

Last year, now, after that FOUR YEARS of HOLSTON MISSIONS

2006: That was Alaska

LAST JUNE, church leaders came to Annual Conference with their congregations' offerings for Alaska. In all, about \$107,000 was collected to support the work of Fran Lynch, a missionary who is also the daughter of Holston pastor, the Rev. Tom Lynch.

Where did the money go? According to Lynch, who visited her parents in Greeneville, Tenn., during March, the gifts from Holston churches are being used in a variety of ways throughout the year.

Lynch, age 50, is a Church and Community Worker who serves Willow – a rural community of about 1,500 with access to roads – and Anvik and Grayling – villages without access to roads that can only be reached by plane.

In August 2006, a flood struck Willow, and Lynch was able to use some of the recently dispatched funds from Holston to provide gas vouchers, building supplies, and clothing for flood victims.

In addition to the \$100,000 offered by churches, children participating in Vacation Bible School last summer collected 4,000 pounds of school supplies and snacks for children in Alaska. The VBS packets were delivered by Jim and Elaine Butcher of Middlesettlements United Methodist Church, Maryville District. While the school supplies were distributed to area schools, the snacks (crackers, granola bars, peanuts)

were stockpiled for rescue workers who came to help the flood victims.

"They were so grateful to fill their pockets before they went out – to share with the people they were trying to help," said Lynch. "They worked very long days."

Some of the 2006 mission offering was used to provide emergency heating fuel for the approximately 100 families receiving assistance each year. Some money will be used to provide camp scholarships for children from Anvik and Grayling who are flown by plane to Birchwood Camp in Birchwood, Alaska. Each summer, Lynch brings about 18 children to stay in her home before and after their designated weeks of camp, until transportation is arranged. This summer, Holston money will help Lynch pay for the children's airfare, meals, and entertainment.

At Christmas, Holston funds bought Christmas gifts for 70 children in Anvik and Grayling. Sixty-two low-income families in Willow received two weeks of food, toys, and new clothing.

Less than \$5,000 was spent to provide building supplies for a 14-member mission team serving in Alaska in June 2006. Led by the Rev. Mike Jackson and representing 10 districts, the team helped complete two homes, worked in a clothes closet, and cut firewood.

About \$35,000 will likely be reserved to buy a four-wheel-drive van that will help transport children and families as needed, Lynch said.

"The reality is that for us to spend that kind of money is going to take a couple of years," Lynch said.

Yet, the people of Alaska have expressed "amazement" that people from east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia would care enough to give so much – to a place so far away. ■



Children in Sunday school classes in Anvik rejoice over snack bags sent by Holston children.



Volunteers from Holston cut firewood during last summer's trip.



Children from the villages prepare to board a plane bound for Birchwood Camp.

2008-09: Sudan is to come

HOLSTON CONFERENCE'S work in Sudan began in 2005 and is ongoing, even while other mission projects are being completed. Beginning next year, Holston will focus on Sudan for Annual Conference offerings and other mission efforts.

Last month, Holston sent its second mission team to Yei, Sudan, where relationships have already been established and many Holston churches and individuals have already contributed to build a well, support the pastors and teachers, and buy land for a United Methodist compound.

Led by the Rev. Don Hanshew and Will Jennings, the 15-member team logged several accomplishments during the March 6-18 trip. They served 540 at a medical clinic, filling nearly 5,000 prescriptions. Most of the treatments addressed malaria, parasite-born illnesses, and respiratory infection. They hired a Ugandan physician and nurse to lead the clinic and provided 1,300 meals at the compound.

Some team members served as ambassadors, according to Danny Howe, who went on the trip with his daughter, Virginia Howe. Currently, the school at the United Methodist compound has an enrollment of about 1,000 children (up from 500 six months ago). "A large percentage of these children do not have parents due to war and HIV/AIDS," Howe said. Holston ambassadors began the process to help the United Methodist Church in South Sudan build an orphanage, medical clinic, and other facilities.

The list of other accomplishments fulfilled by the Sudan mission team is long, and includes paying the salaries of clergy from January to March, providing "play therapy" for 650 children, and delivering 300 textbooks, 101 Bibles, and 36 hymnals.

The numbers are easy enough to communicate. Members of the mission team say that it's difficult to communicate all that they saw in a few words.

"Our eyes were opened to a totally different culture in a very foreign land," Howe said. "But our hearts were opened to a familiar people – a people that share the same needs to exist from day to day. We met with people with whom we share the same need for love, joy, and peace in our lives ... We realized that we had been called to something more than band-aids and books. We are the United Methodist Church in South Sudan, the Sudan that seeks God's help in restoring life in a land literally stripped of hope by civil war."

In the conference office, team members spoke of 104-degree weather; mothers who are happy to see their children get at least one meal a day; and a dirty community water hole where people drink and all suffer from parasitic worms. (The new well is scheduled to be running by April 15.)



Children stand in front of the United Methodist sign for the school in Yei.

In a sermon at Fountain City UMC on March 25, Hanshew spoke of the smell of "cooking smoke from nearby huts," of "body heat and sickness," and of anointing oil used at a service of healing attended by hundreds.

"These scents spoke a language in the air of a hard life, of death, and of the hope that can only be found in the resurrection of Jesus," Hanshew said.

He referred to John 12:3-8, in which Mary anointed Jesus' feet with costly perfume and wiped them with her hair. He spoke specifically of the last person who came through the healing service in Sudan – after she had been prayed over and anointed.

"I watched Jesus walk by me with a sick child on her hip, a humble smile, her eyes focused on home, and the fragrance of anointing oil surrounding her," Hanshew said. "My prayer today, and everyday, is that we catch the fragrance of a life, a death, and a resurrection." ■



The Rev. Harry Howe helps a child participate in Holy Communion, celebrated with grape soda and graham crackers.

David Leach taught the children how to play games. Rose (at left) was chosen to teach them to others.



The missions team departs from Cokesbury Center on March 6.



Worshippers are not afraid to show emotion at Caisacadura United Methodist Church in Rio de Janeiro.

2007: This is Brazil

THIS SPRING, the 912 churches of Holston Conference will join to raise \$100,000 to support the work of Bishop Paulo Lockmann, the Rio Conference, and the United Methodist Church of Brazil.

Churches will collect this offering on May 6 or an alternate date. Following tradition, clergy or lay representatives

will take their congregations' offering during the Tuesday evening offering at Annual Conference, held June 10-13 in Lake Junaluska, N.C. An envelope for the offering will be mailed to church treasurers in May.

The offering will be used to help missionaries in Brazil get 1 million people to Christ within eight years. Two ministries are critical to this effort: Evangemized offers free health and dental services during the day and worship services at night. The School of Missions trains pastors and laity to lead mission work, worship, and prayer.

Resources are available to publicize

the 2007 missions offering to members:

- Sunday bulletin
- Info for newsletters
- Photos for newsletters

To download these resources, visit missions.holston.org. Also available at that Web address is a March 9 story in *The Call* explaining Brazil's mission work in detail. DVDs and videotapes are available through district offices.

Look for another story soon that will explain this year's hands-on mission projects for Liberia and Zimbabwe. ■



Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away ...



... tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her...