

CONFERENCE *connection*

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



SOUTHEAST UCC Conference

February 1, 2017

From the Conference Office

"For Where Your Treasure Is" - Annual Yearbook Reporting

The goal for the Southeast Conference is 100% participation in the **UCC Data and Yearbook Collection**. The deadline for entering data is March 8, 2017. A hard copy mailing has been sent to every church. If you require assistance with data entry, please contact Heather Bardole, the SEC Office Administrator, at 404-719-6572. You will need your church ID Number to log in. If you do not know the number, please contact the Southeast Conference at registrar@secucc.org.

[Read a great article](#) about Yearbook reporting on our website.

Instructions for using the Data Hub [are on our website](#).



Authorized Ministers Information Review

All SEC authorized ministers should have received an e-blast, email, or hard copy mailing with the Annual Information Review form. This needs to be completed on-line and submitted, emailed as an attachment, or completed and mailed to the Conference Office.

Please help us update our records. Contact Heather Bardole, Registrar, if you have not received this form. She can be reached at registrar@secucc.org or 404-719-6572. The Commission on Ministry will be following up with authorized ministers who do not submit a form.

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Transforming Churches Transforming Lives
Grant Application

The "Transforming Churches, Transforming Lives" Grant Application Deadline for the spring cycle is February 25, 2017. [Submit your form online on our website.](#)

Annual Conference Giving Report

The Board of Directors is pleased to report that annual giving exceeded the budgeted amount for Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM) again in 2016. The Conference received \$242,361 which is more than \$13,000 over the budget figure of \$229,000.

Special Offerings received were as follows:

- One Great Hour of Sharing \$25,606
- Neighbors in Need \$13,688 (local SEC churches received \$20,000 in grants)
- Strengthen the Church \$7,040
- Christmas Fund \$10,592

The generosity of the churches and individuals of the Southeast Conference makes ministry possible here in our region and supports the work of the national setting of the UCC through our 10% tithe of OCWM and amounts for special offerings.

Year end reports have been sent. Please contact the Conference office if you have not received your report or there is a discrepancy.

New Banking Relationship for SEC UCC

The Southeast Conference Board of Directors has approved the transfer of all accounts to Resurgens Bank, a community bank. This is in keeping with the General Synod Resolution from 2011, Putting our money where our values are: Evaluating church financial relationships. (Learn more about the resolution [on the UCC website.](#))

The Board felt that a community banking relationship was more consistent with the values and practices of the Southeast Conference.

Ministry Education Scholarships Available

2017 Ministry Education Scholarships are available to those Members in Discernment who are preparing for authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ. Members in Discernment may apply for the Brown Endowment Scholarship and ONE other UCC Ministry Education Scholarship per year. [Learn more on our website.](#)

June's Jottings: "One Degree"

by June Boutwell, Designated Conference Minister

One of the wonderful things I love about the UCC is what I call "one degree of separation." I have been a part of this denomination for my whole life, growing up in a small town UCC congregation and beginning to serve the wider church on conference committees in my 20s. I know many people in the UCC and it is always a source of



Coming Events

Charmaine Penn Johnson Ordination
Sunday, Feb 5, 11:00 am
Victory for the World

Charmaine Penn Johnson Installation
Sunday, Feb 5, 5:00 pm
Kirkwood UCC

SEC Staff Meeting
Friday, Feb 10, 10:00 am
Atlanta, Georgia

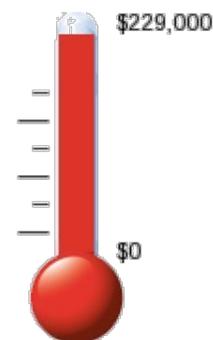
E ALA/W GA Association Meeting
Saturday, Feb 11
Pine Mountain, Georgia

Jennifer Sanders Installation
Sunday, Feb 12, 5:00 pm
Beloved Birmingham

Ecclesiastical Council for Larry Gipson
Wed, Feb 15, 6:00 pm
Rehoboth Fellowship

Information Session on Authorized Ministry
Wed, Feb 15, 7:30 pm
Rehoboth Fellowship

OCWM Giving



To Date: \$238,343

Our Church's Wider Mission provides for programs, resources, and tools to keep our churches strong, effective, and growing. Thanks to you, we met our 2016 goal, but you can still give.

Conference Staff

June Boutwell
Designated Conference Minister

grace and wonderment to me when I find those connections in unexpected places.

