

Forty-fourth Annual Gathering of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ

You shall live!

May 20 – 21, 2009
Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

1 **Wednesday, May 20, 2009**

2 **Plenary Session 1**

3
4 The forty-fourth Annual Gathering of the Southern Conference began with prayer and the reading of
5 Ezekiel 37:1-14 (the valley of dry bones, “Mortal, can these bones live? ... I will put my spirit within you,
6 and you shall live.”), led by Pastoral Leadership Development (PLD) students Wayne Linville (First
7 UCC, Winston-Salem, NC) and Cyndi Burns (Corinth Reformed Church, Hickory, NC). Kathi Smith
8 (Holy Covenant UCC, Charlotte, NC), and the Rev. Bill Englebreth (Moore’s Chapel United Methodist
9 Church, Charlotte, NC) led the singing of hymns.

10
11 At 1:25 p.m., Southern Conference (SOC) President the Rev. Dian Jackson (Grace UCC, Elon, NC)
12 called the meeting to order. The Rev. Larry Walser [Western North Carolina Association (WNCA)
13 Associate Conference Minister (ACM); First UCC, Salisbury, NC] on behalf of the WNCA and of SOC
14 staff, welcomed the Annual Gathering to Salisbury and introduced

- 15 • special guests:
 - 16 ○ Dr. Craig Turner, President of Catawba College, who welcomed the Annual Gathering to
 - 17 Catawba. “We value very much the relationships we have with the churches.”
 - 18 ○ the Rev. Dr. Donna Allen, Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship, Lancaster
 - 19 Theological Seminary
 - 20 ○ the Rev. Stephen Lewis, National Director, Calling Congregations, The Fund for
 - 21 Theological Education
- 22 • UCC national staff:
 - 23 ○ Lynne Hansen, Associate for Financial Development (Gifts Administration), Office of
 - 24 General Ministries
 - 25 ○ the Rev. Karen Thompson, Minister for Racial Justice, Justice and Witness Ministries
- 26 • institutional representatives:
 - 27 ○ the Rev. Ava Blackwell, Director of Admissions and Financial Aid, Lancaster Theological
 - 28 Seminary
 - 29 ○ the Rev. Cheri Lovell, Mission Interpreter—Southeast Region, United Church of Christ
 - 30 Cornerstone Fund
 - 31 ○ the Rev. Nelson Murphy, Director of Education and Marketing, United Church
 - 32 Foundation
 - 33 ○ the Rev. Beth Kennett, Director of the Congregations as Incubators of Vocation project,
 - 34 Center for Congregational Health
 - 35 ○ Betty Kluttz and Ann Kwasnick, agents, United Church of Christ Insurance Board
 - 36 ○ Mona Huffman, Corporate Risk Manager and Executive Assistant, United Church
 - 37 Homes and Services
 - 38 ○ the Rev. David Harsh, Director of Development/Marketing, Uplands Retirement Village
 - 39 ○ the Rev. Dr. Bob Thompson, President, Faithful and Welcoming Churches of the United
 - 40 Church of Christ

- 41 ○ the Rev. Ervin Milton, Director, Franklinton Center at Bricks
42 ○ Martha Shore, Assistant Director, Blowing Rock Conference Center
43 ○ the Rev. Curly Stumb, Executive Director, Johns River Valley Camp (JRVC) and SOC
44 Program Associate for Conference Outdoor Ministry and Communications
45

46 Ms. Jackson announced attendance of 187 delegates and 29 visitors and declared a quorum present.
47 She appointed the Rev. Dr. Warren Casiday (St. John's UCC, Kannapolis, NC, and WNCA President)
48 as parliamentarian.
49

50 **Motion: to adopt the proposed Annual Gathering agenda.* Motion passed.**
51 **Motion: to adopt the Southern Conference Annual Meeting 2009 Standing Rules.* Motion**
52 **passed.**
53

54 Ms. Jackson appointed Board of Directors (BOD) members the Rev. Paul Davis (Congregational UCC,
55 Greensboro, NC), the Rev. Sharon Hammill (Elon Community Church, UCC, Elon, NC), and the Rev.
56 Lilton Marks (Fellowship UCC, Chesapeake, VA) to serve as the Resolutions Committee, and Directors
57 Priscilla Cheek (Mt. Calvary UCC, Durham, NC), Elna Graves (Union Hill UCC, Sedley, VA), and
58 Brenda James (St. Stephen UCC, Greensboro, NC) as the Elections Committee.
59

60 **Motion: to adopt the minutes of the 2008 Southern Conference Annual Gathering.** Moved by
61 Secretary Kristin Andes (Holy Covenant UCC, Charlotte, NC). **Motion passed.**
62

63 Financial Review

64 Treasurer Ron Barlow (Peace UCC, Greensboro, NC) reported that the audit of the Conference's 2008
65 books was completed last week. The 2008 financials received a clean audit report. Because the timing
66 of this Annual Gathering was moved up a month, some documents usually available are not available
67 this year, including the auditor's letter.
68

69 UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss by Class, January through December 2008* shows the
70 Conference received \$784,660 in income during 2008 and had expenses of \$844,870, resulting in a net
71 loss on net ordinary income and expenses of \$60,210. The revised budget for 2008, approved by the
72 BOD during 2008, budgeted a deficit of \$86,982. Therefore, the actual deficit was \$26,772 less than
73 anticipated. (The original 2008 budget approved by delegates at the 2007 Annual Gathering projected a
74 deficit of \$221,139 or \$160,929 more than the actual deficit.) Although the Conference did incur a deficit
75 for the year, it was not as bad as expected. This was due, in part, to foregoing some budgeted
76 expenses and drawing down more than anticipated from investment accounts.
77

78 In the report, Line 8101 – Loss on Sale of Property shows a \$205,502 expense. A donated property in
79 High Point sold during 2008 was valued on the Conference books as worth \$500,000. When it was
80 sold, the proceeds were distributed to three parties as the donor's estate specified: Black Lake Retreat
81 Center (BLRC), JRVC, and the High Point YMCA. The Conference received \$287,472 as BLRC's
82 portion, plus the remaining escrow account balance of \$7,026. These monies were used to repay the
83 UCC Cornerstone Fund loan taken out to pay off BLRC's creditors. JRVC and the YMCA also each
84 received \$287,472. The \$205,502 loss is reported simply because the Conference received \$294,498
85 (JRVC's share was paid directly to JRVC) against the \$500,000 book value of the property. Combining
86 BLRC's and JRVC's shares, the total received would be \$581,970 or an actual gain on the sale of
87 \$81,970 over book value. The auditor felt this transaction should be shown on the P&L and explained
88 as an extraordinary expense. Including it results in an overall 2008 deficit of \$265,712.
89

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89 In the final analysis, however, the actual 2008 deficit should be considered \$60,210, as reported in the
90 net ordinary income line.

91

92 UCC – Southern Conference Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2008* shows Conference assets at
93 the end of 2008 totaled \$5,358,763, a decrease of \$583,955 from the end of 2007, primarily due to the
94 sale of the High Point property and funds taken from investments to cover operating expenses.

95 Liabilities totaled \$547,722, a decrease of \$275,221 from 2007. The decrease resulted primarily from
96 repaying the total balance of the \$300,000 Cornerstone loan, offset by a \$25,000 increase in the
97 Wachovia Bank line of credit.

98

99 UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss by Class, January through April 2009* shows a year-to-date
100 deficit of \$107,600 on the net ordinary income line. The budgeted deficit for the entire year, as
101 approved by the BOD in March in the revised 2009 budget, is \$13,500. OCWM Year by Year
102 Comparison* shows receipts through April are down \$12,900 compared to the same time in 2008.

103 Please encourage churches to give to OCWM.

104

105 P&L line 8102 – Gain on Sale of Property shows a gain of \$317,300 from the sale of the Norfolk, VA,
106 property formerly called Christian Temple. Net proceeds of the sale were \$817,300. (This includes an
107 \$8,000 nonrefundable rent deposit.) Really, all the money from this sale and the High Point sale was a
108 gain, since the Conference paid nothing for the properties. But, because Christian Temple was put on
109 the balance sheet with a book value of \$500,000, only the difference between book value and net sale
110 proceeds appears on the P&L. The year-to-date bottom line for 2009 should be considered a deficit of
111 \$107,600, and not a net gain of \$209,700, which is the bottom line when the extraordinary income from
112 the Christian Temple sale is included.

