

Digest?

This is a mini print version of our regular news. For a free e-news subscription visit thecalltwo.holston.org.

The Call

Digest

Back page

Seventeen Holston groups receive Change for Children grants.

May 1, 2014

www.holston.org

Holston will take education offering

Every story that Brett Burris tells ends up being a story about Africa. At least, that's what his three sons say.

That's because Burris is passionate about South Sudan.

"I talk about it constantly," he says. "God put it on my heart a year ago. It consumes me. I think about it all the time."

In September 2013, Burris traveled to South Sudan with a team from the Chattanooga District. The people he met and the things he saw changed his life.

The experience also made him an advocate for this year's Annual Conference missions offering.

"The children are so thirsty for school," Burris said. "They will walk miles to attend a school that's essentially held under a tree or thatched roof. Then they'll sit on what looks like a split rail for hours to soak up any knowledge the teachers can give them."

Since 2005, Holston Conference has invested about \$2.7 million to develop and support schools, churches, an orphanage, wells, nutrition, health, agriculture, pastors and leaders in South Sudan. Church members gave generously to help Holston Conference fulfill a 2008 covenant partnership with South Sudan, formed through the East Africa Conference.

Now, the 897 churches of Holston Conference are joining in an offering to develop education in South Sudan. The goal is \$175,000. The offering will be collected throughout May and celebrated during the June 8-11 Holston Annual Conference held in Lake Junaluska, N.C.

"South Sudan has one of the weakest education systems in the world because it is the newest nation in the world," said the Rev. Tom Hancock, chair of Holston's Missions Ministry Team.

"Fifty percent of South Sudan's population is under the age of 18. Fifty percent of those children are under the age of five. So when you invest in the education of South Sudan, you really do invest in the future of a nation."

Burris is one of many Holston members who struggle with how education may be taken for granted in the U.S., while children in South

Sudan yearn for an opportunity to learn.

"People ask me, 'Why do we go there and do this when there is so much need in this country?'" said Burris, a member at Burks United Methodist Church in Chattanooga.

His response is that there are so many "safety nets" for children in the U.S., such as welfare and other social programs, public schools and financial aid for college.

"The children in Sudan don't have safety nets," he said. "We are their safety nets."

Holston Conference has helped develop 15 schools in the Yei District of South Sudan, where Holston's own Rev. Fred Dearing serves as a United Methodist district superintendent. The schools are connected to 15 churches, five of which have partnered with districts or churches in Holston Conference.

The offering collected by Holston churches in May and June 2014 "is not a brick and mortar project," Hancock says.

"This offering is about supplies, scholarships, resources, and training to strengthen the education system," Hancock said.

"We have an opportunity to help build up a new nation," Hancock said. "We have an opportunity to be part of another miracle in South Sudan."

To give to the Annual Conference missions offering, write a check to your local church with "South Sudan Education" on the memo line, or give online at ACoffering.Holston.org. ■



"The children are so thirsty for school," says Brett Burris. "They'll walk miles to attend a school that's essentially held under a tree or thatched roof."

17 groups receive children's ministry grants

Sixteen local churches and one community center were recipients in the most recent round of Change for Children grants, the Holston Conference Children's Ministry Team recently announced.

Checks totaling \$36,978 have been mailed to the following children's ministry groups:

- **Hunt Memorial UMC**, "Chief's Kids," Abingdon District -- \$2,500
- **John Wesley UMC**, "Support Bristol Children," Abingdon District -- \$1,000
- **First Pennington Gap UMC**, "Food for Their Souls," Big Stone Gap District -- \$2,500
- **Hurst UMC**, "Hurst Wednesday Night Program," Chattanooga District -- \$1,665
- **Tyner UMC**, "TASK," Chattanooga District -- \$2,500
- **First Dayton UMC**, "Wednesday Night Live," Cleveland District -- \$2,500
- **Cherokee UMC**, "C4K Community Kids Activity Club," Johnson City District -- \$2,500
- **Cassidy UMC**, "Backpack Ministry," Kingsport District -- \$2,500
- **Mafair UMC**, "Mafair Kidz in the Community," Kingsport District -- \$2,500
- **Cokesbury UMC**, "Susannah's House," Knoxville District -- \$2,500
- **Middlebrook Pike UMC**, "Kid's Hope, USA," Knoxville District -- \$1,500
- **Wesley House Community Center**, "S.T.E.P." Knoxville District -- \$2,500
- **Oakland UMC**, "Day Camp," Maryville District -- \$2,000
- **St. John UMC**, "Rock Out!" Maryville District -- \$2,000
- **Sycamore Tree UMC**, "Children's Day Camp," Maryville District -- \$2,500
- **Randolph Avenue UMC**, "Character Matters Most," Wytheville District -- \$2,500
- **Willis UMC**, "Little Hands, Big Hearts," Wytheville District -- \$1,313

In addition, the committee recently awarded \$22,000 to Ishe Anesu Project in Zimbabwe.

Change for Children funds are collected by Holston churches throughout the year and used to support children's ministries. The grant guidelines call for applications for new and existing ministries with economically disadvantaged children and their families.

For more information, contact Connectional Ministries at connectionalministries@holston.org or (865) 690-4080. ■

To give to Ishe Anesu, write a check to your local church with "Ishe Anesu Advance #130710" on the memo line. To participate in the "Hands-on Mission Project," talk to your pastor.

HOLSTON CALENDAR

Peace With Justice Reception/ May 13: Holston members are invited to meet the conference's new Peace With Justice coordinator, Sheila Michel, at 3 p.m., May 13, on the Alex Haley Farm, home of the Children's Defense Fund, in Clinton, Tenn. For more information, contact Susan Montgomery at (865) 405-2653 or smonty924@earthlink.net.

Early Response Team (ERT) Training/ May 17: Holston's disaster response coordinators will be conducting basic training for aspiring ERT members. The training will be held 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., May 17 at Cokesbury Center in Knoxville, Tenn. For more information, email Ralph Brock at edwinb2756@bellsouth.net or call Jim Fetzer at (865) 805-8290.

UMW Spiritual Enrichment/ May 17-18: The Holston Conference United Methodist Women will join for their annual Spiritual Enrichment event, May 17-18, at Lake Junaluska, N.C. For more information, contact Donna Tisdale at donnatis@bellsouth.net or (423) 476-5845.

Annual Conference/ June 8-11: Clergy and lay members attending Annual Conference in Lake Junaluska, N.C., should register online at AC.Holston.org by May 23. Participants in the June 10 "Education for South Sudan" 5K Run/Walk -- as well as parents seeking child care during Annual Conference-- should also register at AC.Holston.org by May 23. For more information, contact Connectional Ministries at (865) 690-4080 or connectionalministries@holston.org. ■

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 • 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