

Digest?

It's the short, print version of our regular e-news. For a free subscription, visit thecalltwo.holston.org.

The Call

Digest

Back page

Churches join to feed Thanksgiving dinner to 1,300 hungry neighbors in Grayson County, Va.

November 21, 2012

www.holston.org

Ready for a 'different kind of Christmas'?

June is not that far away, and Holston Conference has a lot of work to do before reaching its goal of saving 100,000 lives through Imagine No Malaria.

Typically, Holston raises about \$125,000 for its Annual Conference mission initiative. Because the 2013 goal is eight times that amount, churches aren't waiting to get started. When Advent begins on Dec. 2, many congregations will focus on a "different kind of Christmas" that also gives life to brothers and sisters in Africa.

"We are anticipating a Christmas miracle," said Dianna Cantler, director of connections ministries at **Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church in Johnson City, Tenn.**

Munsey Memorial will use a "Rethink Church" series, based on a book by the Rev. Mike Slaughter, to challenge members to "reclaim Christmas."

"Each family and individual in the congregation has been challenged to not just give an offering but to make a sacrifice in order to save a life," Cantler said. "We have been challenged to give as much toward the 'Miracle Christmas Offering' as we spend on gifts."

Families may decide to buy fewer gifts, while others might buy smaller gifts and give the additional amount to Imagine No Malaria, Cantler said. "For my family, that means, instead of spending \$50 on someone, I would spend \$25 and give \$25 to the offering."

Munsey's Christmas Eve offering will be devoted to the Imagine No Malaria goal of ultimately eliminating death by the mosquito-borne disease in Africa, Cantler said.

Peck's Memorial United Methodist Church in Maryville, Tenn., will take the same approach, said the Rev. Tim Jones.

"I am preaching a sermon series based on Mike Slaughter's books, 'A Different Kind of Christmas' and 'Christmas is Not Your Birthday,'" Jones says. "This particular series steers us away from the commercialism of Christmas and points us to giving to and serving those around us."

Peck's Memorial will take a "Be Someone's Miracle" offering for Imagine No Malaria on Dec. 16, Jones said. Church members will be challenged to give the same amount of money to the offering as they spend on other Christmas gifts.

"I have also stressed they shouldn't spend as much as they

have in the past," Jones added. "I am asking them to get creative and give more meaningful gifts to their family and friends – by making gifts or serving in helpful ways."

At **Cherokee United Methodist Church in Johnson City, Tenn.,** the Rev. Andrew Amodei will also use the Rethink Church series and ask members to give an amount equal to their gift-spending to the Imagine No Malaria offering on Christmas Eve.

"Last year, we gave our Christmas Eve offering to Greene County tornado victims and raised \$12,000," Amodei said. "This year we hope to give even more."

Congregations at **Asbury United Methodist Church in Greeneville, Tenn.,** and **First United Methodist Church in Marion, Va.,** will be encouraged to give an "alternative gift" to one of a few choices, including the no-malaria campaign.

"We will honor Jesus' birth by participating less in the commercialism and indulgence of the season so that we can do more to honor Jesus in the season," said the Rev. Jonathan Jonas, pastor at First Marion.

First Marion will collect their special offering on Sunday, Dec. 23. Asbury will ask members to choose the recipients of their alternative gifts by Dec. 12.

Members at **First United Methodist Church in Cleveland, Tenn.,** will take an offering for Imagine No Malaria on Dec. 24, said the Rev. Tom Seay.

"We expect to reach our goal of 500 lives saved (\$5,000) by Christmas Eve, so we are going to ask God to bless us enough to save another 500 by Annual Conference," Seay said. ■



To give to Imagine No Malaria, write a check to your local church with "INM #684" on the memo line. For more information about Holston's campaign to save 100,000 lives, contact LeRae Collins at (865) 293-4133 or leraecollins@holston.org.

Churches serve hot turkey dinner to 1,300

INDEPENDENCE, Va. -- It started seven years ago as a nice little church project: Cooking and delivering Thanksgiving dinner to about 75 neighbors.

By Saturday, Nov. 17, the project had grown to a giant community event, with more than 10 churches and other groups joining to provide 1,300 hot meals to Grayson County, Va.

"It got too big to do it in the church," said the Rev. Terri Johnson Gregory, pastor of First United Methodist Church of Independence, which for the first six years orchestrated the meal from the church kitchen.

This year, the massive meal was put together and rolled out from Grayson County High School. About 60 volunteers started chopping onions and celery for the dressing at 2 p.m. on Friday afternoon. By 11 a.m. Saturday, the first meals were ready to be delivered to nursing homes, apartment complexes, and other homes suggested by the Grayson County Department of Social Services.

Volunteers also delivered meals to families served by First United Methodist Church's "Lamb's Table" community meal on Tuesday nights and Grayson County Backpack Ministry, which provides food to schoolchildren on weekends and holidays.

"The economy went down and more

people found out about it," said Mary Young, explaining how the annual event grew to be so large. "It's for whoever needs it. You could also call and request a meal for yourself."

The meal required 36 turkeys, 49 gallons of green beans, 42 gallons of gravy, 25 pounds of celery, 25 pounds of onions, and 10 bushels of potatoes, Young said. About \$2,700 to buy ingredients was donated by churches and individuals.

Volunteers decided that the "least desirable" chore was peeling potatoes, which started at 6 a.m. on Saturday. The "most desirable" was delivering the meals to neighbors.

"We're just friends helping friends," said Dennis Harrington, who delivered Thanksgiving dinner to Penn Court apartments and Grayson Manor apartments -- the same places he delivers meals every Tuesday night for "Lamb's Table."

"We couldn't do this without the help of the other churches," said Sue Bryant, a member at First United Methodist. "It really brings the community together, and we enjoy being together."

Participating churches included Bridle Creek UMC, Oak Grove UMC, Bethany UMC, Glenwood UMC, Elk Creek UMC Circuit, Flat Rock UMC, Longview UMC, and Grant/Flat Ridge UMC. ■



Charles Sturgill (left) and Dennis Harrington carry out turkey dinners for delivery to nursing homes.

Cokesbury store closures: 'Financially necessary'

(UMNS) The United Methodist Publishing House board's decision to close its 57 Cokesbury brick-and-mortar stores — including 19 seminary stores — will affect about 285 full-time and part-time employees. The news, announced Nov. 5, has dismayed United Methodist customers.

Neil Alexander, United Methodist Publishing House president and publisher, described the redirecting of resources as a needed

change in an increasingly digital landscape.

"Having the stores close and the staff leave is wrenching and deeply disappointing," he said. "But as painful as it is, it is also financially and practically necessary."

The Publishing House has launched the initiative CokesburyNext to redirect resources to Cokesbury.com and extend the hours of the Cokesbury Call Center (1-800-672-1789) to 24 hours a day six days a week by early 2013. Until the end of the year, the call center's hours extend to 10 p.m. Eastern Time. Cokesbury also plans to expand its presence at special church events such as annual conference sessions and vacation Bible school showcases. ■

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