113

114 UCC – Southern Conference Balance Sheet as of April 30, 2009* shows many changes from the end of
115 2008. Total assets have decreased by \$97,171, primarily due to the removal of the book value of
116 Christian Temple from line 1500 - Land and Buildings. Total liabilities decreased by \$444,583, primarily
117 due to the distribution of \$425,000 from the Christian Temple sale and to the receipt of additional grant
118 money for church development.

119

120 2010 Proposed Budget

121 The 2008 Annual Gathering adopted a 2009 budget with a deficit of \$105,500. That budget was revised
122 at the March, 2009, BOD meeting [UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss Budget Overview
123 January through December 2009*]. Extensive cuts lowered the projected deficit to \$13,500. The BOD is
124 proposing today a balanced budget for 2010—the first time in a long time—with income and expenses
125 of \$734,500 [UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss Budget Overview January through December
126 2010*]. Tomorrow, Mr. Barlow will move adoption of the proposed 2010 budget. The vote will follow.

127

128 Discussion included:

- 129 • Typically, the Conference pledges 10% of OCWM receipts to the national setting. For 2008,
130 \$49,000 was budgeted. How was the decision made to send \$0 to the national setting last year?
131 The BOD and Executive Committee (EC) discussed the Conference's difficult financial situation
132 each time those bodies met. The Conference was not receiving enough money to fulfill all its
133 financial commitments. So the Conference could serve congregations as best as possible and
134 help local church ministries, staff told the Board that some commitments would have to wait until
135 money came in to fulfill them. Staff made the decision to delay payment of the national OCWM.
136 The Rev. Steve Camp (Conference Minister; Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC) talked with
137 UCC General Minister and President the Rev. John Thomas, explaining that money from the
138 SOC would be delayed but would be made up. Other conferences were in a similar situation,

139

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- 139 and the national setting understood. The first check written after the Conference received the
140 proceeds from the sale of Christian Temple paid the entire 2008 OCWM commitment to the
141 national setting, plus almost half of the 2009 commitment. Mr. Camp felt we did the best we
142 could in a difficult situation. The Rev. Mark Burns (Oakland Christian Church, UCC, Chuckatuck,
143 VA) appreciated the covenant with the national setting. He did not feel the covenant with local
144 churches was upheld, since the BOD, acting on behalf of those congregations, was not
145 informed until March 2009 that 2008 ended with no OCWM being sent on the national setting.
146 The Rev. Jill Edens (United Church of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC) expressed astonishment
147 that staff can decide to not pay OCWM to the national setting. In her local church setting,
148 because of the congregational polity, she would not have the right to withhold OCWM without
149 congregational approval.
- 150 • Are EC minutes available for anyone in the Conference who wishes to read them? Ms. Jackson
151 said that both EC and BOD minutes are open and available.
 - 152 • The Bylaws state that the Stewardship, Budget and Finance Committee prepares the annual
153 budget, working in close cooperation with the Treasurer and the Conference Minister. Who is on
154 the committee, so the Annual Gathering knows who prepared the 2010 budget? The budget is
155 proposed not by the committee, but by staff. Mr. Barlow, who chairs the committee, feels the
156 committee cannot be reasonably expected to prepare the budget; committee members are not
157 that familiar with day-to-day Conference operations. Staff do the best they can. Mr. Barlow
158 reviews the budget before it is presented to the BOD. Mr. Camp would prefer the committee
159 help prepare the budget, but through the years, it has been very hard to get that committee
160 functioning. Staff therefore have taken leadership in the process, so at least a document is
161 prepared for BOD review. Review by the Annual Gathering is the final part of the process.
 - 162 • Transparency in the budget process is desirable.
 - 163 • The 2008 Annual Gathering asked the BOD to reduce the deficit by half each year. The
164 proposed 2010 budget projects no deficit. Mr. Camp noted there is something here to celebrate!
165 If we are able to keep on the giving path and allow some task forces and committees time to do
166 their assigned work, maybe, with the help of God, we can figure a way forward that makes
167 sense for all of us. Staff have done what they could to make this work, taking salary reductions
168 and even cutting the Eastern Virginia Association (EVA) ACM to part time in December,
169 although he is still working pretty much full time, just to make the Conference's ends meet. We
170 need your help. OCWM is the life blood of Conference mission. Expressing distrust now is not
171 helpful. The perspective should be that, if we are to get through this, we are in this together.
 - 172 • Financial times have challenged not only the church but all individuals. Appreciation was
173 expressed to staff for putting the Conference on more stable financial footing and for taking pay
174 cuts. In this difficult time, we should try to understand what staff and the BOD have done and be
175 financially supportive.
 - 176 • Local church budgets are typically prepared with church committees projecting what their
177 expenses will be; staff does not prepare the budget. The Conference does not have such
178 committees, and its budget preparation is very different.
 - 179 • An extremely important and variable number each year is how much OCWM the Conference will
180 actually receive. In 2008, 105 of 229 churches gave no OCWM at all. Fourteen gave \$284,000,
181 almost 60% of total OCWM. Thirty-five churches, including the 14 just mentioned, gave 81%.
182 Fifteen churches who did not give in 2007 contributed in 2008. Twenty-eight churches who gave
183 in 2007 did not in 2008. Fifty-five churches who gave both years increased giving in 2008; 24
184 who gave both years decreased giving (Mr. Barlow suspects because of their own financial
185 situation). Mr. Barlow thanked churches who contribute to OCWM. (See "Southern Conference
186 of the UCC: Annual OCWM Giving by Churches."*)
 - 187 • Appreciation was expressed for Mr. Barlow's work as Conference Treasurer.
- 188

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- Proceeds from the sale of Christian Temple totaled \$809,300. Expenditures in addition to the \$73,000 OCWM sent to national include paying down the loan on the Conference Center (\$225,000); paying down the Conference's line of credit (\$50,000); and paying pass through designated gifts for the Christmas Fund, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Neighbors in Need (\$26,000). (Pass throughs are usually paid within 90 days of their receipt.) Other expenditures are detailed in Expenditures from Sale of Christian Temple.* Additionally, \$150,000 has been put into a United Church Cornerstone Fund investment account. Those dollars essentially repay \$150,000 taken from an SOC United Church Foundation investment account used to pay Conference expenses. UCF is not currently making money, so the money now available was invested with the Cornerstone Fund. Also, \$50,000 has been put into a demand account at the Cornerstone Fund; \$75,000 into an interest-bearing savings account/mutual fund; and \$35,000 set aside in a new savings account to cover third quarter benefits and emergencies. The remainder of the sale proceeds, \$54,800, is in the Conference's checking account. While determining where expenditures would be made, Mr. Camp consulted the national setting including the Cornerstone Fund; Elaine McAdams, Conference staff Financial Consultant to the Conference Minister; and the Conference's banker at Wachovia. The EC was informed after the expenditures had been made how the dollars were spent.
- The Conference received the proceeds from the sale of Christian Temple roughly one month ago. Could decisions about expenditures not have been put off till today when the BOD met? This was a lot of money for staff to decide about without consulting the Board.

Program Updates

The Rev. Margot Pickett (Pilgrim UCC, Durham, NC), PLD Director, described the Pastoral Leadership Development Program, a three-year alternative educational track for those seeking ordination in the SOC. Now in its fifth year, the program has 12 graduates, seven of whom have been ordained. This evening, four more people will graduate. Thanks to financial help from the Associations and the national setting, this year's cross-cultural experience will be 16 days in South Africa, hosted by two missionaries funded there and including conversations with the Congregational Church of South Africa. The PLD has received another \$200,000 grant from the Leona and Rose Carpenter Foundation, so the program can continue and expand. Educational events for licensed ministers and more workshops for pastors in place are envisioned. Ms. Pickett expressed thanks for all the support for the program.

The Rev. Phil Hardy [Eastern North Carolina Association (ENCA) Area Conference Minister; Grace UCC, Elon, NC] thanked attendees for their support of the Live the Vision! capital campaign. Pledges totaled \$515,300. \$266,000 has been received. Of that, \$185,000 has been disbursed, including church development work, scholarships and transportation for SOC youth to attend the UCC National Youth Event, and an advertising campaign which brought matching funds from the national setting. The "Capital Campaign" handout* details all the expenditures to date. Mr. Hardy looks forward to moving SOC ministries forward with the results from this campaign.