I was reminded of one of those connections in a local church newsletter from this past week. Rev. Bruce Schoup pastors Peace Church in Clemson, South Carolina. His article this week reminded me of how incredible this Conference is and the renewing and innovative ministry that happens every day. With Bruce's permission, I am excerpting a portion of his article. (Note: I was also taught in seminary by David Ray and later we were staff colleagues when I worked for the Maine Conference UCC.)

One of my favorite seminary classes was a course taught by David Ray on small churches. David Ray (1) asked a counter-cultural question about size, and (2) modeled bi-vocationalism as a choice rather than as necessity. I am going to focus on his counter-cultural thinking.

We live in a country that emphasizes size. If you are not big or at least growing, something is wrong. The question David Ray asked was, "When is a church too large?" The reason David Ray stressed smaller congregations is that he believed intimacy and relationship were important. Implied in David's reframing of the question is that smaller communities who often are made to feel inferior, can and should hold their heads up because very good ministry is taking place inside their community. Still in this community an "outsized" ministry takes place in and around the life of Peace Church, UCC. ([The link to Bruce's full article is here](#))

Last Sunday well over half of those in attendance at Peace had just participated in the Tri-County Women's March in Clemson that took place the day before and did not include four members who marched in Washington DC. Peace was awarded a Grass Top Grant from Neighbors in Need for their Tiny House Project (see related article). They have established a dynamic presence called PR(i)SM at Clemson University to reach out to the LGBTQ community. They are co-hosting a joint service/experience with Black Lives Matter, Greenville Chapter and bringing together a Remembrance Pilgrimage that reflects on the recently reclaimed history of Clemson University (broken treaties, slavery, convict labor, exclusion) that has received the endorsement of the Clemson Area African American Museum. And they have received a Transforming Churches, Transforming Lives grant to produce radio spots featuring members of the congregation talking about values important to them and maybe different from the dominant social culture.

Bruce asks in the article, "Are we a small church? Yes. While we may wish we were larger in number, we are the right size to have an awfully big footprint." The Southeast Conference may be one of the smaller conference in the UCC but we have a big impact on the wider church in our record of new churches, innovative process within the Commission on Ministry, the financial support of our churches for ministry in the wider church, and the many, many people over the years who have served in national positions or on national boards and committees.

This is a small Conference with a big heart and a large footprint. And as I prepare to leave your bounds, I will take a story of ministry that transforms the world and will inform my understanding of ministry going forward. I know I will encounter some of you again as we journey in Christ's light and we will have a story to share with the nations. Thanks be to God.

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Connect with Us!



Dear Friends,

As I write this, I wait for the management company agent to come so I can list my house for rent; I signed a lease on an apartment in Atlanta on Wednesday, and I am telling the cats to get ready for a long car ride. I am also ending my ministry in and say goodbye to the Central Atlantic Conference. My transition to becoming your Interim Conference Minister has begun.



I am so excited to come and walk with you all in this part of your journey as the Southeast Conference. I am looking forward to getting to know you, experiencing your ministry settings, and hearing your stories of faith and walking humbly with our God of extravagant welcome.

There is much to be done together in our local communities, our conference, our country, and our world. There will be times when we will wonder how we will be able to accomplish any of it, yet as people of faith we know that when the night is the darkest, God always sends the light to guide and center us. I look forward to us discovering where God is leading the Southeast Conference and all of us for this interim time.

I would be remiss if I did not thank some people who have already made my transition easier and feel welcome: Rev. June Boutwell, Rev. JR Finney, the interim search committee, Debbie Spearman.

I arrive in March! I cannot wait become a part of you all and your faithful and loving ministry.

Blessings and peace,
Marie Bacchiocchi



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2017. 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 2017 prayer list.](#)

Week of February 5

- Safe Harbor Family Church UCC; Flowood, Mississippi
- Dwight Andrews
- Robin Lee Fitch
- Amber Kirkendoll
- Gail McGill
- Jodi Yarini

- Garden of Grace UCC; Columbia, South Carolina
- Thomas Eckert
- Leah Lyman Waldron
- Susan Mitchell
- Helen Smith

