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shock as deeply as anybody else the day of the fire, but the Lord sent people by me and to me.”

This started with the woman, Christine BonDyl, who noticed the fire. “I never got to meet her but I talked to her on the phone,” said Rehagen, who was shopping for office supplies when the fire occurred. “She saved our church to tell you the truth.”

Several concerned community members have called, and Knoxville District Superintendent Doug Fairbanks visited the church on Sunday, Aug. 3, to offer comforting words.

One neighborhood church offered to allow St. Andrews, which averages 35-40 in worship, to use its building. Instead, the congregation will use its own fellowship hall for worship.

“We are doing pretty good considering everything we have to take care of,” added Rehagen.

— John Shearer

Aug. 13 Bishop Wandabula celebrates Holston's gifts for south Sudan

When Bishop Daniel Wandabula visited Holston Conference and other parts of the United States this summer, he repeatedly expressed gratitude for the gifts and mission work provided by Holston for the people of south Sudan. One of the gifts was initiated by the Holston Conference Cabinet.

In 2006, appointment cabinet members each agreed to give \$750 annually over a three-year period to provide salaries for pastors in south Sudan. The contributions totaled \$2,250 per cabinet member and about \$31,500 for the entire cabinet.

The cabinet's commitment was a response to the experiences shared by the Rev. Fred Dearing, when he returned from Holston's first mission trip to south Sudan in March 2006.

“I reported to the cabinet what I found and what I saw,” said Dearing, Kingsport District superintendent. “At that time, there were 10 churches in south Sudan, and there were pastors who were working and serving without receiving any salaries at all. Nothing.”

Since then, the United Methodist Church in south Sudan has expanded, and the cabinet's support has helped the church's leaders immensely, Dearing said.

At a “Sudan Summit” held this past June in Lake Junaluska, N.C., Bishop Wandabula asked Dearing to relay his appreciation to the cabinet.

“I am very grateful to the district superintendents, who have very faithfully given from their own salaries for the past three years,” he said. “Their gifts have enabled our own pastors to have changed lives. They have enabled them to put food on their tables, to send their children to school — to have happier lives.”

Wandabula is resident bishop of the East Africa Conference, which includes Sudan. In February, Holston Conference signed a covenant with the East Africa Conference that will address the challenges of poverty, disease, hunger, and underdevelopment in south Sudan.



Bishop Daniel Wandabula (left), resident bishop of the East Africa Conference, expresses gratitude to the Rev. Fred Dearing (right) and the rest of the Holston Cabinet.

While Holston continues to celebrate its June offering for Sudan, which now totals \$172,505 (updated since prior reports), many church leaders are involved daily in the ongoing work in Yei, Sudan.

According to Danny Howe, Missions Team chair, the Annual Conference offering — which far surpassed a \$125,000 goal — “affirms that the people of Holston are 100 percent invested in our calling and work in Sudan.”

While the funds will be used for numerous commitments made through Holston's covenant with East Africa, current priorities include the establishment of property and living quarters for two missionaries sent by Holston to Sudan in June 2009. Other priorities include the provision of scholarships for six young Sudanese to attend Africa University, as well as education for younger children through scholarships and completion of a school.

In October, Holston will send a mission team of clergy interns — one from each district — to educate clergy in Sudan. In November, a medical team will arrive in Yei, according to Howe. Other teams will be dispatched in February 2009.

On Aug. 12, Bishop Wandabula e-mailed Bishop Swanson, thanking Holston members again for their ongoing work, as well as for the hospitality extended to the Hope for Africa Children's Choir. The choir, comprised of orphans from Uganda, performed at Annual Conference and later toured Holston.

Swanson requested that the following letter be shared with Holston members:

Dear Bishop James Swanson, Sr.,

Receive love and greetings from your brother in Christ. On behalf of the United Methodist Church, East Africa Annual Conference, I extend our appreciation to you, and all the parishioners in the conference, for the hospitality and support extended

to the Hope for Africa Children's Choir, during the recent tour of the United States.

We are especially grateful to the individuals, families, and churches who hosted, fed, and transported the members of the choir while on the maiden trip. We are equally grateful to all the people who attended the concerts, at the different venues, and who were able to make love offerings to the children's choir. The sacrifices made in terms of time and resources are a major contribution towards the orphans and vulnerable children's ministry in East Africa. We have indeed been humbled by the love, care, and support extended to the choir while in the United States.

We were blessed to be part of the Holston Annual Conference session and appreciate the opportunity granted to the choir to perform at the session and the various congregations. While in the United States, the choir was able to visit and perform at scheduled concerts in Texas, Arkansas, Kentucky, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin, and at Lake Junaluska (North Carolina). We were also privileged to have the choir perform at the 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, on April 28-29, at the Fort Worth Convention Center. Praise Him the Living God!

I am glad to inform you that the choir returned home safely on August 1, 2008, after spending four months in the United States. Both the children and adults are doing fine, and sharing the fond memories of the trip with kin, friends, and the entire community. The children are currently taking some rest as plans for their education at Humble United Methodist School are finalized. They are expected to resume school when term III opens on Sept. 15, 2008.

We had a successful Africa Central Conference meeting in Mutare, Zimbabwe, where the first female Bishop was elected [the Rev. Joaquina Filipe Nhanala]. While at the meeting, I met Dr. James Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor, who disclosed that your conference has offered six scholarships for qualified applicants from Sudan to attend Africa University. I will be visiting Sudan, with a General Board of Higher Education and Ministry team, on Aug. 19-21, and hopefully will be able to initiate the identification of the individuals.

We are grateful to Holston especially for the commitment to support the church in Sudan. We are excited about the overwhelming support for the partnership that made it possible for the members to raise funds towards the mission activities in Sudan. We have been able to prepare a draft architectural plan for the missionary house in Yei, Sudan. A copy of the draft plan is to be sent to you via Post Office to enable your team to make an input.

Brother Bishop, I look forward to your February 2009 visit to East Africa, and Sudan in particular, and await receiving the final dates to enable us to plan for the trip.

Grace and Peace,

Daniel Wandabula

Resident Bishop, East Africa Episcopal Area