Mr. Stumb reported that new facilities allow us to stretch our ministries to people of all abilities during all seasons. He lifted up the Sacred Conversations about Race at Franklinton Center at Bricks and camping opportunities for youth and intergenerational groups at JRVC. Camping scholarships are available for churches which have not had participants in quite a while.

BLRC was the gift of a very generous person to the Conference. As best we can know, the donor's desire was to provide a place for children. Sustained, creative attempts have been made to use the property as a ministry site. Unfortunately, it has not become financially self-sustaining. Further, the Conference is financially at risk if a liability issue happens there. The Conference Board has wrestled with these issues for many months. Mr. Camp reported that the Board voted this morning to sell all the

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238 property at BLRC, either as one parcel or as two separate parcels (46 undeveloped acres on one side
239 of the road, and 260 acres containing the lake, lodge, and other buildings on the other side of the road).
240 If the 46-acre parcel were to sell first, there would be more time to think further if needed about these
241 assets. Please continue to support the ministry; the Conference needs to maintain it until it is a self-
242 supporting ministry or it sells.
243

244 Motion: Black Lake Retreat Center at this time would not be sold, and further planning and research be
245 looked into the options of making it self-sufficient. Moved by the Rev. William Sowers (Hedricks Grove
246 UCC, Lexington, NC). Seconded by the Rev. Harold Holste (Trinity UCC, Concord, NC).
247

248 Discussion included:

- 249 • The Board understands there were no stipulations in the donor's will governing the gift. The
250 Rev. Don Flick (Church of the Master, Hickory, NC) thought Mrs. Black's will did lay stipulations
251 on the property. He and former Conference Minister the Rev. Dr. Rollin Russell explored putting
252 HUD housing on the property in the past, but that was not possible because of restrictions in the
253 will. Wills are a matter of public record, so this should be researchable.
- 254 • Building the lodge and sewer system had cost overruns. The Conference had to assume
255 responsibility for that debt, since the property is wholly owned by the Conference. At this point,
256 the ministry of BLRC has been mostly weddings.
- 257 • The Conference has been subsidizing BLRC's operations monthly. Some congregations have
258 also generously given to it. The executives of the other three outdoor ministries in the SOC have
259 advised BLRC and tried to help figure out what to do. Thirty responses were received to the
260 survey sent to all SOC churches this past fall asking, "Is there a vision for ministry at Black Lake
261 Retreat Center?" The responses were evenly split between "Attempt to have a viable ministry
262 there" and "Sell it; the Conference can't bear the burden." Reviewing those results, BLRC's
263 Board of Advisors leaned toward exploring selling the property. Especially with Conference
264 finances as they have been, it is very difficult to responsibly continue to hold the property.
- 265 • The donation of this property was a wonderful gift to the Conference. The Board understands
266 that the property was given for ministry to youth and children with the intent it not be a burden
267 on the Conference. The Board has discussed several options over the years—e.g., children's
268 camp, locating the Conference office on the site—but those have not developed. Few SOC
269 congregations have used it—not enough to sustain it as a ministry site. The Board is not sure
270 what else can be done to make BLRC financially viable.
271

272 Mr. Sowers clarified his

273 **Motion: that at this time the 200+ acre part of Black Lake Retreat Center on which the camp and**
274 **lodge are located would not be sold, and further planning and research be done into the options**
275 **of making it self-sufficient.** The body voted: against the motion – 82, in favor -- 41, abstaining -- 12.
276 **Motion failed.**
277

278 Given concerns raised during this meeting about the decision-making process, the Rev. Bob Thompson
279 (Corinth Reformed Church, Hickory, NC) made the following

280 **Motion: if the Black Lake Retreat Center property is sold, the SOC in annual meeting or called**
281 **meeting approve the disbursement of funds.** Seconded. The Rev. Nathan King (Trinity UCC,
282 Concord, NC) noted that the BOD voted earlier today that when the sale occurs, if it does, the proceeds
283 be held in escrow until the next BOD meeting. Perhaps it is more appropriate if the full Conference
284 decides how to use the sale proceeds. **Motion passed.**
285

286 **Motion: to make three parcels out of the property—46 undeveloped acres across the road, 100**
287 **acres with the lake and buildings, 100 undeveloped acres on back of the property—and save the**
288

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288 **lake and all buildings for SOC in the spirit of trying to save the program at Black Lake.** Moved by
289 Andrew Hege (Zion UCC, Thomasville, NC). Seconded. The Rev. Don Flick (Church of the Master,
290 Hickory, NC) said that he was involved when the deed was given to the Conference. Splitting the
291 property was not possible then. **Motion failed.**
292

293 Association Reports

294 Mr. Casiday reported that talks are underway about two new church starts in the WNCA, with the one
295 near Asheville making rapid progress toward becoming a new church in the Association. The WNCA
296 Board provided scholarships to help youth attend the National Youth Event. A mission team with
297 members from several WNCA congregations worked with the Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS, to help
298 repair and rebuild homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Association congregations continue financial
299 support for missionary outreach. The book Churches Related: Forty Year History of Churches and
300 Related Ministries, 1965 – 2005, United Church of Christ, Western North Carolina Association,
301 commissioned by the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society – Southern Region, is available at
302 this meeting. Other information is in A Report to the Southern Conference from the Western North
303 Carolina Association.*
304

305 Through a skit, the vital signs of EVA were checked. Dr. Julia Avery Muse (Providence UCC,
306 Chesapeake, VA, and EVA President) reported that the Association is doing well. The Association's
307 primary purpose is to help churches understand and grow in their Christian mission. The Association
308 has agreed to three initiatives: engaging congregations in the UCC Congregational Vitality Initiative
309 (CVI), including training selected EVA members as CVI coaches and providing regional CVI training;
310 working through the Church and Ministry Commission, to begin a conflict management program to train
311 selected clergy and laity through the Community Mediation Center to engage and help resolve
312 congregational conflict; and to offer the UCC history and polity course to congregations regionally. A
313 monthly Association newsletter has been reborned, an EVA website (eva-soc-ucc.org) has been set up,
314 a webmaster will set up websites for those churches that do not have one, an all-Association cookbook
315 will be printed, and an awards/recognition banquet will be held in the fall. More detail is in Forty-fourth
316 Southern Conference UCC Annual Gathering: The Eastern Virginia Association Annual Report.*
317

318 The Rev. Jay Kennett (Hillsborough UCC, Hillsborough, NC, and ENCA President) recognized folks
319 who have provided leadership in various ways to ENCA and thanked the Rev. Vertie Powers (Pilgrim
320 UCC, Durham, NC), Mr. Hardy, the Rev. K. Ray Hill (Maple Temple UCC, Raleigh, NC), Linda Carter
321 (Shalom Community Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, Greensboro, NC), and Janelle Bunn (St.
322 John's New Mission UCC, Burlington, NC) who have worked as staff during the past year. The
323 Association granted scholarships to eight persons studying for ministry, ordained five ministers, and
324 granted Privilege of Call to one. Thirty-five "champions"—lay representatives actively involved in their
325 local congregation who serve as liaison between the congregation and the Association—have been
326 recruited. Workshops have been held throughout the Association about church vitality, creating church
327 constitutions and bylaws, and the meaning of covenant. Further information is in Report from the
328 Eastern North Carolina Association 2009.*
329

330 The Southern Conference Foundation

331 The national setting of the UCC and the United Church Foundation have helped the Conference
332 develop a planned giving program. We celebrate the sustained covenantal relationships and
333 connections with those who have gone before us whose legacies help perpetuate ministries among us,
334 and pass on our legacies to those who will follow us. The Southern Conference Foundation has been
335 established to raise, hold, and safeguard those contributed funds to support the work and ministry of
336 the Conference. (The brochure "The Southern Conference Foundation: A Program of Planned Giving"*
337 gives more information.) The money will not be used for the Conference operating budget unless the
338

