

CONFERENCE *connection*

Alabama • Georgia • Mississippi
South Carolina • Tennessee • NW Florida



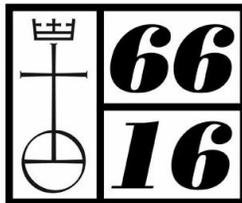
SOUTHEAST UCC Conference

April 18, 2016

50th Annual Meeting is June 10-11

Please mark your calendars for the 50th Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference to be held at Piedmont College on June 10-11. There will be a gathering for authorized ministers on Thursday through Friday morning. With all the administrative changes in the Conference Office, we are far behind the planning cycle. We hope to have the on-line registration up by the end of April and will send out notification when it is available.

A 50th Planning Committee has met and decided on a theme of "Southeast Conference UCC Celebrating Jubilee." Jubilee is an important theological and biblical theme. In Hebrew understanding, every 50 years all land was returned to its original owner, slaves were to be freed so that they might serve God, and all the land was to lie fallow to rest and prepare for a season of greater growth and prosperity. In Roman Catholic tradition, it is a year of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation between adversaries. It is a time of solidarity, hope, justice and commitment to serve God with joy and in peace with other Christian sisters and brothers. And in the African American community, it is about liberation from oppression and slavery. Benjamin Chavez described it as a time to carry the concepts of unity and community outside the church and into the streets as a method for curing social ills and furthering economic empowerment. At a Jubilee celebration in Los Angeles in 1994, he said, "We have to leave a legacy for our young people to take hold," he told the crowd. "We have to lift them up because if we don't, who will?" he asked. "If you take for granted your progress, you will lose it," he warned. "If you take for granted your life, you'll lose it."



As we enter a season of change and looking at who is serving and where that ministry is located, it is a time for us to reset, to consider the period of growth and prosperity that God has prepared for us. It is a time to consider the actions of our past and how that is helpful and hindering our future.

Stay tuned for more information including opportunities to buy an ad in the official program book, a published history of the Southeast Conference, workshops that address our history and our ministry, a gathering of persons preparing for authorized ministry in the UCC, and a gathering of our clergy, as well as special music and speakers who will help us appreciate our heritage. Rev. John Dorhauer, UCC General Minister and President will be present with us as well as representatives from other UCC Conferences in the Southern Region.

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Coming Events

Executive Committee

Tue, April 19, 2016
Web Meeting

SEC Staff Meeting

Thu, May 5, 2016
Conference Office

Lucretia

Bellamy Ordination

Sun, May 9, 2016
Rehoboth Fellowship

Valerie Coe Lowder 4-Way Covenant

Sun, May 9, 2016
Kirkwood UCC

Commission on Ministry Meeting

Sat, May 14, 2016
Chattanooga, TN

50th Annual Meeting

I hope that some of the readers of this column had a chance to see some of the video of the installation of Rev. John Dorhauer as the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. It has been an interesting process to see the installation take place in three cities on three consecutive days-New York on April 15, Chicago on April 16, and Seattle on April 17 to ensure that as many people as possible are able to be a part of this celebration and process. There is a link on our Facebook page at SECUCC.



But even as we celebrate the wonderful diversity-racial, ethnic, geographic, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, theological, mental and physical capacity- of the United Church of Christ, I am reminded that we need to find more ways to live into the Gospel message that is our UCC motto, "that they may all be one." I have seen news reports of two people taken off planes because others were not comfortable with their presence. One was Rev. William Barber, a Disciples of Christ pastor and president of the North Carolina NAACP, who was confronted by another passenger who questioned his need for two seats due to a medical condition. The other was UC Berkeley senior Khairuldeen Makhzoomi who used a common Arabic greeting while talking on his phone. Each incident has its own details which is not my point in this article. Rather that others on each plane felt some need to make their discomfort with the circumstances known.

This comes at a time when we see legislation about religious exemption vetoed by the Governor of Georgia but passed by North Carolina and being considered in South Carolina and Oklahoma and anti-transgender bills passed in Mississippi and introduced in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Those who know the geographic boundaries of the Southeast Conference will recognize that several of these states are within the geographic bounds of the Conference. And I have had inquiries from pastors and members of our churches in some of these places asking if the UCC or Conference have issued official statements regarding this legislation. While there are not official statements issued at this point, I hope you will look at the article about religious exemption legislation and about voting as a way of practicing justice.

Add all this to the upcoming anniversaries of the Boston Marathon bombing, the shooting at Mother Emmanuel AME in Charleston, and so many other places where violence is seen as the action used to make a statement about discomfort with diversity in culture, society and religion. As we are just a month away from Pentecost Sunday, I am reminded that the power of the Holy Spirit can make us one and give us the gift of understanding one another regardless of where we are situated.

I will be preaching at Church of the Savior in Knoxville on April 24th as we celebrate UCC Pacific Islander Asian American Ministry Sunday. This is a group that has been a part of my life and of the UCC since 1974. What can you think of to do to lift up the diversity of your own personal situation, your church, your community, and the wider world so that we may all know that we are one in the eyes of our creator, regardless of the name by which that Holy Presence is known.

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Connect with Us!