Prayer Requests

- We hold **Rev. Glenna Shepherd's** spouse Clare in prayer as the family mourns the death of Clare's mother. Glenna serves Pleasant Hill Community Church in Tennessee and is currently in Great Britain with Clare as the family makes arrangements.
- Prayers for **Laverne Dixon**, associate pastor at First Congregational Atlanta, as she recovers from surgery.
- Prayers for healing for **Cindy Crocker** as she recovers from a recent illness. Cindy is a member of Safe Harbor Family Church in Flowood Mississippi and serves as the chair of the Finance and Stewardship Committee of the Southeast Conference.
- **Rev. Brenda Green** asks prayers for the family. Her mother, Bertie Knight Howard, died on December 13, 2016. A memorial service was held on January 28, 2017, in Savannah, Georgia. Brenda serves as a chaplain in the Atlanta area.
- **Rev. Raymonda Speller** and wife Krystle and big sister Christiana are pleased to announce that Christopher Josiah Speller entered this world on January 4, 2017 at 9:22 pm, weighing 7 pounds 5 ounces. Rev. Speller is pastor of Community Congregational UCC in Montgomery, Alabama.
- Prayers for those in **Albany, Georgia** and **Hattiesburg, Mississippi** who were affected by violent storms and tornadoes. And gratitude for disaster response teams who are assisting in the clean-up, response, and recovery.

Conference Transitions

- **Jodi Yarini** was ordained on January 15, 2017 at Virginia Highland Church. Prayers for Decatur UCC and their leadership as they confirm this relationship.
- **Joshua Kuipers** was ordained on January 15, 2017 at Kirkwood UCC during their regular worship service.
- **Sam Greening** has been called to serve as interim at United Church of Huntsville. He will begin his ministry on February 1, 2017. He comes to Huntsville from La Jolla UCC in La Jolla, California.
- **Jennifer Sanders** will be installed as Pastor to Beloved Community UCC, Birmingham, AL, on February 12, 2017.
- **Amber Kirkendoll** will resign her pastorate of Safe Harbor UCC, Flowood, Mississippi on February 26, 2017.
- **Rev. Marie Bacchiocchi** will begin her service as Interim Conference Minister on March 6. She will be attending the Council of Conference Ministers meeting her first week and will be available in the Conference March 13.

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; United Church, Huntsville, Tennessee, Safe Harbor Family Church, Flowood Mississippi.

"Ministry Happens" on MLK Weekend in the Southeast Conference!

The second weekend of January in 2017 saw ministry happening all across the South, as folks from around the UCC gathered to play, to serve and to grow. Here are highlights from the weekend:

- Forty-seven people from Southeast Conference attended the Winter Youth Retreat hosted by the Southern and Southeast Conferences.
- Pleasant Hill Community Church hosted 24 of our people who are on the path to ordained ministry.
- The Conference had the honor and privilege to ordain our two newest members of the clergy: Jodi Yarini and Josh Kuipers.

[Learn more about these events and view more photos on our website.](#)



Neighbors in Need Grants Announced

The Conference Office has been informed that two Southeast Conference churches received one of the six inaugural Neighbors in Need Grass Top grants in the amount of \$10,000 from Justice and Witness Ministries. The Neighbors in Need grants were re-visioned for this cycle with fewer grants and larger amounts of funding. It is a measure of the critical and needful ministry we are doing in the Southern Region and Southeast Conference that we would have two recipients among these new top tier grants.

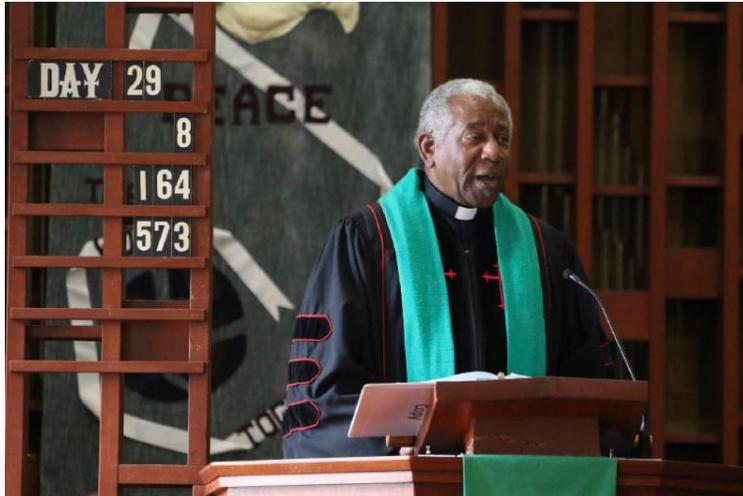
Open Table UCC in Mobile received a Grass Top grant to continue and expand their Free2Be program that provides safe space and resources to adolescent and college age young people who identify as LGBTQ. Part of this grant will be used to do Our Whole Lives training and providing a workshop at General Synod.

