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The Call

Digest

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Tazewell pastor shares education story. United Methodist Church in Latvia struggles to grow without funding.

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Connecticut children remembered through INM gifts

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. -- A congregation's Christmas "miracle offering" and the shooting tragedy in Newton, Conn., have begun to weave together as parents at the church are challenging each other to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children.

"We cannot save the children that were killed, but we can save another from dying," said Monica Jones, a schoolteacher and member at Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church. "Our family is committed to saving 26 lives, and we challenge others to do the same."

As part of the Holston Conference's "Imagine No Malaria" initiative to save 100,000 lives in Africa by June 2013, Munsey Memorial is encouraging its members to give the gift of Christmas with \$10 to save a child from death by malaria.

"What if, instead of buying another sweater or gadget, we give the money we would spend on a gift to the Imagine No Malaria campaign?" asked the Rev. Brian Taylor, Munsey senior pastor. "We would save one or more lives and for those of us who already have so much, we will not miss the addition

to our wardrobe or toy boxes."

The Christmas Eve offering at Munsey has traditionally gone to support a special ministry or organization within the community, Taylor said. In 2012, the congregation is challenged to raise \$16,000 to save 1,600 lives from a deadly mosquito-borne disease.

Munsey parents are stepping up to help meet the goal in remembrance of 20 children killed in the Connecticut school shooting on Dec. 14. In addition, Munsey will ring its church bells 27 times on Friday, Dec. 21, at 9:30 a.m.

The bells will be heard throughout downtown Johnson City as they memorialize the 20 children and seven adults killed one week earlier in the shooting rampage, Taylor said.

"We hope people will hear the bells, stop and take a moment to pray for the families and community affected by the shootings," Taylor said. ■

To give to Imagine No Malaria, write a check to your local church with "INM #684" on the memo line.

BRIEFS: CHERRY SELECTED AS NEW TREASURER



Rick Cherry

ALCOA, Tenn. -- Rick Cherry, Holston Conference's long-time controller, has been selected as director of administrative services and treasurer.

The announcement was made Dec. 13 by Terry Muse, president of the Council on Finance and Administration, and Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor.

Cherry, age 47, has served as conference controller since 2002. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee

at Knoxville, majoring in accounting.

"It is apparent that Mr. Cherry has earned the trust and support of many conference leaders and staff during his service to Holston Conference over the past decade," said Mike Eastridge, Personnel Resources Committee chair. "We look forward to his leadership in this new role in financial administration in the years to come."

Cherry is a member at Fountain City United Methodist

Church in Knoxville, Tenn., and has two sons, Peyton, age 16, and Paxton, age 13. He follows John Tate, who resigned in August.

- **Bishop Mack Stokes**, age 100, died Nov. 21 in Perdido Key, Fla. He was a member of the Holston Conference from 1951 to 1972, when he was elected to the episcopacy and assigned to the Jackson, Miss., area.
- **Rev. Darryl Ross**, age 73, died Nov. 21 in Knoxville, Tenn. He was the pastor at St. Paul East United Methodist Church in Knoxville.
- **Sen. Daniel K. Inouye**, a lifelong member of the Methodist tradition, died Dec. 17 in Washington, D.C., at the age of 88. The U.S. senator from Hawaii was remembered by United Methodists as a World War II hero and fellow church member respected for his integrity and commitment to fairness.
- **Rev. Pamela Dawn Chesser**, Hiwassee College chaplain, has been selected as director of preaching ministries for the General Board of Discipleship in Nashville, Tenn. ■

Pastor's story: 'Huge blessing' from student fund

By Shannon Marie Berry

The last few weeks have been busy for all of us, so it's easy to understand how United Methodist Student Sunday could have slipped by in late November without much thought.

But here's why I hope you'll consider giving to this initiative anyway.

I did not grow up United Methodist. I was not introduced to the United Methodist Church until 2001 when I was married and had a child on the way. The UMC offered something my non-denominational church could not: an explanation of history, beliefs, even rules and regulations. It was a breath of fresh air to discover a church that could answer my faith questions.

In 2007 at the age of 30, I began walking a path to answer my call to ordination as an elder in the United Methodist Church. The following year, my husband, our two children, and I sold our home (months before the collapse of the economy) and moved to Delaware, Ohio, where I began my seminary work at Methodist Theological School in Ohio.



Shannon Berry

The school was a perfect fit for my family and me. Because we recognized this education was the most important of my life, my husband and I decided that I would not have a full-time job and would only work on-campus jobs. Our focus was on completion of my Master of Divinity.

Needless to say, we were taking a huge financial leap. I no longer owned my own business, and my husband had to start all over again in banking. Through the United Methodist Scholarship Fund and Ministerial Educational Fund, I was able to graduate this year -- still in debt, mind you, but not to the extent that many of my seminary friends have experienced. While attending school, I still had time to be a mother and care for my family, even though seminary was some of the hardest work I have ever done, emotionally, spiritually, and educationally. It was all a huge blessing because now I have a job as pastor of three churches in Bland, Va.

I pray you will give to the United Methodist Scholarship Fund so that another family can receive the blessing of answering the call to ministry, just like mine. ■

The Rev. Berry is pastor of the Bland Circuit, including Bland UMC, Central UMC, and Trinity UMC in the Tazewell District. Write a check to your local church with "UM Student Sunday" on the memo line.

UM Church in Latvia needs funding, struggles to grow

ALCOA, Tenn. -- The United Methodist Church in Latvia faces funding cuts from the General Board of Global Ministries at a time when the resident bishop says it's crucial to start new churches.

"In the church in Latvia, we are poor. We have few resources. Sometimes that is a challenge but it is not a problem, and it is not something that will prevent us from growing," said Bishop Christian Alsted, leader of the Nordic and Baltic area of the UMC.

Alsted spoke to about 30 people gathered at First Alcoa UMC Nov. 2-3 as "Friends of Latvia," a group dedicated to aiding the United Methodist Church of Latvia since the nation regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

The 13 United Methodist churches existing in Latvia have newer congregations, assembled within the last 20 years. However, the need for additional United Methodist churches is great in this nation of 2.2 million people, Alsted said.

"Thousands of people have no idea what Christianity is. Thousands of people focus their lives on everything else but Jesus Christ -- focus their lives on materialism," he said.

The church must begin a "second wave" of church growth soon, and it must be low-cost and driven by lay members, he said. Small groups could routinely meet in homes, occasionally meeting in larger, rented spaces. Church buildings could host two separate congregations.

"As long as we don't start to focus on having buildings and employing people, church can be low cost," Alsted said. "Where we got that idea that to have a church you need to have a pastor, I don't know, but we did not get it from our heritage." ■