

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

Strike the rock!

June 26 – 27, 2008
Hilton Garden Inn, Suffolk, VA

1 **Thursday, June 26, 2008**

2 **Plenary Session 1**

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4 Gathering music began at 10:00 a.m., led by the Rev. John Selders, Jr., of Amistad Church UCC, West
5 Hartford, CT.

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7 President the Rev. Dian Jackson, Vessels of Clay United Church of Christ, Elon, NC, opened the
8 meeting at 10:10 a.m. Pastoral Leadership Development (PLD) student Roy Stokes read the theme
9 scripture, Exodus 17:1-7. Following the exodus from Egypt, the people of Israel were very thirsty but
10 there was no water, for which they faulted Moses.

11 The Lord said to Moses, "...I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb.
12 Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so,
13 in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the
14 Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (vv. 5-7)

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16 The Rev. Nanette Hilliard, The Great Awakening UCC, Virginia Beach, VA, struck the rock (a dry stone
17 fountain) with her crutch, and the fountain flowed. PLD student David Carter prayed. The gathered
18 people then sang "This Little Light of Mine" and "Amazing Grace," led by J. Rudolph Wilson, Warwick
19 UCC, Newport News, VA.

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21 The Rev. Stephen Camp, Conference Minister, and the Rev. Hudson Barksdale, Franklinton Center at
22 Bricks, brought word of the sacred conversation on race held at Franklinton Center in May in response
23 to the national United Church of Christ setting's call for such conversations. Over 30 clergy from the
24 Southern Conference participated. Racial work is faith work, Rev. Camp preached in a video from the
25 conversation. A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. In the Southern Conference (SOC), given our
26 diversity, we have particular need to get to a conversation we have been pushing aside for a while. We
27 need to step across some lines society says not to cross; to open our pulpits, meal times, and Bible
28 studies where we can foster a new and a sacred conversation about race. The Rev. Rose Wright-Scott,
29 Victory Christian UCC, Petersburg, VA, and national setting Minister for Program Development based in
30 Whitakers, NC, Justice and Witness Ministries, and the Rev. Beth Kennett, Hillsborough UCC,
31 Hillsborough, NC, reported that other sacred conversations about race will happen in the Conference.
32 Mr. Camp encouraged the Conference to figure out ways to talk and then watch what will happen in
33 individuals' lives and the Conference's life.

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35 On behalf of the Conference Minister, staff, and Board of Directors (BOD), Ms. Jackson welcomed
36 everyone to the forty-third Annual Gathering of the Southern Conference and officially called the
37 meeting to order.

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* A copy of this document is filed with the official copy of these minutes in the Southern Conference office.

38 Linda Johnson, Mayor, welcomed the Conference to Suffolk on behalf of the Suffolk City Council and
39 the people of Suffolk. She noted with appreciation the Rev. Drew Morris, Eastern Virginia Association
40 (EVA) Associate Conference Minister (ACM), who represents Suffolk's hospitality so well.

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42 The Rev. Thomas Hart, EVA President, rousingly welcomed the Conference on behalf of the EVA. He
43 quoted Psalm 133:1, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity!"
44 Marcelle Faulk, President of the EVA Church Women of the Southern Conference, also brought
45 greetings.

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47 Mr. Morris introduced

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- special guests who will lead parts of the Annual Gathering:

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- the Rev. Dr. Riess Potterveld, President, Lancaster Theological Seminary
- the Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr., Senior Minister Emeritus, The Riverside Church
(affiliated with both the United Church of Christ and the American Baptist Churches),
New York City
- Mr. Selders, Musician
- Mr. Wilson, Choir Director

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- workshop leaders and national setting guests:

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- the Rev. Cheri Lovell, Mission Interpreter, Southeast Region, United Church of Christ
Cornerstone Fund
- Sandra Gourdet, Area Executive for Africa, Wider Church Ministries
- Dr. Edith Rasell, Minister of Workplace Justice, Justice and Witness Ministries
- the Rev. Dr. Carl Wallace, Minister for Special Projects and Project Team Leader for
the Gulf Coast Justice Initiative, Justice and Witness Ministries
- the Rev. Dr. Douglas Borko, Director of Ministerial Assistance, The Pension Boards -
United Church of Christ
- Donald Hart, President, United Church Foundation
- the Rev. Kenneth Ostermiller, Minister for Curriculum Development, Local Church
Ministries

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- institutional representatives:

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- the Rev. Curly Stumb, Executive Director, Johns River Valley Camp (JRVC)
- Betty Klutz and Ann Kwasnick, agents, United Church of Christ Insurance Board
- Ms. Kennett, Director of the Congregations as Incubators of Vocation program, Center
for Congregational Health
- Mr. Barksdale and Ms. Wright-Scott, Franklinton Center at Bricks
- Doug Fleegle, President and CEO, United Church Homes and Services (UCHS), and
Mary Wesley, President and CEO, UCHS Foundation
- the Rev. David Harsh, Director of Development/Marketing, Uplands Retirement Village
- the Rev. Dr. Fred Grosse, President and CEO, Elon Homes for Children
- the Rev. Dr. Bob Thompson, President, Faithful and Welcoming Churches of the United
Church of Christ
- folks from the Pension Boards who provided health screenings
- Cathy Green, President, United Church of Christ Insurance Board. UCCIB's mission is to
support and protect churches and church ministries with insurance and risk management
services. Through insurance, this nonprofit organization governed by the UCC
Conferences gathers money so there is money waiting to help out when fires, etc.
happen. UCCIB also serves the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. She thanked
churches already insured through UCCIB and invited others to check it out.
- Dr. Leroy Howell, Director, United Church Homes and Services. He brought greetings
from UCHS and the United Church Foundation. The most recent addition to UCHS
facilities is Lake Prince Woods continuing care retirement community in the Suffolk area.
He thanked the churches and people of the Conference for their support over the years.

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- the Rev. Nora Driver Foust, Southern Conference Staff for Black Lake Retreat Center (BLRC)

Vice-President the Rev. Dale Kennedy, First Evangelical and Reformed UCC, Asheboro, NC, introduced SOC staff:

- Mr. Camp, Conference Minister
- the Rev. Vertie Powers, ACM Eastern North Carolina Association (ENCA) and Church Development Coordinator for the SOC
- the Rev. Phil Hardy, Area Conference Minister, ENCA
- the Rev. K. Ray Hill, Area Conference Minister, ENCA
- the Rev. Larry Walser, ACM Western North Carolina Association (WNCA)
- Mr. Morris, ACM EVA
- Kay Simons, Administrative Assistant, EVA
- Libby Parker, Administrative Assistant, WNCA
- Lisa Jackson, Administrative Assistant, ENCA
- Linda Carter, Administrative Assistant, SOC
- Janelle Bunn, Executive Assistant to the Conference Minister
- Elaine McAdams, Financial Consultant to the Conference Minister
- the Rev. Margot Pickett, Director of the PLD program
- Ms. Foust, SOC Staff for BLRC
- Mr. Stumb, Coordinator of Outdoor Ministries and Communication Resource Specialist

Mr. Kennedy thanked staff for serving us.

Present were 121 clergy, 82 lay delegates, 5 youth, and 104 guests for a total of 312 persons. Ms. Jackson declared a quorum present. She appointed as parliamentarian for the meeting the Rev. Dr. Warren Casiday, St. John's UCC, Kannapolis, NC, WNCA President, and member of the National Association of Parliamentarians.

