



8:30 a.m.
The Rev. Andy Ferguson will lead the final budget hearing.

The Call

2 p.m.
Bishop Swanson will "fix" the appointments.



June 14, 2006

HOLSTON ANNUAL CONFERENCE EDITION

www.holston.org

Wednesday SCHEDULE

7:30 a.m.

Worship: Memorial Chapel

8 a.m.

Fellowship Time: Outside Stuart Auditorium

8:30 a.m.

- Black College Fund
- Holston Home for Children
- Holston Conference Foundation
- Equitable Compensation
- **Stand-up break**
- **Council on Finance and Administration: Final budget hearing**
- Board of Lay Ministry
- United Methodist Women
- United Methodist Men
- Parsonage Furnishing Task Force
- Cabinet transitions
- Unfinished business
- Minute questions
- **"A Humorous Look"**
- Blessing of the meal

Noon to 2 p.m.

Lunch

2 p.m.

Sending Forth Service

- Bishop James Swanson
- Broad Street UMC Choir Cleveland District
- New Beginnings Quartet Hale's Chapel UMC Big Stone Gap District
- Fixing the appointments
- Licensing of local pastors
- Adjournment

Holston members depart today

Bishop Swanson will preach 'Starting Right Now'

This final day of Annual Conference will include the vote on next year's budget, the Sending Forth Service, the licensing of new local pastors – and an opportunity to smile just before lunchtime.

A.M. session

The conference will address final business, with appearances from Neilse Furtado of the Black College Fund, Art Masker of Holston Home for Children and Roger Redding of the Holston Conference Foundation.

After the stand-up break, the Council on Finance and Administration will seek to finalize the 2007 budget.

We'll hear from the laity of Holston Conference, including the Board of Lay Ministry, the United Methodist Men, and the United Methodist Women.

At last year's Annual Conference, the Task Force on Parsonage Policies and Guidelines proposed changes in the parsonage furnishings policy. After a year of seeking responses to the changes at district meetings, the Rev. Stephen Yeane, task force chair, will present the final report this morning. For details, see pages 171-176 in the "Book of Reports."

After a humorous presentation from the Fellowship Committee, the Rev. Rick Isbell of Church Street UMC, Knoxville District, will bless our meal before we break for lunch at noon.



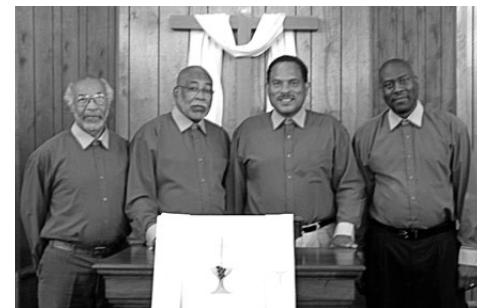
2 p.m.

The Broad Street UMC Choir from Cleveland District will sing at the Sending Forth Service.

P.M. session

The title of Bishop Swanson's Sending Forth sermon is "Starting Here, Starting Right Now." Music will be offered by the Broad Street UMC Choir of Cleveland District and the New Beginnings Quartet of Hale's Chapel UMC, Big Stone Gap District.

After the "fixing of the appointments," 34 new local pastors will be recognized with licenses (an increase of eight over last year). Conference will adjourn. ■



2 p.m.

The New Beginnings Quartet of Hale's Chapel UMC, Big Stone Gap District, will sing.

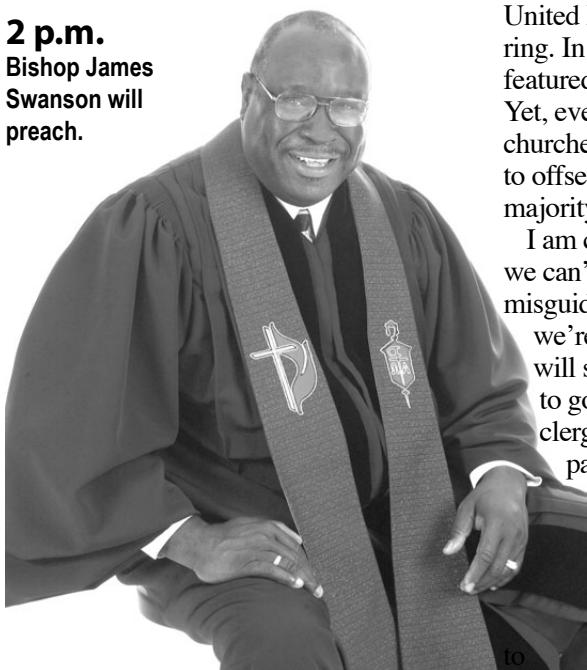
Bishop's sending message:

Lift your heads! Go with a renewed spirit

In his book "Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism," Walter Brueggemann writes, "Evangelism is currently a passionate preoccupation of the U.S. church. This accent on evangelism is no doubt a reflection of the deep crisis facing the church."

2 p.m.

Bishop James Swanson will preach.



I might argue with Brueggemann's assertion that U.S. mainline churches are passionately preoccupied with evangelism. If we are "preoccupied" with evangelism, I see little or no evidence that we're passionate or well organized. I realize that there are pockets within United Methodism where this is occurring. In the Holston Conference we have featured such churches in *The Call*. Yet, even with growth in some of our churches, there is not enough growth to offset the losses experienced in the majority of congregations.

I am convinced that many of us feel we can't reverse this decline because we misguidedly and falsely assume that we're 100 percent at fault. Well, I will say to you there is enough fault to go around. In many ways, we clergy have not held up our part of the partnership. Many laity are so threatened by growth that they discourage growth. District superintendents sometimes have not been willing to fight battles that call pastors and churches to accountability. And we bishops

have failed to lead our conferences in keeping the main thing as the main thing.

In the Bible, every time there was a growth surge, it was followed by persecution, hard times, and prayer. Today, the persecution experienced by the church is complacency. In the book of Acts, every time the church or its leaders got in trouble, they prayed and the Holy Spirit descended and brought power. If we are to turn this around, we need to allow the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit to blow upon us. I know we can turn this around!

Brueggemann tells us that evangelism takes place in three scenes of a drama:

First, God gives victory over the forces of chaos and death. Chaos represents lack of direction, no vision, and everybody working as individuals. Death is the loss of life, an inability to continue bodily functions, and seeking to live without the Spirit. I believe that our vision statement – *God envisions bold, passionate, and joyful communities of faith where the spiritual hunger to worship God and to serve Christ sets disciples on fire with Spirit-filled, risk-taking love for all*

God's children until Holston Conference reflects the saving grace and redeeming justice of our Lord Jesus Christ – I believe this is our directional marching orders.

Second, we must announce or tell the story of the victory. People need to know that God is with us, bringing us the victory.

The third scene of the drama: Others will hear the story and make it their story.

I propose that in spite of the obvious shortcomings, we leave this conference "with a renewed spirit." I call upon you to leave here and tell your fellow church members that God *has already* defeated chaos and death. Tell them your story of victory. Then sit back and watch people respond.

And then Holston, we will lift our heads, straighten our drooping shoulders, and step out of our low self-esteem.

And we will soar with a renewed spirit!

Yours in Christ,

James E. Swanson, Sr.
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