



C-mail:

It's embarrassing that some pastors burn daylight to define the "pecking order" of other clergy, rather than concentrating on the ministry where God has placed them. The laity should be suspicious of such a worldly, bureaucratic clergy system. ["Kitchen Cabinet adds element of fun to a stressful season," May 6 edition]

Maybe, it's time to pray, rediscover our Wesleyan roots, and put all full-time clergy on the same salary. Then perhaps, drifting clergy could refocus on reaching people for Christ instead of reaching for the next promotion.

Maybe, all Holston clergy could reclaim celebrating as Wesleyan pastors, "called and sent" as missionaries, charged with encouraging and equipping all the "priestly people."

Maybe, instead of mocking the precious witness of the itineracy, we could joyfully educate others who are in Christ.

No ... forget it! It wouldn't be as newsworthy as a front-page article about just another group of position-craved Pharisees groping for hollow authority on just another junk Web site.

Rev. Stephen Burkhart
Vermont UMC, Kingsport District

I have mixed emotions about the article, "You Called?" in the April 22 edition. I am a church secretary, but not in Holston Conference.

I do understand that Easter doesn't come the same time every year, like Christmas Eve and Christmas. But should a person wait until Saturday afternoon to find out the time of the services? This is after a secretary has typed and printed thousands of bulletins (and I do repeat, thousands) for the Easter season, to be sure all who attend have a bulletin.

Web sites were also not mentioned as a way of finding out service times. I update the Web site every week.

However, I did learn something from this article. I will always return all the calls on my answering machine on Tuesday when I return to work after the holiday – and tell callers about our regular worship times.

Janet Tabor
Blacksburg UMC, Virginia Conference

The United Methodist Church has reached a crossroads in our theological teaching. Certain bishops and UMC ministers still advocate for same-sex marriages and the ordination of homosexuals. They use the weak excuse that we should have "continued dialogue" on this issue.

It appears the United Methodist power structure has become more concerned about this issue as a matter of politics instead of theology. The majority of the UMC is against the ordination of homosexuals and lesbians.

I am not opposed to everyone coming to the table and worshipping God. It is in that experience that we come to know the grace of God – grace that is open to each of us no matter what our orientation is. As Christians and United Methodists we must decide if we will continue to follow the path of our culture or the path God has for us.

Carl Miller
St. Andrews UMC, Chattanooga District*

* St. Andrews UMC closed in 2004. Miller is still seeking a church home.

Letters to the editor printed in the newspaper are limited to 150 words. Complete text of letters are available online at thecall.holston.org. Click on "C-Mail."

To send letters to the editor, write: C-Mail, The Call, P.O. Box 32939, Knoxville, TN 37930-2939, e-mail thecall@holston.org, or fax (865) 690-3162. ■

District drop-off points announced for hands-on missions project

Churches are gearing up for Annual Conference 2005 by collecting food, health, and school supplies for two countries in Africa.

The annual "hands-on" mission project involves all 925 Holston congregations, which are collecting supplies assigned by district. For example, Tazewell District is assembling 200 health kits (wash clothes, toothpaste, shampoo) for Ishe Anesu mission in Zimbabwe. Morristown is assembling 400 school supply kits (pencils, dictionaries, notebooks) for Methodist schools in Liberia.

Latvia also is benefiting from the annual spring mission project. On May 1, churches took up a conference-wide offering with a goal of \$125,000 to build a camp, help unwed mothers, and develop spiritual leaders.

At Annual Conference in June, members will also hear about a special appeal from the denomination's Council of Bishops. To alleviate a financial crisis at the United Methodist seminary in Moscow, churches will be asked to take a special offering by Sept. 1, 2005. More details will be provided at Annual Conference, as well as in future editions.

To download a brochure with details about the annual missions project, go to www.holston.org/missions. Congregations should drop off kits to designated locations within their districts on the following dates:

Abingdon District
June 8: Pleasant View UMC

Big Stone Gap District
June 6: District office

Chattanooga District
June 9: Brainerd UMC fellowship hall

Cleveland District
June 7-9: First Cleveland UMC

Johnson City District
June 9: District office

Kingsport District
June 8-9: First Broad Street UMC
(9 a.m. to 4 p.m. only)

Knoxville District
June 9: Second UMC

Maryville District
June 8-9: Fairview UMC

Morristown District
June 8: District office

Oak Ridge District
June 6-8: Kern Memorial UMC
(10 a.m. to 4 p.m. only)

Tazewell District
Mt. Zion UMC (Hwy. 460)
June 8: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
June 9: 4 to 7 p.m.

Wytheville District
June 8: Mt. Pleasant UMC, First Dublin UMC, First Hillsville UMC

For more information, contact your district office. ■



grant news:

Renfro Trust

Rural churches seeking to repair or to build new facilities may be eligible for up to \$5,000 in grants from the Renfro Trust Fund. The application deadline is Sept. 1, 2005. Parsonages are excluded from this grant opportunity.

In 2004, 60 percent of Renfro applications from Holston churches were rejected because of inadequate preparation. Church leaders may receive aid in preparing applications by submitting completed or partially completed applications at the Annual Conference registration desk by 5 p.m., Monday, June 13, in Lake Junaluska, N.C. For more information, e-mail the Rev. Mat Merker at matmerker@aol.com. A Renfro application is available for download at www.holston.org/missions.

Holston winners

Three Holston ministries have received grants from general agencies of the United Methodist Church:

• The Rev. Mike Feely, representing "Operation Uplift," received a \$20,000 grant from the General Board of Church and Society Ethnic Local Church Concerns Funding Committee.

• Vicki Collins, representing the Native American Ministries Team's "The Gathering" in September 2005, received a \$3,600 grant from the General Board of Church and Society Ethnic Local Church Concerns Funding Committee.

• The Holston Conference Peace with Justice Committee received a \$2,000 grant from the General Board of Church and Society to help educate and organize people concerned about nuclear weapons activities. ■