letters from **camp:**

By David Leach

Sharing laughter & hope
in Sudan

From March 6 to 18, I was allowed to participate in the conference's mission trip to Yei, Sudan. What a wonderful experience and opportunity to see God in different people in a very different place! Our team was designed to assess and meet various needs in the community. Laura Lambert and I were assigned the task of helping the students at the United Methodist school in Yei to laugh and play more. Sounds a lot like summer camp to me! And it was.

We met the students at the compound at an opening worship service. The students sang songs while the rest of the congregation praised and worshipped and the minister-in-residence led a devotion. Just like camp.

The youth and children watched us with bright eyes, expecting great things to happen. They had looked forward to our arrival and hope was evident in their smiles. Just like camp.

Of course, some were not so sure what they thought about us. We didn't look like them, dress like them, or even talk like them. But even the children that looked at us with apprehension expected something to happen. It didn't take long for them to realize that something was happening. Songs and games, laughter and play were found in the school. Hope that comes from Christ through laughter and play was found in the students. Just like camp.

We taught them camp songs. Just like at Camp Wesley Woods, their favorites were "Singing in the Rain" and "Mercy is Falling." We taught some of the older students how to lead games and then sent them out to lead other students in the games they had just learned. When they came back with smiles, we celebrated the joy of play and the universal language of laughter. Just like counselors at camp.

Yei is war-torn and impoverished. The students at the school have little in the way of supplies or toys. Just

A boy sits on a piece of metal, used as a bell. "They would hit it with a rock to announce a break or to call the students back to school," says David Leach.

Students learn to play the "Group Juggle" game.

like camp, there were opportunities for growth. We struggled to communicate through a language barrier that was more about where we lived than about age differences. We struggled to find hope and laughter when the only reading books we saw were pamphlets provided by UNICEF or by land-mine removal companies. But we were not looking for hope in our surroundings, but in the children and youth. That's exactly where we found it – not just a shallow hope

that comes from hope for the next day, but a deep hope that comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ.

So, like camp, we laughed and we played and we struggled and we praised our God because he is a God of Hope. He showed us about hope when you have little but laughter and play and life and salvation. And we showed them about camp. ■

David Leach is director of Camp Wesley Woods in Maryville District.

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reading **list:**

We asked these participants in Jubilation, "What book is lying on your nightstand?" (See our Jubilation story on page 8.)

Ruth
Beverly
First Hillsville UMC
Wytheville District
The Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories,
by Leo Tolstoy

Iva Lee
Eads
Broad Street UMC
Cleveland District
Faith Breaks: Thoughts on Making It a Good Day, by J. Howard Olds

Russell
Martin
Holston View UMC
Big Stone Gap District
Farm and Ranch Magazine ■

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news brief

Bishop's son dies of aneurysm

David William Looney, son of Bishop Richard and Carolyn Looney, died of a brain aneurysm while he was at home in his apartment in Hilton Head, S.C., on March 9, according to the United Methodist Council of Bishops office. He was a 1979 graduate of Tyner High School in Chattanooga, attended the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and worked as a chef, according to an obituary in "The Island Packet." A memorial service was held March 13 at St. Andrew By-The-Sea United Methodist Church in Hilton Head Island, S.C. Cards to the Looneys may be sent to P.O. Box 747, Lake Junaluska, NC 28745. ■

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?"