

Here's a message for Holston members who pool pocket change from their congregations and give the money to

Change for Children: YOU'RE DOING A Good thing

BY ANNETTE BENDER

EVERY YEAR SINCE 1998, Holston's mission leaders have asked churches to give to "Change for Children." The promise is that half of the money will go to benefit needy children here at home, and half will be sent to help needy children in Africa.



Photo by Annette Bender, The Call

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – The Rev. Mike Sluder (left), pastor at St. Mark UMC, and Joe Haymore show off some cute slippers they hope needy families will claim soon.



At Annual Conference in June, a total of \$30,000 was distributed in grants to 17 Holston groups, from Rockford United Methodist Church in Wytheville District to Brainerd UMC in Chattanooga District. Among other services, these ministries help kids with homework, drive them to church, give them supper, and provide clean clothes.

An additional \$30,000 was sent to "Hope for the Children of Africa," where children in a war-torn land suffer daily from disease and starvation.

Want to know how the money is spent? Here's a trio of ministries in which Change for Children dollars are being used to help needy children here at home.

Knoxville: New clothes & cute slippers

When Joe and Brenda Haymore adopted a baby in 2001, their fellow parishioners at St. Mark United Methodist Church gave them a "baby shower to rival all other showers. The fellowship hall looked like a baby store," says Joe.

One gift in particular made an impression on the couple: A "Moses Basket" filled with infant clothing, shoes, and socks. "The more things we pulled from the basket, the more there seemed to be," says Haymore. "At that time, we were thinking, 'Wouldn't it be great if all children could have a Moses Basket?'"

The experience planted a seed for a new ministry at St. Mark that was unveiled this summer, at the same time it received a \$2,000 Change for Children grant. The Moses Basket provides new or used good clothing and other necessities for needy children up to size 6X.

The ministry started as Haymore's brainchild but was quickly embraced by the church and community. A local Boy Scout, Kenny Jacobs, transformed two utility rooms into a clothes closet by installing shelves, bins and rods as part of his Eagle Scout project.

Grant and Sharon Fetters visited St. Mark this spring after "The Passion of the Christ" film inspired them to return to church. The couple was so intrigued when they heard about the Moses Basket, they decided to become members and participate in the new ministry. The Fetters are now involved in sewing new baby clothes and repairing donated used clothing.

The parents of the church's child care, where 100 kids are enrolled, donate most of the clothing. Haymore and St. Mark's pastor, the Rev. Mike Sluder, are also building relationships with local shelters, adoption agencies, and emergency squads for referrals.

"If a family gets burned out, the fire department can send them our way," Sluder explains. Organizers plan to use the \$2,000 Change for Children grant for gift certificates that will allow families in crisis to buy necessities such as diapers or infant formula.

Brochures were delivered to these agencies in late August and now the church is hoping people will come forward for the Moses Basket experience that first touched Haymore. The offer is also open to Holston congregations that are aware of needy families who could benefit from the ministry: "We're ready for anybody who needs us." For more information, call (865) 588-4047. **M**

Bristol: Backyard games & fresh faces

As soon as the crew from Reynolds Memorial UMC pulls into the parking lot, the children run out of the apartment complex and drive up on their bicycles to greet them.

For two years, Reynolds Memorial has worked to establish relationships with residents of three housing projects near the church. Now, the kids who live in the apartments are in love with their



TRENTON, Ga. – Members of Trenton UMC, Chattanooga District, make regular visits to parents in prison, looking for opportunities to ultimately help their children. From left to right are Thelma Blevins, June Wilson, Margaret Barton, Alicia Caron and Keith Fauscett.



Photo courtesy of Melissa Reasor

friends and can't wait to see them – can't wait for the next church activity.

"Whenever they come, I put on my sad face and say, 'Please, Momma, can I go to church?'" says Kendra, age 9, one of the approximately 25 children who are served by the Abingdon District church.

The ministry started in 2003 as a Vacation Bible School project shared by Reynolds Memorial and Seymour UMC of Maryville District. Together, the two churches provided VBS in a field next to the complex.

"It's the perfect spot, with trees," says Reynolds volunteer Sylvia Bowden. "We bring in lunch for them, too."

Since then, some of the kids have started hopping on the church van to attend youth and children's activities at Reynolds. Buffalo Mountain Camp provided 27 scholarships for the kids to attend camp in Jonesborough, Tenn. Reynolds paid for several kids to participate in activities at Camp Ahistadi.

Also this summer, Reynolds youth joined in to begin a weekly Tuesday afternoon ministry at the apartment complex. The agenda: play games, eat snacks, do Bible study, make friends. The \$1,000 Change for Children grant received by Reynolds in June goes for food and other expenses for the new ministry.

The youth seem to enjoy Tuesday afternoons as much as the apartment kids do: "They're fun to be around," says Katherine Wauh, age 14.

"The ultimate goal is to reach out to these children and let them and their parents know the door is open at Reynolds," says Matt Cumbow, director of youth and children's ministry. Many of the parents are unemployed or raising several children on low incomes, he said. The church is beginning at 9 a.m. contemporary worship service, hoping the "relaxed atmosphere" will attract the parents.

The parents aren't coming to Reynolds yet, but they don't seem to mind if their children do.

BRISTOL, Va. – Members of Reynolds Memorial UMC play with children who benefit from a "backyard ministry" at a nearby apartment complex. From left to right are Katherine Wauh, age 14; Matt Cumbow, minister of youth and children; and Hannah Dishman, age 14.



Photo by Annette Bender, The Call

re-enter the work force. Reasor set aside a large part of the \$4,000 grant to begin a computer lab to assist in job-skill training.

The goal is to have 10 computers to help not only former inmates, but the single mothers and dads who take GED classes at the church. Billy Millican, assistant superintendent of Dade County Schools, has volunteered to teach computer classes in software applications. "We also want to offer training in resume and letter writing," Reasor says.

Trenton could use donations of soft-sided Bibles for inmates. For more information, contact Reasor at (706) 657-6170. **M**

FYI

● The conference treasurer's office will accept money for Change for Children year-round. An offering is also collected each June at Annual Conference.

● Applications for 2005 Change for Children grants are due April 15, 2005. The grants will be awarded at Annual Conference in June.

● In 2004, the Change for Children committee reviewed 27 applications from Holston groups requesting more than \$107,000. Seventeen groups representing nine districts received grants totaling \$30,000. The largest grant was \$4,000; the smallest, \$1,000.

● For tips on collecting Change for Children donations or for grant applications, visit www.holstonkids.com or call Anita Henderlight, coordinator of children's ministries, or Bill Daugherty, coordinator of missions, both at (865) 690-4080.