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338 Foundation's Trustees specifically vote to do so. The initial five Trustees, elected by the SOC Board,
339 are two members of the SOC Board {Sheila Bynum (Melfield UCC, Haw River, NC) and Tom Cantrell
340 [Lynnhaven Colony Congregational Church (UCC), Virginia Beach, VA, whose nomination to the SOC
341 Board will be voted on later at Annual Gathering]} plus one person from each Association [the Rev.
342 Earle Potts (Bethany UCC, Claremont, NC; from the WNCA for a three-year term), David Sanford
343 (Fellowship UCC, Chesapeake, VA; EVA, two-year term), and Mr. Hardy (ENCA, one-year term). The
344 Conference Minister will be an ex officio, non-voting Trustee. Mr. Hardy announced that the BOD voted
345 today to transfer \$10,000 from capital campaign proceeds to the new foundation.
346

347 Ms. Hansen greeted the Annual Gathering on behalf of the national setting, which appreciates our
348 perseverance and dedication to OCWM in the face of challenges.
349

350 UCC financial development ministries can be a resource to the SOC and its churches. Any gift is
351 planned in some way, but the term "planned giving" describes a gift that is promised or given now, but
352 not received monetarily until after the death of the donor. Bequests in a will, life income instruments,
353 making the church a beneficiary of an IRA or other assets like life insurance are examples of planned
354 gifts. Not one piece of paper should leave a church office unless somewhere on it is written, "Have you
355 remembered the church in your will?" It is ministry to get members to write wills whether they leave
356 anything to the church or not. The web page <http://www.ucc.org/giving/> overviews different types of
357 planned gifts.
358

359 Two frequent concerns churches have are:

- 360 • Planned gifts are "not now" money. What is the point, since the church won't see the money for
361 5-25 yrs? Churches see endowments as a "forever thing." Life income gifts, for example,
362 received by a church over time, are an excellent way to build an endowment.
- 363 • If we promote planned giving, people will give less in their annual pledge to the congregation.
364 People really contribute from two different pockets. An annual pledge typically comes from
365 current income. Accumulated assets are the source of planned giving. Thus, planned giving
366 typically doesn't affect an annual pledge.
367

368 New and Renewing Church Development

369 Local Church Ministries in the national UCC setting awarded a \$200,000 grant to the SOC for new and
370 renewing church development. The SOC plan included four components: new church starts, affiliating
371 churches, revitalizing churches, and strengthening healthy churches. Ms. Powers (ENCA ACM)
372 reported that the Conference has made two financial awards for new church starts and two for
373 revitalizing churches. We are in conversation with two which would like to affiliate with the UCC. Church
374 vitality events have been held in each Association.
375

376 The Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss told the story of new church start Land of the Sky UCC
377 (www.losucc.org), in Asheville, NC. Land of the Sky is an emerging, progressive community seeking to
378 serve the still-speaking God by living justly, loving abundantly, and walking humbly in the ways of
379 Jesus. Why start a new church in Asheville, which already has two wonderful UCCs? For Hendler-Voss
380 and co-pastor the Rev. Sara Wilcox, the UCC has become home when other institutional church
381 settings didn't fit. They wanted to share that gift—the good news of the Gospel and the UCC—
382 especially with young families with children and with those who have left the institutional church
383 because they haven't found the good news. A core group began meeting during autumn, 2008. They
384 seek to grow this summer with monthly worship services and events. "We are so grateful to God we are
385 doing this new thing in Western NC. It would not be possible without SOC and WNCA support." Land of
386 the Sky also thanks Umstead Park UCC (Raleigh, NC), which invited Hendler-Voss to preach on
387

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387 Umstead Park's tenth anniversary as a new church start and gave Land of the Sky the gift of 50
388 hymnals.

389
390 The Rev. Linda Clark, pastor of Union UCC, Norfolk, VA, reported on the renewing of this aging
391 congregation. Located in an inner city, urban area where socio-economic and educational
392 disadvantages partner with drugs and violence to discourage the healthy development of children and
393 families, the church has a big and bold vision as it prepares to celebrate its 100th anniversary next year.
394 To minister to children and families, the church is embarking on providing a continuum of care for the
395 children of the Huntersville section of Norfolk, beginning with children as young as six weeks old. The
396 church plans to work with children through the middle school years with before and after school
397 programs and summer activities in the freedom school model. "With God's help, we'll be able to do
398 what we've set out to do. We are grateful for the funding we received in this beginning part of our
399 mission."

400
401 As the Rev. Brent Bisette (Congregational Church of Pinehurst UCC, Pinehurst, NC) met people in the
402 community, they used to asked, "Wasn't yours the congregation that was talking about closing your
403 doors?" Yes, but God is still speaking! Very dedicated people in the congregation were very intent on
404 listening to what God was saying about who we are and who God was calling the congregation to be.
405 The questions have now changed. "Aren't you pastor of that congregation with the wonderful
406 Montessori preschool? The church that has Bible study on Thursday morning where questions are
407 welcome? The church that hosts the PFLAG group once a month? The church that works with the
408 synagogue to distribute food to folks who need food, compassion, and some connection with
409 humanity?" Mr. Bisette expressed thanks not only that God's spirit has supported and accompanied
410 Congregational, and for the listening and vulnerable members of that church, but for our
411 accompaniment through the grant from the SOC and the national setting. Tim Maroney, President of
412 Congregational's Church Council, wished every SOC congregation had to go through the process of
413 reconfirming and recommitting that the grant commits Congregational to for five years. The focus is
414 more than survival. In less than six months, the church has accomplished the goals it set to accomplish
415 in eighteen months. "You have honored us and revitalized an already vital congregation. We are doing
416 things that had been back-burnered years ago. The results in our congregation are huge. No longer do
417 we question, 'Will there be a future for our congregation?' We feel now, 'Yes! We have a future and a
418 need to spread God's Word as far as we can!' Thank you for helping us through this revitalization
419 period."

420
421 Ms. Powers repeated scripture's question, "Can these bones live?" The answer is yes! You have heard
422 it from these speakers from these congregations."

423

424 Nominating Committee Report*

425 The Rev. Jerry Moore (Parkway UCC, Winston-Salem, NC) Nominating Committee chair, placed the
426 following names in nomination, and thanked the nominees for their willingness to serve if elected.

427

428 Southern Conference Officers:

- 429 • President: the Rev. Dale Kennedy (First Evangelical and Reformed UCC, Asheboro, NC)
- 430 • Vice President: the Rev. Lilton Marks (Fellowship UCC, Chesapeake, VA)
- 431 • Secretary: the Rev. Nancy Allison (Holy Covenant UCC, Charlotte, NC)
- 432 • Treasurer: the Rev. Paul Davis (Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC)

433

434 Southern Conference Board of Directors, Class of 2011 (to finish Mr. Marks' term):

- 435 • Bonnie Dinges (Tidewater UCC, Virginia Beach, VA)

436

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- 436 Southern Conference Board of Directors, Class of 2012:
- 437 • Eastern North Carolina Association
- 438 ○ the Rev. Sheila Crump (Word of Life UCC, Moncure, NC)
- 439 ○ the Rev. Jill Edens (United Church of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC)
- 440 ○ Michael Younger (St. John's New Mission UCC, Burlington, NC)
- 441 • Eastern Virginia Association
- 442 ○ Thomas Cantrell [Lynnhaven Colony Congregational Church (UCC), Virginia Beach, VA]
- 443 ○ the Rev. Carlyle Church (Chapel Grove UCC, Windsor, VA)
- 444 ○ the Rev. Mary Dockery (Tidewater UCC, Virginia Beach, VA)
- 445 • Western North Carolina Association
- 446 ○ the Rev. Michael Childress (First UCC, Salisbury, NC)
- 447 ○ the Rev. Barbara Mason Rathbun [First Congregational Church (UCC), Hendersonville, NC]
- 448 ○ Ralph Wenger (Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC)
- 449
- 450

451 Slates for the Johns River Valley Camp Board of Trustees, Class of 2012, and United Church Homes
452 and Services Board of Directors, Class of 2012, will be shared Thursday morning.