Peace Church in Clemson received a Grass Top grant to initiate a tiny house project in cooperation with the newly formed PR(i)SM ministry at Clemson University to provide mobile safe housing for students who have come out and been kicked out. It is envisioned that some of the design and construction of the tiny house will be assisted by Clemson students.

Pilgrim Church in Chattanooga Marches in Support of Refugees

Worshippers from Pilgrim Congregational Church marched down Third Street in Chattanooga on Sunday in protest and local activists were calling for a vigil Wednesday, saying Trump's action holds ramifications for the local refugee community.

[Read more on the Times Free Press website.](#)



Ecclesiastical Council and Exploring Ministry Meeting on Feb 15

Ecclesiastical Council for Larry Gipson

The Commission on Ministry has announced an Ecclesiastical Council to be held for Larry Gipson on February 15, 2015 at 6:00 pm at Rehoboth Fellowship of Atlanta, 1041 Moreland Ave SE, Atlanta. The Ecclesiastical Council is a time for a candidate for ordination to present themselves, respond to questions from the gathered congregations, and approve the candidate for ordination pending a call to a local church or other UCC approved ministry setting. All churches, pastors, and members are invited to be in attendance.

Information Session on Authorized Ministry

The Ecclesiastical Council will be followed by an information session on authorized ministry in the UCC. That session will start at the same location at 7:30 pm.

Interested in a Possible New Church Plant in Myrtle Beach?

The Southeast Conference is exploring the possibility of a UCC church plant in Myrtle Beach, SC. If you live in the area and are interested in joining the team, they are having a meeting on Friday, February 10 at 1:15 p.m. (location TBD). All are welcome and you should not feel reluctant, anticipating that you might be making a commitment. The team is in the exploration phase only, but we hope you can join us! For more details, contact Linda Tomsen at ltomsen11@yahoo.com.

Honduras Global Ministries Speakers Available to Local Churches

Don and Maryjane Westra, finishing a four year appointment in Honduras for Common Global Ministries, are available to speak in the Southeast Conference and Tennessee Region Disciples of Christ. The dates they are available are March 25 - April 9, 2017. [Learn more on our website.](#)

News from the United Church of Christ



General Synod 2017: June 30-July 4 in Baltimore, Maryland

Every two years, General Synod brings together thousands of faithful members of the United Church of Christ for formal church witness, inspirational worship, and fellowship with friends (new and old). In June 2017, thousands from across the country (and abroad) will gather for General Synod 2017 in Baltimore, Maryland.

Together, we will discern resolutions of witness, church structure, and function. We will stand up for issues that demand a faithful witness. And we will join together in worship each day to lift up the Stillspeaking God. At General Synod 2017, we will "Make Glad!" as we celebrate, debate, worship and witness. Join us. Learn more on the Synod website: synod.uccpages.org.

UCC Partnership Offers FREE Websites

In an effort to make online communication easier and more effective for every United Church of Christ congregation in 2017, the UCC's web partner, Ministry Designs, is giving away websites to every local church that needs one to kick off the New Year. In this offer, which runs from January 1 through February 15, Ministry Designs is offering to help create a website for local churches using one of four designs created specifically for UCC congregations. [Learn more on the UCC website.](#)

Training, Learning and Retreat Opportunities

2017 UCC Southern Region Women's Retreat

A group of 10 women gathered Jan 13-15 at Mo Ranch in Hunt, TX to brainstorm and plan the biennial UCC Southern Region Women's Retreat to be held October 20-22, 2017, at Mo Ranch. The theme will be "Joyful Expectation, Peaceful Inspiration!" based upon scripture from Isaiah 55:12 and will be hosted by women from the UCC South Central Conference. The retreat strives to provide refreshment to the soul and relaxation to the weary as well as offering inspiration groups, participatory and/or reflective opportunities and unique worship gatherings. [Learn more on our website.](#)

Candler School of Theology Spring Events

Speaking Tour: Shane Claiborne on "Executing Grace in Georgia: A Faithful Discussion About the Death Penalty"

