

# Resurrection: Is it holy?

Resurrection, Holston Conference's spiritual retreat for youth, celebrated its 25th year with the same elements that made it great: music, message, and mountain resort. This year, youth left Gatlinburg, Tenn., with more than a new hoodie or T-shirt in possession. They went home with the soul-searching question: "Is it holy?"

Popular speaker Justin Lookadoo returned to the Resurrection stage with his rubber face and diaper jokes, humoring the teenagers before socking them with Wesleyan wisdom to guide them through their days.

"God does not care ultimately what's right or wrong," he said, citing 1 Peter: 1:16 and Leviticus 11:45. "He wants to know, 'Is it holy?'"

Lookadoo repeated his three-word question, explaining how its subjective nature leads each to follow Jesus in a culture of internet pornography and other temptations.

"Let me tell you exactly what those boys are thinking and doing when they look at you and your little parties on MySpace," Lookadoo said, scolding the girls for posting suggestive photos on the internet. "Is it holy?"

Resurrection was held Jan. 15-17 and 22-24 at Gatlinburg Convention Center. This year's worship leader was Kristian Stanfill. T-shirts were designed and sold by youth at Emerald Avenue UMC, with profits going to the JustLead Foundation for urban youth ministry in Knoxville.

Total attendance was 12,125, including youth, counselors, volunteers, staff, band, etc. Offerings totaled \$24,065 for Youth Service Fund and \$9,613 for UMCOR Haiti Relief. ■



Popular speaker Justin Lookadoo uses a baby diaper to tease and teach youth at Resurrection.

Photo by Dennis Loy

# DR goes on, despite ice & snow

Under an Ephesians 2 theme, Divine Rhythm commenced for its 10th anniversary, drawing 564 participants despite ice and snow that prevented many from attending. The 2009 attendance was 770.

Held Jan. 29-31 at Country Tonite Theater in Pigeon Forge, the event is designed for adults ages 18 to 35. Worship leader was Casey Darnell of Atlanta. The preacher was the Rev. Grace Imathiu, pastor at Brown Deer UMC in Milwaukee.

Participants donated more than 500 health kits for Haiti and 120 jars of peanut butter for a local food pantry. They gave an offering of \$2,652 for mission work in Sudan.

For more info, visit Divine Rhythm on Facebook or at [divinerhythm.com](http://divinerhythm.com).