Motion: to adopt the agenda.* Moved by many; seconded; **passed.**

Motion: to adopt the 2008 standing rules.* Moved by many; seconded; **passed.**

Ms. Jackson appointed an Elections Committee from members of the Conference BOD—Mr. Barksdale; the Rev. Robert Barrows, Congregational UCC, Tryon, NC; and Ann McDonald, Providence UCC, Chesapeake, VA—and a Resolutions Committee from members of the Conference BOD—Louretha Johnson, Rocky Branch UCC, Kenly, NC; Gail McAfee, Melfield UCC, Haw River, NC; and Caleb Tabor, Grace UCC, Elon, NC.

Motion: to adopt the minutes of the forty-second Annual Meeting of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ, held June 21-22, 2007. Moved by Secretary Kristin Andes, Holy Covenant UCC, Charlotte, NC; seconded. This motion will be voted on Friday.

2007 and 2008 financial review

Treasurer Ron Barlow, Peace UCC, Greensboro, NC, summarized pertinent points of financial documents included in the delegate packets:

- The independent audit of Southern Conference finances as of December 31, 2007, finds the Conference books "clean."
- The UCC – Southern Conference Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2007,* shows Conference assets to total \$5.9 million. Net fixed assets increased \$4.2 million compared to December 31, 2006, as a result of adding to the Conference books the value of the lodge and undeveloped land at BLRC, new buildings at JRVC, the Conference Center, and BLRC's portion of donated

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141 property in High Point, NC, which has since been sold. Current liabilities increased \$750,000
142 over 2006, primarily due to loans for building the lodge at BLRC and for the purchase of the
143 Conference Center. The BLRC loan has since been mostly paid, using proceeds from the High
144 Point property sale. Forty-five acres of land at BLRC are also up for sale.

- 145 • The UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss by Class, January through December 2007*
146 shows a bottom line net income of \$3.6 million. It is not as good as it sounds. The auditor
147 included \$3.7 million in income line 3001 - Contributions which represents the addition of new
148 facilities at BLRC and JRVC. Monies to construct those facilities came from contributions that
149 had not been reflected on balance sheets in prior years, although some of the buildings are
150 several years old. After excluding the \$3.7 million for property contributions, the adjusted net
151 income for 2007 is negative \$135,000. In reality, then, the Conference ended the year with a
152 deficit, although a \$70,000 (34%) smaller deficit than budgeted. The Conference did financially
153 better than we thought we would, but still ended the year in deficit. Our Church's Wider Mission
154 (OCWM) basic support (income line 3000) totaled \$470,500, or \$50,500 more than budgeted
155 and \$16,000 more than what was received in 2006. So, OCWM giving improved, a reverse of
156 previous years.
- 157 • OCWM 2008 giving through May (\$204,000) was down \$6,400 compared to the same time
158 period in 2007. The general U.S. economic situation has doubtless affected giving. The 2008
159 bottom line for the Conference through May has been a net income of \$76,000. This "gain" is
160 due primarily to \$50,000 received from the new church development grant from the national
161 setting and \$50,000 from the Live the Vision! capital campaign fund. The Conference has spent
162 \$12,000 of that \$100,000. So, the money is in the bank but the Conference has not yet incurred
163 many of the expenses the money is to cover. If the \$100,000 were removed from consideration,
164 the Conference would show a net loss of \$10,700.

166 Ms. Jackson called a BOD meeting to follow the plenary session and announced that the 20/30 network
167 of clergy would meet over lunch. The meeting recessed at 11:35 a.m.

169 During a luncheon address, Mr. Potterveld spoke about the changing context and reality of the Church
170 and the United Church of Christ. An invitational phrase emerged from the Stillspeaking campaign: No
171 matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here. Not only people but the
172 church experiences life as a series of transitions. A journey inevitably involves change. God is dynamic
173 and alive, and the church must be. Retrenching—going back to ways of comfort and the ways things
174 used to be—will not address the enormous challenges the Body of Christ faces in ministry. Secularism
175 is growing in the U.S. Eighty percent of U.S. Americans under age of 30 have never been in a
176 sanctuary, according to the Pew Research Center. People coming into churches strongly hunger for a
177 direct experience of God, an authentic-to-them encounter with God's presence.

178 These days, mainline churches undergoing revitalization and growth:

- 179 • have leaders who are charismatic but not hierarchical.
- 180 • really engage in improving the life of the society in which they are embedded.
- 181 • emphasize ritual and spiritual disciplines.
- 182 • worship with music and instruments from other cultures of the world.

183 Surviving tough challenges does involve our creativity and ingenuity, but also the One who walks with
184 us.

186 **Plenary Session 2**

188 2008 financial review continued, 2009 budget presentation

189 The meeting reconvened at 2:25 p.m. During a question and answer period about Conference finances,
190 the following points were made:

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- 191 • OCWM is the primary source of funding for the Conference's operating expenses. Grants given
192 for specific purposes have also been a major source of income. Interest from investments has
193 been used to cover deficits for several years. That source is now substantially diminished.
194 • The UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss Budget Overview January through December
195 2008,* a revised budget the Board of Directors approved, projects a 2008 deficit of \$87,000.
196 The 2008 budget approved by the 2007 Annual Gathering projected a deficit of \$221,000.
197 Changes during the year cause budget adjustments. Over the past several years, Conference
198 practice has been to present a revised budget to the BOD to help the Board have a more
199 realistic view of how the year is actually shaping up financially. It is not necessary for the full
200 Annual Gathering to subsequently approve the revised budget. The revised budget projects
201 \$221,000 more in income than what the 2007 Annual Gathering approved, primarily from the
202 national setting church development grant and a small increase in OCWM giving. Revised
203 expenses are \$87,300 greater than in the original budget, primarily due to the church
204 development program. Neither income nor expenses for church development were in the
205 original budget. Staff have cut other expenses, producing a lesser deficit than projected during
206 the 2007 Annual Gathering.
207

208 Mr. Barlow presented the 2009 proposed budget.* At its meeting yesterday, the BOD accepted it to be
209 presented to the Annual Gathering. Income is budgeted at \$873,200 and expenses at \$978,700,
210 creating a bottom line projected deficit of \$105,500. The proposed budget reflects a \$65,500 decrease
211 in income and a \$47,000 decrease in expenses compared to the revised 2008 budget. Note one
212 correction: The \$120,000 listed as line 6001 should instead be beside line 6000. It represents expenses
213 for the full PLD program.
214

215 What can be done about the continuing deficits? Increase income or reduce expenses. The BOD and
216 the Constitution, Bylaws, and Board Restructure Task Force have discussed both. Grants have been
217 received, but grants are not available for operating expenses. Reducing expenses generally means
218 reducing services and thus far, the Board has been hesitant to do that. Important ministries are going
219 on that we want to continue, and we want to do more good things! Eliminating staff positions would be
220 about the only place to get the amount of money that would be required to balance the budget. At this
221 point, there has not been a decision to reduce expenses to that great a degree.
222

223 Mr. Barlow believes each person in attendance is here because they love their local church, the SOC,
224 and the UCC. What can you do to help the SOC in this time of financial difficulty? Let others in your
225 church know of the financial difficulties and how important the work at the Conference level is for our
226 churches. If you don't know, educate yourself about how the Conference supports local churches. Your
227 congregation may not need Conference services this year, but many congregations do. Talk to the
228 ACMs, other Conference staff, and BOD members. Invite someone to talk to your church's leadership
229 or do so yourself. Request that your church give \$6 per member to the Conference Ministry Fund to
230 help support expenses. Increase OCWM giving through your church's normal budgetary process or
231 through a special fundraising effort. Mr. Barlow challenged each person to take seriously the difficulties
232 experienced by the Conference, as if it were happening in your church or your personal life. You want
233 the Southern Conference work to continue and you love the Conference. Educate yourself and
234 convince your church to contribute or to increase contributions.
235

