

Digest?

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The Call

Digest

Back page

Tennessee Wesleyan professor lives long enough to see Holston history book published.

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Kingsport church celebrates mission

KINGSPORT, Tenn. -- From near and far, about 20 missionaries, speakers and craft-sellers came to the "Missions Celebration" organized by First Broad Street United Methodist Church for the 18th consecutive year on Feb. 21-23.

It was a weekend for stories, music, prayer, workshops, exhibits, crafts and meals. On Friday and Saturday, about 300 church members, staff, volunteers and guests gathered among flags of many nations to learn how their past contributions had changed lives. They heard about new opportunities and ongoing needs in local, national, and global mission fields.

On Sunday morning, 856 came to worship at First Broad Street and pledged \$82,500 in missions giving for 2014.

Keynote speakers included the Rev. Jerry Russell, senior pastor at Fairview United Methodist Church in Maryville, Tenn., and Bishop Paul Leeland, resident bishop of the Alabama-West Florida Conference.

Russell spoke during Saturday lunch as well as at two of the five Sunday worship services. He referred to the weekend's theme, "In His Steps," as he told his own story of going on his first mission trip to build an orphanage in Bogota, Colombia, in 1966.

He said his "heart was broken" by the love of a little boy, Roberto, who slept on the floor next to him so that Russell could sleep in a bed.

"I saw something bigger than myself," Russell said. "We don't need the Dalai Lama to tell us that focus on 'self' is the center of our problems in this world. Jesus said something about dying to self, didn't he?"

Since then, Russell has served as a missionary in Bolivia and Argentina and has led more than 120 short-term mission teams for his own church, the Holston Annual Conference, and World Evangelism.

Bishop Leeland spoke during the Saturday evening meal as well as at three Sunday-morning services. He said his nightly prayer is, "Lord, keep me from being seduced by power, position, influence, or entitlement."

He said there is a big difference between pastors who "chase their passions" and pastors who "chase their pensions."

"There is a real difference in being 'in God to serve the world' than being 'in the world to serve God,'" he said. "We need the passion of the Holy Spirit to remember that we serve one who stripped himself to serve the world."

Leeland was elected bishop in 2008 and spoke at Holston



The Rev. Jerry Russell explains how children in Zimbabwe will appreciate canned ham and other supplies sent by Holston Conference through the annual Hands-on Mission Project.

Conference's "Abolishing Poverty" conference in 2011.

Maria Humbane, missionary from Ishe Anesu, spoke on Saturday morning and led workshops for children and youth. For more than 15 years, Holston Conference has collected supplies for the children of Ishe Anesu through the "Hands-on Mission Project."

"You are the light of the world," Humbane told First Broad Street members. "You do so much for us."

Humbane said she was hungry as a child in a home where her father had died and her mother worked long hours. "I came home from school so hungry. Bread was like gold in the house ... I said that when I grow up, I'm going to be someone and feed hungry children."

Music was provided by different groups. On Friday night, a choir of 4th and 5th graders from nearby Jackson Elementary came to sing and express appreciation for First Broad Street's partnership ministry.

To show their gratitude, the school raised \$1,000 for Imagine No Malaria in First Broad Street's honor.

"This is a God weekend," said the Rev. Mickey Rainwater, senior pastor, accepting the gift. ■

Teacher lives to see Holston history book published

ATHENS, Tenn. – In January, Durwood Dunn was too sick to meet an interviewer in person, nor was he able to talk or eat.

However, he responded quickly and thoughtfully to emailed questions about his fourth and final book, “The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism,” published in late 2013.

“Bishop Asbury warned Methodists to separate their faith from politics,” Dunn said in an email, “but few Methodists on either side heeded this warning.”



Durwood Dunn

In the early morning hours of Feb. 15, 2014, the Tennessee Wesleyan College history professor died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as A.L.S. or Lou Gehrig's disease. He was 70 years old.

Colleagues say he was ready to pass on, although his illness had been diagnosed less than a year ago in April 2013.

“A.L.S. is a terrible disease – he said ‘the sooner the better,’” said the Rev.

William McDonald, chair of religion

and philosophy at the United Methodist-related college where Dunn taught for 39 years. “But Durwood was also ready because he had a firm, abiding faith. He was Methodist down to his boots.”

Dunn said something similar in his January emails, when asked about his faith:

“I am a devout Christian and have always believed Methodism's particular grace lies in the lives of its members – fine people I have known throughout my life.”

Dunn did not have immediate family but was close to his niece's family in Florida. He was the son of Charles Dunn, the first ranger in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

His ancestors were early settlers in an isolated Tennessee valley that inspired Dunn's first book, “Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937.”

Published in 1988, the book is now in its 12th printing and is the best-selling book in University of Tennessee Press history, according to Scot Danforth, director.

“The Cades Cove book is really considered to be a foundational work for Appalachian studies,” Danforth said.

Danforth worked with Dunn on his next three books, but it was the fourth and last book the author anticipated most – after researching since the 1990s and completing before his diagnosis.

“The hardest book to write was the last one,” the award-winning author responded in January. “I had to search high and low for local records, quarterly meeting minutes, or journals to see what was happening in Holston Methodism at the grassroots level.”

McDonald describes the Civil War book as a “painful part of our history.”

“He really zooms in on the people and events and how it played out in Holston when the Methodist church split over slavery,” said McDonald. “I once said the subtitle could be ‘Sinners and Saints.’”

While local pastors in the pre-Civil War 1800s tended to be abolitionists, the more educated, professionalized clergy identified with the Confederate cause and supported slavery, the book shows. Dunn dedicated the book to the “memory of the antislavery local preachers of Holston Conference who remained fiercely loyal to the Union.”

Friends and colleagues remember Dunn as a private, scholarly man who cared deeply about his church and students.

“He never missed a Sunday, until last summer when he got sick and could no longer sit,” said the Rev. Steve Brown, pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church in Athens, where Dunn was a member since 1984.

He grew up in Chattanooga, Tenn., where his father served as superintendent of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. When Dunn was 17, his father retired and the family moved to Townsend, Tenn. The teenager transferred his membership to Tuckaleechee United Methodist Church.

Dunn completed his bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He taught at another United Methodist-related college in Holston – Hiwassee -- for five years before beginning at Tennessee Wesleyan in 1975.

The history teacher was committed to Tennessee Wesleyan and believed it had a mission to provide a liberal-arts education to students from the region, especially first-generation college students, his friends said.

Dunn's last wish was to “live long enough to see my book published,” Brown remembers.

In November, after a few tense weeks when Dunn's illness was progressing and the publishing process “wasn't happening as quickly as I wanted it to,” Danforth was finally able to deliver advance copies to Dunn's home in Athens. It was a very happy day for the author and history teacher, friends said. ■