453

454 No nominations were made from the floor.

455

456 Ms. James offered the dinner blessing. The meeting recessed at 5:00 pm.

457

458 Worship

459 The Annual Gathering met for worship Wednesday evening. Tyler Smith (Holy Covenant UCC,
460 Charlotte, NC) spoke about his participation in Lancaster Theological Seminary's Leadership Now
461 program, designed to help youth become leaders within their church and community. He encouraged
462 SOC congregations to help their youth be involved in similar experiences. Kalyn Adamson, Chantel
463 Armond, and Tiara Moragney-Little (St. Stephen UCC, Greensboro, NC) provided liturgical dance
464 during the song "Behold the Lamb." Mr. Camp led the congregation in remembering the faithful service
465 and witness to Jesus Christ of clergy who have died since the 2008 Annual Gathering:

- 466 • the Rev. Billy Andes
- 467 • the Rev. Ronald G. Coleman
- 468 • the Rev. Walter Gibson
- 469 • the Rev. William Griffiths
- 470 • the Rev. John Henry Jones
- 471 • the Rev. Ronald Morris
- 472 • the Rev. Samuel Nelson
- 473 • the Rev. William J. Parker, Jr.
- 474 • the Rev. Malchus Welch

475 The Rev. Jon Bailey, currently serving in Iraq, and the Rev. Anthony Taylor, who has returned from
476 Iraq, were recognized as UCC military chaplains.

477

478 In her sermon, Ms. Allen noted that soon after Ezekiel's call to ministry/prophecy, he was exiled to
479 Babylon, commanded by God to be in the midst of Israel's misery. You say yes to God, and God may
480 change your geography, friends, and resources. The church must also be in the midst of the pain and
481 the problems of people. Ezekiel saw dry bones; God saw an opportunity for life. Ezekiel felt the exiles'
482 despair; God saw a miracle unfolding. By seeing the world around us as God sees it, we can speak
483 with truth and power. But the ability to see a dry bones situation from God's perspective only comes by
484 spending time with God and from thirsting to see as God sees. Ms. Allen challenged the PLD students

485

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485 to go to the valley of dry bones, get a vision from God, and preach it while helping to make changes in
486 the community. Speaking the truth with power, preach: "You shall live!"
487

488 Ms. Pickett with great pride, hope, and love, presented the PLD Graduating Class of 2009:

- 489 • Mary Jerman (Burchette Chapel UCC, Manson, NC)
- 490 • Wayne Linville (First UCC, Winston-Salem, NC)
- 491 • Stephanie Partlow (Children's Chapel UCC, Graham, NC)
- 492 • Eardine Perry (Union Grove UCC, Henderson, NC)

493 They received certificates of completion and a UCC cross.
494
495

496 **Thursday, May 21, 2009**

497 **Plenary Session 2**
498

499 Mr. Childress offered morning prayers at 8:55 a.m. "Can these bones live? Only you know, O Lord." Mr.
500 Camp remembered with thanks for how they helped shape the Conference SOC BOD members Judy
501 Neff (High Country UCC, Boone, NC) and Mr. Parker (Pembroke Manor UCC, Virginia Beach, VA), who
502 have recently died.
503

504 Resolutions

505 "On the Situation of Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced"* will be considered by General Synod this
506 summer as a resolution of witness sponsored by SOC and the Central Atlantic Conference. Due to the
507 timeline for submitting resolutions, the Executive Committee discussed this resolution by e-mail and
508 okayed adding the Southern Conference's name as a submitter. No action is necessary by Annual
509 Gathering. The resolution states:

510 Therefore, be it resolved that the Twenty-seventh General Synod of the United Church of Christ
511 calls upon national ministries, conferences, associations and local churches

- 512 • to continue to raise awareness of the impact of the Iraq war, especially on Iraqis who
513 have been forced from their homes and are living with much uncertainty and
514 hopelessness, either as internally displaced or as refugees; ...
- 515 • to advocate for a clearer US recognition of our country's responsibility for the
516 humanitarian crisis the war has caused, and for significant increases and expedited
517 processing to offer resettlement of refugees to the United States; ...
- 518 • to support the humanitarian relief efforts of its international partners to offer care for
519 Iraqis forced from their homes, now living in other parts of Iraq, and in Syria, Lebanon,
520 and Jordan; ...
- 521 • affirm [the UCC's] commitment to refugee resettlement, and its support for the rights of
522 refugees scattered throughout the Middle East and all over the world to safe repatriation
523 or resettlement with compensation for their losses.
524

525 The resolution "An Economic Justice Covenant,"* adopted by the 2008 SOC Annual Gathering, will be
526 considered by General Synod this summer as a resolution of witness. The Rev. Rick Edens (United
527 Church of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC) encouraged SOC congregations to become economic justice
528 churches. The resolution states:

529 Therefore, be it resolved, that each United Church of Christ congregation is encouraged
530 to become an Economic Justice Church that:

- 531 a. Engages in focused studies of the economic injustices that prevail in our society
532 and our world, and the ways in which God's abundance is distributed so
533 inequitably;
534

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- 534 b. Creates a program of study that may lead the congregation to draft and adopt an
535 "Economic Justice Covenant" that reflects the context, experience, study,
536 discernment and commitment to action of the congregation;
537 c. Develops a range of programs and activities with the goals of inspiring members
538 and organizing them to engage in actions that promote economic justice. ...
539

540 The North Carolina Council of Churches forwarded the resolution "Teaching the Truth about the
541 Wilmington Race Riot of 1898"* to judicatories around the state, asking they all sign off on it. Several
542 bills are before by the NC legislature about this. At its March, 2009, meeting, the SOC BOD affirmed
543 the resolution, which states:

544 Therefore, be it resolved, that the ____ [sic] urges the North Carolina State Legislature to pass
545 bill S-16 or its companion bill, H-264 and to assure that the truth about the Wilmington Race
546 Riot [is] taught in the public schools of North Carolina, and ... that this resolution be forwarded to
547 the sponsors of those bills with our thanks, and to the North Carolina Legislature for its action.

548 **Motion: to affirm the resolution "Teaching the Truth about the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898."**

549 Moved by Mr. Edens. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Discussion included that the resolution title was
550 insufficient. More than a race riot, the situation was an insurrection, the overthrowing of a legitimately
551 elected government. **Motion passed.** Mr. Camp will convey the Annual Gathering's concerns in a letter
552 to the NC Council.
553

554 Anniversary Celebrations

555 Bethany UCC in Claremont, NC, was recognized for 100 years of service in Christ's mission. UCC
556 General Minister and President the Rev. John Thomas preached at the church on its anniversary.
557 Monticello UCC in Browns Summit, NC, is also celebrating 100 years of Christian witness. The
558 congregation began as a Christian Church, voted to become part of the Congregational Christian
559 Churches before that denomination even came into existence, and voted to become part of the UCC
560 before most other congregations did. They hear God speaking and covet our prayers for their church's
561 continuing work.
562

563 Special Presentation to Janelle Bunn

564 Ms. Bunn is retiring after having served the Southern Conference very faithfully, not only in the
565 Conference office but for many years at Blowing Rock Conference Center. Mr. Camp spoke about how
566 much we care about and love her, and are thankful for her wonderful spirit, the service she has offered,
567 and her sterling leadership among us. The BOD yesterday agreed she will work several hours a week
568 to help with ENCA administrative work. Ms. Bunn thanked the Conference for being so supportive. At
569 the root of her work has been the desire to help build relationships in the SOC.
570

571 President's Report*

572 Ms. Jackson thanked the Conference Minister, the ACMs, the administrative staff, the SOC BOD, and
573 each member and friend of the Conference. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as President.
574 Yet it is also hard to hear what we say about and to each other. We must talk about finances and
575 resources, but let us not become so embroiled and embittered that we forget people come to church for
576 a word of hope. Each time we meet, we should encounter the risen Christ in our midst.
577

578 Ms. Jackson began her presidency excited about the great works we could do. She felt called to be
579 President but has also felt beaten down by things that have come up. We must learn how to get along
580 together and to build each other up. We are responsible for the mess we are in. We have almost
581 forgotten about God in some instances. We should speak passionately but without tearing at the fabric
582 of who we are as a people. "If I can't talk to the church and feel that I am somebody and that I matter,
583 how can I encourage my teenagers to be part of the church?" We fuss and fight about important things,
584

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584 but fussing and fighting each time we come to these meetings erodes the spirit. Ms. Jackson suggested
585 sometimes we need to have an SOC prayer meeting instead of talking so much. We need to listen so
586 we can discern God's will for us and for the Conference. We've got to do better. If we don't learn how to
587 respect and talk to each other, we will be in a deeper mess.
588

589 There is hope: God said, "These bones shall live." We can't do it without God. Pray for the Conference,
590 your leaders, your selves, and that soon, this Conference will rise up and be a light in the South, with
591 people happy to come to Conference meetings, do the work the church has been called by God to do,
592 and love each other.
593

594 Mr. Kennedy expressed thanks on behalf of the Conference for Ms. Jackson's great spirit among us.
595 We are indebted to her leadership.
596

597 2010 Budget

598 **Motion: that the 2010 budget presented by the Southern Conference Board of Directors be**
599 **approved by the voting delegates attending the 44th Annual Gathering of the Southern**
600 **Conference.** Moved by Mr. Barlow. Seconded by the Rev. J.C. Cheek (Mt. Calvary UCC, Durham,
601 NC). **Motion passed.**
602

603 Five-Year Task Force on Conference Restructure

604 In March, the SOC BOD established a Five-Year Task Force on Conference Restructure. The task
605 force is a listening body, not a decision-making body. After this Annual Gathering, members of the task
606 force will begin meeting with churches and groups throughout the SOC to hear concerns about the
607 Conference and Associations, concentrating on:

- 608 • What are your support needs for your ministry?
- 609 • How can the Conference better meet the needs of the churches?
- 610 • What can we do to strengthen corporate trust and Christian unity?

