



Steve Sallee, senior pastor at Cokesbury United Methodist Church

A trio of stories, featuring a visionary preacher, a gifted administrator, and a girl whose faith knows no bounds.

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Complimentary pocketknives. Meat at every meal. ESPN at all hours. No wonder they came to Sevierville.

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Especially when they are locally grown. Why bother with buying foods from local markets or local farmers? A Creation Care commentary

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The Call



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HOLSTON CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

www.holston.org

FATAL SHOOTINGS IN KNOXVILLE

Holston member loses eyesight in Unitarian tragedy

By Annette Spence

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – On July 27, a man walked into a Unitarian Universalist church on Sunday morning and shot eight people. Two were killed. Six were wounded.

One of the wounded, John T. Worth, is a United Methodist who was in the congregation that morning to see his granddaughter in a performance of “Annie Jr.”



Worth

Worth, 68, and his wife, Joy, are members of Peck’s Memorial United Methodist Church in nearby Maryville. The shooting occurred in Knoxville at Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, where Worth’s daughter and son-in-law are members.

A pellet from the shooter’s gun lodged in Worth’s right eye. Physicians have told him that his optic nerve is damaged and he is unlikely to regain vision. Now Worth is struggling with a decision about whether to have the eye removed, because keeping it could lead to disease or disturb his young grandchildren by its appearance.

“He is clinging to hope for a miracle,” said Joy Worth, 66. “But if he has the eye removed, there’s no possibility of that.”

The Sunday morning shooting happened within the boundaries of Holston Conference, which sprawls across East Tennessee, southwest Virginia and north Georgia. First United Methodist Church of Knoxville is located within two blocks of the Unitarian church where Jim David Adkisson, 58, allegedly opened fire. Police say Adkisson was motivated by a hatred of liberals. He has been charged with first-degree murder, and more charges are expected.

One person who escaped the gunfire later sought

See **Loses eyesight**, page 5



Photo by Annette Spence, The Call

Students gather outside Fountain City United Methodist Church following a community prayer service on Aug. 21. Several Holston churches and clergy responded after one student shot another at Central High School in Knoxville, Tenn.

Churches reach out to community after boy dies in school cafeteria

Melissa Smith was leaving for work on the morning of Aug. 21 when a friend sent the news by text message: Shooting in the cafeteria at Central High.

For the Rev. Smith and other staff at Fountain City United Methodist Church, the news was personal. The Knoxville District church is located within blocks of the school, and 60 of the church’s 80 high-school youth are Central students. Several Central staff members are also Fountain City UMC members.

For the rest of the day and evening, several Holston churches and pastors stepped up to offer support to a shocked community. While clergy in the Fountain

City area comforted parents, students, and faculty, the pastor at Lonsdale UMC comforted the family of the boy who was dead.

Ryan McDonald, age 15, was fatally shot just after 8 a.m., as he and 1,500 other students waited in the school cafeteria for class to begin.

Jamar Siler, a 15-year-old freshman, would later face a first-degree murder charge in McDonald’s death. Police say there had been “recent contact” between the boys but have declined to comment on the disagreement between the boys, according to the *Knoxville News Sentinel*.

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