

## Undercover

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church where everybody knew everybody. The people seemed comfortable in jeans and T-shirts or suits. I was dressed somewhere in the middle of that range.

Before the worship began, an attendance register was passed to me to fill out. The bulletin also urged visitors to fill out a form and place it in the offering plate.

When the service started, the congregation was welcomed and the words to the songs appeared on a screen in front of the church. Not too far into the service, I noticed significant changes in the order of worship. I soon realized the order of worship was for an earlier service, while an outline provided the music and the message for this particular service.

The music was both spiritual and well done, and the people felt at ease to raise their hands in praise during the songs or applaud afterwards. The words to the day's Scripture reading also were



displayed on the screen, and the morning message was delivered with a quiet confidence.

Following the sermon, the pastor gave an invitation and then explained in detail the events surrounding the baptisms that morning. The congregation also was directed where to turn in their hymnals for the order of worship. Since the minister had so clearly explained the circumstances, I felt included in the lives of those being baptized.

At the end of the service, no one around me spoke to me, so I made my way to the exit. At the rear of the worship center, one man told me, "Thanks for being with us." As I walked through the vestibule, another man drinking coffee called out, "Come back."

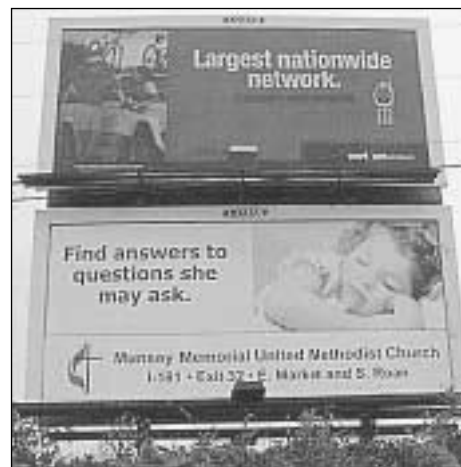
Had I been looking for a church, would I have come back? Maybe or maybe not. The music was good and there was a sweet spirit present, but I felt no welcoming arms. There was no personal touch from anyone to make me think I had come to just the right place at the right time.

However, I did receive a follow-up letter from the minister, including the promise of a call from the church visitation team.

When I joined my own church, what drew me in were not only calls and personal comments by the ministers but also the smiles and friendliness of the members who greeted me after each service. I felt wanted and needed.

If we truly have "open hearts, open minds and open doors," we must preach and teach the concept, but we on the pews also must make our neighbor feel at home.

*Clint Cooper is a member at First-Centenary UMC, Chattanooga.*



**JOHNSON CITY, Tenn.—Munsey Memorial UMC recently invested \$1,600 on four Igniting Ministry billboards in the Johnson City area. Director of Membership Development Beth Anderson says it's the first time the church has done outdoor advertising. So far feedback is positive. ☉**

## Cutting-edge POSTCARDS

Holston Webmaster Donna Hankins recently developed a creative Igniting Ministry idea that's gaining interest on the national level. Holston members can now invite people to their churches by sending electronic postcards from the conference website.

According to Hankins, the idea occurred to her because electronic postcards are an inexpensive and convenient way to connect with people age 25-54, Igniting Ministry's target range. United Methodist Communications leaders are so enthused, the plan is to link Holston's website to the denominational website. Check it out at [www.holstonconference.com](http://www.holstonconference.com).

## Igniting

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our regional television ads have ended for the time being. But that doesn't mean Igniting Ministry is over. Far from it! Now is the peak time when most visitors will enter our doors in response to what they've heard and seen in the media. We've seen evidence of that as worship attendance swells across the conference.

Of course, with the tragic recent events taking place in our nation, it's difficult to gauge how much of the increase is related to people responding to these tragedies, and how many are responding to Igniting Ministry.



**Kevin Slimp**

But almost everyone agrees on one point: The Igniting Ministry campaign was launched at a time when many citizens began searching for deeper spiritual meaning in their lives. The fact that our media spots were already drawing the attention of unchurched viewers probably helped influence them to visit our churches for prayer and worship.

Even if your church isn't already engaged in Igniting Ministry, it's not too late to get started. Remember, this is a four-year campaign. Call Cokesbury Bookstore (1-888-279-3715) and order at least one Igniting Ministry planning kit for your congregation. The cost is \$89.95; shipping is free. When the kit arrives, get some folks together and begin looking through it for ideas. These kits are loaded with materials to help your members become more inviting and welcoming. If your congregation hasn't held training sessions to help members become more hospitable, now is the time to plan some.

## Morristown youth win design contest for Resurrection shirts

A T shirt created by youth from Trinity Morristown UMC has been chosen as the winning design for Resurrection 2002 in January, the Holston Conference youth office recently announced.

The design wittily plays off a popular credit card commercial, showing "Master's Card" on front (*Expiration date: Eternity*) and a price list on back (*Jesus! Don't leave earth without him*).

When the conference youth office announced its third annual T shirt design contest earlier this year, Trinity Youth Coordinator Ed Goan recognized it as a

good project and potential fundraiser for his group.

After one youth member came up with the initial concept, the rest of the group "fed off each other" and developed the details, Goan said. Jason Stansell, a youth counselor who happens to be a graphic design student at East Tennessee State University, did the artwork.

Trinity was one of about 20 youth groups submitting T shirt designs, according to Angee Woody, conference youth coordinator. The conference Youth Council selected the winner.

Now, it's up to Trinity to produce and sell the shirts in pre-orders and onsite during Resurrection. The winning youth group keeps the profits, Woody said. "The only thing we ask is that they tithe 10 percent for the Youth Service Fund."

Two years ago, Concord UMC youth raised more than \$20,000 for an Alaskan mission trip with its winning T shirt design. Goan said his group hopes to raise just as much, applying the funds toward a mission trip and for Trinity's new multipurpose building. Trinity, which has an average worship attendance of 190, has about 35 regular participants in its youth program.

The T shirts are available in white and gold at \$10 for short sleeves, \$12 for long sleeves. For orders of 12 more,

shirts may be personalized with a youth group or church name for an extra \$1.25 per shirt. For an order form, visit [www.holston.org](http://www.holston.org), or contact Goan at (423) 585-4771, [cgoan@charter.net](mailto:cgoan@charter.net) or [goance@lenzingusa.com](mailto:goance@lenzingusa.com).

Scheduled Jan. 11-13 and 18-20 in Gatlinburg, Tenn., Resurrection is the conference's annual youth retreat, attended by about 10,000 youth and counselors over two weekends. For more information, visit Holston's website or call the youth office at (423) 928-2156.



Resurrection Pass .....	\$30
Hotel Room .....	\$60
10 Large Pizzas .....	\$75
Salvation .....	PRICELESS

**Jesus! Don't leave earth without Him.**

