

Digest?

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The Call

Digest

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Maria Humbane, missionary from Zimbabwe, will speak in Holston churches during February and March.

December 1, 2013

www.holston.org

Bound for prison, man finds church family

Bernard Addison, age 63, is remembered by many as a successful person. He worked his way through college to become an award-winning news reporter followed by an award-winning businessman.

When the Rev. John Gargis met him in summer 2012, Addison was homeless and facing prison. He stored his awards in the trunk of his car.

“Bernard said to me, ‘I’d like to join your church, but I’ve got these charges pending,’” says Gargis, remembering the first visits Addison made to Lincoln Park United Methodist Church in Knoxville, Tenn.

“I said, ‘Bernard, I would rather you be a member of our church in jail than not to be a member.’”

Today, Addison is seven months into his 46-month sentence for conspiracy to commit mail fraud. He’ll spend the holidays behind bars in an Atlanta prison camp.

“I depend on God to get me through the day,” Addison said in a recent email. “I trust in God that I will return home, that I do not need to fear for my safety or the future.”

He also has his fellow inmates, who “look out for each other,” his pastor, and his new church friends.

“He’s got these sweet older church members who fell in love with him, who pray for him and send him magazines,” says Gargis.

Pastor Gargis first met Addison at Knox Area Rescue Ministries (KARM), where Gargis is also director of development. The federal defender handling Addison’s case helped him get into the homeless shelter shortly after he was arrested and charged.

A native of Memphis, Addison worked his way through the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in communications in 1977. He was hired as a news reporter at two radio stations, where he won awards for his public affairs and political reporting.

In 1994, Addison left broadcasting for insurance and investments, where he also excelled. He was married for a while but never had children.

“I pursued worldly goals like making more money, getting a better place to live, buying better clothes or better cars,” Addison says. “In the end none of this stuff really matters.”

In 2009, the insurance company where Addison worked as an office manager closed. “At the age of 60 I started to search for a job.”

He searched for two years without luck. In May 2011 Addison suffered a mild stroke. While he was hospitalized, he lost the home he rented with a friend. Out of desperation, he accepted a job offer from a man named Frank.

Addison’s new job was to send welcoming kits with surveys and money orders to “secret shoppers” who joined Frank’s business. The business was a scam, as Addison learned when a postal inspector came to his motel room. Addison resigned and signed a “cease and desist” letter.

Two months later, Frank contacted Addison again, saying that he had cleared up the situation. “In my heart, I knew he was lying,” Addison said, “but I had \$800 left and was concerned about being homeless. So I started work again.”

In April 2012, Addison was arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit mail fraud. He checked into KARM, where he followed through on a promise to God to be baptized. He also met a new friend, who kept telling him about his great church.

“He said it was like a country church in the city with an older congregation,” Addison said. “I finally went and fell in love with Pastor John and the Lincoln Park congregation.”

In February 2013, Addison became a church member and helped his pastor serve Holy Communion. On April 1, the day after Easter, he reported to the U.S. Penitentiary in Atlanta. His release date is April 2016.

“He was at peace when he left,” Gargis says. “He was more at peace than we were.”

For the next three years, Addison’s home is a prison camp, where he lives in a dormitory with 53 other men. “Most of these men were businessmen or other professionals,” he says, “so it’s a good crowd. None of them are violent offenders.”

He says he is thankful for many things.

“The Bible is a great source of comfort,” he writes. “And I thank God for the brothers and sisters in Christ at Lincoln Park, for their prayers and their concerns.”

“Guys like Bernard teach us that there are no categories,” Gargis said. “We develop categories like homeless, prisoner, prostitute, and drug addict. When you hear their stories or get involved in the messiness of their lives, you realize there is only one category: human being.”

This truth leads to the Gospels, says Gargis, “where we are taught to love others as Christ loved us.” ■

Zimbabwe missionary available to speak to churches Feb. 12-March 13

The woman who dropped to her knees at Bishop James Swanson's feet is returning to Holston Conference.

Maria Humbane, director of the Ishe Anesu Project in Zimbabwe, will be visiting Holston churches Feb. 12 through March 13. Her purpose is to thank church members for the supplies sent for the children in her care over the past 15 years.

"Thank you so much. The Hands-on Project is very helpful and useful for our daily consumption," Humbane said in a recent telephone interview. "We are able to feed the children two meals a day. They now look much healthier than they did before."

Holston Conference has had a long relationship with the Ishe Anesu Project, sending food, school, and health supplies to Sakubva, Mutare, Zimbabwe through the Hands-on Mission Project each spring. At Annual Conference, Holston members applaud and pray as two or three tractor-trailers stuffed with supplies pass through Lake Junaluska on their way to the Charleston seaport.

In 2007, Maria Humbane crossed the ocean to attend the Holston Annual Conference, dropping to her knees on the Stuart Auditorium stage to thank Bishop James Swanson and the conference for their annual donations.

Although Humbane has returned to the U.S. since, many still remember Humbane's 2007 expression of gratitude, said the Rev. Jerry Russell, senior pastor at Fairview United Methodist Church in Maryville, Tenn.

Russell is now scheduling Humbane's Feb. 12-March

13 speaking appearances at Holston churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia during her month-long stay. (Call Becky Sewell at 865-983-2080 to reserve a time.)

Congregations will learn how their donations of food, supplies and money have helped the 50 students who live on the Ishe Anesu campus.

"We don't have money to buy meat and fish so the food in the buckets is very helpful," Humbane said. "We alternate the beans and ham."

"She makes it last for 12 months. It's unbelievable," Russell said, explaining how Humbane uses the donated food. "She takes a deep breath whenever that new shipment comes through each year."

An additional 30 students receive aid or scholarships for training or college education through Ishe Anesu. Additional money and laptop computers are needed to help keep the students in school, Russell said. "Ten years ago, students didn't need laptops. Now, that's how they do their assignments."

Humbane said her main message to Holston Conference is to express appreciation. "Thank you for giving to people you haven't even met. We know we are working with gifted hearts who understand the needs of other countries. Thank you for thinking of us, and may God bless you." ■



Maria Humbane

HOLSTON CALENDAR

Resurrection/ Jan. 17-19, 24-26: About 11,000 youth and counselors are expected to attend Holston's annual winter spiritual weekend at Gatlinburg Convention Center in Gatlinburg, Tenn. For more information, visit HolstonYouth.com (click on "Events") or call the Youth Ministries office at (865) 690-4080.

Human Relations Sunday/ Jan. 19: One of six Special Sundays in the United Methodist Church, offerings taken on Human Relations Day strengthen outreach to communities in the United

States and Puerto Rico, encouraging social justice and work with at-risk youth. Give by writing a check to your local church with "Human Relations Sunday" on the memo line, or visit UMCgiving.org. (Give on Jan. 19, today, or any other day.)

Divine Rhythm/ Jan. 31-Feb. 2: About 600 young adults (ages 18-35) are expected to attend Holston's annual winter spiritual weekend at Mills Auditorium in Gatlinburg, Tenn. Visit DivineRhythm.com or call the Young Adult Ministries office at (865) 690-4080. ■

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) • Twitter @TheCall_Holston • Free e-news: thecalltwo.holston.org