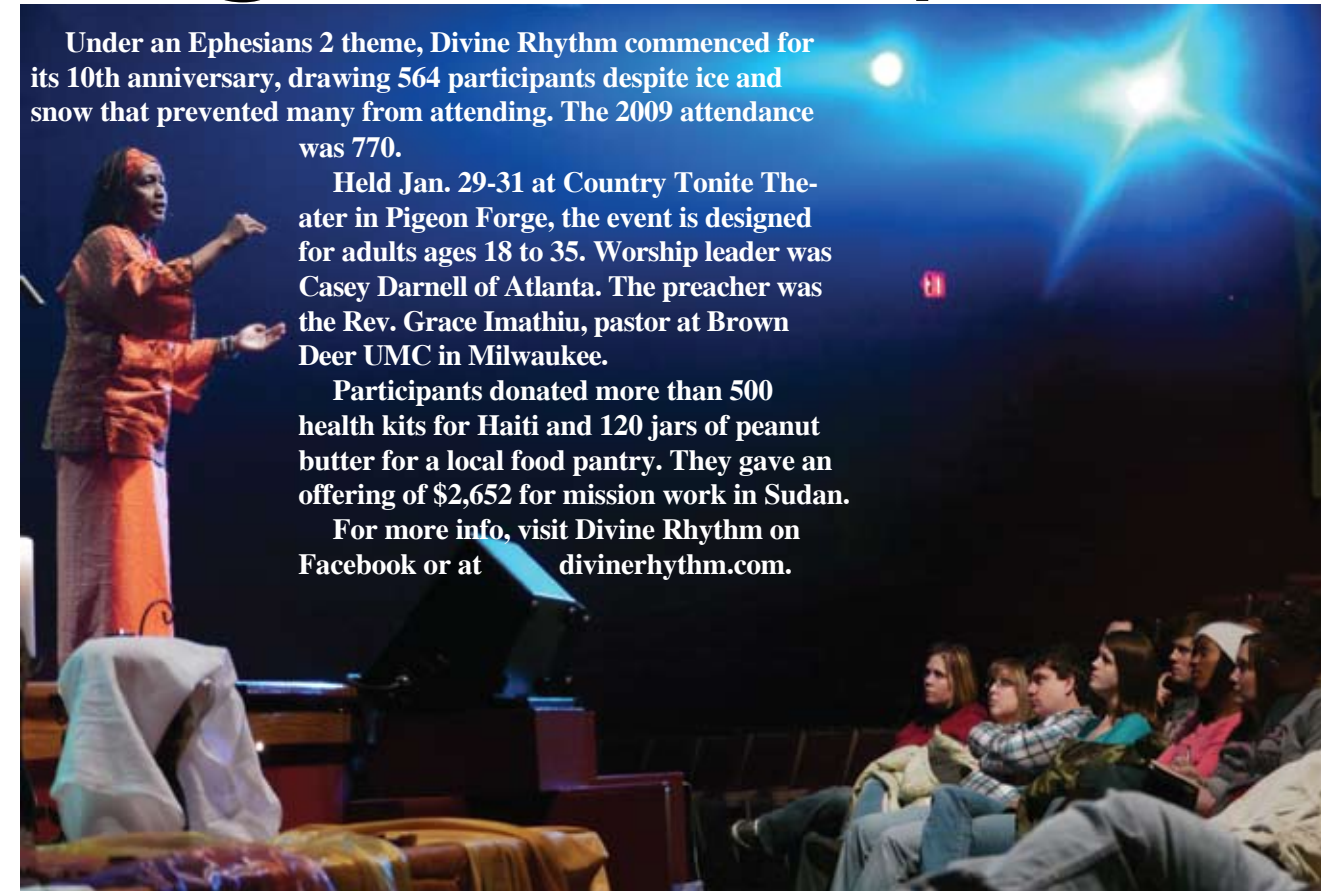


Photo by Clinton Jones

The Rev. Grace Imathiu preaches at Divine Rhythm, an annual spiritual weekend for adults ages 18 to 35.

# Offering for new school in Liberia is celebrated

Holston Conference is rejoicing that \$62,090 – almost \$3,000 over the original goal – has been raised to build a United Methodist school in Zwedru, Liberia.

The conclusion of the fund-raising campaign comes about a year and a half after Holston churches took offerings for the school during Vacation Bible School in summer 2008. Bishop James Swanson asked churches to give for a school after Bishop John Innis of Liberia requested Holston support in early 2008.

"Don't give up on Liberia. Peace has come to our land," Innis said in a letter to Swanson. "The need for village schools is the most urgent need for Liberia. It is the churches which are providing quality education for the children of Liberia today."

The goal of \$60,000 was set to build a school for 300 students in a "fast growing area" near Zwedru United Methodist Church, according to the Rev. Dan Kelly, Operation Classroom Committee chair.

"There is no United Methodist school in Zwedru, so a place was chosen to build a new school in a growing section of the town," he said. More than 120 United Methodist schools exist in Liberia.

Zwedru is about 350 miles southeast of the capital city of Monrovia. For years, Holston has collected food and school supplies for Liberia through the Annual Conference hands-on mission project. Holston also bconstructed a new uilding for the J.J. Roberts United Methodist School in Monrovia. The "Holston Building" has classrooms named for Holston districts.

Holston also added eight classrooms to the Tappita United Methodist School through Operation Classroom. The United Methodist Women of Holston funded a prenatal clinic at Ganta Hospital.

Construction on Zwedru school started in spring 2009 and will be completed soon, now that funding is secured, Kelly said. In the meantime, Holston churches and individuals can continue to reach out to Zwedru.

Holston churches and individuals can continue to reach out to Zwedru. "One thing we need to help that school get off the ground is student scholarships," Kelly said. "If they have student tuition, then they also have money to pay the teachers."

A child can attend Zwedru school for a year with only \$75, Kelly said. Persons can provide scholarships by writing checks to their local churches with "Project 664-Liberia" on the memo line.

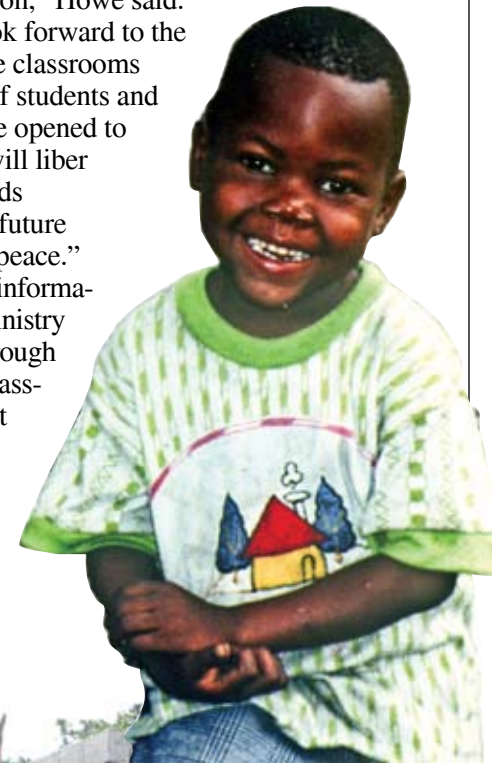
Others may give through The Advance on UMC.org. The Advance project number is 3020499.

