

commentary:

By Kevin Slimp

Holston Director of Communications

I was a little surprised when I received an email message from a member in Virginia early this week concerning the recent pastoral letter released by the Bishops of the United Methodist Church. Frankly, I couldn't find anything in the letter that would be interpreted as offensive to anyone. The next day there was a phone call from the southern area of the conference concerning the same letter.

It wasn't until Al Bowles, Chattanooga District Superintendent, showed me a newspaper clipping from the Chattanooga newspaper that things became clear. The headline, "Methodists criticize war effort," was emblazoned across the top of the article. The article, credited to The Associated Press, also found its way to the Roanoke, Virginia newspaper.

In 1985 I was fortunate to hear Lewis Grizzard, well-known newspaper columnist and humorist, speak at a conference in Alabama. At one point, referring to criticisms newspapers take for not presenting facts accurately, Grizzard said, "What do people want? It only costs a quarter." He went on to add, "Let us raise the price to \$7.95 a

copy. Then newspapers will be truthful and accurate."

The article which found its way into the Chattanooga and Roanoke newspapers was a prime example of a reporter who didn't release truthful or accurate statements. The article began, "President Bush's denomination, the United Methodist Church, implicitly criticized the U.S. war effort Friday, declaring that 'violence in all of its forms and expressions is contrary to God's purpose for the world.'"

I've read the pastoral letter several times and asked others to do the same. We have yet to find any criticism of the U.S. war effort. The only mention of President Bush is when the bishops offer their "fervent and constant prayer" for several groups, including the prayer, "for President Bush and the leaders of all nations that they may have wisdom and courage to lead people toward justice and peace."

J.N. Howard, Superintendent of the Wytheville District, told me that the pastors of his district have written a "letter to the editor" of the Roanoke newspaper expressing their concern about the misinformation presented in this article. I'm sure others will do the same. The sad part of this is that many folks, both United Methodists and others, have already read the Associated Press article and accepted it as truth.

bishop's perspective:

By Ray W. Chamberlain Jr.

Resident Bishop

By all means serve somebody

I believe it was C. H. Spurgeon who wrote, "No one can help everybody, but everyone can help somebody."

I appreciate that piece of philosophy. It's good theology, too.



One of the painful lessons I learned long ago is that not everyone appreciates my approach to faith. Not everybody likes my style of ministry or my way of preaching. Learning this lesson provided enormous relief for me. I discovered I didn't have to save the world. All I have to do is help save some and help serve some. I cannot reach or serve everyone, but I am uniquely gifted to reach some.

No local congregation will serve the needs of everyone. No pastor will satisfy the desires of every church member – or the people outside the church, for that matter.

We don't mean to exclude anyone, but some people will not find our form of worship particularly meaningful. Some will feel we dilute the faith. Others will be convinced our approach is too definitive.

Yet we know that many will respond to Jesus Christ through our witness. We know that we can serve some people who won't be served by anyone else.

All of this creates a healthy humility in us. None of us have perfected our expressions of faith. We are all partially flawed. But we are also individually and magnificently endowed with the gift of touching lives with the grace and love of God in ways that no one else can.

There is more to celebrate in our ability to serve somebody than to despair in our inability to serve everybody. ■

'United Methodist Student Day' is Nov. 25

Observed on the last Sunday of November, United Methodist Student Sunday calls the church to support students as they prepare for life in uniting faith with knowledge. The offering receipts support United Methodist scholarships and the United Methodist Student Loan Fund.

United Methodist Student Day, as required by The Book of Discipline, is one of "six special church-wide Sundays with

offerings [which] shall be celebrated in each United Methodist Church."

Through special Student Day gift offerings, members provide undergraduate scholarships for students attending United Methodist-related schools and loans to students whose commitment is demonstrated by the lowest loan-default rate (0.1 percent) of any such program in the United States. Each year \$50,000 is returned to annual conferences for merit scholarship awards to students of their choosing.

► **For more information** about student scholarships and loans, see your pastor or contact the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, P.O. Box 871, Nashville, TN 37212, (615) 340-7406, or visit www.gbhem.org. ■



■ What's Your Size?

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

- ① Churches with average 85 or fewer in principle weekly worship service(s)
- ② Average 86 to 225 in worship service(s)
- ③ Average 226 or more in worship service(s)

Bishop's Salute to Staff

I join a chorus of voices across the Holston Conference in saluting our communications staff for bold, creative and committed leadership.

Our conference is at the cutting edge with a newly formatted and locally created and produced newspaper. Our web page is distinctive and inviting. The online-meeting technology has been successfully modeled.

I thank God for staff persons of the past like Susan Grove-DeJarnett who so faith-

fully labored, always envisioning what we have achieved. I am grateful for our Communications Team members and for Fred Gault who boldly lifted this vision for an exceptional communications ministry in this conference. We are blessed! Thank you Kevin Slimp, Annette Bender, Donna Hankins and Dion Dykes. ■

Ray Chamberlain Jr.

'Survivor wives' will retreat in March 2002

If they can survive until then, Holston Conference ministers' wives will gather for an annual retreat March 14-16, 2002, at Oak Tree Lodge in Pigeon Forge, Tenn. The theme is "Survivors By the Grace of God."

Guest speaker will be Joy Carr, director of ministry for the Southeastern Jurisdiction Administrative Council. Her topic: "Transitions and the Fourth Little Pig."

Other highlights include Marisa Winegar who will present "a program of popular music specifically designed for survivors in the parsonage," organizers said. Workshop topics include "Scrapbooking for Penny

Pinchers" and "Survive and Stay Alive." Activities include "Water Aerobics in the Cement Pond" and "Sing-a-long with Mary Ellen."

"We are trying to stir up a lot of enthusiasm about the retreat," said Laura Archer of the Johnson City District, which is co-sponsoring the retreat with the Kingsport District. "It's not only fun but forms a wonderful support group for the wives."

► **Registration is \$75** for overnight guests or \$30 for commuters. Registration deadline is Feb. 1, 2002. For more information, contact Registrar Lori Sluder at (423) 753-2614 or mgsluder@aol.com. ■



(USPS P000-014)
Published biweekly by
THE HOLSTON CONFERENCE
of the United Methodist Church
9915 Kingston Pike, Suite C
Knoxville, TN 37922

Telephone (865) 690-4080 Fax (865) 690-3162
www.holston.org

Application to mail at
Periodicals Postage Rates is pending at
Knoxville, Tennessee

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Call,
P.O. Box 32939, Knoxville, TN 37930-2939.

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