

Report to the Southern Conference 2009 Annual Gathering  
From: Southern Conference Minister  
For May 20, 2009 Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

This Conference Minister's annual report is offered as we have experienced a busy year, frankly, as each has been in the ministry of the Southern Conference. The SOC has hosted conferences like the United Black Christians, the Ministers for Racial, Social and Economic Justice of the UCC, the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries to name just a few and I have been present and the conference has been represented at numerous national church development events, National UCC Pacific Islanders and Asian American Conference and the Retirement Housing Foundation.

During the year, we have continued to offer help to Black Lake with its continuing financial concern, and in the work of completing the sale of Christian Temple. Over the period, I have attended over 50 worship services, ordinations, funerals and installations. I have had lunch with several pastors, a few deacons and numerous others inquiring information about the UCC and the Southern Conference. I have initiated or attended several gatherings across the conference with clergy and with laity. I have served the wider church on the Board of Directors of the Cornerstone Fund, the Council of Conference Ministers, the Southern Region Conference Ministers group, the Executive Council of the UCC, United Church Homes and Services, Elon University Board of Trustees, Black Lake's Board of Advisors, Franklinton Center Board and of course, the Southern Conference Board of Directors, with its executive committee. I have attended a couple of board meetings of our associations and numerous other meetings in local churches and in the wider community. I have met with staff several times over the year and had meetings with the Virginia Council of Churches and the North Carolina Council of Churches. I was honored to meet with the Governors of both states in our boundaries, and hosted a high level delegation of our partner church, the Church in the Rhineland just last Easter time.

During the period, we have begun a new Southern Conference Foundation to receive planned gifts and bequest offered by Southern Conference people, continued the work of the Pastoral Leadership Development program, and our continued efforts at Church Development and Congregational Revitalization.

Over the last three years we have -- each year -- grown slightly in OCWM giving, yet the current year we are behind that pace. With the infusion of dollars from the sale of Christian Temple, the conference will be

financially solvent for the next year and longer if the churches maintain the 2008 level of giving or better. We have convened a group to look at our Constitution and Bylaws of the conference and currently a task force to look at next steps for the mission, and even the shape of the conference as we seek to go forward.

With all of the right-sizing that took place among our budget, affecting staff greatly, and the continuing challenge to meet our financial obligations, it is unfortunate that some of our clergy, mostly progressive clergy find my service to the Southern Conference inadequate for these days. While the times in our recent past have been challenging, my look forward is filled with great hope. I am hopeful that respectful and honest conversations about the future of the Southern Conference will be our chosen way forward.

Blessings...

Stephen W. Camp