

## holston's vision:

God envisions  
bold, passionate, and joyful  
communities of faith  
where the spiritual hunger  
to worship God  
and to serve Christ  
sets disciples on fire  
with Spirit-filled, risk-taking  
love for all God's children  
until Holston Conference  
reflects the saving grace  
and redeeming justice of our  
Lord Jesus Christ.

—Adopted by the 2006 Holston Annual  
Conference



www.holston.org

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southwest Virginia, and north Georgia

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## editorial policy:

THE CALL is the official newspaper of the Holston Annual Conference, published monthly or 12 times each year.

All publication decisions are made by the Editor, under the supervision of the Executive Assistant to the Bishop. The Call does not accept paid advertising.

Letters to the editor ("C-Mail") will be considered for publication. Letters should be no longer than 150 words and must do no harm to others.

United Methodist job openings and other church-related needs will be considered for publication in the "Exchange" section at no charge. The Call gives priority to Holston Conference churches and related groups.

To submit letters, news, or photos, contact: Editor, The Call, P.O. Box 850, Alcoa, TN 37701-0850, phone (865) 293-4130, fax (865) 690-3162, e-mail [thecall@holston.org](mailto:thecall@holston.org).

A 12-month subscription to the newspaper is \$15. Checks should be made to "Holston Conference" and mailed to: The Call, P.O. Box 850, Alcoa, TN 37701-0850. To order online, visit [www.holston.org/thecall](http://www.holston.org/thecall).

Subscriptions to Holston's weekly e-mail publication, The Call 2, are free of charge. Sign up at [www.thecalltwo.holston.org](http://www.thecalltwo.holston.org). ■

## wings:

By Bishop James Swanson



# Spiritual abundance amidst such poverty

In the summer of 2005, I received an e-mail that rocked my world. It was a Pulitzer Prize-winning picture of a child, obviously malnourished, crawling to find food at a camp for internally displaced persons in south Sudan. The child, who looked about five years old, was stalked by a vulture. The vulture looked far healthier than the child.

I was so moved by this photo that as I went into staff meeting that morning, I found it difficult to concentrate on the issues. I asked the staff for prayer concerns when Anita Henderlight mentioned she had read a book that disturbed her. The book was "They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky" by Benson Deng, Alephsion Deng and Benjamin Ajak, three of the lost boys from Sudan.

The staff members were moved as I told them about the photo I saw earlier that morning. It was at then we began to experience what we believe to be the Holy Spirit, moving on our hearts to do something about this horrible situation.



This was the genesis of what has evolved into a passionate, bold, and joy-filled witness of God's love for the people of southern Sudan and for the people of the Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church.

In 2007, I decided to accompany a Holston team to Sudan in 2009. I also accepted an invitation from Bishop John Innis to serve as guest preacher for the 2009 Liberian Annual Conference. It was an opportunity to visit Africa and personally witness the impact United Methodism is having in this wonderful place.

The dates were set: I would be in Liberia Feb. 6-16 to preach and also to visit the J.J. Roberts School and Ganta Hospital, which Holston has supported for so many years. I would travel on to Uganda and then Southern Sudan through March 3, 2009. I had no clue what God had in store for me.

Last fall I began to prepare for the trip by getting my immunizations along with my wife, Delphine, who would accompany me to Liberia. My energy level started to rise about that time. Yet, I was so immersed in the ministry of Holston Conference and the upcoming appointment-making process that I didn't have much time to think about the trip. January is a very busy month in The United Methodist Church. My calendar was so full of must-do meetings and local-church visits that before I realized it, February was almost here.

In mid-January I received an e-mail from the executive committee of the Council of Bishops, stating that I had been selected for the Council of Bishops Visitation Team to the East Africa Annual Conference. The East Africa Annual Conference is comprised of United Methodist churches in Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Uganda, and Southern Sudan. The Council of Bishops executive team was aware of conflict within the churches in Burundi and Rwanda. They were also concerned about churches in Southern Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya. I was asked to join Bishop Felton May, Bishop Emilio DeCarvalho, and Bishop Gaspar Domingos — along with Bishop Daniel Wandabula of the East Africa Conference — to assess the situation in these five sovereign nations and report our findings back to the Council of Bishops.

I return to you in Holston with new eyes, and I want to share what I experienced. In the next issues of The Call and in my blog, I will offer a glimpse of my discoveries in Africa. I will never forget this visit. It was challenging, but it was also a time of renewal as I prayed and sought the Lord's face — that I might see through Jesus' eyes and make decisions that would bless his holy name. ■

## bishop's speaking schedule:

- **April 5:** Unicoi UMC (Johnson City District) at 8:55 a.m. and 11 a.m.
- **April 16-17:** Great Small Churches Conference at Gray UMC (Johnson City District)
- **April 19:** Centenary UMC Centennial (Johnson City District) at 11 a.m.; St. Mark UMC 60th Anniversary (Kingsport District) at 3 p.m.
- **April 26:** Albright /McCarty UMC Heritage Day (Johnson City District) at 2 p.m. ■

## C-mail:



The young adult Hope for Sudan missionary team was great. I met them for the first time when we arrived in Sudan on March 3, with Beth Tipton and Don Thomas as our team leaders. God is really working in peoples' lives. I admire and have asked God for his blessings on everyone who was in Sudan the last two months.

**KORTNI M. LAKE**  
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## Resource: Find-a-Church provides free advertising

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The redesigned [www.Find-A-Church.org](http://www.Find-A-Church.org) option on [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org) provides United Methodist churches with a free online profile. The Find-A-Church directory receives approximately 280,000 hits a month and churches can reach anyone searching for a church home. For more information about updating profiles, contact United Methodist Communications at [FAC@umc.org](mailto:FAC@umc.org) or (800) 251-8140. ■