

Digest?

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The Call

Digest

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How to keep a good thing going? UMW finds hope in emerging groups.

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'Hands-on' mission supplies arrive in Zimbabwe, Liberia

Holston Conference church members are rejoicing to learn that "Hands-on Mission Project" items collected by congregations in May and June have arrived in Zimbabwe and Liberia.

The Rev. Mike Sluder, associate director of connectional ministries, was visiting the Ishe Anesu Project in Sakubva, Mutare, Zimbabwe, when the second of two shipments arrived in late August.

"Scores of children showed up to cheer and help carry buckets that in some cases weighed as much as they did," Sluder said.

Before the doors of the shipping container were opened, "the children gathered and joined together in singing songs and praying prayers of thankfulness for their friends in Holston Conference who love them so much without ever having met them," he added.

Workers unloaded canned ham, dried beans, backpacks, notebook paper, shampoo, washclothes and other supplies for storing and sustaining children and senior adults for the year to come. The supplies were collected by Holston churches and blessed at their Annual Conference meeting on June 10.

Earlier in August, supplies from Holston also arrived in Liberia, reported Helen Evans-Roberts, director of general education and ministry for the Liberia Annual Conference.

According to a report by Julu Swenn, the food buckets and school supplies will be distributed among 16 United Methodist Church schools and six orphanages, while the health kits were sent to the United Methodist hospital in Ganta City.

"I hope there will be medicines and materials in the kits that will help our health workers at the Ganta Hospital in this time of crisis," said Evans-Roberts, referring to the wave of Ebola infections and deaths in the West African nation.

The students in Liberia will not receive the school kits until schools reopen, Swenn reported. However, church workers planned to immediately distribute the food buckets to senior citizens who are homebound or in hospice.

Some of the food buckets were also distributed among the staff of the United Methodist Church's Central Office "to meet some of their food needs amidst the Ebola crisis and



In June, buckets are packed in Maryville, Tenn., for shipping to Africa.



In August, the food buckets arrive in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

the recent State of Emergency which is now threatening food security," according to Swenn.

In June, churches celebrated a record-breaking load of supplies – valued at \$194,188 -- to send to Africa as part of Holston Conference's annual "Hands-on Mission Project."

Holston Conference includes 887 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia. For more information, visit Missions.Holston.org or Mike Sluder at (865) 690-4080. ■

How to keep a good thing going? UMW finds hope in new groups

Here's what the United Methodist Women look like in Pearisburg, Va.: Five teenage girls meet after school, usually in Starbucks or a Mexican restaurant. They share a snack and devotion. Then they talk about their next outing, which could mean visiting a nursing home, providing child care for a church meeting, or collecting cleaning products for flood victims.

Here's what the United Methodist Women look like in Knoxville, Tenn.:

Ten working professional women in their late 30s and early 40s meet in the evenings -- sometimes in homes, sometimes in restaurants. They discuss their families and church news. Then they make plans to collect toilet paper, shampoo, or other necessities for a homeless project known as the "Sharing Shop."

These aren't typical United Methodist Women groups in Holston Conference -- but they could be, says Lynice Broyles, the brand-new president of Holston's UMW. Broyles is a member at Sulphur Springs United Methodist Church in Jonesborough, Tenn.

"We need to step up and say, 'Come be our guest. We want you to experience what we have experienced all these years,'" Broyles said.

When Holston UMW gathered for their Annual Meeting this year on Sept. 13-14 in Lake Junaluska, N.C., attendance was 285. In 2013, it was 400. Broyles, who attended her first local meeting at the age of 22 in 1962, remembers when the annual gathering attracted 700.

"Families are involved in so many activities, and women have to get home from work, cook supper, and get this one to basketball and that one to soccer," Broyles said. "They don't have time for meetings."

However, most women have the need for connection, and many women will be inspired by a common cause that helps other people, Broyles said.

To invite more participation, the international organization encourages flexibility for local UMW groups as well as online groups. Cherokee United Methodist Church in Johnson City, Tenn., is one of the first Holston churches to try the online community, Broyles said.

Suzanne Sherman, age 38, is co-leader of the Suzanna Wes-



Lynice Broyles (above, left), president of Holston United Methodist Women, and Willela Douhat enjoy a moment at their organization's Annual Meeting.

ley Circle, one of 13 UMW circles at Church Street United Methodist Church in Knoxville. Sherman's group bucks tradition by not meeting in a "dimly lit church room" or having a set monthly meeting time, she said. Instead, they meet in one of the members' homes or restaurants and confer on the next convenient gathering.

"When you look at the United Methodist Women historically and all the good that they have done is this world, it's amazing," says Sherman. "Being part of something that big is awe-inspiring."

In 2013, Holston United Methodist Women gave \$290,976 to support their organization's international program, which advocates for social-justice issues such as domestic violence and immigration rights and supports ministries such as Holston's own Wesley House Community Center and Bethlehem Center. That total doesn't include giving and volunteering women did locally -- including \$20,918 donated to Imagine No Malaria in 2013 and \$5,863 donated this year to support language interpretation for Holston Hispanic groups, Broyles said.

For more information, visit UnitedMethodistWomen.org or HolstonUMW.org. ■

The Call is the news source for Holston Conference. • The Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church includes 887 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 • thecall@holston.org or 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