

# CONFERENCE *connection*

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

TRANSFORMING  
CHURCHES,  
TRANSFORMING  
LIVES

Southeast Conference  
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

**SOUTHEAST UCC Conference**

December 1, 2017

**YOUR YEAR-END**

**GIVING**

**MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

## **From Your Conference Minister: Support Our Church's Wider Mission by Donating the the Conference**

Dear Friends,

The song says, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," and in some ways it is... yet in some ways it is not. It is the time of the year when we all hear about worthwhile charities that need an extra push during the Holidays. The same can be said for your local church, the Southeast Conference, and the national setting of the United Church of Christ.

We, as the church, are the imperfect embodiment of Christ here on earth. We are imperfect. We strive to live God's message of grace and love, hope and peace, each and every day, and yet we all know that some days, we don't get there. And yet, we, as the Church, keep on trying. We continue to preach and teach, witness and love. We are community that cares and challenges. We build houses, feed people, collect items, and do thousands of things that are not even noticed. We live our faith.

All this takes money. So, as you hear about organizations that do good things in our communities and our world, remember your church, your conference, and your denomination. Your donation will impact so many in so many ways. [Donate online.](#)

Blessings,  
Marie

**News from Around the Conference**



### 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 December 3

- The United Church; Huntsville, Alabama
- Elizabeth Clement
- Lou Kavar
- Rebecca Seldomridge
- Scott Williamson

#### Week of December 10

- Sandy Creek UCC; LaFayette, Alabama
- Wendy Coleman
- Ruth Kershner
- Maureen Shelton
- Sonya Williams

### In Memoriam

The UCC lost two faithful servants on November 20, 2017, both members of Pleasant Hill Community Church and residents at Uplands Village in Tennessee.

- **Rev. Robert (Bob) Charles Ahrendt** graduated from Elmhurst College and Eden Theological Seminary served UCC churches throughout the Midwest. After retiring in 1998, he moved to Uplands Village in 1999. At Uplands, he began his second career doing volunteer work for many different organizations. [Read more.](#)
- **Rev. William (Bill) Verner Ring** had a long career of 45 years as a minister in the church starting as a youth in Chicago. He held pastorates across Ohio and Florida, eventually moving to to Pleasant Hill TN. [Read more.](#)

### Prayer Requests

- Prayers for **Jess Chancey** as she prepares for her ecclesiastical council on December 18. The meeting will be held at Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, GA.

### Conference Transitions

- **Rev. Kim Buchanan** has been called by First Congregational, UCC of Asheville, NC to serve as their new Senior Minister beginning February 2018. She has served as pastor of Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, GA for the past 16 years.
- Virginia-Highland Church has called **Matthew Laney** as their new Senior Pastor. Rev. Laney and his family will be moving to Atlanta from Hartford, CT.

### Churches in Transition

- Garden of Grace, Columbia SC; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN



## UCC Southern Region Women Leadership in Southeast

Since 2012 the UCC women of the Southeast Conference have been represented within the Southern Region by Mary Ruth of Pleasant Hill Community Church. A previous Southeast Conference leader was Nancy Sales of Birmingham AL. Clarice Mitchell, recently retired from Rockledge FL and now a member of Pleasant Hill Community Church in Pleasant Hill TN, is now assuming the volunteer planning team role. [Read more.](#)



## Blowing Rock Conf. Center Installs New Exec. Director

Ted A. Wilson was installed as the next Executive Director of Blowing Rock Conference Center, in Blowing Rock, North Carolina on Saturday, November 18, 2017. Since 2008 he served as Assistant Director at the Blowing Rock Conference Center under former Executive Director William (Bill) Bourdon. BRCC has a longstanding relationship with the UCC Southeast Conference for adult and youth ministries. [Read more.](#)

## News from our Local Congregations



## Faith and Gun Safety: TN Faith Leaders Meet Sen. Bob Corker

Rev. Scott Williamson, Senior Pastor at Pilgrim Congregational Church, United Church of Christ and twenty-one other local faith leaders recently met with Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee to discuss gun safety as a faith issue. The Senator was gracious to give the group time during his Thanksgiving Holiday break to meet and discuss how he can help make Chattanooga, TN, and the United States more safe and peaceful. [Read more.](#)

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## Pleasant Hill Community Church Sends Work Team to Back Bay Mission

