

Bishop's Perspective

Transcending friendliness for authenticity

I have visited hundreds of congregations, and the leaders of each of these churches are convinced they are friendly. But when I challenged one congregation on such an assumption, the church's leadership council plunged into a heated and angry debate over the degree of their friendliness. One man insisted that his was the "friendliest church in America." Yet, when a single young mother visited with her two children, she was told she should care for them herself in the nursery. "Our church doesn't have nursery workers because we don't have any children," the mother was told.

You see, these people were friendly to

each other but not to the strangers among them. This church was a tightly knit club whose members were dying and the congregation was shrinking.

We will have more visitors than usual attending our churches this fall. This is the result of our TV and newspaper promotion of United Methodist churches as places of "open hearts, open minds and open doors." Over and over again in this Igniting Ministry campaign, we have been urged to provide friendly, inviting environments for our guests. Some good ways to get started:

- **Make** sure worship service times are clearly posted outside the church.

- **Record** a telephone message announcing worship times and offer an invitation to attend.

- **Save** the best parking spaces for guests rather than for staff and members.

Bishop Chamberlain

"We're not trying to be the friendliest club in town. We're seeking to create honest encounters with God."

- **Be** sure the worship bulletin includes the words of the Lord's Prayer or where to find such in the hymnal. In other words, be "worship user friendly." We will have visitors who do not know the Lord's Prayer, Gloria Patri, or Affirmation of Faith.

This is only a partial checklist addressing

some very practical concerns. The way you greet, treat, care for and follow up with visitors is crucial.

But I'm also concerned about something that transcends friendliness. Above all, I want us to provide a worship experience that's baptized with a sense of awe and the presence of the Holy Spirit. We must avoid the illusion that friendliness can be substituted for authenticity of worship. This requires we spend time in careful preparation for each worship service. It means we saturate the worship hour with prayer. We're not trying to be the friendliest club in town. We're seeking to create honest encounters with God who heals our brokenness, forgives our sins, offers hope, and empowers us to go forth and "do good" — to live meaningfully and treat others as we treat ourselves.

God forbid that visitors find our open doors lead only to a vacuous and innocuous hour of friendly fellowship. My dear brothers and sisters, offer Jesus Christ to all who worship. Do it prayerfully, humbly, creatively, thoughtfully and expectantly. The stakes are too high for anything less.

Grace and peace,

Ray W. Chamberlain Jr.
Resident Bishop

In Brief

Prayer encounters in Cleveland, Knoxville

A Houston-based speaker will lead "Acts 29 Prayer Encounters" at two locations this fall: Broad Street UMC, Cleveland, Tenn., on Oct. 13, and Cokesbury Center, Knoxville, on Oct. 14.



Terry Teykl

Terry Teykl, author of "Pray the Price" and "Blueprint for the House of Prayer," has been teaching and preaching on prayer since 1980. After he began a church with only eight people committed to prayer, Aldersgate UMC grew to a membership of more than 1,000 in five years.

Sponsored by the Cleveland District, the Oct. 13 encounter will be held 9 a.m.-4 p.m. and includes prayer activities for children. Call (423) 476-5886 or (423) 476-8221 to register.

Sponsored by the Knoxville District, the Oct. 14 encounter begins at 2:30 p.m. and concludes at 7 p.m. Call (865) 470-7005.

Continuing education credits (.7) are available from the Wesley Institute. A \$20 registration fee includes workbook.

Good things come in small packages



Christian Believers at Liberty Hill

LIMESTONE, Tenn. — When a church with 22 in average weekly worship has 12 people sign up for a "Christian Believer" course, that's impressive. Classmates celebrated completion of the course in July at Liberty Hill UMC in the Johnson City District. Since then, Liberty Hill "praises God for several spin-offs from the course, including the baptism of one student, the confirmation of another, and the reception of a new member," reports the Rev. Jane Ayers.

Correction: Not Doyal but Titcombe

In the story, "Mission kits arrive in Africa this month," the Aug. 3 edition of *The Call* incorrectly identified a photo subject as the Rev. Stephen Doyal of Norwood UMC. Pictured was the Rev. James Titcombe of Bethel (Knox) UMC. *The Call* regrets the error.

What's Your Size?

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

- ⑤ 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)

Commentary

Simple prayer to help us 'win some'

By Jean Henderson
Discipleship Team Chair

Part 3 of excerpts from her June 13 address to the Holston Annual Conference in Lake Junaluska

In a recent issue of *The Call*, Bishop Ray Chamberlain's column was an open letter to the Apostle Paul and John Wesley. I know most of you were stirred by it, but let me remind us of something he said in that letter. He said it broke his heart to report that 45 percent of Holston churches did not receive a single person by profession of faith last year. He went on to ask, "What do we have to change to 'win' converts in these churches?"

What can we do to measure up to the expectations Christ has for his church?

Could it be that simply changing our prayer lives could liberate us to serve others and 'win some'? What if we persistent-

ly, earnestly, faithfully, prayed as a church — as a body of believers — just these four lines:

1. *Lord, we are ready for you to use us.*

2. *Fill us with your spirit and compassion and anoint us with your power, that we may speak your word with boldness.*

3. *Keep us alert and sensitive to the opportunities you are bringing our way.*

4. *Keep us faithful even when we do not see results right away.*

Could that kind of commitment really make a difference? I believe it could!



Jean Henderson

Exchange

KINGSPORT, Tenn. — Ketrion Memorial UMC seeks **part-time pianist** for morning worship and Sunday evening services. Salary commensurate with education and experience. Send resume to: Staff Parish Committee, Ketrion Memorial UMC, 301 Virgil Avenue, Kingsport, TN 37665, phone (423) 246-6792. ①

ELIZABETHTON, Tenn. — **Director of music** sought for 300+ member church. Responsible for oversight of total music program including Chancel Choir, Handbell Choir, and instrumental Ensemble, with expansion into Children's Choir and Youth Choir. Director should be comfortable with multiple styles of music and application in worship setting. Music degree required; experience preferred. Resumes with brief history accepted immediately at: First UMC, 325 East E Street, Elizabethton, TN 37643 Attn: Music Ministry Search Committee. ①

KINGSPORT, Tenn. — Mountain View UMC seeks a **director of lay ministries** to recruit, train, and support volunteer lay members and coordinate lay activities. Preference given to applicants with college degree or experience. Salary negotiable. Send resume to: Butch Hite, Mountain View UMC, 4405 Orebank Road, Kingsport, TN 37664, fax (423) 245-1325. ①



The Call is jointly published by the Holston Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church and United Methodist Reporter Communications Group. Editorial & circulation offices: P.O. Box 32939, Knoxville, TN 37930. Phone: (865) 690-4080. Fax: (865) 690-3162. Email: TheCall@Holston.org.

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