

# Members walk to benefit children; retirees pass the mantle to next class

**B**ill Deskins strolled up to the Walk for Change tent with a grin on his face.

"I finished it," he said, referring to his two-and-half-mile walk around the lake.

Anita Henderlight squealed, and Deskins, a Tazewell District lay member, was sent off with a ribbon and other materials indicating that he is a Change for Children supporter.

By the end of June 14, the third day of Annual Conference, more than 400 people would support Change for Children by walking or contributing to the offering. In all, more than \$40,000 was given to help needy children in Holston and in Africa, according to Henderlight, coordinator of children's ministry.

It was a day of many such joys.

Fellowship Time finally seemed to take off, after a couple of days when rain, heat or unfamiliarity with the routine seemed to deter the crowds. Yesterday afternoon, the grounds outside Stuart Auditorium were packed with people enjoying the Ice Cream Social under the blazing sun.

All this week, refreshments served during Fellowship Time were made possible by financial contributions from Asbury Inc., Holston Conference Foundation, Tennessee Wesleyan College, Holston Methodist Credit Union, and Holston Home for Children.

An afternoon Retirement Celebration marked the retirement of 12 clergy members, with a message by the Rev. Ann Blair, "It's the Filling That Counts."

"Methuselah lived 969 years — and then he died. Moses lived 120 years, and there was never another one like him," she said.

"You don't know the span of life, so what makes the difference? It's what you put in the filling that counts."

Other yesterday highlights:

- **Bishop Michael Watson** returned to the Holston stage for his last visioning Bible study, speaking on Matthew 22:36-40 and Matthew 28:16-20. "May this great Holston Conference obey the Great Command and the Great Commission," he said before departing. "May God's great vision be revealed."

- **Anne Travis**, director of connective ministries, reported results from yesterday's visioning tool activities. The top four indicated values, she said, were love, faith, spirituality, and spiritual fruits. The next three core values were outreach, nurturing, and evangelistic passion. Between now and the 2006 Annual Conference, a writing team will "seek to discern how to write a vision statement so that all these values are incorporated into Holston Conference," Travis said.

- **The finance office** updated Monday's offering for Latvia. As of 2:45 p.m. Tuesday, the total received was \$91,922.

- **Rita Sexton** gave an emotional testimony about how she was taken in by Holston Home for Children after years of molestation. Today, she is the mother of six children and 10 grandchildren, many of whom are involved in church activities. "I know because of you ... my life is successful," she said.

- **Stephen Condon**, incoming president of Tennessee Wesleyan College, greeted the conference during the Board of Higher Education's presentation. Condon reported that TWC is experiencing a 5 percent increase in enrollment, with an enrollment of 811 last fall.



Bill Deskins, member of Main Street UMC in Tazewell District, receives Change for Children recognition from Anita Henderlight after completing his walk around the lake.



Zachary Burch, age 8, and Michael Burch, 11, enjoy an afternoon ice cream break. They are the children of the Rev. Brian Burch, Rural Retreat UMC, Wytheville District.

- **The Francis Asbury Award** for higher education was presented to the Rev. Wayne Cummings, former conference director of Christian higher education. Cummings is a retired clergy member in the Johnson City District.

- **In the Cabinet's Report**, the Rev. Stella Roberts had strong words for churches that are "still resisting" the appointment of clergywomen to their pulpits. "We are profoundly disappointed ... we grieve for these churches," said Roberts, cabinet secretary. "We earnestly pray that any remaining barriers to full inclusion of clergywomen in the Holston Conference will be torn down forever."

- **Four churches** were closed with the approval of the Cabinet Report: Bethel, Oak Ridge District; East View, Cleveland District; Salem, Cleveland District; and Kleppers Chapel, Kingsport District. The total of Holston Conference churches is now 915.

- **Two resolutions** were introduced for the Annual Conference's consideration. One resolution involves ministry to persons disenrolled from TennCare. The other resolution concerns an apology for not having passed anti-lynching laws earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More information will be provided in this morning's session.

- **Bernie Bowman**, president of Asbury Inc., announced that all four campuses had received national accreditation.

- **Roger Redding**, Holston Conference Foundation executive director, announced that its balanced growth fund was up 9.13 percent, and that 50 new investment accounts had been opened in the past year. Of 446 accounts, "almost half belong to local churches," he said.

- **The conference** lifted up "great singing," according to Bishop James Swanson, from the Men of Praise, Chip Yeomans, and from members themselves. "I'll tell you, there is great singing in Holston. Amen?" Swanson said.

- **At last night's** Service of Ordination and Commissioning, Swanson told participants, "You are not great. You are called to lift up someone who's already great."

- **By 1 p.m.** yesterday, the first-aid station in Harrell Center's room 101 had seen 29 visitors. Common complaints included swollen ankles and blisters. Several requested blood pressure checks.

- **Correction:** Yesterday's edition incorrectly stated that premiums for the conference's health insurance plan would rise 15 percent effective July 1. During Monday's session, the Board of Pensions proposed a 15 percent increase in rates effective Jan. 1, 2006, and an increase in deductibles, out-of-pocket costs, co-pays, and drug costs effective July 1, 2005. Members will have an opportunity to ask questions at this morning's session. ■

*A complete wrap-up of Annual Conference 2005 will be provided in the July 1 edition of The Call.*



The Rev. Ann Blair preaches during the afternoon Retirement Celebration, "Yes, we step to one side to make room for the young ones, but we do not sit down."



The Rev. William Wells "passes the mantle" to the Rev. Sarah Martin during the Retirement Celebration. Martin was one of four full-connection elders ordained last night.



The Rev. Wayne Cummings receives the Francis Asbury Award for higher education from the Rev. Karen Albers.



Art Masker, Holston Home for Children president, joins Rita Sexton on the stage after her testimony.