

opportunities:**Grants available for 'young people' ministries**

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Shared Mission Focus on Young People is making grants available to local churches, Annual Conferences, and other United Methodist entities to “support innovative mission and ministry with young people around the world.”

Funded projects will address “the cause of critical issues related to young people in their local context, with an eye toward how their work can have a broad impact on the priorities of the United Methodist Church,” according to the application form. The application deadline is Jan. 15, 2002.

Holston groups interested in applying for the grants should contact Anne Travis, conference director of connectional ministries, for assistance. Call (865) 690-4080 or write AnneTravis@holston.org. Additional information is available at www.umc4youngpeople.org; click on “Shared Mission Focus on Young People.” ■

What's Your Size?

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

- ③ Churches with average 85 or fewer in principle weekly worship service(s)
- ⑪ Average 86 to 225 in worship service(s)
- ① Average 226 or more in worship service(s)

bishop's perspective:

By Ray W. Chamberlain Jr.

Resident Bishop

*Let's share the stories of our people*

I recently attended the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tenn. It is a grand event with storytellers from all over the country moving listeners to tears and laughter with verbal images of grace and providence at work in ordinary lives.

We are experiencing a renaissance of storytelling: We are re-discovering that our rational lives leave us empty and bored. We are hungry for stories of our traditions and heritage and the re-telling of God's mighty acts in human history. And we have stories to share of God's activity among us. These stories nurture and nourish our souls.

Will Durant provided a profound perspective on this subject. He wrote, “Civilization is a stream with banks. The stream is sometimes filled with blood from people killing, stealing, shooting and doing the things historians usually record ... while on the banks of the river, unnoticed, people hold hands, make love, raise children, sing songs, write poetry, whittle statues. The story of civilization is the story of what happens on the banks.”

Well, we have some wonderful faith stories to tell of what is happening on the banks of the river. Grace is being experienced in powerful life-changing transformations and healing. Bold acts of kindness are being extended to the most hurt and devalued. Yes, I know there is terrorism and violence all about us, and I deplore it. But on the riverbanks of civilization the church is offering forgiveness, compassion and reconciliation.

I encourage you – in your Sunday school classes, covenant groups, board meetings, circle gatherings and worship services – to hear the stories of our people. The media will tell us enough about the world's meanness and madness, while others will tell of the church's flaws. Maybe we should watch less TV and spend more time telling and journaling our stories of love and romance, of music and laughter — of jobs being lost and work being found, of illness endured and health restored, of flowers and poetry and birth and death and life eternal. Let us bear witness to the daily struggles and adventures of life being made magnificent by God's great providence.

What's happening on the banks of the stream is worth naming, honoring and celebrating. Miracles surround us. God is with us. Life is still a precious privilege. Nothing is really just ordinary.

I like what Bishop Kenneth Goodson said he often did when he woke in the morning. He pulled open the curtains, looked out on creation and declared, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.” That's a good beginning for every day and a good perspective on life. It's worth telling and re-telling. ■

church finance:

By George Odle

Say 'NO' to annual fundraising, 'YES' to way-of-life giving

The season of annual fundraising efforts to underwrite 2002 budgets in local churches has nearly passed. Over the years the conference has employed numerous ways to get people to give in light of church budget demands. I know, because I have done this as a local church pastor for more than 30 years in both large and small Holston churches.

Each fall – often at the last minute – I would thumb through the Cokesbury catalog for a fresh stewardship campaign. But even with the latest catchy themes, my parishioners



and I would brace ourselves for another season of tithing sermons, generic bulletin inserts, and letters reminding us the church needs our money if we're going to pay the bills.

For reasons ranging from not wanting to be accused of “always talking about money” to plain feeling uncomfortable with the whole subject, I conveniently didn't preach on giving and money or material matters. And admittedly I felt uncomfortable asking parishioners to give in ways I was not willing to do myself.

The net results of such activities are a focus on money more than ministry, on the institution instead of the individual, on obligation rather than grace. With United Methodists annually giving a paltry 2.1 percent of their incomes while our churches and connectional institutions struggle for lack of fiscal resources, the need for a new paradigm for funding ministry is paramount.

Meeting the church's financial needs cannot be accomplished with annual fundraising efforts, nor will such campaigns change our current predicament overnight. If faithful stewardship is to become a reality, a dynamic new strategy must be implemented. For what we are dealing with is essentially a spiritual matter: the need to give in response to God's grace.

► See Say 'NO' on page 3



(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.

Ray W. Chamberlain, Jr. Bishop
Kevin Slimp Director of Communications
Annette Bender Editor
Rita Broderick Circulation Manager
Dion Dykes Layout Artist