

CONFERENCE *connection*

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



SOUTHEAST UCC Conference

October 15, 2016

From the Conference Office

Moderator's Message

by JR Finney

"Without good direction, people lose their way; the more wise counsel you follow, the better your chances."
Proverbs 11:14, "The Message"



Our Southeast Conference has a wonderfully rich history as chronicled by Michael Stroud in *"Ye Shall Be Witnesses Unto Me in the Southland: The Story of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ, 1966-2015."* We did incredible ministry in our first 50 years. Our commitment to "love mercy, act justly and walk humbly with our God" ensured we never lost our way. Different conference ministers brought their various skills and passions to bear in leading the conference in its incredible work and we were blessed to have them.

However, as we know, being church and doing ministry has changed remarkably in recent years requiring difficult paradigm shifts to ensure that the message that "God is still Speaking" continues to be our witness changing lives and bringing hope. It has been imperative that we make the critical changes and shifts organizationally and financially to do just that. Being relatively new as Board Moderator, I was blessed to see the truth of Proverbs 11:14 in a very reassuring way as I met recently with conference staff, attorney and accountant.

Our Designated Conference Minister, Rev. June Boutwell, with her leadership, financial and organizational skills has proven to be just the right counsel we needed as our leader these last three years. As she prepares to transition from this position at the end of February 2017, we owe her a great debt of gratitude that she has been willing to take on an incredible difficult beginning of our much needed shifts. She has provided effective and critical management needed to *"better our chances"* going forward.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to our staff for all of their incredible efforts on behalf of the Conference: Debbie Spearman, Generosity Coordinator; Rev. Dr. Sarah Kim, Executive Director of PATHWAYS; Don Harris, Director of Communications and Chris Lyman Waldron, IT guru who has provided direction to allow technology to assist these shifts. They too *"better our chances"* going forward.

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Coming Events

Executive Committee
October 18, 2016

Upper Room Fellowship
Sat, Oct 22, 2016
Howard Congregational Church, Nashville TN

SEC Staff Meeting
Thu, Nov 3, 2016
Conference Office

Commission on Ministry Meeting

Many thanks to two others: Art Dobby, our long time "almost encyclopedic memory" conference attorney who continues to provide wise counsel to "better our chances" going forward. And of course, many thanks to our newest counselor, Revolution Financial Services and our accountant Sandy Johns and bookkeeper Dianne Ash, whose passion for working with non-profits like us "better our chances" going forward.

I came from this meeting feeling very hopeful that the challenges before us are not overwhelming. I believe these counselors were meant for our conference "for such as time as this." They continue to provide us with "good direction." While June will be leaving us, the others remain. As we have undertaken our search for a new Interim Conference Minister in an effort to continue to "better our chances" going forward, we need the continuing support of all of you. We need all of our local churches to have a global outlook and support our efforts to make it known that **"God is Still Speaking!"**



Prayer Requests

- We hold the **coastal communities of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina** in prayer as they recover from Hurricane Mitch. Circular Congregational Church reported that they did not hold worship on October 9 but the church was open and there was no visible damage. However, at that time, the evacuation order had not been lifted. The Conference Office has not been able to contact anyone from First Congregational Church in Savannah.
- Please hold those working in **Disaster Response Ministries** for the UCC in prayer. This has been a hard season and they are working diligently to respond to the needs of many from multiple events. Zach Wdgemuth from UCC Disaster Response Ministries contacted the office on Monday to check on any needs. If anyone knows of any, please contact the conference office.

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2016. 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.](#)

Week of October 16:

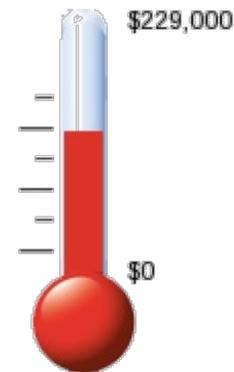
- Methodist Congregational Federated - Demorest, GA
- Jennifer Lee Crane
- Ruth Kershner
- Wayde Washburn

Week of October 23:

- Sankofa UCC - Atlanta, GA
- Stephanie Crumpton
- Andrew Kim
- Stanley Roat

Sat, Nov 5, 2016
Pilgrim UCC,
Chattanooga, TN

OCWM Giving



Our Church's Wider Mission provides for programs, resources, and tools to keep our churches strong, effective, and growing. We're currently at 57% of our goal!

Conference Staff

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- Lyle Weible

Week of October 30:

- Howard Congregational UCC - Nashville, TN
- Bryan Currie
- Sarah Kim
- Patricia Robbenolt
- J. Houston Wheeler

