

Holston's RESPONSE to Sevier County Wildfires

Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church • December 2016

**Your donations provide
immediate aid to
fire survivors**



Dakota Cogdill sifts through the remains of a home in Pigeon Forge. (Photo by Tom Sherlin/ *The Daily Times*)

Whenever people donate money for a good cause, they want to know it's going directly to help people who need it most.

On Dec. 8, five United Methodist churches at the center of Gatlinburg fire destruction received a total \$40,000 from donations made to Holston Conference, empowering them to take care of survivors' needs in a hurry.

From donations made to Holston and designated for "Wildfire," three grants of \$5,000 each were made to: First United Methodist Church, Gatlinburg, First United Methodist Church, Pigeon Forge, and El Ministerio del Espiritu Santo (at The Connexion in Sevierville)

From donations made to "Change for Children" throughout the year, five grants of \$5,000 each were made to: First United Methodist Church, Gatlinburg, First United Methodist Church, Pigeon Forge, Burnett Memorial United Methodist Church, El Ministerio del Espiritu Santo, and Wears Valley United Methodist Church

"We know the local churches know what the needs are," said the Rev. Michael Sluder, director of connectional ministries. "We wanted to get some money into the hands of the pastors and say, 'You go be the church and meet those needs.'"

As of Dec. 13, a total \$93,240.20 had been received online and in cash from generous givers all over the nation for the Holston United Methodist wildfire response.

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The Holston Conference Children's Ministry Team also wanted to immediately aid five local churches that are trying to help families displaced by the Sevier County fires. The team gave a special \$25,000 grant from the Change for Children Fund, said Gaye King, associate director of connectional ministries.



Gaye King (left) awards a \$25,000 grant from the Change for Children Fund to Rev. Charles Maynard during a Maryville District Christmas clergy party on Dec. 8. (Photo by Buzz Trexler)

The Change for Children fund is collected from Holston churches all year long and at Annual Conference. Half of the funds are designated for children in Africa, while the other half helps children in Holston.

Within hours after the Nov. 28 wildfires ravaged Gatlinburg and other parts of Sevier County, United Methodist pastors and church members in the immediate area were providing shelter for evacuees, Sluder said.

Since then, Sevier County congregations have been storing and distributing furniture, baby supplies, cookware, clothing, shelter and financial assistance for those who lost their homes and jobs in the fire.

Churches nearest to the Gatlinburg fire destruction have also received direct donations from the public and from other United Methodist churches all over the nation.

“With people coming back in town, we’re just now beginning to assess the needs,” said the Rev. Dan Moore, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church of Gatlinburg, on Dec. 10. “We’re trying to place a family into housing this afternoon. They’ve just been kicked out of their shelter, which I think we’re going to start seeing.”

To help survivors of the Sevier County fires, write a check to “Holston Conference” with “Wildfire” on the memo line and mail to: Holston Conference Wildfire Response, P.O. Box 850, Alcoa, TN 37701. You may also give online at Holston.org/Wildfires.

To learn about volunteer opportunities and other needed donations, visit MountainTough.org or call the Holston Conference office at (865) 690-4080.



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