

# Manchin, Ireland present award to historic church camp

By Mannix Porterfield  
REGISTER HERALD REPORTER

CHARLESTON — Wars and rumors of such, the Great Depression, and the dawn of a new century, along with other historic milestones, have altered America's landscape over the years, but through it all, there has been one constant — the Mount Olivet Church Camp.

This year marks the 90th installment of a camp born in 1916, when the nation was in the throes of the First World War.

In advance of its landmark anniversary, Gov. Joe Manchin and Secretary of State Betty Ireland prepared special certificates to honor the camp, a week-long retreat steeped in the old style of evangelism.

In his proclamation, Manchin saluted the camp for its long history of "serving the Lord by sharing an evangelistic message and promoting spiritual growth."

Fewer than a dozen campers made up the initial contingent when it debuted in 1916, but the camp "grew by leaps and bounds" with a few short years, attracting several hundred to church services, Ireland pointed out in her certificate.

Ireland said the camp drew on the input of outstanding leaders, including the founder, John Harris, his son, Dwight, a daughter and son-in-law, Clarence and Lois Ratliff, the Rev. Allen Gallimore, pastor of Wesleyan Chapel in Beckley, and that church's former pastor, the Rev. Vic Reasoner.



SUBMITTED ART

**Certificates of recognition** for Mount Olivet Church Camp, extended by Gov. Joe Manchin and Secretary of State Betty Ireland, are displayed by the camp's new president and director, the Rev. Tommy Mounts, and the Rev. Bill Thompson, pastor of the host church at Madam's Creek, just outside Hinton.

The secretary characterized the camp as "a striking example of a volunteer labor of love, involving everything from initial construction of the buildings, to countless hours spent cooking and washing dishes to the donations that have funded the camp since its inception."

Mount Olivet hasn't lacked for media recognition, as well. It once was featured in a PBS television special titled "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory."

The Rev. Tommy Mounts, camp director, plans to display both certificates in the church for this year's camp, set for July 15-23.

Normally, the camp attracts as many as 125 campers, said Mounts, who pastors the Painter James Charge in Speedway and a United Methodist Church in True, while handling a weekly radio message carried Sunday mornings on WJLS Radio in Beckley.

Original bake ovens in use when the camp opened are still in use, and visitors can still sit on wooden benches resting on sawdust floors in the huge tabernacle and hear sermons from a variety of speakers.

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## CAMP

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A special addition this year is known as "Friend and Family," devoted to encouraging attendees to keep the tradition alive.

"This is your heritage," Mounts said.

"We're asking for help and support to keep this thing going. It's been worthy for 90 years. It ought to be worthy for another 90. There's a lot of history and heritage wrapped up in this place."

Back when the camp first broke ground, rigid rules were in force, Mounts noted.

Campers were forbidden to eat pork, drink coffee, or even chew gum, but succeeding generations departed from such legalism. There is, however, no compromise when it comes to the Biblical teachings on salvation and righteousness, Mounts stressed.

"We're moving on to the 21st Century without compromise," he said. "I think you can do that."

"When you look at the Christian world today, we can still hold to the landmarks of the gospel without compromise. The generations may change, but Christianity, as far as salvation is concerned, never changes. Our great goal today as pastors is to find a way of changing without that compromise."

Mounts, himself, is part

*"When you look at the Christian world today, we can still hold to the landmarks of the gospel without compromise. The generations may change, but Christianity, as far as salvation is concerned, never changes."*

**REV. TOMMY MOUNTS,**

Hinton minister  
and camp director

of the new wave of modern preachers, reaching an audience via the Internet — an idea the Harris generation never dreamed of doing. His Web site is [www.stbi.org](http://www.stbi.org).

The camp clings to its old traditions of spreading the gospel message but today encompasses a wide spectrum of Christianity as an inter-denominational gathering, including Methodist and Missionary Baptists.

Conflict among generations also focuses, at times, on music, and Mounts endorses the contemporary Christian music.

"We've got to reach the young people," he explained. "Some of the old folks scare them off instead of bringing them in."

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# Hinton minister to lead Mount Olivet this year

By Tesla Hartsog  
REGISTER-HERALD REPORTER

HINTON — One of the longest-running gospel camps, Mount Olivet Camp, will begin at 7 p.m. Friday and run through Saturday, July 23.

Founded by the late John and Lula Harris, the camp will be celebrating its 90th year.

Youth programs and leadership programs for the adults will be available as well as three services featured daily by the Rev. Bill Thompson.

For those who will be staying the week, a campground will be available, equipped with camper hookups and domes.

A "Friends and Family" celebration will begin at 11 a.m. July 23, featuring several

singing groups with a dinner.

This year the Rev. Tommy Mounts will serve as the camp director. Mounts and wife, Martha, are longtime residents of Hinton and have served in churches in Raleigh Summer and Monroe counties.

They are currently serving at James Chapel at True and Painter's Chapel at Speedway in Mercer County.

Many people know them from their radio ministry Sunday morning on WJLS 99.5 FM.

Since the early 1960s, the Mounts have maintained a residence on Madams Creek, and Mount Olivet was their home church prior to Mounts' entering his ministry.

A program schedule is available by contacting Rev. Mounts at 304-466-1761.

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