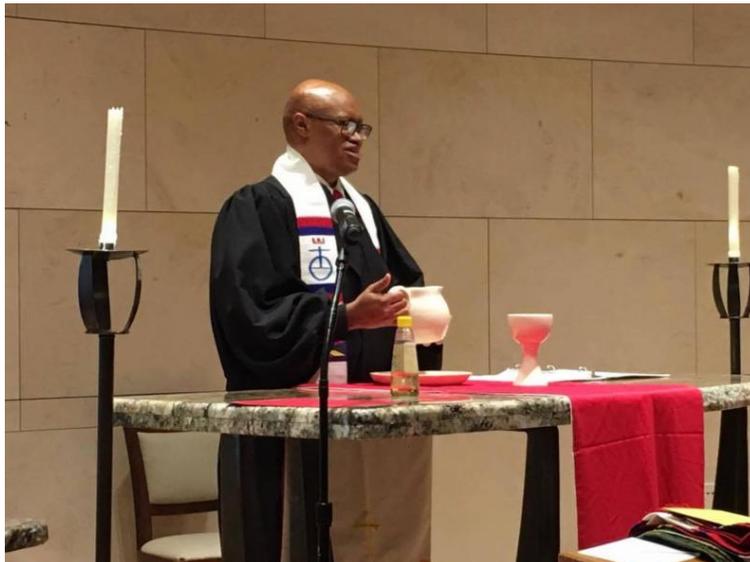


Conference Transitions

- The Southeast Conference Board of Directors has appointed an **interim search committee** who has begun its work with the assistance of Lee Albertson on the national UCC staff. The interim search committee is chaired by Rebecca Seldomridge, chair of the SEC personnel committee. Members are: Glenna Shepherd and Vanessa Robbs from Tennessee and Heith Battles from Alabama. Interviews for the Georgia representative are still ongoing.
- Congratulations to **Rev. Julius "Chaka" Jessup Peterson** who was ordained on October 2, 2016 at Wesley Teaching Chapel on the Emory Campus in Atlanta, Georgia. He was installed to a four-way covenant with Decatur UCC and Care and Counseling Center of Georgia (photo below).
- Congratulations to Church of the Savior in Alpharetta, Georgia who called **Rev. Paul Hackett** as their part-time settled pastor on September 25, 2016.
- Congratulations to Beloved Community Church in Birmingham, Alabama who called **Jennifer Sanders** as their part-time settled pastor on October 9, 2016. She began serving on October 10, 2016. Ms. Sanders will be seeking licensure.
- Congratulations to First United Church in Belvidere, Tennessee who called **Jan Whiteman** as their part-time settled pastor on October 9, 2016. She will begin serving on November 27, 2016. Ms. Whiteman will be seeking licensure.

Churches in Transition

Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee; Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Beloved Community, Birmingham Alabama; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville Tennessee.



Conference Grant Deadline is October 31

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

Kirkwood UCC Represents at Atlanta Pride

Over 35 members of Kirkwood UCC in Atlanta marched in the annual Atlanta Pride parade on Sunday, October 8.



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.](#)

Bill Bourdon Retirement Party at Blowing Rock

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and the staff of the Blowing Rock Conference Center, you are cordially invited to a reception to honor our Century Club members. Additionally, we will honor Bill and Jan Bourdon's ministries here at BRCC. Please mark your calendars for November 12, 2016 at 2:00 in the afternoon in the Leonard Dining Room at the Blowing Rock Conference Center. This celebration will include a time of

reflection on the Bourdon's 40+ years of service in Outdoor Ministries, and there will be speakers from the past and present.

As many of you know, Jan will be retiring in December of 2016, and Bill will go on a short sabbatical after which he will officially retire in April of 2017. The Blowing Rock Conference Center would not be what it is today without their tireless work and leadership. They have helped make BRCC a viable ministry that will prosper in their absence. Because the Century Club is a program that they created at BRCC, we find it fitting to honor them while recognizing the important efforts of the Century Club.

Educational Resource on White Privilege

'White Privilege: Let's Talk' is an adult education curriculum designed to invite members to engage in safe, meaningful, substantive and bold conversations on race, is written by five authors from different perspectives and walks of life.

The resource became available on September 1, 2016.

[Learn More on the UCC website.](#)

Training and Retreat Opportunities

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.](#)

Sixth Retired Servants Retreat a Success

Fifty five people were present for the 6th Annual Retired Servants Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center in Blowing Rock, NC. The theme of "Living and Dying Wisely" was interpreted by Steve Halstead of Southern Conference who presented a program on "Caring for God's Creation: A Moral Imperative."

This coincided with the date of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. George Bennett closed our retreat with a film titled "The Grief Walker" about the work of Stephen Jenkinson and reflection/sharing from his book "Die Wise: A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul."

Next year the retreat will be on October 2-4, 2017 at Blowing Rock Conference Center. We are looking for someone to be on the planning committee to represent Southeast Conference.



Winter Youth Retreat 2017

Early Registration Deadline is November 4

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 Gathers on October 22

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 Fellowship will gather on October 22 at Howard Congregational Church. 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.

Regional Theological Education Consortium

The Regional Theological Education Consortium (RTEC) will meet from November 7 - 9, 2017 in Oberlin, OH. Rev. Dr. Sarah Kim, Director of Theological Education and Dean of PATHWAYS will be attending along with the Rev. Ginnie Ferrell, chair of the PATHWAYS Advisory Committee and Rev. Dr. Lou Kavar, immediate past chair of the Advisory Committee.

Registration, program materials, lodging and meals are FREE to participants, thanks to generous support from The BTS Center and the UCC's Strengthen the Church Offering. The Southeast Conference will provide travel funds for this event. [Learn more.](#)

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 23: TACC Open House

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (includes tour of Edward S. Gay House)

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>

Also, please congratulate the Rev. Dorothea Lotze-Kola pastor, German Church, Atlanta, GA on the publication of her book, Gospel Sermons: Zinzendorf's Great Granddaughter - Sermons to Germans in English, which can be found online here.

Pr. Lotze-Kola, who is celebrating her second anniversary as pastor of the German Church, is also the Executive Director of the Training & Counseling Center at St. Luke's.

Continuing Ed Opportunities for Clergy and Church Leaders

Early Bird Deadline is October 19

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

More information available on our website.

**Clergy Participation Invited:
Discussing Grief Experienced by Pastors in
Congregational Settings**

Marie Tracy, a third-year Master of Divinity student at Vanderbilt Divinity School, is completing a project on the potential ability for pastors to grieve within a congregational setting. She is looking to interview United Church of Christ clergypersons who lost a loved one while working in a church, to hear your story, and to discuss your experience as a pastor facing grief. Potential participants do not need to still be serving within a congregational setting. Please contact Marie at (908) 358-5436 or by email at

marie.b.tracy@vanderbilt.edu with any questions or if you are interested in participating. All identifying information will remain strictly confidential.