236 **Motion: To approve the 2009 proposed budget that has been approved by the Conference Board**
237 **of Directors.** Moved by Mr. Barlow; seconded by the Rev. Barbara Rathbun, First Congregational
238 UCC, Hendersonville, NC. This motion will be voted on Friday.
239

240 Live the Vision! capital campaign update

241 Mr. Hardy announced that almost \$500,000 has been pledged to the capital campaign. We are starting
242 to live out the vision! Proceeds from the campaign have helped make possible:
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- buses to take SOC youth and advisers to the National Youth Event
 - a church vitality conference at the United Church of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, which close to 100 people attended
 - a follow-up workshop by Graham Standish, author of Becoming a Blessed Church
 - sending SOC people in pairs, African American and European American, to go through important civil rights sites and then come back and engage the Conference in continuing the sacred conversation on race
 - a marketing campaign with billboards in EVA and Greensboro, NC, and newspaper ads in the Burlington, NC, News and Record
 - a fall-time pilot cable marketing program, reaching people from Greensboro through the Triangle area of NC. (This effort will also receive funding from the national setting.)

255 The Conference will soon begin a planned giving program. Mr. Hardy encouraged attendees to allow
256 conversations with their congregations about planned giving and estate gifts.
257

258 Pastoral Leadership Development program update

259 Ms. Pickett expressed deep gratitude to Lancaster Seminary for a tremendous partnership, pointing the
260 Conference in the right direction as it has sought grants, funding two weeks of summer study, and
261 sending two professors to teach in the PLD each year. If you are called to ordained ministry or know
262 someone who is, talk to Ms. Pickett or pick up written information. To start the PLD application process,
263 talk with your pastor and your ACM. The PLD is trying to figure out a location for classes that will not be
264 as far away for EVA participants as the Conference Center is. Of the six 2007 PLD graduates, two have
265 been ordained [the Rev. Leroy Dukes, pastor of Galilee UCC, Merritt, NC, and the Rev. Sharon
266 Hammill, minister of spiritual growth and Christian education, Elon Community Church (UCC), Elon,
267 NC]. The other four are in process, with two anticipating ordination. Three in this year's class are
268 already pastoring churches and anticipate ordination soon. The other three are seeking a call. The
269 Class of 2008 was recognized with applause.
270

271 Black Lake Retreat Center presentation

272 Ms. Foust, who has been the staff person for six months for BLRC, proclaimed, "If you come to BLRC
273 one time, you will fall in love with it and want to keep coming!" UCC attendance at this outdoor ministry
274 center in Asheboro, NC, has fallen off over the past five or six years. Formerly, twenty UCC
275 congregations used the facility. Now seven do. BLRC is more than one place, offering a seven acre
276 lake for fishing and boating; the original retreat cottage of the Black family; a picnic shelter with eight
277 picnic tables; four youth- and young-adult-friendly rustic cabins with electricity; and Leonard Lodge for
278 conferences, weddings, and family reunions. BLRC will host an all-day Advent workshop for churches
279 on November 15. BLRC is a wonderful property. We as a Conference have a narrow window to make it
280 financially work. Come visit!
281

282 Eastern Virginia Association report*

283 Mr. Hart reported the Association has hosted Association-wide worship, and general and specialized
284 training for clergy and laity. The Commissions continue to function. Multiple installations, ordinations,
285 and graduations have occurred. The EVA continues to support our beloved Church and leaders.
286

287 Eastern North Carolina Association report*

288 ENCA President the Rev. Jay Kennett, Hillsborough UCC, Hillsborough, NC; Ms. Hammill; Ms. McAfee;
289 and the Rev. Yvonne Riddick, Good Shepherd UCC, Cary, NC, reported on behalf of ENCA, where the
290 diversity of the UCC shines forth in exciting and at times challenging ways. Over the past year, the
291 Association welcomed back into fellowship St. Stephens UCC, Beaufort, NC, and Lebanon Christian
292 UCC, Semora, NC, as well as granted standing to Grace UCC, Elon, NC. Nine ministers have been
293 called and six approved for ordination. A new program called "89 Champions" has begun, seeking lay
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294 representatives actively involved in each local congregation who are willing to act as liaison between
295 the congregation and the Association, as the Association works together to bridge gaps and strengthen
296 relationships. Thirty committed champions have joined the program to date. In January, Ms. Powers
297 accepted the three-quarters time position of Church Development Minister for the SOC. She continues
298 one-quarter time as ENCA ACM. Mr. Hardy and Mr. Hill have been hired as part time Area Conference
299 Ministers to help fulfill ACM responsibilities in ministering to the needs of churches within the ENCA.
300

301 Western North Carolina Association report*

302 Mr. Casiday reported that, in February, the Association's Church Development and Evangelism
303 Committee took 28 individuals from 11 congregations on a mission trip to Biloxi, MS, to rebuild housing
304 destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. A missionary in Guatemala and another in Angola have been linked to
305 the Association for support. The Association provided scholarship money to help WNCA youth attend
306 the National Youth Event and helped pay the way of the Association Secretary, Ms. Parker, to the UCC
307 Office Support Staff national meeting in Cleveland. Talks are underway about two possible new church
308 starts. The Association Board also helped underwrite the expenses of the Evangelical and Reformed
309 Historical Society's publication of Churches Related: Forty Year History of Churches and Related
310 Ministries, 1965 – 2005, United Church of Christ, Western North Carolina Association. A calendar of
311 prayer about WNCA congregations has been distributed to the Association's churches.
312

313 Church Development presentation

314 Ms. Powers wanted everyone to be excited about going forth into the world with the Word. The video
315 "Southern Conference Revolution" emphasized that the population in the area covered by our
316 Conference is growing. Where there are houses, there are people, and there need to be churches.
317 Members of the Conference's Church Development Committee were recognized. Ms. Powers asked
318 attendees to talk with committee members about hopes and dreams for church development in the
319 Conference, including what your congregation needs to expand your ministry and mission. Church
320 development includes new, renewing, and affiliating congregations as well as strengthening existing
321 congregations. She also asked each church to participate in the Strengthen the Church special offering
322 which helps raise funds for church development.
323

324 Greetings from national setting staff

325 Mr. Wallace offered greetings on behalf of the Rev. Linda Jaramillo, Executive Minister, Justice and
326 Witness Ministries, and its BOD, which includes Ms. Jackson. OCWM and the Neighbors in Need
327 special offering really make a difference, enabling justice and witness ministry such as centers for
328 education and social transformation like Franklinton Center and Daniel F. Romero Center for Border
329 Ministries/Centro Romero which deals with issues of the U.S.-Mexico border. The Gulf Coast Justice
330 Initiative addresses historic racial and economic injustice exposed by the disasters that followed
331 Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. To do justice work, stay in the U.S. and go to the Gulf Coast! Our Faith
332 Our Vote 2008 is a community education/voter registration mobilization for the 2008 elections.
333

334 Mr. Borko offered greetings on behalf of Pension Boards - United Church of Christ (PB – UCC)
335 President and CEO Michael Downs. The organization's mission is to care for clergy and lay employees
336 of the UCC. It manages \$3 billion that belongs to those employees. Good news includes:

- 337 • All UCC congregations that are part of the PB - UCC's health benefit plans will not have to
338 pay one month's premium during the third quarter of this year. Retirees will receive the
339 equivalent of one month's premium by check. Thus, PB – UCC is essentially giving \$4
340 million back.
- 341 • PB – UCC declared a premium moratorium for those insured by its plans in zip codes
342 declared disaster areas following hurricanes.
- 343 • One thousand low income annuitants will receive a check for \$200 to help with rising gas
344 prices.

