

# bishop's speaking schedule:



**July 2:** Groundbreaking for Joseph and Shirley Bethea Welcome Center, Lake Junaluska, N.C., 4 p.m.

**July 9:** New Mount Olive UMC, 11 a.m.; First Dublin UMC, 2 p.m.; Carter Street UMC, 5 p.m. (all in Wytheville District) ■



## The Call

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*The Call* uses the following symbols to identify articles about small, medium or large churches:

- S** Churches with average 85 or fewer in principle weekly worship service(s)
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# wings

By Bishop James Edward Swanson Sr.



## Did it make any difference?

**T**he answer to that question is the true test of any meeting or endeavor. I have thought long and hard about that question since the final gavel was struck at the 2006 Holston Annual Conference in Lake Junaluska. I watched on opening night as we heard from and affirmed women clergy from the past, the present – and from those who will continue to lead our communities, pulpits, and homes here and around the world for years to come.

During one of the breaks (I believe it was Monday afternoon), a young adult woman approached me on the stage of Stuart Auditorium. She said, "Bishop, I am a visitor to this conference from West Palm Beach, Fla. I am here accompanying my grandfather, a lay member from one of your churches in Athens, Tenn. I really wasn't excited about coming to an annual conference meeting, but now I am so glad I came. Last night as I watched all the women clergy of this conference give leadership, I was so inspired.

"You see, I have been toying around with a call to ministry. The gathering and worship last night were so moving that I realized, I need to give serious consideration to my call."

Well, did it make a difference? I would like to think that for that young woman, it did.

I watched Bishop Scott Jones of Kansas honestly and with biblical integrity help us wrestle – not just with scripture related to women in ordained ministry – but also with respecting the Bible and giving serious time to interpretation. I am not naïve enough to believe that Bishop Jones resolved these issues for everyone, but I am convinced, as I listened to conversations around the edge, that he helped those who wanted a better understanding of the United Methodist position on women in ministry.

I was in awe of the number of persons ordained as elders and deacons. I saw on each of their faces a tremendous desire to make a difference for Jesus. I had the privilege of meeting with them back in May, as they shared their calls and talked about their passions for ministry. They leave me with a great sense of hope for the next few years. The Board of Lay Ministry was also excited about the new crop of local pastors and wanted to pray with them and give spiritual support and affirmation to their calls. I see new possibilities for lay and clergy partnership in our mutual ministry.

The Discipleship Team report made us proud and helped us to see that we are making a difference in Holston, Zimbabwe, Alaska, Estonia, and Sudan; through our camps, Resurrection, and Divine Rhythm; and with our children, people in prisons, and those who never knew Christ until the Holy Spirit inspired us to speak.

The worship throughout conference was so uplifting, inspiring, and Holy Spirit-led that it was as if heaven descended upon us. The congregational singing was so moving that one choir was moved to tears as we lifted our voices together and sang praises to the God of our salvation.

I witnessed children, youth, young adults, middle-age adults, older adults, African Americans, Euro-Americans, and Hispanic Americans worshipping God in and through Jesus in such a way that I saw a glimpse of what heaven shall be like.

I believe Annual Conference made a difference, and I believe that whenever the people of God gather with their minds set on praising and responding in positive ways to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, it makes a difference.

It made a difference for me. What about you? ■



## opportunities:

**T**he conference office is taking orders for the "2006 Handbook and Directory," which contains contact info for all clergy, staff members, and committee members, and for the "2007 Holston Conference Program Calendar."

The handbook costs \$6 and must be ordered by July 19. Visit <http://holston.org/handbook> or call Sheila Knowles toll-free at (866) 690-4080.

The calendar costs \$7.50 if ordered before Sept. 22. Visit <http://holston.org/calendar> or call Lori Sluder toll-free at (866) 690-4080. ■



## reading list:

We asked these participants at Annual Conference, "What book is lying on your nightstand?"

### Phyllis Bostick

First Maryville UMC  
Maryville District  
*Miss Julia Stands Her Ground*,  
by Ann B. Ross



### Rev. Jan Buxton-Wade

Church Street UMC  
Knoxville District  
*The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*,  
by Sogyal Rinpoche



### Linda Comer

Bookwalter UMC  
Knoxville District  
*Battlefield of the Mind*,  
by Joyce Meyer



### Rev. Janet Geitner

McDonald UMC  
Cleveland District  
*The Essential Wesley, in Today's English*



### Rev. Bill Shelton

First Alcoa UMC  
Maryville District  
*In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*,  
by Henri J. Nouwen



### Rev. David St. Clair

Chilhowie-Seven Mile Ford UMC  
Abingdon District  
*Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance*,  
by Larry L. Rasmussen



### Hina Trinpathi

Ft. Oglethorpe UMC  
Chattanooga District  
*Knowing God Intimately*,  
by Joyce Meyer