Danny Howe, chair of Holston's Missions Team, expressed gratitude for the successful campaign.

"We are excited about Zwedru School and are proud to have had an opportunity to participate in its construction," Howe said.

"We also look forward to the day when the classrooms will be full of students and books will be opened to a page that will liberate their minds and insure a future of hope and peace."

For more information about ministry to Liberia through Operation Classroom, contact the Rev. Dan Kelly at [bkelly27@knology.net](mailto:bkelly27@knology.net). ■



AT RIGHT: The new school will accommodate 300 Liberian schoolchildren, like the little boy pictured above. At right, the Rev. Boo Hankins (in blue shirt), a Holston clergy member serving in Sudan, visits the school site in Zwedru.



Photo by Clinton Jones

Bishop Robert Schnase, resident bishop of Missouri Conference, was keynote speaker at Ministers Convocation.

# Convo: Stop old habits or scare off new people

Take an honest look at what you're doing, then stop it. That's the message of many church training programs today, in an attempt to get church people to see why the un-churched don't like or understand them.

At Ministers Convocation in Lake Junaluska, the message was reiterated to Holston pastors who came for their annual continuing education. About 250 clergy attended the Feb. 2-4 event, organized by the Wesley Leadership Institute and based on Bishop Robert Schnase's book, "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations."

Also speaking and preaching at the three-day event – cut short one day by predictions of snow and ice – was the Rev. Tom Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology.

Long may have won the loudest laugh of the week, when he convicted clergy of assuming a pompous, head-held-high posture upon stepping into the pulpit. "What is that door back there, Clergy Land?" Long said to his laughing audience. "Who is out there, the Queen of Bohemia?"

Long's point was that church leaders sometimes act and speak "as if God is not even there." He also criticized prayers that stray from their purpose.

"You can tell when we're not praying to God, but just talking to the people in stained-glass voices," he said. "We substitute ourselves into the place of the spirit, yet worship starts because God invades our world."

Pastors should "get out of the way" and let worshippers experience the mystery of God, even if mystery sometimes involves silence, he said. "We sometimes confuse words with The Word."

Long also warned pastors against worship that is "theologically and technically laden." To announce, "We will sing Hymn 15 – 1st, 2nd, and 4th stanzas only" is akin to speaking Latin to the typical church guest.

He cautioned against overusing video to reach a society uneducated in church language and rituals.

"We assume that video is more powerful than it is, and there is a certain flatness to it," he said. "We begin to substitute video for the oral proclamation of the Word. Nothing is more powerful than someone who loves other

people, standing up there and telling the truth."

Schnase also turned the spotlight on Church Practices Gone Bad when he spoke of how leaders can kill the excitement of a new movement by imposing procedures.

"How many people does it take to have a meaningful Bible study?" he asked. The answer is two – yet the temptation is to answer a person's wish to start a Bible study with a to-do list of committee actions, publicity steps, budget questions, bookstore trips, participation minimums, and so on.

"Do you see what we do sometimes, to make things difficult?" said Schnase. "We've got to give people permission and then not be disgruntled if only three or four show up for the Bible study, because that's OK."

Schnase also told the story of a young pastor who complained when her congregation wouldn't accept her progressive ideas. Out of frustration, she gave the "Five Practices" book to five of her church leaders.

However, when one of the five approached the pastor with an idea from the book – to replace the back pew with rocking chairs for parents and infants – the pastor put him off with the same "we have to check with the trustees" response that she previously found irksome.

Schnase also recalled the occasional church meeting that prompts excitement and new ideas, and the tendency for those ideas to be laid aside for the next meeting or committee approval. Several weeks later, the passion is gone and the ideas are stale.

"All this sends the message that you're really not serious about changing anything," said Schnase. "You need to get three of those new ideas started on Monday – the ideas that are easy and don't cost money. We have to let people get access to the new ideas, then let them change the dynamics, instead of slowing it down." ■



Tom Long: "We confuse words with The Word."