holy Spirit," Johnson said recently. "It felt like a kick in the gut, but it also felt like we were lifted up."

The pastors were still in the airport, returning home from the convocation, when the Rev. Angela Hardy made an observation.

"I said, 'I feel led for us to come together to pray,'" said Hardy, pastor at St. Marks UMC. "If we pray together, I

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Pro or Con?

Holston members weigh in on war

By Annette Bender



Chris Probst (left), husband to the Rev. Amy Rollins Probst (right), is "deployment ready" at Fort Campbell, Ky.

While many United Methodist leaders have gone on record opposing a war against Iraq, some Holston Conference members say that war may be necessary to protect freedom and stop suffering.

More on War

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for peace, but accept the realities of a dangerous world.

"My soldier husband and I agree that war is evil and always wrong," the Rev. Amy Rollins Probst recently wrote in an e-mail to *The Call*. "But sometimes it's just the very best we as a fallen people can do in the midst of overwhelming wrong and evil."

Informal invitations for clergy and lay members to express opinions about a possible war revealed that they hope

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