

Nation & World

News throughout our nation and world relating to United Methodists of the Holston Conference

United Methodists

offer encouragement on New York billboard



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Words of Encouragement

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Erected Nov. 29, the billboard features a large photograph of praying hands with the words: "Fear is not the only force at work in the world today." It also includes the church's familiar cross and flame logo with the words: "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors. The People of the United Methodist Church." The phrase regarding openness has been a part of a major national "Igniting Ministry" media campaign directed by United Methodist Communications (UMCom), a church agency based in Nashville, Tenn.

By UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

During the next three months, more than 600,000 people a day are expected to see the billboard, according to outdoor advertising officials.

The billboard's simple but direct message is intended to tell New Yorkers that followers of Jesus Christ are praying with them, said the Rev. Steve Horswill-Johnston, Igniting Ministry director.

The \$20 million Igniting Ministry campaign was launched shortly before the Sept. 11 tragedy, using TV spots, print ads and billboards. Its purpose is to reach people seeking answers to real-life questions and to invite them to United Methodist churches to continue that search. The billboard in Manhattan was produced especially for use in the city as a message of hope and reassurance.

Igniting Ministry

Horswill-Johnston said that since Sept. 11 church leaders of diverse traditions have observed that people are searching to fill a "hole in the soul." That hole is widening and deepening worldwide, but is most evident in the lives of the New York citizens, he said.

UMCom has used a variety of communications channels, including the Internet, television and radio, to help Americans deal with the aftermath of the terrorist attacks and to share the church's concern for victims, family members and loved ones. A television spot broadcast on CNN in late October and early November urged people to pray for safety, justice and a "change in angry hearts."

The basic purpose of the overall Igniting Ministry campaign is to invite people, particularly those between 25 and 54 years old, to enter into connection with the Christian community as they seek meaning and purpose in their lives.

Initial reports from a media-tracking firm indicate the effort is working. More people between the ages of 25 and 54 are reporting a favorable opinion

► See 'United Methodists Offer Encouragement,' on page 7