

President's Report for the Western North Carolina Association
2009 – 2010

I have found that with various opportunities there also come various responsibilities. The position of President for the Western North Carolina Association of the Southern Conference of the UCC has had various stressors that have had to be faced in this past year that were not anticipated when I agreed to become the President for this group of Christians! The Presidents of each association in the Southern Conference also become part of the Executive Committee of the Southern Conference by virtue of their position, and this has added additional meetings, times of prayer, and stress to this past year.

Soon after being elected your President in October, 2009, Rev. Stephen Camp, Southern Conference Minister, resigned and the Southern Conference Executive Committee found itself with a new task of seeking temporary, interim Southern Conference leadership while beginning a process of seeking an interim Southern Conference Minister. Regular, monthly meetings of the Executive Committee were begun as new leadership was sought, and Rev. Dr. Emmett Floyd agreed to be a temporary Conference Minister as we sought more full time leadership, who could serve us as a consultant as well. Thank you, Emmett, for your extended, temporary leadership!

A major issue that was faced by the Executive Committee of the Western NC Association, the Western NC Association Board of Directors, and the Church and Ministry Commission was our learning on December 31, 2009 that our former treasurer had embezzled money from our association account. The Executive Committee agreed that we should seek to regain the money taken, and their decision was affirmed by the Board of Directors. This decision meant that charges had to be filed against our former treasurer. The insurance company has repaid the money taken, minus a \$1,000 deductible. We hope, in time, that this money may be regained through the courts. Presently the embezzlement charges have been reprimanded to Superior Court by a Grand Jury and we await hearing when a trial date is to be set.

A beneficial event that was held within the Western NC Association was a Church Finance Workshop held on Saturday, April 24, 2010 at which 67 people attended from 12 churches. This workshop was led Carl Kotheimer, from the UCC Insurance Board, and Jennifer Killingsworth, WNCA Treasurer. The goal of the workshop was to share important ways of accounting to keep church money safe from embezzlement and also increase the trust factor for those who handle the church's finances. I thank Larry Walser, our Associate Conference Minister, and Jennifer Killingsworth, our Association Treasurer, for making this event possible!

Early into the new year of 2010 our Southern Conference Treasurer, Rev. Paul Davis, realized that our income from churches toward the support of the Southern Conference was not adequate to cover our expenses, and our reserves were not adequate to cover our over-expenditures. Much prayerful thought and consideration was given by the Executive Committee and the Southern Conference Board of Directors during the first 6 months of 2010 because of this financial crisis we still face. Our financial crisis, and how to best deal with its implications, led to the postponement of the Annual Gathering of the Southern Conference on June 11 and 12, and that meeting being replaced with a gathering of the Boards of Directors of the Western NC Association, Eastern NC Association, and Eastern Virginia Association and the Southern Conference Board of Directors.

In April, 2010, Rev. Larry Walser announced his intentions to retire as Western NC Associate Conference Minister on June 30, 2010. This began a search by the Western NC Board of Directors for someone to serve as an interim minister for our association through the remainder of 2010. Rev. Dr. Tom Hamilton agreed to come to our aid! Thank you Tom! Following the June 11 and 12, 2010 meeting of the Boards, the Southern Conference Board voted to end the search for an interim Southern Conference Minister, and instead voted to provide additional money for the service of associate conference ministers to the associations.

Following the meeting of the Southern Conference Board of Directors in June, I called Tom Hamilton to see if he would be willing to work with the new arrangement approved by the Southern Conference Board of Directors - of having a person work 30 hours a week rather than 20 hours a week, and continue this work through the Southern Conference Annual Gathering in June 2011, instead of just being employed through December, 2010. Tom Hamilton, in his wisdom and graciousness, suggested that I contact Rev. Larry Walser to see if he might be willing to accept this new position, after his retirement. Tom Hamilton's rationale was that Rev. Walser knew what was going on and how the office and annual meeting were run, and so he would be a more advantageous person to have serve in this interim position than himself. Rev. Walser gave the matter serious thought and agreed to continue serving God and Jesus among us in this new, interim position!! Thank you, Larry, for continuing with us!

Rev. Larry Walser did retire from the position he had held previously, and the Western NC Board of Directors had a "Retirement Reception" for him, and at the same time had a "Thank you Reception" for Mrs. Libby Parker for her willingness to serve as our Association Secretary. The wonderful people at First UCC, Salisbury were willing to coordinate this reception and provided the delicious food and delightful setting for this event on Sunday, June 27! Thank you ladies and gentlemen of First UCC!! I am glad to say that many people came to express their thanks to Larry Walser and to Libby Parker. The event provided a very enjoyable Sunday afternoon setting for people to renew friendships and be reminded of the important place our association plays in the lives of our people and churches.

I am grateful that we have such a dedicated, concerned, group of men and women who are serving on the Western NC Association Board of Directors, the Church and Ministry Commission, and those involved on various committees. Thank you for your service to God and Jesus our Christ through the prayers, time, and energy you give for the benefit of God's work among us.

I am also grateful for the continuing presence of Larry Walser and Libby Parker as they coordinate and provide services to ministers and churches of our association and conference as their service rendered to our Lord and Savior.

May God give all of us wisdom and direction, strength and courage for the future as we strive to be faithful in loving service to our Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer.

Peace and hope,
Jamie Fonville, WNCA President