

# FORUM

## A Good Pastor is Hard to Find



**Ernie Pitt**

This & That

on the UMC's website. In fact, they put the reappointment on the Web site before members of our congregation knew anything about it themselves. Therein lies the egregious and insensitive issue.

I must admit that when I joined the church, I had no depth of knowledge regarding the United Methodist Church. I joined because of the way the pastor taught the Word, lived the Word and trusted in the UMC. We have in our sect, a guide book called "The United Methodist Book of Disciplines." It outlines rules and procedures for governing the body. Well, to my great surprise, I found two items that the district superintendent and the bishop were supposed to do before making this reappointment. Number 1: they were supposed to have had some consultation with a duly appointed and specific committee in the church charged with this function; num-



**Rev. Jenkins**

ber 2: the district superintendent and/or the bishop were supposed to inform the congregation, by way of the committee, that they were making this reappointment of our pastor prior to making it public. Neither of those things occurred prior to many of us finding out that our pastor was being reappointed on the UMC's Web site.

You can imagine the sinking feeling in many of our guts upon seeing on a Web site that our beloved pastor had been reappointed. For many of us, it is not so much what was done, but the manner in which it was done. Given the fact that membership in the UMC all over the country has been steadily declining, we felt that since our membership was steadily increasing, the DS and the bishop would at least treat us with a little more respect and sensitivity, and respond to our many letters of inquiry instead of treating us like slaves. Many of us believed Pastor

Jenkins had the formula for correcting the decline, and that the bishop and the DS would use St. Paul as a model for bringing souls to Christ. Instead, both violated the very rules created and outlined in the Book of Discipline and ignored the wishes of 98 percent of the congregants. To me, this is absurd. How can you be more concerned with staffing issues than bringing souls to Christ and increasing the membership?

I have to apologize because I, like so many others, am grieving over this most insincere and callous disregard for spiritual righteousness. I was also quite surprised to learn that part of the problem related to declining membership was a history of racism in the UMC. Now, I didn't say it. It is on their Web site, but they don't know how to fix it. I do know that you can't fix anything by running from it. God bless you. Amen? Amen!

*Ernie Pitt is the publisher of The Chronicle. Reach him at erpitt@wschronicle.com.*

## 'Mama, They Need to Know'



**Iris Venable**

Guest Columnist



Photo courtesy of NNPA

**Iris Venable's "Sunshine," Antonio Terry Jr.**

for HIV. Medical personnel also constantly called, asking him to be checked.

So, I pled with him too. But, he just kept saying, "No, Mom I'm fine." I would say, "You're in denial."

It took him at least two years before he got checked and the doctors finally confirmed it. He confessed that he thought it would just go away if he ignored it. They got him started on his medications and for a while he was happy - even relieved.

But, then the side effects of the medicines seemed to have a worse effect on him than the disease itself. The constant diarrhea and nausea were unbearable. The medicines also gave him mood-swings. Then, he started having seizures.

I watched as my son slowly deteriorated, his legs weakening, sometimes unable to walk.

As he neared the age of 30, I would often recall him in his prime. He had a gift. The gift

was that people hung on to his every word. They didn't have to know him and they still hung on to his every word. There were people on my front steps all the time. I would say, "Tony, why are those people on my front steps?" He would say, "I have no idea. I asked them to go home. But, they're waiting for me to come back out."

Even when he attended church, those who ministered to him the prayer of salvation now chuckle that he did more talking than they did.

The last seizure that he had was in August last year. That is when he also began to hallucinate from the medication. He never came back home from that one. The doctors diagnosed PML (progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy), which they described as a condition in which the HIV had attacked the brain, causing it to shrink. Ever since then, he lived between hospitals and nursing homes.

On Feb. 12, the Lord took

Antonio home. He would be turning 31 this year had he lived 'til Mother's Day.

I would often talk heart to heart with Tony when the medications were not causing him to be delirious. I can hear now the essence of the message that he desired to bring to other young men and women. I hope they will hear it too:

He'd say, "Mama, they need to know, if you have to have sex - even safe sex - don't just jump anything. Don't take sex casually because you don't want to be where I am. You don't want to know when your last day is. You don't want to take these medications for the rest of your life. You don't want people looking at you funny. You can't get a shot for this. You don't want this. You don't want any parts of it."

*Iris Venable is one of millions of mothers who have personally been touched by HIV/AIDS.*

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