- February 3 * 7:00 p.m. * Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church, Atlanta
- February 4 * 10:30 a.m. * Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens
- February 4 * 6:00 p.m. * Centenary Church, Macon

Preaching Conference: "Preaching a Relevant Word: Politics, Policy, and the People"

- March 23-24 * Candler School of Theology

Candler presents the Bandy Preaching Conference on "Preaching a Relevant Word: Politics, Policy, and the People," designed to assist pastors and congregants better understand contemporary sociopolitical issues and provide strategies to effectively address them through proclamation. The keynote speaker is the **Rev. Dr. William Barber**, chair of the North Carolina NAACP the Rebuilding Broken Places Community Development Corporation. The **Rev. Billy Honor** will lead closing worship.

Learn more about these and many more events [on the Candler School of Theology website](#).

Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders

Monday-Friday, March 20-24, 2017
Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church
805 Mount Vernon Highway NW, Atlanta, Georgia

This 5-day training is intended to equip church leaders with skills for conflict transformation and mediation, both in situations of congregational conflict and interpersonal conflict. It includes lectures, discussion, and guided practice in role plays, and is designed to be active and practical in focus. The sessions emphasize hands-on skills training and real-life role-plays, based on conflicts faced by participants. This training is useful for pastors, lay leaders, judicatory staff, and others who serve with churches and parachurch organizations. [Learn more and register on the Lombard Peace Center website](#).

Back Bay Mission Accepting Scholarship Apps

Back Bay Mission is now accepting applications for the 2017 Shari Prestemon Social Justice Internship. This internship provides people between the ages of 19 and 35 with a unique opportunity to participate in a 10-week summer program tailored to their interests.

Drawing on the Mission's long experience in community engagement and advocacy for justice, the internship will nurture participants' passion for social justice and develop their appreciation for the church's role in seeking social justice.

Applications must be submitted by March 1. Notifications will be made by March 31. [Learn more about the internship and download an application](#).

Back Bay Mission 2018 Mission Trip Calendar

Back Bay Mission's 2018 mission trip calendar opened at midnight central time on January 1, 2017. You can reserve your mission trip week by emailing the Mission's volunteer coordinator at volunteercoordinator@thebackbaymission.org. The Mission accepts reservation requests only through email. The 2018 calendar is available on the Mission's website.

[Learn more about mission trips at Back Bay Mission.](#)

Diving Lessons / 2017 Lent Devotional by the Stillspeaking Writers' Group

Diving Lessons is a fresh collection of unique Lenten devotions that includes an insightful scripture verse and prayer for each day of Lent. Begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1, and continues through Easter Sunday, April 16. Can be used in individual or group settings.

Devotional titles include:

- Jesus is Coming, Look Busy!
- Do Non-organic Parents Not Love Their Children?
- A Tale of Two Jesuses
- Christian Privilege
- Take a Dip

5-pack - \$16.50 (plus shipping); Single copy - \$6.50 (with FREE shipping in USA only). [Order from UCC Resources](#)

Prophetic Faith: Exploring Social Justice Advocacy as a Congregation

Is your church group looking for a new study on faith-based social justice advocacy? This timely, ecumenical resource invites Sunday school classes, book clubs, clergy clusters, study groups, and spiritual friends to explore the public dimensions of biblical faith in today's world through personal reading and reflection, group discussion and learning activities, creative Bible study, and worship. Presented as seven, 90-minute sessions, the Prophetic Faith materials are readily adaptable to a weekend retreat setting or to a 14-week series of one-hour sessions. [Learn more on their website.](#)

Save the Date: Conferences in 2017

UCC Musicians Conference

Their National Biennial Conference will be held July 9-12, 2017 in Boston, Massachusetts. The theme is Empowering Musicians, Transforming Communities. [Learn more.](#)

Mountain Ministries Youth Retreat

Mountain Ministries is a week-long mission camp that will be held July 9-14, 2017 at the Blowing Rock Conference Center. Youth groups will be dispatched daily to go into the High Country region and work on different environmental projects. [Learn more on the Blowing Rock website.](#)

Retired Servants' Retreat

Held at the beautiful Blowing Rock Conference Center, this retreat is for Southern and Southeast Conferences combined. It will be held Oct 2-4, 2017. Planning Leader for the 2017 event is George Bennett from Southeast Conference. His email is lajoyaredpoint@gmail.com.

