

The Call

November 19, 2004

HOLSTON CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Volume 21, Number 25



A Thanksgiving Testimony:

When she needed the church, Logan's Chapel was there

By Annette Bender

MARYVILLE, Tenn. – Behind the counter of a mom-and-pop grocery store in a small community, you learn to read people pretty well, says Bill Clabough.

“You see people that you think are hurting, and you hope the church can provide comfort and stability for them,” he says.

When Clabough invited Pam Denton to church for the first time, she laughed it off, like most of his customers do whenever the invitation is extended.

“That’s a pretty typical response,” says Clabough’s wife, Judy.

But both Bill and Judy could tell that the polite woman with the long blonde hair “had issues.” They remember her as a person who seemed to work hard, who lived in an old house with a spouse who didn’t seem to work much.

They didn’t yet know the depths of pain and abuse she had suffered in the past, or the violent night she would experience months later, on Dec. 11, 2003.



Photos by Annette Bender, *The Call*

With her congregation’s help, Pam Denton is recovering from a marriage that ended violently last December: “It’s their love, support and faith that have gotten me through.”

“We never tried to overdo it, but we kept asking her to visit,” says Judy.

One day, Judy pleaded with her, “Pam, just come one time, and if you don’t like it, you don’t have to come back.”

“She kept putting me off,” says Judy. “To tell you the truth, I never thought we’d get her there.”

Pam Denton, now 49, used to live across the street from Logan’s Chapel United Methodist Church. The church bells woke her up on Sunday mornings, a source of irritation for a woman who admittedly often drank too much on Saturday nights.

“I’m thinking, ‘All right, people, get over yourselves. There are people in this

neighborhood who are trying to sleep,’” says Denton.

She’s smiling – probably at the irony that as the newly appointed lay leader for Logan’s Chapel, she is now on the other side of those church bells.

Two years ago, when Denton walked into Logan’s Chapel, it was her first time in a United Methodist church – her first time in any church for more than 10 years. She is originally from Tucson, Ariz., where she spent a childhood in the Roman Catholic Church and raised four children in the Mormon Church.

She left the Mormon Church in 1991, the year she divorced her first husband. A church leader called her into his office and told her she had to “find a way” to



Logan’s Chapel UMC: “The greatest resource a church has is extending itself in love,” says Pastor Ann Robins.

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TennCare Crisis

Tennesseans are facing a serious health care and fiscal crisis that will have significant repercussions for the poor and disadvantaged in the state. Visit www.holston.org/tenncarecrisis to find links for additional information on this subject, as well as some ways to express your opinion.

Inside

Racism Forum

Holston members are encouraged to attend a conference-wide forum at Gray United Methodist Church on Nov. 20.

Page 2

A Day in the Life

Holston’s Church and Community Workers are – daily, quietly – serving the needy in both urban and rural areas.

Page 4

Mission Update

The conference mission team arrives in India, while supplies donated by churches last summer arrive in Africa.

Page 3