

HOLSTON EVENTS & DATES

DECEMBER

23-26: Conference and district offices closed for Christmas

JANUARY 2006

- 2:** Conference and district offices closed for New Year's
- 6:** Deadline for submitting 2005 apportionments to conference treasurer
- 15:** Human Relations Day
- 13-15:** Resurrection, Gatlinburg, Tenn.
- 16:** Conference and district offices closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 20-22:** Resurrection, Gatlinburg, Tenn.
- 20-22:** Divine Rhythm, Pigeon Forge, Tenn.
- 23-1:** Holy Land Tour, sponsored by Wesley Leadership Institute
- 29:** Holston Home Fifth Sunday Offering

FEBRUARY

Black History Month

20-23: Ministers' Convocation, Lake Junaluska, N.C.

MARCH

Women's History Month

- 3-4:** March Forth for Children training for children's ministry workers, Knoxville, Tenn.
- 5:** First Sunday in Lent
- 11:** United Methodist Men's "Day with the Bishop," Brainerd UMC, Chattanooga, Tenn.
- 23-25:** Ministers' Wives Retreat, Pigeon Forge, Tenn.
- 24-26:** 'Discovery' weekend for young people considering ministry, Townsend, Tenn.
- 25-26:** United Methodist Women's Young Women's Event, Pigeon Forge, Tenn.
- 26-28:** Jubilation retreat for older adults, Gatlinburg, Tenn.
- 26:** One Great Hour of Sharing

APRIL

- 9:** Palm Sunday
- 15:** Change for Children grant applications due
- 16:** Easter
- 25:** Senior Adult Day, Camp Lookout
- 30:** Native American Ministries Day

JUNE

- 4:** Pentecost Sunday
- 11:** Peace With Justice Sunday
- 11-14:** Annual Conference, Lake Junaluska, N.C.
- 17-25:** Youth in Mission
- 21:** Moving Day for transitioning pastors

JULY

- 10-14:** Junior High Assembly and Senior High Assembly, Emory & Henry College
- 27-29:** Holston Conference United Methodist Women's School of Christian Mission

AUGUST

5-12: Young Adult Mission Trip, Charleston, S.C.

SEPTEMBER

15-17: Youth Pilgrimage on the Appalachian Trail

For more information on these events, visit <http://upcoming.holston.org>. For corrections or additions, e-mail thecal@holston.org or call Annette Bender toll-free at (866) 690-4080.

Apportionment giving drops

Year-end boost needed to meet 2004 levels

At the end of November, apportionments received from Holston churches was 1.7 percent lower than at the same time in 2004, prompting concern that the year-end total would drop below last year's total.

"I was hopeful that last month's giving 'dip' was temporary, but November receipts were down significantly from last year," the Rev. Clyde McDonald said in a Dec. 2 report to the Cabinet. "This will require almost \$2 million in December receipts to match last year's 91 percent in Fair Share apportionment giving."

In December 2004, McDonald added, the conference office received \$1.82 million for the month. "But in 2003 December receipts were \$2.38 million – so it is possible [to surpass last year's giving]."

District results range from 85.8 percent in apportionments received from Maryville District to 64.3 percent received from Big Stone Gap District. Seven districts show decreases in giving so far this year, while the Chattanooga District is up 4.4 percent.

According to McDonald, 38.7 percent or 357 churches have already paid 100 percent or more of

their apportionments. Sixty-one of Holston's total 914 churches have paid zero dollars toward their apportionments, representing \$227,321 of lost ministry dollars. "In 2004, we had 34 churches that paid zero dollars toward their apportionments," McDonald said.

Money for 2005 apportionments must be received in the Knoxville treasurer's office by Friday, Jan. 6, at 5 p.m.

Several church members have called to ask if offerings received on Sunday, Jan. 1, may be applied to 2005 apportionments, McDonald said.

"Internal Revenue Service contribution rules clearly state that churches should *not* count gifts physically received on Jan. 1 – even if the check is back-dated," he said.

However, checks postmarked by Dec. 31 and arriving by mail after Jan. 1 may be applied to 2005 apportionments. "This is a very important distinction," he said.

For more information, call the conference treasurer's office toll-free at (866) 690-4080 or locally at (865) 690-4080. ■

Resource uses Bible to help people deal with crisis

By Linda Green

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – A new online resource from the United Methodist Board of Discipleship uses Scriptures to help people who are in crisis or recovering from disaster. "Stories for Survivors," a collection of Bible stories with discussion questions created for survivors of disaster, was launched Nov. 20 at www.umcevangalism.org.

The holidays are stressful times under normal conditions, but when you add homelessness, separation from the familiar and the other issues of displacement, the stress factor increases exponentially, said the Rev. Kwasi Kena, a staff member in the board's evangelism section.

"There are so many challenges involved with reaching displaced people: Where are they now? Where will they be next week?" he said.

When people experience stress and trauma, they look for hope, he said. "Sharing Bible stories with people in distress is a gift of hope and strength and faith that we can offer to people who are trying to rebuild their lives."

"Stories for Survivors" was launched online with the story of Elijah on Mt. Horeb because so many people were hearing messages that God's judgment was being poured out through the hurricanes that struck the Gulf Coast, he said. "When Elijah met God on Mt. Horeb, there was terrible wind, and earthquake and a fire, but God was not in them. God spoke with a quiet whisper."

"The people in the Gulf region need stories of hope like these," Kena explained. "The Bible stories, the life lessons from the Bible story and the discussion questions are catalysts to enable the survivors to discover or rediscover faith through the Bible and to discover their own faith stories that witness of God's grace at

work in their lives through the disaster."

Seven more stories are included to help people get through their first Christmas season following a disaster.

The stories are told without commentary to enable personal and group discovery of spiritual truths most relevant to the needs of those in crisis and transition. In a disaster, few people pause to pick up an armful of books or sermon notes, Kena said. "Hearing and discussing Bible stories encourages people in crisis to see their unique challenges as stories of faith, struggle and perseverance."

Initiated as a joint project between the Board of Discipleship and Jack and Doris Day of Bible Storytelling Inc., the resource also is a response to some evangelism scholars' claim that the United States is entering a third or fourth generation of biblical illiteracy. The Days of Ashville, Ala., are former missionaries to Brazil, and Jack has written methodology books and trained people in Bible storytelling.

Preaching is often more explanation than telling the Bible story, Kena said. Bible stories are powerful when simply shared with people, which is how the Scriptures were shared effectively for hundreds of years.

"When people are presented with the context leading up to the Bible story, and when Bible stories are told chronologically, people are able to gain a panoramic perspective of God's activity with humanity," he said.

"By simply telling the Bible story and allowing people to mine the truths for themselves, we leave room for the Holy Spirit to teach, inspire, convict and comfort people. Sometimes we get in the way of the biblical message." ■

Green is a United Methodist News Service news writer based in Nashville, Tenn.