We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2016. Each month, we will publish a weekly list for the month and post them weekly on our Facebook page. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

- [Click here to download the entire 2016 prayer list](#)

Highlights:

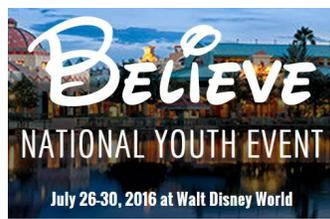
- Congratulations to **Rev. Katie O'Dunne** who was ordained and installed on April 9th as the Chaplain at Woodward Academy in Atlanta. She is a member of Kirkwood UCC. [View photos of the ordination.](#)
- Congratulations to **Edward Colf** who was approved for ordination pending call at the Commission on Ministry meeting held at Pilgrim Church in Chattanooga April 2, 2016. He is working as a hospice chaplain in Nashville and a member of United Church of Huntsville.
- Condolences to the family of **James L. Myers** who died on April 12 at the age of 87. The funeral service will be on Monday April 18 at 12 noon at First Congregational Church in Birmingham. He served First Congregational Christian Birmingham for many years and was ordained in 1953. His son, Gary L. Myers is the pastor of Trinity Congregational UCC in Athens, Alabama.
- Condolences to the family of **Jack Yates** who died March 23, 2016. He would have turned 90 on March 27th. He celebrated the 66th anniversary of his ordination in June 2015. We keep Bettye and their two daughters in prayer. Services will be held at 10:00 am, Tuesday, April 19 at Pleasant Hill Community Church.
- Prayers for **Rev. Debbie Douglas** and her family. A memorial service for her father, Benjamin Taylor Welch, was held at Pleasant Hill Community Church April 16.
- Prayers for **Rev. Bob Hurst**, United Church of Huntsville who had knee replacement surgery March 28.
- Prayers for **Rev. Lesley Brogan** as she recovers from knee replacement surgery.
- Prayers for **Rev. Laurie Hill** as she recovers from surgery. She is serving Fairfield Glade Community Church in Tennessee.

Churches in Transition:

Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Church of the Savior, Alpharetta Georgia; Pensacola UCC, Pensacola Florida; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee; Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Beloved Community, Birmingham Alabama; First United Church, Belvidere Tennessee.

National Youth Event is July 26-30 at Disney

Mark your calendar to attend the most magical National Youth Event (NYE) of all! From July 26-30 join 4,000 UCC and Disciples youth from across the country and world at Walt Disney World's Coronado Springs Resort. The online store for NYE is now open. T-shirt orders will be available ONLY online, as there will not be a physical store onsite. [Read more...](#)



News from Around the Conference and Beyond

Clothing for Migrant Farm Workers

Each summer, Central Congregational UCC, along with Emory University heads down to south Georgia to provide free health-care and clothing to the farmworkers. Are you cleaning out your closets? We want your stuff! We need men's long pants, long sleeved t-shirts, short sleeved t-shirts, hats, shoes, sunglasses, belts. We are also accepting women's clothing. Anything you want to give will be gladly accepted.

You can drop clothing off at Central UCC (Monday-Friday) 9am-5pm. Address: 2676 Clairmont Rd NE Atlanta, GA 30329. Please feel free to call/text Rev. Lacey Brown with any questions 239-849-0846. Or email lacey@central-ucc.org. We are accepting clothing until June 1. Thank you so much!

When Exemption is the Rule: The Religious Freedom Strategy of the Religious Right

Have you been looking for an in-depth analysis of what's going on with the religious exemption bills that have been put forward in statehouses across the country, seeking to deny LGBTQ people and others their basic rights in the name of religious freedom? Here's what you're looking for: *When Exemption is the Rule: The Religious Freedom Strategy of the Religious Right*, is an in depth analysis of the religious exemption strategy of the religious right, written by Frederick Clarkson, Senior Fellow at Political Research Associates and introduced by Rev. John C. Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. [Read the Article...](#)

Camp Beech Grove Returns to Central UCC

Camp Beech Grove welcomes children who want to connect with each other and nature, learn about the outdoor world in which they live, and have time to play in the forest. The children will sing, play, learn about the forest around us, hear sacred stories, gain environmental awareness through fun hands-on activities, do some yoga and enjoy the outdoors.

[Read more...](#)

UCC Surveys

UCC Giving Survey

The UCC is conducting a survey to gather feedback on various items related to giving patterns in the United Church of Christ. In 2015, the UCC Board of Directors formed the Task Force on Giving to review giving across the denomination and to recommend ways to improve and enhance giving throughout the UCC. To that end, they are seeking your wisdom, ideas, thoughts, and general feedback on giving patterns in the UCC.

[Take the Survey](#)

UCC HIV Ministries Survey

The 2016 UCC HIV Ministries Survey is your opportunity to share with the Leadership Team of the UCC HIV & AIDS Network (aka, UCAN) about the HIV ministries happening in and through your local church. You will also have the opportunity to tell them how you think UCAN is doing and what you need from us to better serve you. [Take the Survey](#)

Conferences and Learning Opportunities

Summer Intensive UCC History & Polity Course

Once again this year the six New England Conferences, in cooperation with Andover Newton Theological School, will be sponsoring an intensive summer class in UCC History, Theology, and Polity. The class will take place June 6-17 in Freedom, NH, on the shores of beautiful Lake Ossipee.

[Read more...](#)

Divine Inspiration: Your Next Breath. Contemplative Christian Psychotherapy

This day-long seminar offers psychotherapists, counselors, and spiritual directors an opportunity to explore the experience of breathing as the momentary source of life, metaphor for divine presence and an anchor for contemplative praxis. By engaging in this practice, therapists can be guided in their clinical work by divine inspiration, building on the foundation of their professional training to interact creatively with clients as each moment unfolds. [Read more...](#)