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- 345 • The Christmas Fund raised the highest amount ever in 2007. That money goes back to
346 retired clergy and clergy in crisis and need.
347

348 Mr. Hart thanked the Conference and its churches on behalf of the entire national setting for gifts for
349 OCWM and the special offerings. Without them, the UCC national setting could not do the ministry that
350 it does. The United Church Foundation is an associated ministry of the UCC. Its major activities are to
351 manage investments for churches, serve as fiscal agent for planned giving for the UCC, and, upon
352 request, serve as a trustee for endowment funds.
353

354 Special presentation to Mrs. Ruth McDowell

355 Ruth Alexander McDowell, First Congregational UCC, Kings Mountain, NC, was recognized for the
356 depth, breadth, and continuity of her loving witness amongst us. A United Church of Christ missionary
357 in Angola for 13 years along with her late husband, the Rev. Dr. Henry Curtis McDowell, she has
358 served on just about every committee in the Southern Conference as well as the Board of Directors of
359 the Conference, affiliated UCC institutions, and community organizations. Together, she and Mr.
360 McDowell helped nurture new church start Church of the Open Door UCC in Miami, Florida, to become
361 the vibrant church it is to this day. Ms. Andes read a letter* which noted that Mrs. McDowell “has always
362 given the title ‘church lady’ the humble yet noble face it deserves.” The plenary rose to its feet in a
363 standing ovation of recognition, appreciation, and celebration.
364

365 Conference Minister report*

366 Mr. Camp observed that in the midst of stark realities, the “Can do!” spirit has risen in the Conference.
367 Now is the time to strike the rock and encourage water to flow among us. He expressed appreciation
368 for staff, a gifted and generous team. Staff is overworked and underpaid. They do not complain about it.
369 They understand the Conference’s financial plight. But congregations need to understand that to keep
370 quality staff, we must think about increased financial remuneration. When we need new staff, our pay
371 scales won’t attract quality leadership. We also need to rethink what we need of staff and our
372 expectation of volunteers.
373

374 How do we raise the money needed for ministry? One thousand dollars per church would arrest the
375 current situation; \$1,500 per church would strengthen the Conference. We must address the
376 Conference’s financial concerns or we will run out of time and bring on staff and program cuts. If the
377 Conference is of value to you, you—we—must show greater commitment now and in future years.
378

379 Ms. Foust has brought energy to BLRC. We hope to build ministry there that can sustain its own life. If
380 not, the Conference may have to sell it. Mr. Camp thanked those who have contributed to BLRC; you
381 are making a difference. Understand that the SOC cannot carry this ministry financially. It owes
382 \$50,000 to SOC now, which SOC has provided—an example of OCWM at work. The Conference is in
383 the process of building a legal “fire wall” between outdoor ministry sites and the Conference, so the
384 Conference would not be pulled down financially if an outdoor ministry went bankrupt.
385

386 The Conference has received a \$200,000 church development grant. The Conference hopes to start
387 new churches. We are at the rock and intend to strike it. We expect water to come out.
388

389 The PLD program has exceeded expectations. Mr. Camp is grateful for Ms. Pickett’s work. The
390 program must expand to include laity, which will take grant money and expansion of vision of church
391 leadership. We will meet the challenge. Mr. Potterveld has asked, “Can we adapt to the challenges we
392 face?” What is our stake in SOC ministry? SOC is changing, whether we like or believe it or not. Will we
393 adapt to all the change around us? Staying in the same place is not an option. Do we really see that we
394 all have a stake in the future of the Southern Conference? Is the Conference part of the life and mission
395 of each local congregation, or is it considered just another benevolence?
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396 Mr. Camp asked, "Will you go home and help people in your local church understand that your local
397 church can make a difference in the future of the whole church? There is either a day of reckoning or a
398 day of hallelujah rising. It is your decision."
399

400 The BOD and staff will ask for leeway and grace as we rebuild our functioning, reorganized BOD,
401 revise the constitution and bylaws, etc. We are working to pull this Conference into a future in a new
402 way. Systems are hard to change.
403

404 Talk not only about race but racism. It is time we deal with it. We may not fix it all, but it is time to get on
405 the journey.
406

407 On a personal note, Mr. Camp appreciated the caring expressions following his mother's recent death.
408 He will take his overdue sabbatical from mid-December, 2008 – mid-March, 2009.
409

410 "In these challenging times, it is good to be on the journey with you. Strike the rock and see what
411 comes forth. It will be something amazing."
412

413 The meeting recessed at 4:50 p.m., with the Nominating Committee report* distributed as people
414 exited.
415

416 Worship

417 Attendees reconvened at 7:15 p.m. for worship. The Rev. Dr. Yvonne Delk introduced Mr. Forbes who
418 preached using Exodus 17:1-7, "Strike the Rock" as his theme. He said the Kingdom to come may look
419 a lot like the Southern Conference with its diversity of people united by faith to work together. The SOC
420 is a pilot project, ahead of our time, and reflective of what it might look like if the Kingdom of God
421 manifested itself in North Carolina and Virginia. Striking the rock, expecting God to respond, is needed
422 as we face war, economic disparities, racial and ethnic injustice, and environmental degradation. Mr.
423 Forbes asked, "Do we find comfort in the bondage of past arrangements, the way things always were,
424 rather than face the scariness of freedom? Can you count on the Lord to see you through, if you do
425 what the Lord tells you to do?" It matters if what you are doing, you do in the Spirit of the Lord. Not
426 getting to the Promised Land doesn't mean God has left you or despises you or rejects you; remember
427 Moses. The Southern Conference is already doing something about racism, but it has to go deeper.
428 What God has done makes possible what we will do, and God will be there before we get there. On this
429 40th year anniversary of the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy, it is as if
430 God were reassuring those two, "I am bringing the people together. See the Southern Conference? But
431 it is taking a little bit longer. It feels delayed, because it happens in God's time, not yours."
432

433 Ministers who died since the 2007 Annual Gathering were remembered for their faithful service: the
434 Rev. Harold Auler, the Rev. Alvin Brewer, the Rev. Thomas Britton, the Rev. Arthur Preston Colbourn,
435 the Rev. Dr. Eleanor Ebersole, the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Guptill, the Rev. Henry S. Lewis, the Rev.
436 Thelma Norfleet, the Rev. Dr. Gordon Sperry, and the Rev. Daniel Squires. Other names were lifted up
437 from the floor: the Rev. James Robert Boone, the Rev. John Henry Jones, and the Rev. Homer
438 Yearick.
439

440 Following communion, the worshippers went forth in the name of Christ.
441

442 **Friday, June 27** 443 **Plenary Session 3** 444

445 The Rev. Joe Copeland, Union UCC, Norfolk, VA, began the morning with song, followed by the Rev. J.
446 J. Ferguson, Zion UCC, Suffolk, VA, with prayer.
447

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447 At 9:00 a.m., Ms. Jackson called the meeting to order. Four thousand six hundred seventy-six dollars
448 was given in offering last night.
449

