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The Call

Digest

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Buffalo Mountain Camp will close operations on Jan. 1 with hopes for renewal.

September 1, 2013

www.holston.org

Atchley connects churches in 7 counties

Brooke Atchley is the new United Methodist “Church and Community Worker” for seven counties surrounding Tazewell, Va. But on this hot August day, Brooke Atchley is not in Virginia.

She’s in Kentucky.

“OK, does everybody have a seat? Is everybody ready?” Atchley asks, as church members pile into vans.

Atchley and 30 other volunteers from eight different churches have come to Henderson Settlement in Frakes, Ky., for a week-long mission trip. It’s fitting, in a way, that this is one of her first projects in her new role.

In the United Methodist Church, “Church and Community Worker” (CCW) is a special category of missionary service under the General Board of Global Ministries. Workers with this title might serve as nurses, builders, immigration lawyers, or economic developers.

Atchley’s job is to facilitate ministry among the 83 churches comprising the Tazewell District of Holston Conference. Her ultimate goal is to address poverty and drug abuse in the region, according to her boss. She will be Holston Conference’s fourth CCW.

“There is such a huge crime issue here because of drugs, and the poverty rate is high,” says the Rev. David Tabor, Tazewell District superintendent. “Our district includes seven counties and two states, so any coordination between the agencies is nonexistent.”

The seven counties are Russell, Tazewell, Giles, Buchanan, Bland, Pulaski (all in Virginia) and Mercer (West Virginia).

“I have a huge heart for the people of Appalachia. I grew up here,” says Atchley. “I want to know where the people’s hearts are breaking and what they’re breaking for, and I want to help the church stand behind that.”

Atchley, age 37, has lived in Tazewell District since her husband was appointed to pastor two churches there in June 2012. The Rev. Aaron Atchley, age 39, is pastor of Hales Chapel United Methodist Church and Kathleen Memorial United Methodist Church, both in Narrows, Va.

Tabor saw a need for a new CCW in his district in 2011. As an upcoming United Methodist deacon with experience and passion for the ministry needed in Tazewell District, Brooke Atchley quickly “came on the radar” as the person who could succeed at the job, Tabor said.

Brooke grew up in Kingsport, Tenn., and her husband grew



Brooke Atchley prepares volunteers from Virginia for a long day of home-repair work.

up in Knoxville, Tenn. They met on a mission trip with other students from East Tennessee State University.

In 2008, the couple took their two daughters to Kentucky to complete their education at Asbury Theological Seminary: a master’s in divinity for Aaron, a master’s in servant theology for Brooke.

Aaron was appointed to Tazewell District in June 2012 and Brooke was still finishing her degree, but they immediately went to work on connecting the district. They organized a study of “Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry” for parents of three churches (First Narrows, Hales Chapel, Kathleen Memorial) in fall 2012.

By spring 2013, they were ready to launch “Connexion.” Fifty to 60 children and youth, divided into two groups, now come for supper and activities on Sunday night.

This summer, Atchley organized vacation bible school in Narrows with seven churches and 70 children. She’s applying for grants and supporting a new children’s ministry in Giles and addiction-recovery ministries at Main Street United Methodist Church and First Richlands United Methodist Church. ■

Letter: Buffalo Mountain Camp will stop operations Jan. 1 with hope for renewal

August 22, 2013
Jonesborough, Tenn.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As most of you know, Buffalo Mountain Camp experienced a devastating flood one year ago on August 5, 2012. The flood and the accompanying mudslides significantly damaged our infrastructure, trails, and summer camp program space. We lost the use of Allison Lodge, the bathhouse, cabins 1 thru 5, Ramsey Creek, the office and the lower trail. The Camp's Board of Directors has been hard at work since the flood. And the Camp's staff has worked tirelessly. Through generous donations of many great supporters and some initial clean up, Buffalo Mountain Camp was able to stabilize its base-camp area and continue its retreat ministry and general operations.

The way forward has proven to be a great challenge. Continuing the limited operation while conducting the intensive recovery planning effort has been a huge economic challenge that cannot be sustained. In order to conduct this study with thoroughness and to be the best stewards of our limited resources, the Board of Directors has voted to close all operations beginning January 1, 2014, until a renewed operation is designed, developed and funded.

The services of a professional consulting firm are being secured to evaluate our new business model strategy, do an extensive market research analysis, and conduct a fund development assessment.



Buffalo Mountain Camp lost the use of historic Allison Lodge during the August 2012 flood.

While this decision to close operations has been a painful one, we also move into this new phase of the journey with much hope. The support and love for Buffalo Mountain Camp in the Johnson City and Kingsport Districts continues to be strong. Opportunities for the district campers continue to be explored through our sister camps: Camp Wesley Woods, Camp Dickenson, and Camp Lookout.

We believe there is and always will be a need for camping ministry and the unique way camping shares the love of Christ and forms faithful disciples. We believe that God is with us and will guide us. We ask for your continued prayers, support, and participation in the coming months. Camp currently has surveys that can be filled out on our website and will have other upcoming opportunities for your important input. Thank you for your love for Buffalo Mountain Camp. This is not

the end. It is the beginning of something new.

You can keep up with the ongoing work through our website www.buffalomountaincamp.org and by clicking the "Like" button on our Facebook page.

Thank you for keeping this ministry and all involved on your hearts and in your prayers.

In Christ,

PAUL SEAY, Board Chair
JASON ONKS, Executive Director