

## Digest?

This is a mini print version of our regular news. For a free e-news subscription visit [thecalltwo.holston.org](http://thecalltwo.holston.org).

# The Call

## Digest

## Back page

Morristown District members raise money to dig wells in rural Tennessee.

September 15, 2013

[www.holston.org](http://www.holston.org)

## Henley bridge worker fights for job safety

**KNOXVILLE, Tenn.** -- By the time Dwayne Sweat began working on the Henley Street Bridge in July 2012, two construction workers had already been crushed to death at the site of workplace safety violations.

Two other construction workers had died within the last two years in Tennessee, all employed on projects involving the same company.

"The first thing I noticed was they were pushing employees at a frantic pace," says Sweat, age 34, speaking to church groups on Labor Day weekend, Sept. 1.

After five months on the job with Britton Bridge Company – working high above the Tennessee River on the 82-year-old downtown landmark – Dwayne Sweat decided to "lay down his tools" and speak out full-time against unsafe working conditions.

"If this is what God is calling me to do, I'm going to give it all I've got," said Sweat, a member at Emerald Avenue United Methodist Church.

Sweat was a speaker at an "Interfaith Worker Justice Sunday" service at his home church and later at Church of the Savior United Church of Christ. He was joined by Carlos Guzman, who also left his Henley Street renovation job to strike against Britton Bridge.

The Emerald Avenue service included a message on worker justice as a Biblical issue from the Rev. Jim Bailes, pastor, and historical information from the Rev. Jim Sessions, a retired United Methodist pastor and representative of Interfaith Worker Justice of East Tennessee.

"Dwayne personalized the issue for us by speaking about his experience on the bridge," Bailes said. "When he talks about being on the bridge with the crane, without safety belts, it just sends chills down the spine."

Sweat spoke of workers carrying heavy equipment over hazardous passages, high over the river and without lifelines. He said he and Guzman have had emotional meetings with families of employees who died.

John Womac, 25, was struck and killed by the arm of a back hoe in January 2011. Solin Estrada-Jimenez, 47, was crushed by falling concrete in May 2011. Britton Bridge was cited and fined \$31,000 for safety violations related to the two deaths by the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development, according to the *Knoxville News Sentinel*.

Another Britton Bridge construction worker was killed in Memphis in November 2010. A fourth died outside Chattanooga in March 2012.



Dwayne Sweat shows photos of dangerous safety violations on the Henley Street Bridge.

"I'm fighting with Britton Bridge to try to get them to change their ways so we can go back to work," Sweat said.

Together with Bridges to Justice, a worker and community alliance, Sweat is meeting with Tennessee Road Builders Association and other groups to advocate for safety and working conditions on construction projects. The role as advocate is a new one for a man whose experience is in construction.

"It's humbling," Sweat said. "But it's too coincidental to be coincidental ... All my fears and doubts will be taken care of by Him, if I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing."

"Emerald Avenue has a real connection with how faith and life go together," said Bailes, noting that many of his congregants are young adults struggling with low wages and employer issues. "Dwayne's experience in the church has helped him open his eyes and decide to do something about it." ■

From its start with John Wesley, the Methodist movement has focused particular attention on the concerns of workers. Justice, dignity and equality for workers are an integral part of the United Methodist Church's social teachings and heritage.

# 'Happy dance': Morristown churches give \$9,632 to dig wells in Hancock County

**M**orristown District members did a "happy dance" Aug. 21 after a four-night district revival, the Rev. Tom Ballard reports.

"In addition to the good preaching of folks who grew up in the district ... and our own Bishop [Mary Virginia] Taylor, we had set an offering goal of \$4,000 to dig a well in Hancock County through Jubilee Project," said Ballard, Morristown District superintendent.

"We thought it was an ambitious goal since last year over four nights, the total offering was \$2,800 for Jubilee but without a real focus," he added.

Attendance ranged from 107 the first night to 251 the final night.

Revival preachers for the week included the Rev. Ron Matthews at Liberty Hill UMC on Sunday night, the Rev. Nathan Malone at Mosheim Central UMC on Monday night, the Rev. Lauri Jo Cranford at Ebenezer (Talbot) UMC on Tuesday night, and Bishop Taylor at First Newport UMC on Wednesday night.

"We emphasized how local congregations help shape future leaders, even when they may not realize it," Ballard said. The revival theme was "Imagine."



Morristown District members dance after receiving an offering for wells in rural Tennessee.

The Sunday night offering was \$2,337 for the well, Ballard said. "We thought that perhaps we would be able to dig one well after all."

After the third night, participants exceeded their goal. "We challenged folks to dig a second well on the fourth night. Thinking that we would come within a few hundred dollars, again we were overwhelmed."

On the final night with Taylor's preaching, \$1,000 from the Holston Conference Foundation, and stories from Jubilee Project, "we were able to announce a single night's offering of over \$5,100, for a grand total for the week of \$9,632," Ballard said. "We are on our way to digging the third well."

Two members of the revival planning team said that if enough was raised to dig the second well, they would do "the happy dance," Ballard said. "It wasn't a pretty dance but it was happy, and we give God thanks for this bright spot in Morristown District."

Morristown District is home to 109 churches, served by 75 pastors. The churches are located in east Tennessee's Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson and Sevier Counties. ■

## HOLSTON CALENDAR

**Holston Secretaries Retreat/ Sept. 19-20:** Church secretaries are invited to the Holston Conference Secretaries Association meeting at Holiday Inn Convention Center, Sept. 19-20 in Pigeon Forge, Tenn. For more information, visit [HCSA.holston.org](http://HCSA.holston.org) or contact JaNae' Swanson or Karen Wright at (865) 690-4080.

**Children's Ministry Training & Retreat/ Sept. 20-21:** Children's ministry workers and volunteers are invited to Camp Wesley Woods in Townsend, Tenn., Sept. 20-21 for the fall session

of "LEAD Kids." For more information, visit [HolstonKids.org](http://HolstonKids.org) or contact Gaye King at (865) 690-4080.

**ETSU Wesley Foundation Auction & Barbecue/ Sept. 28:** College students are hosting a fundraiser for their campus ministry, 12:30 to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 28, at the ETSU Wesley Foundation, 1100 Seminole Drive, Johnson City, Tenn. Adults: \$10. Students: \$5. Call (423) 929-2121 or visit [ETSUWesley.com](http://ETSUWesley.com). ■

**The Call** is the news source for Holston Conference. • The Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church includes 897 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia. • Our resident bishop is Mary Virginia Taylor. • Our executive assistant is the Rev. Carol Wilson. • Our office address is P.O. Box 850, 217 South Rankin Road, Alcoa, TN 37701. • (865) 690-4080 • [www.Holston.org](http://www.Holston.org) • [thecall@holston.org](mailto:thecall@holston.org) or [info@holston.org](mailto:info@holston.org) • [Facebook.Holston.org](https://www.facebook.com/Holston.org) • [@TheCall\\_Holston](https://twitter.com/TheCall_Holston) • Free e-news: [thecalltwo.holston.org](http://thecalltwo.holston.org)