450 Resolutions

451 Mike Mullinax, Circle of Mercy Congregation, Asheville, NC, presented the resolution “Extravagant
452 Witness: Resolution in Support of Community Investing,”* submitted to the Annual Gathering by the
453 Church Council of his church. “Community investment institutions include both ‘microlending’ (or
454 ‘microfinance’) organizations that provide small loans for business development and ‘community
455 development banks’ that provide loans for things like housing development. Both provide working
456 capital to individuals and businesses most in need and least likely to receive loans from mainstream
457 investment institutions.” Mr. Mullinax described microinvesting as dollars guided by our dreams making
458 new realities.
459

460 The resolution states:

461 Therefore, in addition to supporting these [UCC financial ministries such as the United
462 Church Foundation and the Cornerstone Fund], we delegates to the 43rd annual meeting
463 of the Southern Conference, hereby urge the Conference staff, affiliated congregations,
464 and individual members to practice “community investing” as a form of Christian
465 discipleship, by depositing or investing savings into financial institutions that focus on
466 serving marginalized communities, here in the U.S. and abroad. Specifically, we
467 recommend that a minimum of 10% of discretionary capital (savings, endowments,
468 emergency funds, etc.) be placed in community investments.
469

470 **Motion: to adopt “Extravagant Witness: Resolution in Support of Community Investing.”** Moved
471 by Mr. Mullinax; seconded; **passed.**
472

473 Andy Short, United Church of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, presented the resolution “An Economic
474 Justice Covenant,” submitted to Annual Gathering by the ENCA and United Church of Chapel Hill. That
475 congregation looked into the causes of economic difficulties people are facing who use the shelters and
476 community food kitchens the church participated in. What are the sources of economic injustice that
477 plague our country? Congregational research concluded the problem is not scarcity but distribution of
478 resources. Working from an ethic of economic justice will make a difference. Conference Minister
479 Emeritus the Rev. Dr. Rollin Russell is the original author of this resolution.
480

481 The resolution states:

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

- 484 a. Engages in focused studies of the economic injustices that prevail in our society
485 and our world, and the ways in which God’s abundance is distributed so
486 inequitably;
487 b. Creates a program of study that may lead the congregation to draft and adopt an
488 “Economic Justice Covenant” that reflects the context, experience, study,
489 discernment and commitment to action of the congregation;
490 c. Develops a range of programs and activities with the goals of inspiring members
491 and organizing them to engage in actions that promote economic justice. ...

492 Be it further resolved, that this resolution be forwarded to the General Synod of the
493 United Church of Christ for consideration at its 2009 General Synod Meeting, and that
494 General Synod 27 establish a national Task Force staffed by Justice and Witness
495 Ministries to develop such an Economic Justice Congregation program.
496

497 **Motion: to adopt “An Economic Justice Covenant.”** Moved by Mr. Short; seconded by Ms. Delk.
498 Discussion points included:
499

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- 499 • Do what will truly empower us to become instruments of justice rather than charity. Economic
500 justice means people can rise to be subjects, not objects, of what's going on. We need to invest
501 in economic development in our communities.
502 • The impact of economic injustice on young people is evidenced by low test scores, gang
503 involvement, etc. Most of these indicators have a direct correlation to the economic status of
504 that child. This resolution impacts not just material things, but our children's lives.
505 • After the ENCA adopted the resolution, the United Church of Chapel Hill amended it to
506 emphasize the need for action. Underlining in the resolution document reflects these
507 amendments, which were passed by the SOC BOD.

508 Motion **passed**.

509
510 Irwin Smallwood, Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC, asked all churches to come up with creative
511 ways to raise \$1,000 per church for the Conference Ministry Fund.
512

513 Constitution and bylaws presentation

514 The Rev. Rick Edens, United Church of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, and Mr. Casiday, members of the
515 BOD-appointed Constitution, Bylaws, and Board Restructure Task Force, reported on its behalf. The
516 2007 Annual Gathering heard some of the same financial situation as has been presented this year.
517 Forming the task force was one response. The task force's work has been focused on the current
518 constitution and bylaws and how to weather the current time. It is looking at three major changes:

- 519 • reducing the size of the BOD to make it more effective and efficient
- 520 • rolling the work of inactive committees into the BOD so that work is handled more effectively
- 521 • clarifying the terms of office for elected positions in the SOC.

522 The task force hopes to present recommendations to the fall meeting of the BOD. If the Board approves
523 them, the recommendations would be presented to Association annual meetings for review. In February
524 or March, 2009, an Annual Gathering would be called strictly for voting on proposed changes to the
525 constitution and bylaws.
526

527 Nominations

528 The Rev. Jerry Moore, Nominating Committee chair, had to leave the meeting early. On behalf of the
529 Nominating Committee and reflecting the Committee's written report, Mr. Kennedy placed in nomination
530 for the Southern Conference Board of Directors, Class of 2011:

- 531 • Eastern North Carolina Association
 - 532 ○ Sheila Bynum (Melfield UCC, Haw River, NC)
 - 533 ○ Bridgette Douglas (Rocky Branch UCC, Kenly, NC)
 - 534 ○ the Rev. Sharon Hammill [Elon Community Church (UCC), Elon, NC]
- 535 • Eastern Virginia Association
 - 536 ○ the Rev. Madelene Beard (Galatians UCC, Suffolk, VA)
 - 537 ○ the Rev. Lilton Marks (Fellowship UCC, Chesapeake, VA)
 - 538 ○ Helen Seldon (Lynnhaven Colony UCC, Virginia Beach, VA)
- 539 • Western North Carolina Association
 - 540 ○ the Rev. Paul Davis (Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC)
 - 541 ○ Faye Humphrey (Holy Covenant UCC, Charlotte, NC)
 - 542 ○ Brenda James (St. Stephen UCC, Greensboro, NC)

544 The Rev. Sallye Hardy, Tidewater UCC, Virginia Beach, VA, nominated Bonnie Dinges, Tidewater
545 UCC, Virginia Beach, VA, an experienced Christian educator. Ms. Rathbun seconded the nomination.
546

547 The Rev. Bob Thompson, Corinth Reformed Church, Hickory, NC, stated that balanced representation
548 of theological perspectives is important, but no one from WNCA has been nominated who represents
549

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549 Faithful and Welcoming Churches. He nominated the Rev. Bill Howell, Corinth Reformed Church,
550 Hickory, NC. Anthony Herman, St. Matthew's UCC, Maiden, NC, seconded the nomination.

551
552 When the Nominating Committee was questioned why more women than men were nominated (7:2),
553 the Rev. Larry Bolick, Grace Reformed UCC, Newton, NC, who chaired the Committee in 2007, said
554 nominations were heavy with men in previous years. Men are well represented on the BOD.
555

556 **Motion: that nominations be closed and that all uncontested positions be elected by**
557 **acclamation.** Moved by Mr. Kennedy; seconded. Mr. Kennedy clarified that because of the way BOD
558 composition is mandated by the SOC bylaws (Article IV – Directors, Section A. Composition, Point 2,
559 and Section C. Election, Point 2), Ms. Dinges and Ms. Seldon would run for the same position, and Mr.
560 Howell and Mr. Davis would run for the same position. Motion **passed.** Each person nominated from
561 the floor spoke a bit about their involvement in the UCC and what they would bring to the Board.
562

