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According to the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, TVA has offered to buy some homes and property. Both McSween and Hendrickson, whose homes are within walking distance of the sludge-filled lake, said they aren't interested.

"My property value might go down for a while, but it will go back up," McSween said.

"I don't want to live anywhere else but here," Hendrickson said.

Tom Grizzard, a member at Harriman church, owns 200 acres of land, along with his relatives, near the Kingston steam plant. His property was spared from the sludge.

Like many in this community, Grizzard has been interviewed by many media sources. He told the *Huffington Post* he was not willing to leave the land once owned by his grandfather, although he was concerned his family would deal with fallout for a long time. He told the *Roane County News* that helicopters overhead and clean-up crews on the ground had disturbed his peace on his acreage, where he and his sons like to fish and hunt.

"My concern right now is all these big old dump trucks," Grizzard told the *Roane County News*. "It's hard to get out of our driveway at times. They have no respect for speed limits."

During the Swan Pond worship service Jan. 4, the ash spill was mentioned only once, when a woman asked for prayers for the community, the clean-up workers and the landowners.

The Midtown Valley and Harriman congregations "definitely do a lot of praying" about the disaster's effects, Fox said.

"As residents, we will have to pay attention to air and water quality," she said, "and there are a lot of people who are really worried about the wildlife, because they know the animals are continuing to walk through this."

Many residents have already started drinking bottled water, Fox said, although authorities have said the local water is safe.

"Because I have severe asthma, I will personally have to take precautions for my own health," the pastor said. "But I'm not going to freak out. I'm not going to panic."

—Annette Spence

Jan. 22 New team will lift up African-American ministry in Holston

A newly formed African American Ministry Team will promote racial inclusiveness in Holston Conference while addressing the needs of black churches.

The team was formed in November after Bishop James Swanson and the Discipleship Team recognized a need to develop African-American ministry in Holston, organizers said. Serving as team co-chairs are the Rev. Leah Burns of Haven's Chapel

UMC, Oak Ridge District, and the Rev. William Pace of Lincoln Park/Martin Chapel UMC, Knoxville District.

Burns said the team is needed "because as United Methodists, we are called to be faithful to the example of the ministry of Jesus Christ to all persons, to be inclusive and to be supportive of each other."

Racial inclusiveness is a commitment of the United Methodist Church, consistent with the "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors" campaign, Burns said.

A mission statement and goals have not yet been established. However, team members discussed the need to grow African-American congregations, involve and support youth, offer Christ to the community, engage laity, and foster hope, she said.

Of 906 total churches in Holston, 45 to 55 are African American, Pace said. Two of those congregations are in his own district, he said, along with 30 other Methodist churches of other denominations (African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal).

"The attitude that African Americans are experiencing 'Methodism' under other administrations is really unacceptable and not true to the allegiance and hope of all African American members and others in the Holston Conference," Pace said.

The team hopes to make others aware of African American congregations and possible inequity, Burns said. They hope to foster connections between the black churches as well as between congregations of different races.

"Diversity and inclusiveness were important to the founder of American Methodism, John Wesley, and the [team] would like to give a voice to African Americans in this area -- to identify needs, to identify resources, and to meet those needs," she said.

As the African American Ministry Team prepares to form a mission statement and set goals, others are invited to contribute, Burns said. Her hope is the team can follow a process similar to one used to develop the conference vision statement in 2006.

"[We want] to involve and get input, and then to put in place some actions that will enable us to accomplish our mission," she said.

"I just keep thinking about Nehemiah, who led a fractured and frustrated group of people to extraordinary effort to rebuild a wall -- this despite distractions and detractors who relentlessly to stop the work," Burns said. "I love his reply to those who would stop the rebuilding: 'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down.' I would think the same applies to our efforts. We are doing such great work and we cannot get discouraged or stop the progress."

Holston members may offer ideas or volunteer their services by contacting Burns at (865) 387-1627 or lkburns@bellsouth.net, or Pace at (865) 525-2725 or pacejasper@aol.com.

—Kathy Barnes-Hemsworth

Jan. 16 Sweetwater church provides scholarships for low-income child care

First Sweetwater United Methodist Church had a vision. Shortly after building a Family Life Center in May 2007, committee members brainstormed uses and ideas for the building.

"One of those visions was to start a preschool," said Lea Watson, board member and spokesperson for First Kids. "We thought the best way was to start small with a Mother's Day Out program."

"First Kids," a two-day-a-week preschool and child care opened October 2007 in the new facility. Currently, 18 children ages 18 months to five years spend four hours each Tuesday and Thursday at the center. Janet Standridge serves as director.

"Until recently, child care had always been a problem in this area," Watson said. "Most daycares in the area had waiting lists, until now."

When the program first started, parents needed a safe place for children to stay while they worked or ran errands. Because of the long waiting lists, parents had to wait long periods for a space to open up in area child care centers. "First Kids" met a need in the community.

Board members recently took another step toward helping the community. Watson said the board wanted to help low-income families get child care. That's when they established scholarships. The Maryville District church received a \$4,000 Change for Children grant to help.

"The (Change For Children) grant money we received is strictly for scholarships," Watson said.

The program uses guidelines already established by the federal government for receiving food stamps and/or free school lunches in public schools, Watson added. Grants cover most, but not all, the cost of the mother's day out program.

"We felt that they need to pay something, even just \$5 a month, because it makes them accountable," she said.

So far, two families receive the scholarships. Watson said several more scholarships are available.

At one time, "First Kids" officials wanted to develop a full-time, licensed child care. The downturn in the economy delayed those plans.

"When the other daycares in the area don't have waiting lists, it would be foolish to do that," Watson said. "It would be irresponsible."

First Sweetwater is one of 18 groups that won a 2008 Holston Conference grant for children's ministry. Funds are donated by churches throughout the year and at Annual Conference. Applications for 2009 grants are due Feb. 16. For more information, visit <http://holston.org/ministries/children/programs/change-children-2008/> or call the Connectional Ministries office toll-free at (866) 690-4080.

—Rheta Murry