

CONFERENCE *connection*

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



SOUTHEAST UCC Conference

October 1, 2016

From the Conference Office

Jottings from June

In these waning days of summer (yes, I know that fall has officially arrived) we begin to appreciate the changing temperatures and turn our thoughts from vacation and family time to school and church and sports and playoffs and harvest. It is a time of shifting our focus and readying ourselves, as Christians, for a season of gratitude as we celebrate Thanksgiving and a season of waiting, wonder, and expectation as we travel through the Advent season and look to a new year.



As Rev. JR Finney, Southeast Conference Moderator pointed out in the last issue of this newsletter, we need to be prepared for a season of change. My tenure here is only for a few more months. The board is preparing to seek an interim Conference Minister. The staff is preparing to move to a virtual office. How do we keep our focus on God's presence in our lives and the call to follow Jesus as individuals and as organizations such as churches and Conferences in the midst of these kinds of transitions?

This is a time of hopeful presence. I am reassured by hearing the choir in one of our Southeast Conference churches recently sing, "God has never failed me yet!" And scripture reminds us that even after Jacob wrestled with the angel, when he awoke, God told him, "...all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place-and I did not know it!" (Genesis 28:14b-16)

And we are reminded as we look to the birth of the son of God, that at the end of his story, he tells the disciples, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:16-20)

We all are familiar with Black Friday and Cyber Monday as the

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Coming Events

Retired Servants Retreat
October 3 - 5, 2016
Blowing Rock Conference Center in North Carolina

African American Women in Ministry Conference
October 13-15, 2016
Franklinton Center

SEC Staff Meeting
Thu, Oct 13, 2016
Conference Office

East Ala - West GA Association Meeting

shopping season kicks off after Thanksgiving. But what if our focus was turned toward a different set of values other than consumerism. Celebrated on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving (in the U.S.), #GivingTuesday kicks off the charitable season, when many focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving. Giving Tuesday was started in 2012 by the 92nd Street Y and the United Nations Foundation as a response to commercialization and consumerism in the post-Thanksgiving season. It is a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration. Last year over 700,000 people raised \$116,000 online in over 70 countries.

Let's keep our focus on what is happening in the communities which we care about and care for. And let us practice gratitude and be generous in our giving whether the gift is one of presence, compassion, funds, goods and services, or helping to share the good news of the power of love to overcome the ills of the world. If we keep this as our focus and as our ministry, we will not fail God, ourselves, or our neighbors.



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 of thanksgiving for **Church of the Savior Alpharetta, Beloved Community Church Birmingham**, and **United Church Belvidere** as they each gather in worship and congregational meeting to vote on a new pastor.
- Prayers for **Julius 'Chaka' Jessup Peterson** as he is ordained on October 2, 2016 through a four-way covenant with Decatur UCC and Care and Counseling Center of Georgia.
- Congratulations to **Kirkwood UCC** in Atlanta as they broke ground on Sept 20 for a new sanctuary.
- We note with great regret that **First United Church in Nashville, Tennessee** has voted to withdraw from the United Church of Christ. We wish the congregation and their pastor blessings on their continued ministry to the community.

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.

October 15, 2016

Executive Committee
October 18, 2016

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Connect with Us!



Conference Grant Deadline is October 30

September 19 thru October 31, 2016 marks the next application cycle for Fall 2016 Conference grants.

During this time congregations may apply in 3 different ways:

1. Online at secucc.org/giving/capital-campaign-grant-application/
2. Mailing a paper application to the Southeast Conference office
3. Emailing an electronic application to dspearman@secucc.org

Transforming Churches Transforming Lives
Grant Application

Memories of a Southern Sojourn

This month's 50th Anniversary historical feature highlights portions of "Memories of a Southern Sojourn" by Erston M. Butterfield, an unpublished manuscript, October 2001.

In the Spring of 1952, Dr. Thomas Tripp, Director of Town and Country Work (for the Congregational Christian Churches), called to see if we might be interested in the Southeast Convention, composed of 127 white churches in six states practicing segregation-Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and the Panhandle of Florida. The answer was an emphatic "No!" Go South? No way!

[Read the entire article on our website.](#)

News from the United Church of Christ

Our Faith, Our Vote

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. [Learn more.](#)

Neighbors in Need Special Mission Offering

What do Praxis UCC (Americus GA), Unity UCC (Montgomery AL), Circular Congregational (Charleston SC), Church of the Savior (Knoxville TN), and Open Table UCC (Mobile AL) in common besides being congregations in the Southeast Conference?