563 Greetings from national setting staff continued

564 Ms. Gourdet offered greetings on behalf of Wider Church Ministries (WCM) and Global Ministries, the
565 joint UCC – Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) worldwide mission program. WCM Executive Minister
566 the Rev. Cally Rogers-Witte has fond memories of 18 years of pastoring in the SOC. She has always
567 felt she was a missionary from Community UCC, Raleigh, NC, and the Southern Conference, first to the
568 Southwest Conference and then to WCM. Ms. Gourdet spoke of some of the ministry of WCM: refugee
569 and immigration issues, health and wholeness, One Great Hour of Sharing, disaster relief, partner
570 churches in Africa, southern Asia, east Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the
571 Middle East and Europe. Thank you for your support of these various ministries. We are united in a
572 common mission of service. Not only have you made financial contributions, but you have sent people
573 as leaders to the national offices and overseas including the Rev. Eric Gass, Ms. Delk, Grace Bunker to
574 Sri Lanka, Louis and Beth Wilkins to Turkey, and the McDowells to Angola.
575

576 Ms. Lovell, Holy Covenant UCC, Charlotte, offered greetings on behalf of the UCC Cornerstone Fund.
577 Mr. Camp serves on its Board of Directors. The Cornerstone Fund is a financial ministry within the
578 UCC. It invites individuals, churches, and UCC organizations to invest in the fund and then loans the
579 money to churches to expand and build their ministries. The Cornerstone Fund does not take OCWM
580 money. The difference between what is earned from loans and the interest paid to investors is plowed
581 back into church loans or given to OCWM. Many SOC churches have had a loan from the Cornerstone
582 Fund, which could always use more investors. It is a way to support local churches while one's money
583 makes money. Mr. Camp thanked the Cornerstone Fund for the quickly arranged loan to BLRC.
584

585 Mr. Ostermiller offered greetings from Local Church Ministries where he and his colleagues are always
586 ready to respond in partnership. Thank you for how you support our ministries.
587

588 Mr. Harsh brought greetings from the Uplands Retirement Village residents, staff, and BOD. Although it
589 is a rural, mountainous, retirement area, it is not primarily a place for rocking in a chair on the front
590 porch. The residents are active in protesting nuclear power and war, building Habitat Houses, and
591 working mission trips to places like the Back Bay Mission. Its mission is to be "a warm and secure
592 Home nurturing the human spirit; not just a place to live, but a way of living." He asked participants to
593 think of Uplands when it comes time to think about retirement.
594

595 The Elections Committee distributed to delegates and then collected ballots for the two contested
596 positions on the Conference Board.
597

598 The **vote** was held on Thursday's **motion to adopt the minutes of the forty-second Annual Meeting**
599 **of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ, held June 21-22, 2007. Passed.**
600

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600 The Rev. Don Flick, Church of the Master, Hickory, NC, informed the plenary that a levee broke in
601 Missouri last night. He invited churches to prepare clean-up buckets, a sample of which was in the
602 exhibits area.
603

604 2009 budget continued

605 During a discussion period about the 2009 proposed budget, the following points were made:

- 606 • Well over \$200,000 in earnings on investments has been drawn down over the past several
607 years. It took a long time to accumulate the \$200,000, and we have spent the money relatively
608 quickly. Approximately \$20,000 - \$25,000 more is left of earnings on investments. Perhaps
609 money could be borrowed from the principal, or Annual Gathering might vote to change
610 endowment restrictions.
- 611 • Conference bylaws say the Stewardship, Budget, and Finance Committee of the Board of
612 Directors is to work in close cooperation with the Treasurer and the Conference Minister to
613 prepare annual budgets. In actuality, the budget is prepared by staff and presented to the Board
614 for approval.
- 615 • Amending the proposed budget to narrow the cumulative deficit rather than further widen it
616 would seem wise.
- 617 • Some money will be generated when the Christian Temple property sells, but that money would
618 be gone in several years if used to cover budget deficits.
- 619 • In a study of 2005 OCWM giving by 235 SOC churches, 14 churches provided 49% of OCWM,
620 61 provided 88%, and 75 churches did not give anything. Although this study is several years
621 old, there is reason to believe that the statistics have not improved and have most likely gotten
622 worse.
- 623 • Many churches are proud to be UCC and contribute gladly to OCWM. Some have special
624 fundraisers. Others build OCWM into their budget. Some additionally contribute \$6 per member.
625 An additional \$1,000 from each congregation would solve the Conference's financial problems.
626 For many churches, though, that figure is "utterly ridiculous."
- 627 • The Friends of the Conference program is for individual gifts. Every individual can be a friend
628 and make a personal contribution to the Conference budget. People who are here can do
629 something as individuals.
- 630 • What would happen if the proposed budget were voted down and the Board were asked to
631 develop a different 2009 budget? If we can't increase income, we must further reduce
632 expenses. About the only variable costs, as opposed to fixed costs, where cuts could be made
633 is staffing. Cutting staff means cutting services, which could lead to a downward spiral. The
634 Board has been reluctant to consider staff cuts. Before redoing the budget, some plan for
635 restructuring would need to be in place.
- 636 • Relationships are important. People don't give to budgets but to people they have relationships
637 with and, through those relationships, people can believe in the programs. We need to work on
638 relationships in the Conference and on programs that build churches.
- 639 • It would be shameful to reduce what is already barebones. What we pay staff is "unforgivable."
640 Through the years cuts in programs and personnel (e.g., youth, Christian education) have been
641 made, thus reducing the possibilities for relationships.
- 642 • People respond to having Conference staff come to our churches, participate in the worship
643 service, and talk about what the Conference is doing. That way people know who the Southern
644 Conference, United Church of Christ is and what we do.
- 645 • Relationships are important, but we are called to give because we give to God and out of
646 gratitude to God for our relationship to Jesus.
- 647 • The BOD will have to knock on doors or communicate through the internet, establish
648 relationships, and ask for money. The BOD cannot shift its responsibilities to these delegates.
- 649 • The Board was commended for working on a complex budget.
650

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- 650 • Are we using lay and clergy resources to help us ask in appropriate ways for the money? Are
651 we building those relationships? The money is there.
652 • Change the language of Conference financial documents from “budget” to the much more
653 inviting “mission spending plan.”
654 • We are a unique community of faith. We have a special voice to bring to the table in North
655 America. We need to stay strong. If we have reserves, spend them.
656 • The Conference would benefit from a sacred conversation about money.
657 • Voices in the Conference desire equal representation at decision-making tables. Let us also
658 take on equal responsibility.
659 • PLD expenses are not broken out in the proposed 2009 budget. The program is self-supported
660 and its income equals its expenses.

661
662 **Motion: to extend discussion of the proposed 2009 budget for 15 minutes maximum.** Moved by
663 Mr. Barksdale; seconded by Mr. Barrows; **passed.**
664

- 665 • A few churches are giving the majority of the money that pays for Conference-setting work.
666 What contact is made with churches who are not giving, to understand why they are not giving?
667 Some feel they financially cannot give. Some feel they have other valid reasons not to give. It
668 would be important for the BOD to contact the non-giving churches and understand their
669 reasons. Those reasons need to be addressed by the Board and made public.
670 • Sale of Conference-owned property would help financially, but the big thing would be to
671 increase sustained giving through the years. Property currently on the market is the buildings
672 and land formerly known as Christian Temple in Norfolk, VA, and 45 acres of land at BLRC.
673

674 **Motion: to table the vote on the proposed 2009 budget until the body reconvenes at 2:00 p.m.,**
675 **following a gathering at lunch to discern possible solutions to our ongoing budget crisis.** Moved
676 by the Rev. Julie Peeples, Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC; seconded by Ms. Kennett; **passed**
677 (76 in favor, 66 against).
678

679 Ms. Jackson announced results for the contested elections for Conference Board of Directors:

- 680 EVA: Ms. Seldon – 96, Ms. Dinges – 71
681 WNCA: Mr. Davis – 123, Mr. Howell – 42

