

News Briefs



Amanda Bachus

Bachus named Hispanic director

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – Amanda Bachus has been named director of Hispanic Resources for United Methodist Communications. Bachus had served as associate editor of Hispanic Resources, which produces the magazine *el Intérprete* and the news feature *Noticias en Español*. She was named director effective March 17. In her new role, Bachus will help identify and develop resources and programs to enhance the communications ministries of and with Hispanic United Methodists.

NCC to study Taco Bell situation

NEW YORK (UMNS) – The National Council of Churches is requesting special prayers for farm workers “who have been made poor and vulnerable by fast-food and agricultural industries.” The council also asks churches to study farm worker issues, especially by focusing on the current struggle for just wages and working conditions of Florida farm workers who pick tomatoes that go into Taco Bell products. At issue is the fact that farm workers are earning sub-poverty wages for picking tomatoes that are used in Taco Bell products. According to the Department of Labor, their wages (ranging from 40 to 50 cents per 32-pound bucket) have not changed in 20 years.

Elections top annual conference agendas

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – Election of clergy and lay delegates to the 2004 General and jurisdictional conferences will be a major agenda item for the United Methodist annual (regional) conference sessions this year. The 64 U.S. conferences, meeting during May and June, will elect 400 clergy delegates and 400 lay delegates to the denomination’s highest legislative body, General Conference. The 53 conferences in Europe, Africa and the Philippines, meeting at different times throughout the year, will elect a total of 184 delegates. (An additional total of 10 delegates will be elected from other Methodist traditions in Britain, Mexico Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean and Americas.) General Conference, convened every four years, meets April 27-May 7, 2004, in Pittsburgh.

Deacons connect church to world

DALLAS (UMNS) – Seven years ago, the United Methodist Church abandoned its one-lane route to the ordained ministry and replaced it with a “Y.” The poet, Robert Frost, might have anticipated the consequences. In his verse, “The Road Not Taken,” the poet said, in part: “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – / I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference.” About 400 of those who chose the new road “less traveled by” to United Methodist ordination converged on a Marriott motel in Dallas Feb. 27-March 2 for their fourth international convocation. ■

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Kingsport churches shoot, *continued from page 1*

In 2001, Kingsport District led the conference with 75 percent of Five-Star churches, followed by Big Stone Gap and Morristown Districts, each with 51 percent.

Of Holston’s 12 districts, Cleveland (32 percent) and Johnson City (33 percent) had the lowest percentages of Five-Star churches.

Five-Star Churches for 2002 receive certificates and will be recognized at Annual Conference in June. ■

I can see God’s hand, *continued from page 1*

Stressful situation

Knight’s wife, Stacy, and children Kelsey, 11, and Caleb, 7, love living in Florida, about 10 minutes from the beach. But waiting for her husband to be deployed is “stressful,” Stacy Knight admits.

“I was going to be in ministry to all these military spouses and families, but now I’m the one who needs help. If he gets deployed, this will be the first time we’ve been apart,” she says. “It just hit me in the last day or so. Caleb said, ‘I’m sure going to miss my dad. Is he going to go over there and tell those pilots about Jesus?’”

Stacy Knight pauses before saying, “I’m glad that he’s doing this. He was called to do this. It’s wonderful to be married to someone who is so excited about his job.”

As family ministries chaplain at Eglin Air Force Base, Knight preaches two Sunday church services and leads support groups, couple Bible studies, and divorce recovery programs. He is one of six Protestant chaplains on a base of 2,400 homes.

While 500-700 worshippers may attend one of four Protestant services on base, “90 percent of my ministry during the week may not even be with people who come to chapel,” Knight says. “I’m reaching people who may have no spiritual orientation. But they come because of their stress or the confidentiality that we provide in support groups. So we’re really hitting some practical needs with the programs as far as reaching out to the unchurched and unaffiliated.”

When war began to seem inevitable, Knight noticed more military family members coming to him with questions such as, “Where is God in the midst of my anxieties and uncertainties?” Or, “I have a need to renew my faith. It’s not very serious. I’ve never explored the Christian faith before. Can you show me? Can you give me insight about what faith is all about?”

The prospect of war causes “a real spiritual crisis” for some, Knight says, “not just for the people over in the desert but for the families back here, seeking to find support. They may be away from their families; they don’t know anybody. So we do our best to [help] them” – by locating support groups, offering counseling or even sending someone over to mow the lawn or change the oil, if needed.

“You can’t fix every problem, but we make ourselves available to be a supportive framework for them to lean on,” Knight says.

Reenergized for ministry

Knight has a “mobility pack” ready that contains his uniforms, contemporary worship CDs, “and a hymn machine that plays like a thousand hymns” for worship services in Iraq. Any day now, any moment, he might get the call to say good-bye to his family. The Knights have talked about how they will stay in touch: through e-mail, videocam and audiotapes.

Back home in Holston, old friends have been e-mailing Knight, especially after he wrote a letter to the editor in the March 14 edition of *The Call*, asking readers to pray for military men and women and their families. The e-mail writers encourage Knight, saying they’re thinking of him and wondering how he’s doing.

“The folks of Holston have given so much to me,” he says. “I appreciate their support.”

Knight seems ready for whatever lies ahead, although he emphasizes that Air Force people don’t know any more than civilians about what will happen.

“We just don’t know. We see as much news as you all do,” he explains.

In any case, Stacy Knight says she is proud of her husband, who can’t wait to get up every morning to go to work.

“This has been a rejuvenation for him,” she says.

The chaplain, who can barely contain his enthusiasm, agrees.

“This has reenergized me for ministry,” he says. “It’s been like a breath of fresh air as far as using the skills and gifts that God has endowed me with. Maybe I used them in pastoral ministry, but they’re being multiplied in this situation, with this opportunity.

“I can just see God’s hand in leading me to this place.” ■

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