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District Roundup

NEWS FROM YOUR DISTRICT



Tazewell

SHEEP OF FAITH: For 25 years, members at Central UMC have put on their bathrobes, gathered up their farm animals, and braved the cold for a two-night live nativity scene.

Abingdon: The district held its third Ice Skating and Food Drive Night at Bristol Motor Speedway on Nov. 26. Rick Call reports there were 92 youth on ice and 20 workers, representing 16 churches. More than 200 cans of food were collected and delivered to Faith in Actions food bank ministry in Abingdon.

Big Stone Gap: Hiltons Memorial UMC began preparing for Christmas in January, by displaying a Christmas Cart in the narthex. "Each month, we collected designated items for (church and community worker) Nancy Hobbs," reports the Rev. Will Shewey. "We have collected a truckload of items, from toothbrushes to jeans to children's underwear and everything in between." Hobbs distributes the goods to the needy.

Chattanooga: Send news and photos to: Editor, *The Call*, P.O. Box 850, Alcoa, TN 37701-0850, fax (865) 690-3162, thecall@holston.org.

Cleveland: Members of Wesley Memorial UMC handed out free hot chocolate during the Etowah Christmas parade. Each cup had a sticker with the church name, mission statement (*Helping people find the Way*), and the message, "Jesus loves you and so do we!" Some people were amazed the cocoa was free and asked if donations were accepted. "We told them we didn't want any donations," says Pastor Todd Kingrea. "That's what free means."

Johnson City: After Bishop James Swanson visited Eden UMC and challenged Eden and other churches to help their communities with the health-care crisis, this Jonesborough congregation felt led to act. Eden had a health fair and blood drive in 2006, followed by another blood drive in 2007. "Blood drives are so easy to plan, because the Red Cross brings everything," reports Carolyn Kerr. "This is also a great way to bring new people into

the church." Eden plans to make the blood drive an annual mission.

Kingsport: The Rev. Grover Starnes, currently serving at Arcadia UMC, tells this story about serving at Chalybeate Springs UMC:

"I had just completed Christmas Eve communion and was at the church by myself. It was a perfect Christmas evening with snow coming down. I was on the porch, wondering if I was going to make it out, when I saw the headlights of a car driving up. Imagine my surprise when out stepped Santa. He said the traditional *ho ho ho* and asked if it was too late for communion. When he came closer, I recognized him as a church member. He explained that he always dressed as Santa on Christmas Eve to take presents to a poor family in the neighborhood, and that was why he was so late.

"I wish I had a picture of that moment as we went to the altar and I got to serve communion to Santa on Christmas Eve. That is one Christmas Eve I will never forget."

Knoxville: On Thursday evening, Nov. 15, 160 children and 12 staff from Vestal Boys & Girls Club were treated to a full Thanksgiving dinner at Bearden UMC. Crowne Plaza Hotel donated and prepared all the food for the event, led by General Managers Ken and Tammy Knight (who are also church members). A crew from the children's ministry at Bearden helped staff member Donna Lewis set up for the mega-event in the church gymnasium. Bearden UMC has a weekly children's ministry program at Vestal Boys & Girls Club, Lewis reports.

Maryville: On Christmas Eve 1886, a new church held its first-ever service. On Dec. 16, 2007, the choir at Wears Valley UMC will celebrate 120 years of Christmases past with a dramatization of that first candle-lighting service, including the kero-

sene chandelier used ever since. "Birth of a Savior, Birth of a Church" includes grandchildren of the church founders and first-service participants.

Morristown: River Hill UMC had a Veterans Day service. Forty-four living veterans and 59 deceased veterans were honored within the Cherokee Circuit. Besides River Hill, Cherokee Circuit includes Mt. Carmel (at Sunnyside), Mt. Pisgah, Rehobeth, and Mt. Vernon. Pastor is the Rev. Martha Beamer.

Oak Ridge: The United Methodist Women of Bradbury UMC donate unsold clothing from their spring and fall festivals to Lost Sheep Ministry in Knoxville. Lost Sheep serves the homeless under the Gay Street Bridge, providing a change of clothing in a plastic bag on each Wednesday night.

Tazewell: Central UMC is located in a farming community. For 25 years on Dec. 23 and 24, members have gathered their animals (sheep, cows, donkeys, goats); dressed in costumes; and braved the cold to present a two-hour nativity scene on the church lawn. "Visitors can view the scene from the comfort of their vehicles – or they can come closer and we'll offer them a costume and the opportunity to become part of the scene," reports Betty Munsey.

Wytheville: In September, the district had a "no excuses" revival for members who complain that long driving distances keep them from attending. Five simultaneous revivals were held Sept. 9-11 for each of the five clusters: Carroll/Galax at Mt. Olivet; Grayson at First Independence; Pulaski/Dublin at Aldergate; Radford/Floyd at Central; and Wythe at St. Paul. Speakers included the Rev. Kim Goddard, the Rev. Curtis McKee, the Rev. El Lee Ellis, the Rev. Adam McKee, and Bishop Richard Looney. Total attendance was 675 to 725 each night, reports the Rev. Kevin Fiorini.



Abingdon

ICE, ICE BABY: The district hosts 92 skaters for its third annual "Ice Skating and Food Drive" at Bristol Motor Speedway on Nov. 26. Two hundred cans of food were donated to a food bank.