

# The Call

September 24, 2004

HOLSTON CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Volume 21, Number 21

## Who's next?

Every September during Open House Month, Clint Cooper secretly visits a church to assess its welcoming skills. We don't reveal the church's name, only the district. Here's how they've fared so far:



Date: Sept. 2001  
District: Chattanooga



Date: Sept. 2003  
District: Maryville



Date: Sept. 2002  
District: Big Stone Gap



Date: Sept. 2004  
District: Wytheville

To read Cooper's previous articles, go to [www.holston.org/thecall](http://www.holston.org/thecall) and click on "Secret Visitor."



[www.holston.org](http://www.holston.org)

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At summer camp, a hoodie could be a kid's best friend. A wrap-up report of the 2004 season.

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At lunch with Wayne Scott: Unicoi layperson, founder of Scott Farm, and Hispanic ministry advocate.

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### It Still Fits

Why is this man wearing a 42-year-old shirt?

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## Secret Visitor rates Wytheville church: Friendly, but room for improvement

By Clint Cooper

The words on the sign in front of the church in the hilly Virginia town indicated the congregation was "visitor friendly."

But the sign should have said "friendly to visitors," because the Wytheville District church, in fact, was that.

An usher gave this visitor a hearty welcome and a bulletin on Sept. 12, which was designated National Neighborhood Day across the denomination. Three or four people sitting near me or heading up the aisle said hello or offered a handshake. Others greeted me during "hand of fellowship" time.

Visitors also were welcomed from the pulpit by the lay leader during announcements at the beginning of the service and encouraged to return.

From the many announcements and information in the bulletin, it appeared the church is a very busy and caring place. There were activities for men, women and children and indications the congregation was heavily involved in the community.

A lengthy list inserted in the bulletin suggested the congregation had a deep prayer life, and solicitations were made for other names prior to the pastoral prayer during the service.

The bulletin itself also was friendly in indicating when a visitor should stand during the service, that a nursery was available and where to find it, and how to contact the church office. Even the deaf were accommodated – as the service was partially interpreted with sign language – by the pastor, no less.

However, while being friendly to visitors, the church might want to take a few more

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## HOLSTON CONFERENCE POURS IT ON: Disaster relief continues

By Annette Bender

If the remnants of Hurricane Ivan end up flooding parts of Holston, Western North Carolina, and Virginia Conferences, then disaster-relief workers won't have to wait for clean-up supplies to be shipped here. The supplies are *already* here.

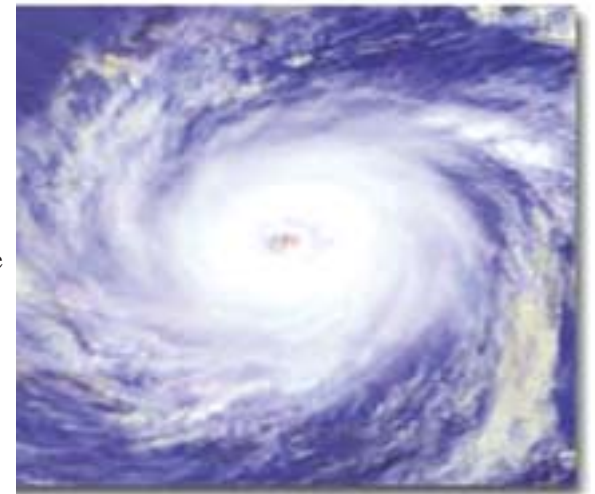
For a few weeks, the Rev. Harry Howe of Project Crossroads has been collecting "flood buckets" for United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Instead of shipping the supplies to Florida or Louisiana, Howe is keeping the flood buckets handy, for use within Holston as well as nearby conferences.

"We're kind of in a central place and can actually have the buckets ready to go," said Howe, based in Abingdon District.

When the Wytheville District collected 163 flood buckets earlier this month, UMCOR officials told the Rev. Randy Frye to send the supplies directly to Western North Carolina. A truck left Dublin UMC on Sept. 16, headed for the flood-ravaged town of Mooresville, N.C.

All over Holston, churches and districts are joining in efforts to help victims of a catastrophic hurricane season. In Oak Ridge District, churches are collecting flood buckets as well as health kits. Knoxville District congregations are collecting gallon jugs of water to send along with the Oak Ridge District shipment, all destined for UMCOR's Sager Brown Depot in Louisiana.

Meanwhile, checks designated for hurricane relief continue to pour in to the conference treasurer's office. Since



*The Call* reported that 35 congregations had contributed \$11,911 as of Sept. 2, the totals have risen to 77 churches contributing \$27,856 as of Sept. 16.

The Morristown District continues to lead all 12 districts in giving to help hurricane victims, with 18 congregations contributing \$7,524. Among the top givers is Carter's Station UMC, sending in a total of \$2,150. Carter's Station, led by the Rev. Mark Wills, has 22 in average worship attendance.

### For a national report on United Methodist hurricane relief,

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Holston congregations still have many opportunities to help, officials say.

Howe, along with Jubilee Project's Randy Hildebrandt, will collect flood buckets through October. For more information, call Howe at (276) 782-3339 or Hildebrandt at (423) 733-4195.

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