Could nine “older adults” really make a difference while working at Back Bay Mission?” some of us thought as we piled into cars for Biloxi, MS. “Yes, we can” was our discovery! It also resulted in a difference in our own lives. For 6 days in November, our group from Pleasant Hill Community Church traveled to Biloxi, MS on a mission trip to support the ministry of the Back Bay Mission. [Read more.](#)



## Six Alabama UCC Pastors Signatories to Open Letter about Roy Moore

In mid-November a group of 59 progressive Christian ministers, more than half from mainline Protestant denominations, signed a letter calling US Senate candidate Roy Moore “not fit for office.” The signers included 23 United Methodist ministers, eight Baptists, seven Episcopal clergy and seven Presbyterian pastors, and six from the United Church of Christ. The letter made national news. [Read more.](#)

## Training, Retreat and Other Opportunities

### PATHWAYS Announces Three New Course Offerings

PATHWAYS Theological Education announces three course offerings to begin the new year. With a start date of January 10, 2018, these courses will provide local church leaders and Members in Discernment with knowledge and expertise needed for ministry today. The January courses include:

- **Dynamics of Difference:** Many congregations today have members with backgrounds in various religious and faith traditions. Because of these backgrounds, congregants bring different understandings and expectations about faith, dogma, and spirituality. The Rev. Julius Jessup, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker will facilitate this course which includes video and audio streaming and engaging discussion.
- **Christian Faith Formation:** This course will explore the role of faith formation, beginning with childhood and Godly Play, through adulthood, while helping participants consider how the local church can support the spiritual growth of its members in programmatic ways. The course is ideal for those involved in education-related programs in the local church as well as Members in Discernment. Commissioned Minister Debbie Gline Allen facilitates this course.
- **Small Church Administration:** One of the greatest challenges for small congregations is maintaining the administrative functions of the church. This course, ideal for pastors, church council members, and other leaders in small churches will provide practical tools that can be used to manage the business of a small congregation. The Rev. June Boutwell (most recently our Interim Conference Minister) will facilitate this course.

These PATHWAYS courses are online using an asynchronous format, allowing participants to access the course room based on each person’s schedule. The courses are six-weeks in length and require six to eight hours of work each week. Learning objectives for each course are reflective of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers in the United Church of Christ. The tuition for each course is \$375. [Learn more.](#)

## Mission Trip Opportunities at John's River Valley Camp

Nestled in the Southern Appalachian Mountains; Johns River Valley Camp offers an ideal setting in which youth and adults can team together to address poverty and environmental issues. The camp is offering mission trip possibilities that offer participants the opportunity to work on home repair projects, volunteer in soup kitchens, and more. On Wednesday of each week the group will take a break and either bike the scenic Virginia Creeper Trail or enjoy tubing on the New River. Trips are available the weeks of June 10-16, June 24-30, July 8-14, and July 22-July 28. [Learn more.](#)



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## Insurance Board Webinars Provide Online Learning

The following webinars are scheduled for 2018. These webinars are free and open to all. All webinars are scheduled to begin at 2:00 p.m. Eastern. To register for one of these webinars [click on this link](#), and click on "Insurance Board Webinars":

- Wednesday, January 10th: Winter Driving (The Hartford)
- Wednesday, February 7th: Preventing and Dealing with Sexual Harassment at Church (Praesidium)
- Wednesday, March 14th: Driver Management for Owned and Non-owned Vehicles (The Hartford)
- Wednesday, April 11th: Risk Management for Camps (The Insurance Board)
- Wednesday, May 9th: Ladder Safety (The Hartford)
- Wednesday, August 8th: Unique Risks Preventing Sexual Abuse in the School Environment (Praesidium)
- Wednesday, September 12th: Trending Risk Management Concerns for Churches (The Insurance Board)

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## Another Smart Use of Your IRA

While you may initially appreciate the income, as time goes on the higher withdrawal requirements may push you into a higher tax bracket, increasing your taxes. Congress has made the IRA charitable rollover permanent. The rollover law allows taxpayers who are required to withdraw money from their IRAs to give directly to charity. Because the rollover counts against your required minimum distribution (RMD), **making an IRA rollover gift to an organization like OURS could reduce our income and taxes.** The IRA rollover is a great way for you to help support your favorite causes. While you won't receive an income tax deduction for a rollover gift, you also won't pay any income tax on the transfer. The transfer only works for IRAs and not other retirement accounts. You may be able to roll over your 401(K) or other plan into an IRA and take advantage of this strategy. Check with your tax advisor or contact us to learn more about how you can use your RMD for good and lower your taxes.

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