611 For the health and future of the Conference, as many people as possible need to participate. The task
612 force will compile and analyze the resulting data, give this information to the BOD, and propose areas
613 of improvement to the Board. Although the Board may present the beginnings of a five-year plan during
614 the 2010 Annual Gathering, the work cannot be completed by then; the Conference cannot be re-
615 birthed that fast. So, the task force does not anticipate that the 2010 Annual Gathering will make
616 decisions about structure. The task force includes six BOD members [ENCA: Ms. Bynum and Ms.
617 Edens, EVA: Mr. Marks and Ms. Muse, WNCA: Doug Sink (Second Reformed UCC, Lexington, NC)
618 and Mr. Davis], one ACM [the Rev. Drew Morris (EVA ACM, Lynnhaven Colony Congregational UCC,
619 Virginia Beach, VA)], plus the Conference Minister and the President of the BOD ex officio. God can
620 bring new life, but we must be willing to accept God's breath. Mr. Marks shared a written report* and
621 asked for prayers for the Conference during this process.
622

623 Discussion included:

- 624 • Appointing a special group to focus on these questions is laudable. Yet, over the last ten years,
625 the Conference has several times appointed working groups (e.g., the Listen to Hear process
626 and before the capital campaign began) to ask questions similar to those this task force will ask.
627 Local churches have seen little difference resulting from these questions. What will be different
628 now? Mr. Kennedy clarified that the task force is part of a larger process of the SOC BOD. The
629 Board will depend on the Conference's participation. And the Conference has the commitment
630 from the BOD that this will be different.
- 631 • Will the task force put out some models of how we might live together for us to respond to? We
632 still have the structure from when the Conference was about double the size it is now. Can we
633 be open to God's leading and be open to a different structure? For example, could we organize
634

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634 so there are not three Associations? Mr. Barksdale stated that the task force very intentionally
635 decided not to suggest restructure models but to be as neutral as possible to maximize its ability
636 to listen and solicit ideas. Mr. Marks commented that the task force cannot make
637 recommendations without adequate data. The task force needs to hear as much as possible the
638 different views and needs within the Conference before suggesting a structure that will work for
639 all across the Conference.

- 640 • Some would encourage the task force to talk with an outside consultant before it begins the
- 641 listening sessions within the Conference, to hear what some possibilities are and about healthy
- 642 ways to move forward.
- 643 • In addition to the meetings throughout the Conference, folks are welcome to write letters to the
- 644 task force about anything they think would be helpful.
- 645 • Mr. Owens, who served on the SOC Self-Study Committee and remembers well the huge
- 646 amount of work that was, charged the BOD and the Conference to not let this task force's
- 647 recommendations die after they are made. Although the Conference carried through on some of
- 648 the self-study recommendations, the initial excitement waned and some very important things
- 649 did not happen. Each and every one of us should be held accountable for what we are to be
- 650 about. Recommendations and time lines are important.
- 651

652 Awards and Recognition*

653 Stewardship awards for the largest percentage increase in giving to OCWM in 2008 were given to:

- 654 • ENCA: Word of Life UCC, Moncure, NC and Umstead Park UCC, Raleigh, NC
- 655 • EVA: St. Luke UCC, Sedley, VA, and Lynnhaven Colony Congregational UCC, Virginia Beach,
- 656 VA
- 657 • WNCA: Monticello UCC, Browns Summit, NC, and Salem Reformed UCC, Lincolnton, NC.
- 658

659 While not exhausting the list of excellent churches doing mission, Rising Star awards for churches with
660 the most progress in growth, giving, and supporting missions and programs of the Southern
661 Conference and the UCC were given to:

- 662 • ENCA: Grace UCC, Elon, NC
- 663 • EVA: Bayside Christian UCC, Virginia Beach, VA
- 664 • WNCA: Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC
- 665

666 One pastor and one lay person in each Association were recognized for outstanding service and
667 dedication to their church, Association, and Conference:

- 668 • EVA: the Rev. Lisa Gaul (First UCC, Hampton, VA) and David Sanford (Fellowship UCC,
- 669 Chesapeake, VA)
- 670 • ENCA: the Rev. J. C. Cheek (Mt. Calvary UCC, Durham, NC) and Katherine Floyd (Elon
- 671 Community UCC, Elon, NC)
- 672 • WNCA: the Rev. Jim Simonds (Zion UCC, Thomasville, NC) and Doug Sink (Second Reformed
- 673 UCC, Lexington, NC)
- 674

675 "5 for 5" churches support OCWM and also contribute to all four special UCC mission offerings—One
676 Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and The Christmas Fund. These
677 congregations were recognized for their serious stewardship to wider church ministries:[^]

- 678 • Chapel Grove UCC (Windsor, VA)
- 679 • Congregational UCC (Greensboro, NC)
- 680

[^] There may be other 5 for 5 congregations in the SOC, but if churches send their offerings directly to the national setting,
the Conference is unaware that they are 5 for 5.

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- 680 • Corinth Chapel UCC (Suffolk, VA)
- 681 • Emmanuel UCC (Greensboro, NC)
- 682 • First Reformed UCC (Burlington, NC)
- 683 • First Reformed UCC (Lexington, NC)
- 684 • Hillsborough UCC (Hillsborough, NC)
- 685 • Holy Covenant UCC (Charlotte, NC)
- 686 • Lynnhaven Colony Congregational UCC (Virginia Beach, VA)
- 687 • Monticello UCC (Browns Summit, NC)
- 688 • Mt. Hope UCC (Whitsett, NC)
- 689 • Peace UCC (Greensboro, NC)
- 690 • Pilgrim UCC (Charlotte, NC)
- 691 • Pilgrim UCC (Durham, NC)
- 692 • Portsmouth UCC (Portsmouth, VA)
- 693 • Trinity Reformed UCC (Conover, NC)
- 694 • Union UCC (Norfolk, VA)
- 695 • United Church of Chapel Hill UCC (Chapel Hill, NC)
- 696 • Word of Life UCC (Moncure, NC)
- 697 • Zion Evangelical & Reformed UCC (Lenoir, NC)

698
 699 At General Synod this summer, the Rev. Julie Peeples (Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC) will
 700 receive the Antoinette Brown Award which is presented to outstanding clergywomen whose ministries
 701 have exemplified advocacy for women and significant leadership in the parish, community, or other
 702 church-related institutions. Carathene Wallace Crump, Church Women of the Southern Conference's
 703 2009 Woman of the Year, will be recognized as an Honored Lay Woman whose leadership and
 704 example of faithful living brings God's Spirit into our midst. The Rev. Richard McBride (Chaplain
 705 Emeritus of Elon University, Elon, NC (Elon Community UCC, Elon, NC) will receive the Excellence in
 706 Teaching Award as a passionate and gifted educator who places critical importance on the teaching
 707 ministry of the United Church of Christ, for the church and for society.

