

CONFERENCE *connection*

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

SOUTHEAST UCC Conference



July 15, 2016

Jottings from June

*A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more.*

It has been hard to hold onto the concept of Jubilee since the end of the 50th Annual Meeting. There continues to be so much violence and grief in the world, so much suspicion and disrespectful rhetoric, so much speculation and analysis. And, thankfully, so many who gather in prayer and in peaceful solidarity to mourn and to wail and to encourage one another that we might be the light of God's love for all peoples in all places, regardless of our faith or our alliances.



How do we bring a word of hope in these dark times? I know many of our clergy colleagues are struggling with this question. How do we shine a light to draw communities closer and in alignment with common values of human dignity, respectful relationship, and peaceful interaction? I know many who are in the streets who are struggling with this same question.

And yet, there are all the pains and burdens of our everyday lives as we try to care for family and be responsible employees and employers and find the time to do all the things we are engaged in. How do we find the energy and the time and the will to witness to hope and transformation and to weep with our neighbors and talk to our children?

These are hard times as we are assailed with new acts of violence even as we remember the anniversaries of past acts that have harmed and killed others and have left their imprint on our collective psyche. The opening text is found in Jeremiah 31 and again in Matthew 2 when Herod killed the innocent children. Jeremiah 31 recounts the tragedies of a people and provides us a word of hope:

*Thus says the LORD:
The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness;
when Israel sought for rest, the LORD appeared to him from far away.
I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.
I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.*

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Coming Events

National Youth Event
July 26-29, 2016
Disney World, Orlando FL

SEC Staff Meeting
Thu, August 4, 2016
Conference Office

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Even as I continue my prayers and my public witness for change in the world, I pray that you and all those who are weeping may find comfort and community and blessing that we might be strengthened as people of God who know that even death cannot overcome God's love and mercy and justice.

UCC leaders: Peace must begin with us

Leadership of the United Church of Christ "distressed and haunted by the words of a man who shot and killed these officers" today released a pastoral letter after the second incident in just over a week where law enforcement officers in this country were targeted, shot and killed by a gunman.

[Read the entire letter on the UCC website.](#)

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:

- Prayers for the family of **Bill Eure** who died early July 18. He is the spouse of **Rev. Michael Piazza** serving Virginia Highland Church in Atlanta. A memorial services will be held Saturday, July 23, at 1 p.m. at Virginia-Highland Church. A second service will be hosted by the Cathedral of Hope in Dallas on Monday, July 25, at 6:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to the Virginia-Highland Church altar guild. Donations can be made on the church's website, www.vhchurch.org/give-online. Cards can be sent to Virginia-Highland Church; 743 Virginia Ave. NE; Atlanta, GA 30306.
- Rev. Andy Sidden at Garden of Grace in Columbia South Carolina has requested prayers for his sister-in-law **Danene Howard** of North Carolina and nephew Chris Barnes of West Virginia who are both suffering from cancer.
- Prayers for the family of **Elder James Jackson**, from Hope, Arkansas. He is the nephew of Minister **Carrole Moss** of Victory for the World Church in Stone Mountain Georgia. The services were held Saturday July 16.
- Prayers for the family of **Ronald D Vinson**. He died on July 11th at his home in Bakersville, North Carolina. He was a marriage and family therapist in the Atlanta area for over 25 years and a previous member of Central Congregational UCC. Services will be held August 7 at the Universalist Unitarian Church in Asheville. Memorial gifts can be made to the Southern Appalachian

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Highlands Conservancy.

- Blessings to **Rev. Ginnie Ferrell** as she retires July 31 from active ministry as Associate Pastor of Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta. Her farewell Sunday was July 10.
- Blessings for **Rev. Laurie Hill** whose last Sunday at Fairfield Glade Community Church in Tennessee will be August 7. She has accepted a call at a UCC church in Illinois.
- Prayers for the newly elected and appointed officers, board members, General Synod delegates, and committee chairs and members as they begin their service to the Conference.
- 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.

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.

50th Anniversary History Books Available

Copies of the 50th Anniversary history of the Southeast Conference are still available. The cost is \$25 which includes shipping and handling.

Please send a note detailing how many copies are desired and the complete mailing address along with a check for the total amount. Or you may pay through our [on-line contribution site](#) noting the payment is for History Book and emailing the shipping details to info@secucc.org. Please allow 2-3 weeks for processing.

