

# CONFERENCE *connection*

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



## SOUTHEAST UCC Conference

May 15, 2016

Southeast Conference  
50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

## CELEBRATING JUBILEE

### 50th Annual Meeting: June 10-11, 2016

The draft schedule for the 50th Annual Meeting of the Conference is **now posted on the conference website**. We will be celebrating our history and heritage through the recollections of persons from our own history. We will have a program book with historical information and well wishes from a variety of settings and people. Thanks to all who have already purchased an ad.

Those preparing for authorized ministry will gather in retreat on Thursday and Friday, June 9-10. Authorized ministers will gather on June 9 for a time of retreat. The annual meeting will begin "Celebrating Jubilee" with lunch on Friday, June 10.

Our thanks to Rebecca Seldomridge who is acting as annual meeting registrar and to the planning committee as they work on the final details of program, worship, workshops, and exhibits. We will be having a book sale this year to benefit PATHWAYS, our regional theological educational program, and you are invited to bring your own books for sale. Please see the related article. If you are a published author, we would like to talk with you about being part of our author's corner.

If you are interested in offering a workshop or being an exhibitor, please contact Debbie Spearman at [dspearman@secucc.org](mailto:dspearman@secucc.org).

Joyce Hollyday will be preaching our opening worship. Kevin Madill and Connye Florence are writing a special piece for our jubilee and invites singers to be a part of the mass choir for the closing worship. Rehearsal will be during one of the workshop sessions.

Congregations are invited to bring a grab bag from their church to share. If you have a cup, a magnet, a t-shirt, a CD, an apron, or any other items that tell about your ministry, prepare a little gift bag for our mealtime exchange.

Reports and other materials will be posted in the next week at the Annual Meeting page on the Conference website. Feel free to call the conference office with questions or concerns. And we will see you at the appointed hour to begin our celebration of life and ministry together.

We appreciate your patience and understanding as we rethink, retool, revise the annual meeting schedule. We will continue to

### In This Issue

- [50th Annual Meeting](#)
- [PATHWAYS Book Sale](#)
- [Caring Community](#)
- [Jottings from June](#)
- [Scholarships Available](#)
- [National Youth Event](#)
- [Commission on Ministry News](#)
- [LaCretia Bellamy Ordained](#)
- [Open and Affirming Coalition Annual Meeting](#)
- [Nation Gun Violence Awareness](#)
- [Strengthen The Church Special Offering](#)
- [Conferences and Learning Opportunities](#)
- [2017 General Synod in Baltimore](#)
- [Retired Servants Retreat](#)
- ["Live & Learn" Lunches](#)

### Coming Events

**Executive Committee**  
Tue, May 17, 2016  
*Web Meeting*

**Board of Directors**  
Tue, May 17, 2016  
*Web Meeting*

**SEC Staff Meeting**  
Thu, June 2, 2016  
*Conference Office*

**50th Annual Meeting**

## PATHWAYS Book Sale at Annual Meeting

During the Southeast Conference 50th Annual Meeting, PATHWAYS is hosting an Annual Meeting Book Sale to benefit the PATHWAYS program. Much of the Theology Among the People (TAP) books will be sold as well as other books in the Conference Resource Library.

Friends of PATHWAYS and members of the Southeast Conference are invited to set aside books in good condition that you think your friends and colleagues might love to read over the summer. Consider not only the condition of the books but broad and niche interests, serious and beach reads. Children's books, novels, clergy shares, audio books and even puzzles are welcome. There will be a drop-off room at Annual Meeting.

Because of space limitations and the need to dispose of unsold materials, this is not the time to find a home for a large number of hymnals nor your college textbooks. So please look through your shelves knowing that the PATHWAYS Book Sale is not only a way to support the educational ministry of the Southeast Conference but to gather together in ministry and fellowship as we learn more about our world and each other through the joy of reading.

## From the Conference Office



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:

- Continued prayers for **Bill Eure** as he battles cancer. He is the spouse of Rev. Michael Piazza serving Virginia Highland Church in Atlanta.
- Prayers for both **Kirkwood UCC** in Atlanta and **Decatur UCC** in Georgia as they relocate to different temporary ministry sites as part of a transitional ministry plan.
- Prayers for all those who are graduating from theological institutions across the nation and for their leadership and for the communities they are serving and will serve.

### Churches in Transition:

Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia;  
Church of the Savior, Alpharetta Georgia; Pensacola UCC,  
Pensacola Florida; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga

## Conference Staff

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## Connect with Us!



Tennessee; Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Beloved Community, Birmingham Alabama; First United Church, Belvidere Tennessee.

## Jottings from June

Pentecost was on Sunday, May 15. Some call Pentecost the birthday of the church. Some churches celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit with special worship and children's church activities. Some churches encourage people to wear red. Some churches celebrate their anniversaries on Pentecost or take the annual congregational picture on that day.



It is good to set aside a day to reflect on how the Holy Spirit came upon believers from many places and of many tongues and races. That is a fitting metaphor for the diversity of the culture we find in the Southeast Conference. And it is a fitting time to think about how our congregations and communities are being revived. Do we feel the rushing wind or see the spark of new energy and new ideas in our congregations? Do the people in our communities stop to wonder at the words we are speaking in the public square and ask how we came to speak their language?

