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I am asking you to again step up to the plate and show our neighbors that people in Holston have huge hearts – hearts that beat for those close to home as well as those in Liberia, Zimbabwe, and Sudan! We realize we are asking a lot of each of you at this time, but we are so fortunate and so richly blessed by God. God calls on us to share what we have with all of our brother and sisters in their time of need. So many of us have family members and friends who live in the areas affected by the flooding.

We will be collecting cleaning buckets (formerly called flood buckets) and contributions to support UMCOR's work in the flooded areas of Tennessee. Please make your contributions to Advance Special #901670 and mark it for Tennessee floods. Also, please go to the UMCOR web site to read the instructions for preparing cleaning buckets. In the next few days, we will organize pick-up times in each district for the cleaning buckets, and we will let you know as soon as possible when and where those will be collected. For instructions to assemble cleaning buckets, please visit UMCOR's web site: <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/getconnected/supplies/flood-bucket/>

We would love to receive at least 25 to 30 cleaning buckets per district! What a statement that would make to our neighbors about our desire to help them recover their lives.

Thank you for your generous hearts, your willingness to share what you have, and your love of God and neighbor, which you demonstrate over and over and over again. You are truly an inspiration to me and to others. I know of no other Conference in United Methodism that does more for missions than Holston, and I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve as your Episcopal leader.

Grace and Peace,

James E. Swanson, Sr.

James E. Swanson, Sr.
*Resident Bishop Holston Annual Conference
May 4, 2010*



Belle Meade United Methodist Church is reflected in the rising flood waters in Nashville the morning of May 3, 2010.
UMNS photo by Kathleen Barry

Holston's RESPONSE to the Tennessee Flood

Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church • May 4, 2010



Letter from Bishop Swanson:

“Holding up the banner of Christ”

Will Clark, son of Jeff and Laurie Clark of Jackson, TN, holds his shoes after cleaning out his home with his family on May 2. The Clarks had to hurriedly evacuate their home when it was flooded May 1. The water reached chest high on the men and chin high on Will's mother. Will will graduate from high school this spring and plans to study for the ministry.

UMNS photo by Cathy Farmer



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As we near Annual Conference, we are aware that this has been a most unusual year. We have seen disaster upon disaster, and we have been asked to respond to them all. Holston responded in a most amazing way to the earthquake victims in Haiti, and we will celebrate that response at Annual Conference in June. Others of you responded to earthquakes in Chile and China and to the tornadoes in Mississippi. Yet, at this time of year, we find ourselves busy with our Annual Conference hands-on mission preparation for our friends in Liberia and Zimbabwe – vital assistance we provide each year – as well as preparing to take up an offering to support our Covenant Agreement with Sudan.

Now, our brothers and sisters right next door – in the Tennessee and Memphis Conferences – have desperate needs as well. All of us have seen the devastating pictures on TV of the weekend flooding in Nashville and the surrounding counties. Our Holston Conference Early Response Teams are gearing up to leave on Thursday of this week to provide immediate assistance. We will send three of these specially trained teams in the next 14 days, and as soon as invited, we will begin to line up Volunteer in Mission (VIM) Teams to offer ongoing, long-term response in the middle and western parts of our state. Information on how to register an UMVIM team will be provided as soon as we receive it.

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