They are all recipients of a Neighbors in Need grant from Justice and Witness Ministries. Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

The 2016 theme for NIN is "This we believe" and connects the issue of child hunger to the work that UCC congregations are doing to serve their community and address this injustice. Most UCC congregations will receive the NIN offering on October 2,

2016 as part of their World Communion Sunday observance.
[Read more.](#)

Advent Devotional from Writers Group

It is not too early to begin to prepare for Advent! The Still Speaking Writers Group has published an Advent devotional for 2016. There are also other resources to help you prepare individually and as a congregation to welcome the Christ Child into our hearts and our lives. [Learn more.](#)

Progressive Advent Resources from SALT

The folks at SALT Project (a donor-supported, not for profit production company with Disciples of Christ roots) have created some terrific Advent videos and Advent cards that you may find useful in your planning for the Advent and Christmas season. [Learn more on their website.](#)

Training and Retreat Opportunities

African American Women in Ministry Conference

The African American Women in Ministry Conference will be held at Franklinton Center at Bricks in Whitakers, North Carolina on October 13-15, 2016. Charmaine Penn Johnson, Associate Pastor at Kirkwood UCC in Atlanta and one of the event coordinators has advised that the registration portal has been re-opened and additional registrations are being accepted.

It is reported that the following women from Southeast Conference will be in attendance: Aubra Love, Susan Mitchell, Gwen Thomas, Margaret Conley Greene, and Charmaine Penn Johnson. If you are interested in attending, please visit the website at <http://events.uccpages.org/aaw2016.html>.

PATHWAYS Short-Term Explorer Courses

In the coming months, PATHWAYS is offering two Explorer Series Courses that are designed to provide a short term, low commitment online learning experience to inspire and enlighten those who love to learn. These courses will also acquaint inquirers with the PATHWAYS Theological Education program and introduce them to progressive Christian theology and praxis closely related to the best practices of the United Church of Christ. The asynchronous online learning platform enables participants to study, learn, and interact with peer learners on their own pace each week.

If you enjoy engaging in theological reflection and in group discussions, you are invited to partake in this special learning opportunity. All are welcome on first come, first served basis. Space is limited. Tuition is \$99 per course. Contact the PATHWAYS administrator at pathways@secucc.org at your earliest convenience to enroll. [Learn More.](#)

Retired Servants Retreat

Many thanks to the Planning Team for the Retired Servants Event to be held at Blowing Rock Camp and Conference Center in North Carolina. Last reports are that about 50 people will be gathering there on October 3-5 for a time of fellowship and renewal. The theme this year is "Living and Dying Wisely." We

are grateful to the Southeast Conference planning team members for their ministry to this joint Southeast/Southern Conference event:

- Mary Ruth, Pleasant Hill TN, retired Volunteer Ministry Worker
- Rev. George & Martha Bennett, Valdosta GA, retired Clergy & spouse
- Rev. Susan Webeler, Opelika AL, retired Clergy

Winter Youth Retreat 2017

When: January 13-16, 2017

Theme: What is your purpose?

Speaker: Rev. Scott Hardin-Nieri from Asheville, NC

We will welcome back Mandee and Christi from Alatheia, and are shaking up the break-out sessions by asking students from Wake Forest Divinity School to create and facilitate them. Last, we will offer a few new service opportunities.

[Download the Retreat Flyer](#)

[Download the Retreat Registration Form](#)

[Winter Youth Retreat Website](#)

Upper Room UCC Fellowship in Nashville

The Upper Room is an association of United Church of Christ laypersons and UCC friends promoting prayer and daily meditation on God's Word and the greater unity, fellowship and spiritual vitality of the Nashville-area United Church of Christ & UCC friends. The theme for the evening is "But for Me it is Good to Be Near God" (Psalm 73:28a) and our guest speaker will be Rev. June Boutwell, Designated Conference Minister.

Training and Counseling Center at St. Lukes

Every 3rd Tuesday of the Month, 11:30 - 1pm

Physical Address: 98 Currier St, Atlanta, GA 30308

Please join TACC staff and community experts for lunch, and to learn more about how to explore life's difficult conversations and challenging situations. Walk- Ins Welcome. RSVP's by EMAIL preferred by the Friday previous to the event

Suggested Donation: \$5 for attendance, \$15 for attendance and lunch

Oct 18: Family Response to Addiction

How to Support a Loved One While Taking Care of Yourself with Matt Wagner, NCC

Please RSVP by Oct 14

Nov 15: Post-Partum Depression

Understanding This Unique Condition and How To Help.

Please RSVP by Nov 11

<http://www.trainingandcounselingcenter.org/#!/live--learn-lunches/c10sm>

Continuing Ed Opportunities for Clergy and Church Leaders

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is offering two upcoming

continuing education opportunities for clergy and other church leaders in Atlanta, Georgia.

- **Leadership and Anxiety in the Church: A Family Systems Perspective**
- November 2, 2016
- Held at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 435 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA

- **Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders**
- March 20-24, 2017
- Held at Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church, 805 Mount Vernon Highway NW, Atlanta, GA

[More information available on our website.](#)