In this season as we listen to all the rhetoric in the political arena and watch people divide along ideological lines, how do we speak the language of love and freedom from bondage and inclusion of all in our own houses of worship? How can we be a healing balm in this season of contentious debate and deeply wounding words and the lack of respect for others' viewpoints and realities? How do we speak truth to power in our communities, counties, states, and in our nation as we go to the polling place?

The ministry of Jesus and of the gospel that we seek to live out was not contained in a single building but happened on the road, among the people, reaching out to those who were regarded as less than equal or even untouchable. How closely are we following Jesus or are we just preaching to the choir and living with the same old, same old and calling it good. We are challenged in scripture to reach out, travel outside our comfort zones, and encounter the other so that we might grow into the likeness of Christ and be faithful disciples as well as agents of God's unfailing love, mercy, and compassion.

Breathe on us, breath of God. Fill us with life anew.

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## Theological Education Scholarships Available

The Southeast Conference, through the Scholarship Committee of the Commission on Ministry, offers financial assistance for those engaged in theological education.

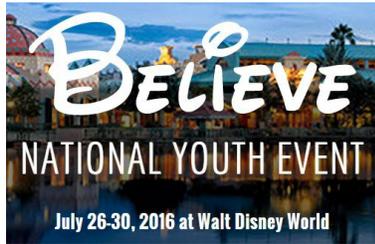
The deadlines for applications are May 15 and October 15. The scholarship committee has extended the deadline for the spring applications to June 15, 2016.

You can find the application form and details about criteria and award limits on the Southeast conference website.

<http://www.seucc.org/resources/becoming-a-ucc-pastor/theological-education-scholarship/>

## 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. **Registration closes May 27, 2016.**



The Southeast Conference is excited that youth from Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, Georgia and Church of the Savior in Knoxville are planning to attend National Youth Event. If other youth groups are planning to attend, please let the Conference office know. [Read more...](#)

## From the Commission on Ministry

by Valerie Coe Lowder

### COM Reorganization

The Commission on Ministry is reorganizing in order to more effectively accomplish its work. As of Annual Meeting, the Commission on Ministry shall consist of:

- Two ex officio members: the Conference Minister and the Conference Registrar
- a Chair and a Vice-Chair/Chair-elect
- Three At-Large members

Three teams:

- **Preparation for Authorized Ministry** team shall be responsible for: psychological evaluation review; support of Persons In Exploration and Members In Discernment; recommending candidates for ecclesiastical councils and interviews; administering scholarships; managing Privilege of Call and Commissioned Ministry requests.
- **Support And Nurture of Ministries** team shall be responsible for: Periodic Support Consultations for clergy; continuing education; boundary training; clergy support (including pastors and ministers in specialized settings); support for congregations; providing a process for Situational Support Consultations; hearing initial concerns and determining whether a Fitness Review should be initiated, and providing a process for Fitness Reviews.
- **Ministerial Oversight And Standing** team shall be responsible for: Annual Information Reviews; accountability of authorized ministers to the standards established by the Commission on Ministry (for Annual Information Reviews, continuing education, boundary training, Conference participation, etc.); dual standing requests; transfers of standing; licensure requests; endorsing professional chaplains and recommending endorsement of military/government chaplains.

### Welcome transfers into SE Conference!

- **Donna Farrar** – She is Coordinator-Chaplaincy/Clinical Pastoral Education for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and a member of Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, GA.
- **Sonya Gravlee** – She is Chaplain to St. Vincent's East

Hospital in Birmingham, and a member of Beloved Community UCC in Birmingham, AL.

- **Shelli Poe** – She is Campus Minister to Millsaps College in Jackson, and a member of Safe Harbor Family UCC in Flowood, MS.

## **Congratulations!**

- **Matthew Frierdich** was approved as a Board Certified Chaplain by the Association of Professional Chaplains.
- **Michelle Holtman** was endorsed by COM/SE Conference as a Board Certified Chaplain.
- **LaCretia Bellamy** was ordained by Rehoboth Fellowship, and installed as Associate Pastor on May 8. On May 14 her endorsement as an Army Reserve Chaplain was recommended by the Commission on Ministry.
- **Valerie Coe Lowder** was installed as Director of Smoke Rise Baptist Weekday School, in covenant with SE Conference and Kirkwood UCC.

## **Upcoming COM Meeting Dates**

- COM Orientation and team meetings - Date TBA in July, at SE Conference office
- COM meeting - September 17 at Pilgrim UCC, Chattanooga

## **News from Around the Conference and Beyond**

### **LaCretia Bellamy Ordained at Rehoboth Fellowship on May 8**

LaCretia Bellamy was ordained at Rehoboth Fellowship Atlanta on May 8 to hold dual standing in the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. She was also installed as associate pastor of Rehoboth Fellowship and is in the process of seeking endorsement as an Army Reserve Chaplain. It was a joyous day as Pastor Troy Sanders, Rev. Susan Mitchell, and Rev. June Boutwell participated in this affirmation of LaCretia's ministry. [View Photos on our website.](#)

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### **Still Speaking 2.0 Coming Soon!**

The national offices of the United Church of Christ is rolling out a God is Still Speaking 2.0 local church toolkit. It will be sent to every local church by the end of the month. It is a collection of resources to help UCC churches connect with social media, build a UCC identity, and provide materials to help local church connect to their congregations and communities. Look for more details soon!