708
 709 Two SOC members graduate from Lancaster Theological Seminary this month with a Master of Divinity
 710 degree—Gary Leath (Clinton Memorial UCC, Burlington, NC) and Darrell Sluder (Mt. Tabor UCC,
 711 Lexington, NC)

712
 713 Helping Churches Bring Out Gifts for Ministry

714 The recent grant the PLD program received will help it do congregational leadership development, i.e.,
 715 helping churches bring out people's many gifts for ministry in our towns and neighborhoods. PLD will
 716 work in partnership with The Fund for Theological Education. Mr. Lewis noted that we are now raising
 717 the next generation of the church. "What will I do with my life when I grow up?" is a question young
 718 people especially engage as they search for meaning in life. The church should help young people, and
 719 others, figure out how to live a life of service to the wider world and to God, grounded in their Christian
 720 identity. What will we do about our lives in light of our faith? People should not be left to their own
 721 devices; lots of people meander and then stumble into what makes life significant for them. Not every
 722 person is called into pastoral ministry, but every Christian is called. People live out their faith in a local
 723 context—the local church. Thus, congregations must help members look into the intersection of faith
 724 and vocation. We as the church need to take seriously the responsibility to nurture youth and help them
 725 explore Christian identity and vocation. A leadership community, not just an individual leader, is needed
 726 to take care of a community and to lead a church.

727

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- 727 The characteristics of “calling congregations”—those who nurture vocation and call—are notice, name,
728 and nurture:
- 729 • Notice the gifts and graces among the clergy and laity.
 - 730 • Explicitly name obvious and dormant gifts.
 - 731 • Nurture people as they explore and make sense of what they want to do with their lives.
- 732 The four disciplines of calling are to invest, invite, name, and apprentice:
- 733 • Investing in someone broadens their perspective of what their lives can be.
 - 734 • Invite the person to explore their gifts.
 - 735 • To name is to make explicit what is implicit.
 - 736 • Mentor with a sense of imagination an apprentice within the church, dreaming together what we
737 can do.

738 Calling congregations are places where people explore, discover, and risk failure, knowing that people
739 there care for them. They are also places where something is at stake. What would you miss if your
740 Conference or your congregation closed? What do you value about those communities?

741
742 The Calling Congregations program offers support raising the kind of leadership we believe God is
743 calling, through an annual conference; grants to congregations or church-related organizations for
744 leadership development, particularly with the next generation; and fellowships to help with seminary
745 study. More information can be found at <http://www.thefund.org/>.

746
747 The blessing for lunch was offered by the Rev. Willie Mae Hawkins (Maple Temple UCC, Raleigh, NC),
748 a Southern Region UCC Women in Mission Women’s Ministry Consultant. She is a resource in the
749 Conference to assist all women in churches and women’s groups to get speakers, find support from the
750 national offices, and help women in their spiritual journeys. The meeting recessed for lunch at 11:50
751 a.m. and reconvened 1:50 p.m.

752 753 Elections

754 In addition to the nominations made yesterday for SOC officers and Board of Directors, nominations for
755 the JRVC Board of Trustees, Class of 2012,* were offered on behalf of the camp’s Executive
756 Committee by Mr. Stumb:

- 757 • the Rev. Steve Halsted (Community UCC, Raleigh, NC)
- 758 • the Rev. Mark Burns (Oakland Christian Church, UCC, Chuckatuck, VA)
- 759 • Hamp Shuford, Jr. (Corinth Reformed Church, Hickory, NC)
- 760 • Lance Smith (Congregational UCC, Tryon, NC)
- 761 • Phil Leonard (historic ties with First Reformed UCC, Lexington, NC)
- 762 • the Rev. Lisa Gaul (First UCC, Hampton, VA)

763
764 United Church Homes and Services Board of Directors, Class of 2012, nominees are:

- 765 • Brenda Eckard (Bethany UCC, Claremont, NC)
- 766 • Mark Walker (Spring Branch Community Church, Virginia Beach, VA)

767
768 **Motion: that these nominations be accepted.** Moved by Mr. Simonds. Seconded. **Motion passed.**

769
770 Mr. Murphy brought greetings from the United Church Foundation and national setting UCC staff. The
771 foundation manages endowments of the national setting and 800 congregations across the U.S. It does
772 not serve individuals. Over the years, it has provided above average returns. Mr. Murphy thanked those
773 entities which have invested with the foundation and those who have made planned gifts to those
774 agencies and entities.

775

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775 A Statement of Mission

776 “New Occasions Teach New Duties: Hope for the Future—A Statement of Mission” was presented to
777 the 2008 Annual Gathering for discussion as the Conference develops some tenets of understanding to
778 guide SOC work over the next few years. The Board and staff sought not a vote on the paper, but
779 instead encouraged churches to study and discuss it in the intervening year. The insights of Lynnhaven
780 Colony Congregational Church (UCC), Virginia Beach, VA, and Corinth Reformed Church, Hickory, NC,
781 were sent to the Conference office in written statements of response.* Several Lancaster Seminary
782 professors are developing educational points and theological underpinnings for the various sections of
783 the document, to aid study and dialogue. We hope to receive their work back this summer. Annual
784 Gathering attendees received a May 20 draft of “New Occasions”* and discussed it in small clusters.
785

786 Discussion reported out to plenary included:

- 787 • Be clear what the intent of the document is. It is called both a vision plan and a statement of
788 mission. Those are different things.
- 789 • Perhaps the real intent of the document is to have conversations about the kind of church we
790 are.
- 791 • Be careful with wording. Add “Christ” to the first bullet point so it reads “We affirm that Jesus
792 Christ is the sole head of the church.” Jesus is Christ—Lord and Savior, not just a role model.
- 793 • After careful work and thorough discussion at past Annual Gatherings, the Conference adopted
794 both a vision and a mission statement as part of its self-study in the early 2000s:
 - 795 ○ Our vision: We are called to be a living expression of the Body of Christ, strengthening
796 ties that bind God’s people together in mission.
 - 797 ○ Our mission:
 - 798 ▪ To proclaim the saving grace, compassion, justice, and peace of Jesus Christ for
799 all people.
 - 800 ▪ To pray, worship, and work in covenant with the congregations of our conference
801 and with mission partners at home and throughout the world.
 - 802 ▪ To empower and equip clergy and laity for transforming ministry in the Body of
803 Christ (Romans 12:1-2).
- 804 • This statement is very generic and could be from almost any church organization anywhere.
805 What is particular to the SOC and how we are engaged in ministry? For example, the PLD is a
806 real mission of this Conference. Also, the SOC is one of the most if not the most diverse
807 Conference in the UCC, by race and by background of congregations. How does that inform our
808 mission together?
- 809 • Succinct bullets are helpful. Lengthy explanations provide fodder for disagreement,
- 810 • Peace UCC (Greensboro, NC) shared the document with its whole congregation and invited
811 response. The church is challenged by it, and are trying to “go green,” for example, because
812 “we are pushed toward it by this document. We declare our collective table to be fully inclusive,
813 yet many voices we are not hearing. So we need to listen carefully.”
- 814 • We are a mosaic of thousands of tiny pieces. Consider adding a bullet that says, “Scripture is
815 central to us,” noting in the explanatory paragraph that individual churches lift up the scriptures
816 most central to them. Likewise, perhaps reword the bullet “We call ourselves to be in closer
817 covenant and have higher and mutual accountability” to “We are covenant people committed to
818 working together.” Invite different churches to define what “covenant” means for them and list
819 those various responses under the bullet instead of trying to homogenize and make one
820 response.
821

822 Ana Tampanna (Parkway UCC, Winston-Salem, NC) volunteer Open and Affirming (ONA) consultant
823 for the SOC, brought greetings from the UCC Coalition for LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and
824 Transgender] Concerns. As a mom, she has experienced how a welcoming experience made a

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825 difference in her teenager's life. She invited folks to the Coalition's National Gathering June 22–25,
826 prior to General Synod, in Grand Rapids, MI.

827

828 Conference Minister Report*

829 The last half of 2008 and the first half of 2009 have been the most challenging since Mr. Camp came to
830 the Southern Conference, tougher by far than navigating human sexuality conversations. The line
831 between disagreement and meanness seems to have disappeared.