German Evangelicals and Swiss Reformed Seek Zion in the Southland

The Southern U.S., for the most part, was in the 19th century most unlike much of the rest of the country in that it was not considered hospitable to non-English-speaking immigrants. Other than in a few large cities, most surnames were decidedly of Anglo-Saxon origin, as were the churches they attended, descendants of the Great Awakenings that took place within the confines of English-derived Puritanism. But here and there, one could find exceptions. Among them were two German-speaking immigrant groups that birthed the several congregations of the Evangelical and Reformed tradition in Alabama and Tennessee.

[Read the entire story.](#)

Commission on Ministry Kick-off Meeting

Meeting together for the first time as the new Southeast Conference Commission on Ministry, the commission kicked off this year well with an orientation and initial meetings on July 15 and 16. We were pleased to host Rev. Malcolm Himschoot, UCC Minister for Ministerial Transitions from our denominational headquarters in Cleveland. He shared with us about the role of a Commission on Ministry in the United Church of Christ, authorization for ministry, tools and resources for our work. [View](#)

[the photos here.](#)

SECUCC is Going to the National Youth Event

The Southeast Conference will be represented at National Youth Event in Orlando from July 26-29. Rev. June Boutwell will be there to share the experience with youth from Praxis UCC in Americus, Georgia who are being sponsored by Piedmont College and youth from Church of the Savior in Knoxville. This quadrennial national youth gathering, which will include over 3,000 young people, adults, and volunteers of all ages, is a transformative experience in the lives of those who attend. It is a wonderful view of the UCC in all its diversity and richness and a way to see how the lives of these young people are critical to the ministry in their local churches and beyond, this day and into the future. We invite your prayers, especially for those traveling from Southeast Conference, but also for all those who will gather in faith and fun and fellowship.

Disaster volunteers urgently needed for SC

Attention potential volunteers! South Carolina homeowners still struggling to recover from last fall's devastating storms and floods need your help. Week-long work teams are being recruited now, especially and urgently for September and October. [Learn more on our website.](#)

Celebrating Retirements

Rev. Dr. Ashley Cleere has retired from her position as Chaplain at Piedmont College where she has served since 1999, and Rev. Ginnie Ferrell is retiring from First Congregational Church in Atlanta after serving 16 years. [Learn more about each of these wonderful women on our website.](#)

Our Faith, Our Vote

Many of you are aware that the Republican National Convention will be in Cleveland and that the national offices of the United Church of Christ are a block away from the convention site. The UCC offices will be closed during Convention week due to security restrictions but Rev. Traci Blackmon speaks to our UCC presence during this time. [Learn more from the UCC.](#)

Please consider using resources from Our Faith, Our Vote. Here are some recent blog posts and an invitation to apply for a grant for your local church to make a difference in your community. [Read the Blog.](#)

Training and Retreat Opportunities

6th Annual Retired Servants Conference/ Retreat is Oct 3-5

You are invited to attend the Sixth Annual Retired UCC Servants Conference/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!

[Click here to view all the information on our website.](#)

African American Women in Ministry Conference is Oct 13-15

AAWIM is headed back to the historic Franklinton Center, at Bricks, Whitakers, North Carolina (October 13-15) for a two-day retreat packed full of opportunities for professional growth, networking, time to reconnect with colleagues and friends and, of course, an incredible lineup of dynamic preachers: Rev Traci Blackmon, Rev. Dr. Iva Carruthers and Rev. Waltrina Middleton. Plus these inspirational speakers: Rev. Kathy Clark, Minister Jené Colvin, Rev. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis, Rev. Bianca Davis, Pastor Naomi Leapheart, Chaplain Kentina Washington. And the wisdom and power of our Founders: Rev. Dr. Yvonne Delk and Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson. Come; let us find hope For Such a Time as This. [Learn more.](#)

Faith in Literature Festival, Oct 21-22

UNC Asheville and the Wake Forest School of Divinity will jointly convene Faith in Literature: A Festival of Contemporary Writers of the Spirit, a gathering of 11 writers whose work deeply engages-by embracing, complicating, or wrestling with-a faith tradition or spiritual practice. [Learn more.](#)