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### **Open and Affirming Coalition Annual Meeting**

You are invited to a very special National ONA Gathering June 7-9 in St. Joseph, MN. We're at a turning point for our movement. Marriage equality was a magnificent achievement, but the right to marriage was a milestone on our journey, not the final destination.

So what's next for the Open and Affirming movement in the United Church of Christ? That's what this year's National ONA Gathering is all about. ONA congregations around the country

will meet in St. Joseph to explore the issues that face us, to plan for the future, and to learn new ways we can make a difference in our communities.

We promise that National ONA Gathering 2016 will help you and your congregation revive your ONA spirit! More details:

[openandaffirming.org/news/ona-gathering/](http://openandaffirming.org/news/ona-gathering/)

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## **Your vote is your voice - don't give it up!**

These are difficult and challenging times for our local communities, our country, and the world. Divisive and heated rhetoric dominate the public dialogue, and the power of money is shutting out the voice of the average voter. More and more people are withdrawing from engagement in the political process out of a growing sense of cynicism and mistrust.

Now, more than ever, your voice and your efforts are needed. As people of faith, we can play a unique role in this election cycle by encouraging civil, respectful dialogue that builds community and offers a hope-filled vision of the future for all people.

Join the Our Faith, Our Vote campaign and find out how your congregation can participate in the electoral process through faithful, nonpartisan engagement. Check out our resources and sign up for helpful webinars and opportunities to make a difference in this election season. [Read more...](#)

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## **Second Annual Nation Gun Violence Awareness Day is June 2**

Wear Orange was inspired by friends of Hadiya Pendleton, a 15-year-old Chicago high school student killed by gunfire, who decided to honor her life by wearing orange -the color hunters wear in the woods to protect themselves and others. On June 2, 2015, what would have been Hadiya's 18th birthday, more than 200 organizations and influencers asked people nationwide to join them by wearing orange to honor her life, the lives of the more than 90 Americans killed by gun violence and the hundreds more who are injured every day. Last year the #WearOrange message reached more than 220 million people on June 2nd; this year we need your help to make Wear Orange bigger and louder.

Celebration of Gun Violence Awareness featuring mOody bLaCk, Spoken Word Poet and Marlo Hogue, singer/songwriter and the Lighting of the ONE Building in Orange. June 2, 2016 from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. in Greenville, SC at One City Plaza where Coffee Street meets Main Street. For more info contact: Tandy Taylor ([tataylor.sc@gmail.com](mailto:tataylor.sc@gmail.com))

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## **Strengthen The Church Special Offering**

Strengthen The Church (STC) is a special mission offering to re-imagine and build the future of the UCC. Shared at the conference and national levels, STC largely supports youth ministries and full-time leaders for new churches in parts of the country where the UCC voice has not been heard. As God calls our congregations to be the "church" in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults. STC funds will also be used to award grants to

help congregations communicate the "God is still speaking," message. Most congregations received the STC offering on Pentecost Sunday, May 15, 2016.

## Conferences and Learning Opportunities

### 2017 General Synod in Baltimore

It is not too early to plan for General Synod 2017 scheduled June 30-July 4, 2017 at Baltimore Convention Center in Maryland. Standing Rules for Synod 31 in 2017 are available on the UCC website: <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/GS31-Standing-Rules.pdf>. Also, nominations are being sought for persons interested in serving on the United Church Board ([link to details](#)).

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### Retired Servants Retreat is October 3-5

Mark your calendars now to attend the Sixth Annual Retired UCC Servants Retreat that will be held Monday dinner through Wednesday morning on October 3-5, 2016. This event is being planned for Retired UCC Servants of the Southeast and Southern Conferences of the UCC. It is being held at Blowing Rock Conference Center in Blowing Rock, NC amid the beauty of fall coming to the NC mountains! More details coming soon!

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### "Live & Learn" Lunches @ TACC

Every third Tuesday of the Month from 11:30 to 1:00 join TACC staff and community experts for lunch, and to learn more about how to explore life's difficult conversations and challenging situations.

- May 17: Sustainability as a Spiritual Discipline with Rev. Kate McGregor Mosely, ED, GA Interfaith Power & Light
- June 21: The Importance of Receiving Love: Becoming Open and Appreciative of Love and Kindness From Others with Dr. Louis McLeod, Ph.D.
- July 19: Spirituality and Recovery: Exploring the Connection Between the Body and the Mind (Hint: Its more than just your neck!) with Dr. T. Albert Davis
- Aug 16: Understanding Trauma: What It Is; What It Does; What To Do About It with Stephanie Featherston, M. Div., Ed. S.

[Read more...](#)