682 **Ms. Seldon and Mr. Davis were elected to the Board.**
683

684 Recognition and appreciation

685 Many congregations and members do extraordinary work to be helpful and supportive in the
686 Conference’s ministry. Mr. Camp recognized:

- 687 • the top ten giving churches to OCWM in 2007
688 ○ First Reformed UCC, Burlington, NC
689 ○ United Church of Chapel Hill UCC, Chapel Hill, NC
690 ○ Pilgrim UCC, Durham, NC
691 ○ Elon Community UCC, Elon, NC
692 ○ Community UCC, Raleigh, NC
693 ○ Congregational UCC, Greensboro, NC
694 ○ Grace Reformed UCC, Newton, NC
695 ○ First UCC, Salisbury, NC
696 ○ First Congregational UCC, Hendersonville, NC
697 ○ Mt. Hope UCC, Whitsett, NC
698 • one church from each Association with a significant increase in OCWM giving in 2007
699 ○ Mt. Zion UCC, Rockingham, NC (ENCA)
700 ○ Union UCC, Norfolk, VA (EVA)
701

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- 701 ○ Bethel UCC (Bear Creek), Mt. Pleasant, NC (WNCA)
702 • all churches who increased their giving to OCWM in 2007 (See p. 2 of Southern Conference
703 United Church of Christ Statistical Summary – 2008.)*
704 • all “5 for 5” churches, i.e., those who gave to all five special UCC offerings (OCWM, One Great
705 Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and The Christmas Fund)
706 • the Rising Star Award churches, i.e., those with the most progress in growth, giving, and
707 supporting missions and programs of the Southern Conference and the UCC
708 ○ Congregational Church of Pinehurst UCC, Pinehurst, NC (ENCA)
709 ○ The Great Awakening UCC, Virginia Beach, VA (EVA)
710 ○ First Congregational UCC, Asheville, NC (WNCA)
711 • one pastor from each Association who has given outstanding service and dedication to their
712 church, Association, and Conference
713 ○ The Rev. Stephen Halsted, Community UCC, Raleigh, NC (ENCA)
714 ○ The Rev. J. J. Ferguson, Zion UCC, Suffolk, VA (EVA)
715 ○ The Rev. Trudy Irving, Zion Evangelical and Reformed UCC, Lenoir, NC (WNCA)
716 • one lay person from each Association who has given outstanding service and dedication to their
717 church, Association, and Conference
718 ○ Dianna Moody, Elams Chapel UCC, Littleton, NC (ENCA)
719 ○ Tom Cantrell, Lynnhaven Colony UCC, Virginia Beach, VA (EVA)
720 ○ Eulene Shepherd, First Reformed UCC, Lexington, NC (WNCA)
721

722 Mr. Camp thanked Ms. Jackson for her leadership as Conference President.
723

724 President's report*

725 Ms. Jackson expressed amazement that some churches, clergy leaders, and laity still don't see value in
726 being in relationship with the Conference. Local congregations are active in local and overseas mission
727 work. People are giving generously to local congregational ministries, which is a beautiful thing. But
728 what about the SOC? How many churches and individuals can brag about what we give in time,
729 money, and energy to the Conference?
730

731 Why did 312 people come together under this tent at the personal cost they bore? Why are we here?
732 Because we value and love the SOC, because we are in a covenanted relationship, because we are
733 connected. We are nourished and inspired to be in community, we share some commonalities, and we
734 desire to be in ministry together. All that we do on the local level cannot equal what we can do together
735 as a Conference.
736

737 Ms. Jackson challenged each attendee to sacrifice \$300 and send it to the SOC over the next six
738 months. That would produce \$93,600. And what if each church increased giving by \$1,000? Giving is
739 possible, and the Conference has value and does matter.
740

741 Ms. Jackson reminded attendees, “You have people—the Conference staff and BOD are your people.
742 We are in this together. Help us do this work! Support the SOC with your dollars. Thank you for what
743 you do in your local church. But we need your dollars, too. Praying is one thing, but we can't just pray.
744 Faith is not all that is involved; works are, too. There is so much the Conference can be doing. We can
745 make a difference. We could spend hours talking about ministry and program but we spend hours
746 talking about finances. We must be proud of each other and proud to be the Southern Conference of
747 the United Church of Christ. Whatever we have pride in, we invest in. God has brought us to this place
748 and will take us through this place and beyond. Strike the rock and see water come forth.”
749

750 She thanked Mr. Casiday for serving as parliamentarian.
751

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751 Mr. Kennedy spoke of Ms. Jackson as a giant, full of faith, hope, love, vision, and courage. The
752 Conference is blessed to have her in leadership.

753
754 The meeting recessed for lunch.

755 756 **Plenary Session 4**

757
758 The meeting reconvened at 2:00 p.m. Ms. Peeples reported that over 30 people came together to talk
759 over lunch about the Conference's financial situation. The people of the Conference know staff and the
760 BOD have worked diligently on this. We are grateful for those efforts, yet we cannot leave it as their
761 responsibility solely.

762 763 **Motion:**

- 764 **1) to approve the proposed 2009 budget.**
- 765 **2) to ask the Executive Committee to set up a well-defined (e.g., timeline) task force from**
766 **the wider church community, with outreach to non-contributing congregations, to use**
767 **the ideas generated by the group which met over lunch and other ideas that may surface.**
768 **This task force is to make its initial report by the fall Board of Directors meeting and its**
769 **final report by the spring Board of Directors meeting.**
- 770 **3) to ask the Board to continue to reduce the deficit by half each year.**
- 771 **4) to suggest the formation of a standing committee, separate from the Board's Budget**
772 **and Finance Committee, whose sole work would be stewardship.**

773 Moved by Ms. Peeples; seconded by Velma Copeland, St. Stephen UCC, Greensboro, NC.

774 It being noted that the Conference Treasurer had already moved the approval of the proposed 2009
775 budget, **point number 1 in the motion above was removed and the resultant motion containing**
776 **only points 2, 3, and 4 was voted on. Passed.**

777
778 The **vote** was held on Thursday's **motion to approve the 2009 proposed budget that has been**
779 **approved by the Conference Board of Directors. Passed.**

780 781 A statement of mission

782 Mr. Tabor presented highlights of "New Occasions Teach New Duties: Hope for the Future—A
783 Statement of Mission,"* a paper for discussion as the Conference develops some tenets of
784 understanding to guide SOC work over the next few years:

- 785 • We affirm that Jesus is the sole head of the church.
- 786 • We encourage every person and church in the Southern Conference to strive to love each
787 other, with all our many differences.
- 788 • We call ourselves to be in closer covenant and have higher and mutual accountability.
- 789 • We encourage all of our churches to be an active part of the Southern Conference and the
790 United Church of Christ.
- 791 • We covenant to do all that we can to move the Southern Conference to financial stability,
792 immediately.
- 793 • We declare our collective table to be fully inclusive in every way, shape and form, despite the
794 discomfort that may present to any one of us. At this collective table, no one shall dominate the
795 conversation, and we shall strive for all to have equal voice.
- 796 • We call ourselves to a new level of discipleship, working for justice, seeking peace. We know
797 that God still speaks and still inspires us.
- 798 • We will seek to "go green" in whatever ways are possible.
- 799 • We will seek to be ecumenical.

800

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800 Mr. Tabor encouraged participants to take the document back to their congregations, talk about it as a
801 whole and in small groups, and provide feedback about what you like, what you would add, and what
802 you would take away.