832

833 Many people after the spirited 2008 Annual Gathering understood clearly for the first time the
834 Conference's financial challenges. While over 100 congregations gave nothing to OCWM in 2008, still,
835 OCWM increased for the third year in a row. That was good news, but not good enough given the
836 financial challenges faced. Budget adjustments were made. Finally, Christian Temple sold. Painful
837 staffing cuts have been made, but local church expectations of staff have not diminished. Now, we face
838 the challenge of BLRC. The capital campaign did not reach its goal, but the gifts made have enabled
839 the Conference to do church development work we wouldn't otherwise be able to do. The Southern
840 Conference Foundation has begun. In 2008, we promised to cut the Conference deficit in half. With the
841 infusion of Christian Temple proceeds and the January cuts, there will be no deficit in 2010, which is
842 progress but not a long term solution. We have some time to develop a plan for long term financial
843 stability, but no time to waste. The BOD has established a special task force to look at the mission and
844 structure of the Southern Conference as we together shape a future that all can participate in. The
845 Associations will be treated equally. No one will get all they want, but Mr. Camp's hope is that no part of
846 the Conference will lose all they have.

847

848 How do we go forward? How do we do this with each other? It will take time, considerable effort, and
849 patience. How do we share the cost of discipleship across the board? Some churches will need to step
850 up. Prayer without works is not going to mean much. Prayerful work will make the difference.

851

852 Mr. Camp suggested that some would rather throw him under the bus right now, but that would not
853 solve Conference problems, for they were here when he arrived. We continue to have a lack of trust
854 across theological lines, racial lines, and between those who consider themselves powerful among us.
855 The issue that faces us is not just money, which is important. The motivation and guide for us ought to
856 be our work in the name of Jesus Christ. Our fundamental question remains: What is essential and
857 faithful work in these times? What is our unique and essential mission as we go forward? What are we
858 doing to make God and Jesus real in local churches and local communities?

859

860 Although many good things have been happening, few knew them because grumbings were louder. In
861 this valley of dry bones, staff became fire fighters rather than vision planters. The BOD became a
862 rubber stamp rather than a think tank. Supporting Conference concerns went way down on local church
863 priority lists. The Conference has a choice between sustained financial stability and financial insolvency
864 by the end of 2010 or 2011. Can these bones live? Scripture's response is, "You shall live!"

865

866 Change is clearly here. What kind of change and how we live into it are at issue. The question of race
867 and racism is central work for the Southern Conference. Sexuality issues have not been solved, just put
868 on the shelf. Simple fixes to Conference structure that are not holistic, which fail to encompass our
869 sense of mission, which do not include the varied theologies or important justice understandings will not
870 solve our problems and could make them worse. If we don't listen to the wisdom of lay people as well
871 as of clergy, we will make a mistake. We must look at the mission we want to accomplish, and fit our
872 ministry to that mission.

873

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873 Mr. Camp sees the need for a one to two sentence covenantal statement that would bind us together;
874 redoubling efforts make OCWM and “5 for 5” part of the central mission of local congregations; deciding
875 how to communicate since United Church News will soon be no more; encouraging participation in the
876 SOC Foundation; clear and fair requirements for licensed ministry; really providing care for those “in
877 care” for ministry preparation; finding leaders for new church starts; and being bolder in witness on
878 justice issues. There is no reason more dollars should be cut from our budget. We have the dollars but
879 do not give them. Money used as a weapon hurts everyone, including the one wielding the weapon. We
880 are cutting people, programs, and ministry around the world because we are in partnership. We are in a
881 valley of dry bones and must live there, but the mandate is to live.

882
883 Mr. Camp will be on sabbatical June 1 through the end of summer. The ACMs will handle all issues and
884 decisions during that time. Mr. Camp thanked the staff, who try to face challenges together. They are
885 outstanding in service. He thanked the Annual Gathering for the opportunity to serve the SOC.

886
887 “So, the Southern Conference has a future alive with promise and possibilities. The Word to us is, ‘You
888 shall live.’ What is difficult, though, is that we have to believe it and live it out.”

889
890 Mr. Marks, commenting on what we’ve gone through this last year, who we are as God’s people, and
891 what God has commissioned us to do, led the Annual Gathering in a standing ovation for the
892 Conference Minister and staff and for what they have accomplished.

893

894 Installation

895 Ms. Jackson and Mr. Morris installed the Conference officers, BOD members, and General Synod
896 delegates. Mr. Camp affirmed Ms. Jackson for her faithful, committed leadership. “We affirm the ways
897 you have brought the depth of your spirit to the spirit of the Conference. You are very much of a part of
898 where we have been, who we are, and where we will go.”

899

900 Other Business

901 The Rev. Larry Bolick (Grace Reformed UCC, Newton, NC) announced that Churches Related has
902 been selling successfully and thanked all who encouraged that book project. All are invited to the
903 Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society’s annual meeting on May 30. Every church needs a
904 historian.

905

906 For David Miller (Paul’s Chapel UCC, Lexington, NC), the economic justice covenant resolution
907 misrepresents Jesus’ ministry in many ways. Jesus was not involved in lobbying and his greatest
908 concern was those in spiritual poverty. Life is defined by where you are with Jesus Christ, not where
909 you are economically. Dealing with the woman at the well, the woman about to be stoned for adultery,
910 Zacchaeus, and us, Christ chose not justice but grace.

911

912 The 2010 Annual Gathering will probably be held sometime during the last two weeks of June. The
913 Conference is negotiating time and space with Elon University.

914

915 Mr. Kennedy expressed his great appreciation for Ms. Jackson’s leadership. He continued, “I feel called
916 to be President and humbled that you have placed me here. I will do my best to serve you well. I pledge
917 to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ and to pray for you. I pledge to love, care, and respect you, but
918 not always to agree with you. The SOC officers and Board serve with you and cannot serve without
919 you. There will be great moments ahead, including challenges. I have no doubt we can face the
920 challenges. I want you to be full of hope and faith as we work together. As we hold each other’s hands,
921 remember Jesus is holding us in his care.” After offering a prayer, Mr. Kennedy adjourned the Annual
922 Gathering at 3:35 p.m.

923

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923 Recorded by Kristin Andes, Secretary of the Southern Conference

924

925

926 The following handouts are attached to the official copy of these minutes, held in the Southern
927 Conference office:

- 928 • Forty-fourth Southern Conference UCC Annual Gathering May 20-21, 2009, Agenda
- 929 • Southern Conference Annual Meeting 2009 Standing Rules
- 930 • UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss by Class, January through December 2008
- 931 • UCC – Southern Conference Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2008
- 932 • UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss by Class, January through April 2009
- 933 • OCWM Year by Year Comparison
- 934 • UCC – Southern Conference Balance Sheet as of April 30, 2009
- 935 • UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss Budget Overview January through December 2009
- 936 • UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss Budget Overview January through December 2010
- 937 • Southern Conference of the UCC: Annual OCWM Giving by Churches
- 938 • Expenditures from Sale of Christian Temple
- 939 • Capital Campaign
- 940 • A Report to the Southern Conference from the Western North Carolina Association
- 941 • Forty-fourth Southern Conference UCC Annual Gathering: The Eastern Virginia Association
- 942 Annual Report
- 943 • Report from the Eastern North Carolina Association 2009
- 944 • The Southern Conference Foundation: A Program of Planned Giving
- 945 • 2009 Nominating Committee Report
- 946 • “You Shall Live!” (worship bulletin, May 20, 2009, SOC Forty-fourth Annual Gathering)
- 947 • On the Situation of Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced: A Resolution of Witness
- 948 • An Economic Justice Covenant: A Resolution of Witness
- 949 • Resolution: Teaching the Truth about the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898
- 950 • Dian Griffin Jackson: SOC 2009 President’s Report, May 21, 2009
- 951 • The Report from the 5-Year Task Force on Conference Restructure
- 952 • Southern Conference United Church of Christ Statistical Summary -- 2009
- 953 • Nominations for the Class of 2012, Johns River Valley Camp Board of Trustees
- 954 • New Occasions Teach New Duties: Hope for the Future—A Statement of Mission (draft dated
- 955 May 20, 2009)
- 956 • Lynnhaven Colony Congregational Church, United Church of Christ: Southern Conference
- 957 Mission Statement, Discussion #1 of 9, Summary and Notes (September 14, 2008)
- 958 • (Lynnhaven Colony Congregational Church, UCC:) Southern Conference Mission Statement,
- 959 Discussion #2 of 9, Summary and Notes (September 21, 2008)
- 960 • E-mail from Bob Thompson to Dian Jackson and Steve Camp, Subject: Response (dated
- 961 November 7, 2008)
- 962 • Report to the Southern Conference 2009 Annual Gathering, From: Southern Conference
- 963 Minister

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