

## Digest?

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# The Call

## Digest

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United Methodist Women study the Roma of Europe at annual event in Bristol, Va.

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## South Sudan orphanage to open this fall

**L**ibby Dearing never gave up on her dream for a United Methodist orphanage in South Sudan, but she did begin to wonder if it would ever happen.

"I began to think God had changed his mind and didn't tell me," says Dearing, who saw an urgent need for a children's home on her first visit to Sudan in February 2008. "So I prayed and I asked, 'God, is this still what you want?'"

The answer came last Christmas, when a church in Chattanooga, Tenn., took a special offering to get the orphanage started. The goal was \$85,000. Christ United Methodist Church collected \$290,000, enough to complete construction.

"It was like being hit upside the head, a neon sign," said Dearing.

In September, 24 children will move into a home that has been lovingly promoted and planned by Dearing, her husband, and others since the Holston Conference formed an official covenant partnership with the East Africa Conference in 2008.

The Rev. Fred Dearing, former Chattanooga and Kingsport (Tenn.) district superintendent in Holston Conference and current district superintendent in Yei, South Sudan, says the orphanage and ongoing Imagine No Malaria offering are "miracles."

In addition to raising more than \$2.07 million for South Sudan in the last seven years, the 889 churches of Holston have, in the past year, raised more than \$1.17 million to help their denomination eradicate malaria in sub-Saharan Africa.

"What those two things bespeak is the overwhelming power and faithfulness of Holston Conference," said Fred Dearing. "If you give them a goal, they will rise up and meet it."

The orphanage, named Grace Home for Children, is scheduled to open in September, according to Libby Dearing.

"God did this," she says. "If Holston Conference hadn't, God would have found someone else to receive the blessing."

Fred Dearing was Kingsport District superintendent and his wife was a nurse when he joined Holston's first-ever team to Sudan in April 2006.

Two years later, Libby Dearing crossed the ocean and immediately noticed the number of Sudanese children left homeless by civil war, violence, and other tragedies. In meetings with the Sudanese, Holston members were repeatedly asked to help the abandoned children.

Art Masker and the Rev. Sam Puckett of Holston United



Grace Home for Children is nearing completion and will house 24 "double orphans," children who have lost both parents.

Methodist Home for Children traveled to South Sudan to help conduct a feasibility study for the orphanage.

"There is such a severe need for the care of vulnerable children who are either orphaned or left with individuals who don't have the ability to care for them," Masker said.

By 2011, the Dearings had agreed to work and live in South Sudan, taking the place of the Revs. Boo and Phyllis Hankins to guide Holston's mission partnership with the East Africa Conference.

"Action is required," Libby Dearing wrote in a 2009 booklet prepared to raise support for the orphanage. "If we are to answer God's call to care for the orphans, we must provide a place for them."

Construction started on the orphanage immediately after Christ UMC gave its \$285,000 offering (which has since grown to a total of \$311,000). Located near Pukuka United Methodist Church (the church built by First Maryville United Methodist Church), the 10-acre compound will include four dormitory houses, a kitchen/dining room, director's house, guard house, and office building.

Selection of the 24 children will begin soon, says Libby Dearing, with "double orphans, those who have lost both parents" as first priority.

She will rely on pastors, tribal chiefs, and the South Sudanese government to help identify the children: "We're trying to get ages 3 to 8, so we can have a bigger impact on them, a longer time to teach them," she said. ■

## United Methodist Women study Roma of Europe

**BRISTOL, Va.** -- Vicki Hardesty is concerned about the stereotypes perpetuated by the TV show, "My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding." After attending a United Methodist Women class on "The Roma of Europe," she is more informed now about the injustices heaped upon the single largest minority group in Europe.

"The persecution they have suffered is unbelievable," says Hardesty, a member at Soddy United Methodist Church in Cleveland District. She plans to have her teacher, the Rev. Barry Kidwell, come speak about the Roma at her church.

Hardesty was one of about 100 participants at "Mission U," a Holston Conference United Methodist Women's event held July 18-20 at State Street United Methodist Church in Bristol, Va.

Formerly known as the "School of Christian Mission," the annual summer event prepares participants for faithful living and action through geographical, topical, and spiritual growth study.

This year, the geographical study on the Roma was led by Kidwell and Michael Feely. Kidwell has traveled to Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria six times within the last four years to help establish ministries within Roma communities, he said. Over the years, the Roma have been enslaved, shut out, shunned, and even suffered forced sterilization, he said.



Nyoka Holder introduces study leaders for the 2013 "Mission U."

"I thought they were just gypsies until I had a chance to go over there," Kidwell said. "They were very hospitable people, and I have been welcomed into many of the homes and villages we are working in."

Learning about different people and cultures can erase some of the fears that cause so much trouble, Kidwell said. He referred to the recent death of teenager Trayvon Martin at the hands of George Zimmerman.

"Fear motivated much of that death. They were two men who were afraid of each other," Kidwell said. "If we could really put our fears aside and accept each other

for what we are, then a lot of the problems we have socially across the world might just go away."

Another class, "Living Sacramentally, Walking Justly," was led by Becky Hall, Rev. Gordon Goodgame, and Brenda Brown.

The Rev. Doug Wingeier led a class on "Poverty." A children's study on "Migration" was led by Carol Alley. This year's dean was Nyoka Holder.

The 2014 Mission U event will again focus on the "Roma of Europe" as well as "How Is It With Your Soul?" and "The Church and People with Disabilities." The gathering will be held at Central United Methodist Church in Lenoir City, Tenn. Contact Lynice Broyles at (423) 426-1730. ■

## HOLSTON DISASTER RESPONSE

**Following the recent large disasters** in the U.S., the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has nearly depleted their depot supplies of relief kits and cleaning buckets. Holston Conference has set a goal to replenish supplies by collecting 475 "cleaning buckets" by Aug. 31.

Visit the UMCOR.org web page for the list of supplies contained in each cleaning bucket (or call your church office for help). Purchase the supplies

and buckets and assemble the buckets. Contact your district office for the Disaster Response Coordinator who is collecting buckets in your district.

Instead of collecting and assembling cleaning buckets yourself, UMCOR will accept donations. Make the check to "Holston Conference" with "Cleaning Buckets" on the memo line. Place in your church offering or send to: Disaster Response Coordinator, Holston Conference, P.O. Box 850, Alcoa, TN 37701. (You may also give online at UMCOR.org.) ■

**The Call** is the news source for Holston Conference. ● The Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church includes 899 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia. ● Our resident bishop is Mary Virginia Taylor. ● Our executive assistant is the Rev. Carol Wilson. ● Our office address is P.O. Box 850, 217 South Rankin Road, Alcoa, TN 37701. ● (865) 690-4080 ● www.Holston.org ● thecall@holston.org or info@holston.org ● Facebook.Holston.org ● Twitter @TheCall\_Holston ● Free e-news: thecalltwo.holston.org