803
804 During discussion, the following points were made:

- 805 • The document is for discussion and will not be voted on at this time as a possible mission
806 statement of the SOC.
- 807 • The “fully inclusive collective table” sounds like a done deal, like the SOC has an Open and
808 Affirming perspective. The Faithful and Welcoming Churches perspective should also be
809 present at a fully inclusive collective table. Mr. Tabor said the Conference is opening up to all
810 perspectives and will include those who choose not to embrace all people for one reason or
811 another.
- 812 • The paper developed initially from staff conversation and prayer. Mr. Camp presented initial
813 ideas to the BOD.
- 814 • Rather than “a new level of discipleship,” perhaps “a higher level of discipleship” would be more
815 appropriate.
- 816 • Our particular callings are varied and many, so the issues worked on will be varied and diverse.
- 817 • Add “and interfaith” to “We will seek to be ecumenical.”
- 818 • The Conference self study was energizing and a consensus-builder, but follow-up was not done
819 and within a year, other than a few things coming out, the document and energy died. The
820 relationships the stewardship teams would have built would have been very helpful to prevent
821 the current financial situation. Bring “New Occasions Teach New Duties” up continually in
822 congregations to keep an engaged conversation going, so this effort doesn’t fizzle.
- 823 • It is very important that this document not be presented for a vote but for conversation and that
824 it has a long and fruitful life. Maybe, after a long, long time, when the Conference feels
825 consensus about it, then it could be voted on.
- 826 • The Board and staff do truly invite suggested revisions and comments.

827
828 **Motion: that by January, 2009, input from local churches and Associations about “New**
829 **Occasions Teach New Duties: Hope for the Future—A Statement of Mission” be given to the**
830 **Conference Board of Directors for further work.** Moved by Mr. Marks; seconded by Mr. Edens.

831 Discussion included:

- 832 • Would the timeline in the motion encourage or shut down conversation?
- 833 • Adding educational points to each section of the document could aid study and dialogue. Mr.
834 Potterveld volunteered that Lancaster Seminary could help develop them.

835
836 **Motion: to table the previous motion until the 2009 Annual Gathering at least.** Moved by the Rev.
837 Ed Neff, High Country UCC, Boone, NC; seconded by Don Chrismon, Monticello UCC, Browns
838 Summit, NC. Mr. Marks was agreeable to the change. Motion **passed**.

839
840 Mr. Camp thanked individuals and churches who have made additional gifts to the Conference Ministry
841 Fund during the Annual Gathering.

842
843 Ms. Jackson recognized the children, youth, and young adults present, as well as BOD members
844 whose term finishes at the end of this meeting: Ms. Johnson, Dr. Henry Lister, Ms. McDonald, the Rev.
845 Mark Nanney, the Rev. Dr. William Parker, Jr., and Larry Sink. Ms. Jackson thanked the Annual
846 Gathering planning committee; the Conference staff; the EVA, its President Mr. Hart, and ACM Mr.
847 Morris; the staff of the Hilton Garden Inn; worship participants; workshop presenters; musicians; Mr.
848 Potterveld; and all who have in any way helped make this Annual Gathering wonderful. The next
849 Annual Gathering will be held at Catawba College, Salisbury, NC, May 20-21, 2009.

850

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850 Ms. Powers installed the newly elected members of the Board of Directors, thanking them for
851 answering the call to service.

852
853 The meeting recessed at 3:15 p.m. for workshops*:

- 854 • Vital Churches—Ready, Set, Grow: A Workshop on Church Vitality, led by Ms. Powers and Mr.
855 Edens
- 856 • Budgets that Inspire Giving, led by Ms. Lovell
- 857 • An Overview of WCM/Global Ministries Work in Africa, led by Ms. Gourdet
- 858 • Farm Workers and R. J. Reynolds, led by Ms. Rasell
- 859 • Four Dollar Gas and the Pension Boards, led by Mr. Borko

860

861 Pastoral Leadership Development graduation

862 Attendees gathered for a banquet at 6:30 p.m. The Rev. Nancy Ellett Allison, Holy Covenant UCC,
863 Charlotte, NC, preached from the theme scripture, Exodus 17:1-7. Speaking especially to the soon-to-
864 graduate PLD students, she encouraged us to be like Moses, to bring our centered self—a focused,
865 reverent presence—fully to each encounter. Amid the conflict within the Hebrew people, Moses neither
866 fought nor fled, but stood courageously. Likewise, we should engage rather than ignore conflict. We
867 cannot ignore the darkness in the world and be leaders. For example, the privileged need to address
868 racism. And we must know our own dark side. She cautioned against a busyness that presses out the
869 very Presence of God. Stand before God with courage, even if it is a struggle to stand firm. Be willing to
870 keep working at it. God welcomes anyone with a pulse! Remember God's name: I am who I am, I will
871 be who tomorrow demands.

872

873 The PLD program recognized the following students for successfully completing the PLD course of
874 study, fulfilling the educational requirements for ordination in the United Church of Christ:

- 875 • Tom Benedict, Asheboro UCC, Asheboro, NC
- 876 • Tanya Best, Mt. Calvary UCC, Durham, NC
- 877 • Brenda Burton, Antioch UCC, Townsville, NC
- 878 • David Carter, Hebron UCC, Winston-Salem, NC
- 879 • Roy Stokes, Chapel Grove UCC, Windsor, VA

880

881 Mr. Camp spoke of the pride the Conference has in these graduates and offered the benediction to all,
882 "Go out and be the people of God."

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886 Recorded by Kristin Andes, Secretary of the Southern Conference

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888

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

- 891 • Agenda, Forty-third Southern Conference UCC Annual Gathering
- 892 • Southern Conference Annual Meeting 2008 Standing Rules
- 893 • The UCC – Southern Conference Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2007 (dated 6/11/08)
- 894 • UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss by Class, January through December 2007 (dated
895 6/12/08)
- 896 • 2004 – 2008 OCWM from Churches & Individuals
- 897 • UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss Budget Overview January through December 2008
898 (dated 2/15/08)
- 899 • UCC – Southern Conference Profit & Loss Budget Overview January through December 2009
900 (dated 5/28/08)

901

* A copy of this document is filed with the official copy of these minutes in the Southern Conference office.

- 901 • The Eastern Virginia President's Annual Report 2008
- 902 • Report from the Eastern North Carolina Association
- 903 • A Report to the Southern Conference from the Western North Carolina Association
- 904 • Letter to the Southern Conference from the McDowell Family
- 905 • Report of the Southern Conference Minister for the Year 2008
- 906 • Report of the Nominating Committee for the Class of 2011
- 907 • The Southern Conference at Worship (order of worship), Thursday Evening, June 26, 2008
- 908 • Extravagant Witness: Resolution in Support of Community Investing
- 909 • Resolution: An Economic Justice Covenant
- 910 • Southern Conference United Church of Christ Statistical Summary – 2008
- 911 • President's Report, June 12, 2008
- 912 • New Occasions Teach New Duties: Hope for the Future—A Statement of Mission
- 913 • Forty-third Southern Conference UCC Annual Gathering Workshops
- 914 • Special Guests at SOC Annual Gathering 2008 biographical information
- 915 • The Rev. Nancy Ellett Allison, Friday banquet speaker, biographical information
- 916 • Welcome Letter to the Forty-third Annual Gathering from Stephen W. Camp, Conference
- 917 Minister
- 918 • Letter from Suffolk, VA, Mayor Linda Johnson to the Attendees of the Southern Conference of
- 919 the United Church of Christ, dated June 26, 2008
- 920 • Southern Conference Churches, 2007 Membership Report

* A copy of this document is filed with the official copy of these minutes in the Southern Conference office.