

calendar:

Clergy should plan for 'sabbath experience' in October

In response to the expressed needs of Holston pastors for "time away," the Orders Steering/Fellowships Steering Committee is planning clergy "sabbath experiences" at nine different sites during the week of Oct. 10-16.

Based on responses to a recent survey, reservations have been made for clergy at the following locations: Alumni House, Emory & Henry College, Emory, Va.; Atkins House, Lake Junaluska, N.C.; Buffalo Mountain Camp, Jonesborough, Tenn.; Camp Dickenson, Fries, Va.; Camp Lookout, Rising Fawn, Ga.; Camp Wesley Woods, Townsend, Tenn.; Holiday Inn and Millstone Golf Course, Morristown, Tenn.; Jubilee House, Abingdon, Va.; and Whitestone Country Inn, Kingston, Tenn.

Elders, deacons, licensed local pastors, and associate members may choose a time to get away at one of these locations in October, either alone or with family or friends.

Each clergy member must make his or her own specific reservations at the chosen facility. Pastors may elect a one- or two-night package. The only planned retreat activity will be a worship service.

To eliminate the need for clergy members to prepare sermons and to be present on that day, Pastor/Staff Parish Committees will receive letters asking them to arrange for a lay speaker on Oct. 16 (Lait Sunday). Each church also will be asked to assist its appointed clergy with the cost of the retreat. Pastors will need to register their planned retreat with the conference office, so that the Orders Steering Committee can coordinate participation.

A brochure with complete details will be available in mid-May.

Children's Day: May 14 and June 4

By May, most children's ministry workers could use a boost. Children's Day offers an instant end-of-the-school-year activity with games, campfire songs, a picnic lunch, and devotions. Children's Day also offers a chance to connect with other congregations and to visit a Holston camp. There is no charge.

On Saturday, May 14, Children's Day happens at Camps Ahistadi (Damascus, Va.), Laurel (Rocky Gap, Va.), and Wesley Woods (Townsend, Tenn.) Group registrations are due by May 1.

On Saturday, June 4, Children's Day is planned at Camps Blackmore (Fort Blackmore, Va.), Buffalo Mountain (Jonesborough, Tenn.), Dickenson (Fries, Va.), and Lookout (Rising Fawn, Ga.). Group registrations are due by May 20.

For more information, call the children's ministry office at (865) 690-4080 or visit holstonkidscalendar.holston.org ■



exchange:

BRISTOL, Va. – Trinity UMC has church organ for sale. Allen Organ Protege AP-6 bought in 1999 includes console controller and MIDI guide version 22. Warranty can be extended to second owner on all equipment. \$11,500. Contact Trinity UMC at (276) 669-1836 or trinityoffice@bvunet.net.



correction:

Easter attendance

Due to a production error, the "Numbers" column on page 2 of the April 8 edition contained incorrect Easter worship attendances for two congregations. Rural Retreat UMC, in Wytheville District, had 211 in worship attendance. Woodlawn UMC, in Morristown District, had 70 in worship attendance. *The Call* regrets the errors. ■

commentary

By Brian Burch



Growing churches tend to be tech-oriented churches

Last spring as part of my dissertation, 132 pastors in Holston Conference responded to questions about their personal use of technology and its use in their congregations. At the time of the survey, each of these pastors was serving a growing congregation. By growing, I mean these churches were in the top one-third of our conference in attendance, membership, and professions of faith.

The majority of surveyed pastors own and use technology. They have cell phones (93.9 percent), computers (87.9 percent), and use e-mail (87.9 percent). Pastors of growing churches check their e-mail at least daily (85.3 percent). Most find e-mail effective for church growth (58.9 percent), for supporting church members (64.9 percent), and for dealing with pastoral concerns (64.9 percent). This does not mean that these pastors own all the latest gadgets. Instead, they have limited their investments to technology that can be used effectively for ministry.

Of the churches surveyed, 54.5 percent have web sites, compared to a conference average of 12.4 percent that have web sites. A majority of churches with web sites (63.9 percent) have had one or more visitors attend their church after examining their site within the last six months.

Breaking the data down by the community demographics led to another observation: The use of technology matches that of the local community. Pastors serving congregations in communities with populations larger than 5,000 used the internet and e-mail at a rate one-third higher than pastors serving growing churches in more rural communities. Likewise, churches in

communities of 5,000 or more implemented church web site features at a rate double their rural counterparts.

I believe these findings point to a trait of growing congregations: Their leaders understand their communities and match the use of technology to the community in which they minister. These pastors have learned to apply St. Paul's model of becoming "all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Of course, this is the same method put into practice by St. Patrick in his work with the Irish, John Wesley in his work with the poor in England, and Rick Warren in his ministry to today's pop culture.

In terms of conference-wide church growth, two findings call for deeper reflection. Higher rates of church growth were found in communities with above-average education levels, and with above-average level of internet access. Of the 166 congregations that reported zero professions of faith over a four-year period, 125 (75.3 percent) were the smaller congregations on a circuit.

These results are based on surveys distributed to 154 churches identified as "growing," with an 85.7 percent response rate. Church growth data was determined from year-end reports from 2000 through 2003. During those four years, the average church in the survey group experienced 33.3 professions of faith, had a positive change in attendance of 24.4 persons, and grew by 43.3 members. ■

The Rev. Burch is pastor at Rural Retreat/Mt. Olive UMC in Wytheville District. For complete survey results, visit www.circuitride.com.



in memoriam

Morgan Phillips

MARYVILLE, Tenn. – Morgan Kemmar Phillips died March 29 at Blount Memorial Hospital. He was a retired Holston clergy member who had served Andersonville-Mt. Pleasant, Heritage-Arrowhead, and Logan's Chapel UMC, among others. The Rev. Phillips is survived by his wife, Louise Phillips; sons, Morgan T. Phillips of Memphis, Mark Phillips of Memphis, Victor Tilley of Maryville, and Dennis Tilley of Alcoa; daughter Sarah Roberto of Knoxville; one granddaughter; and two great-grandchildren. A funeral service was held April 1 in the Trinity Chapel of Smith Mortuary with the Rev. Tom Robins and the Rev. Rae Mullins officiating. Interment followed April 2 at Grandview Cemetery. ■



numbers:

These are the seven largest denominations – as reported by the National Council of Churches in the recently released 2005 "Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches."

67,259,768	Roman Catholic Church
16,439,603	Southern Baptist Convention
8,251,175	United Methodist Church
5,503,192	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
5,449,875	Church of God in Christ
5,000,000	National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.
4,984,925	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America