



Southern Conference edition

"We are the United Church [pause] of Christ"

by C. L. Stumb

"The ad is funny," stated Ron Buford at a second workshop in Southern Conference. Everyone who had seen the ad, based on Buford's observations, has had some kind of reaction. Ron Buford, coordinator and team leader for the "God is still speaking initiative" of the United Church of Christ, gathered with groups in both Eastern Virginia and North Carolina in mid-February to talk about branding, evangelism and marketing. Energy at the events centered around anticipation of the -- then soon to be released -- new ad, a spring loaded pronouncement stating "that you [Buford's audience ... members of the United Church of Christ] are the people that welcome everybody."

The ad was released to the world at a press conference in Cleveland on March 27. "This is, at its heart, a branding. It is an interesting time to let the world know who we are, despite the fact that we are not all the same, and that's a characteristic that is hard to understand."

This is also about evangelism, continued Buford, who acknowledged that in the United Church (pause) of Christ, evangelism has not always been a strong suit. "This campaign, as David Schoen (UCC Evangelism Ministry Team Leader) put it, is 'tricking the Church into evangelism in a way that has integrity.'" Ron suggested that we are often guilty of defining ourselves by what we're not (i.e. not Baptists). "This is an opportunity to define ourselves by who we are."

Having come from the business world himself, Buford drew upon business analogies, like the business of selling and servicing bikes. "These stories," he elaborated, "suggest that this is God's business. And in God's business, the primary function is about bringing people in to experience God in a new way."

Ron Buford began the workshop with Bible study and ended by responding to questions. He indicated that Isaiah 56:3-8 was the text Walter Brueggemann picked to frame a theological perspective for the ad. The verse -- For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples (Isaiah 56:7c NRSV) -- creates a visual image envisioning a God that does not reject people, even the "foreigner," but rather gathers all at the holy mountain. Further study also looked at Luke 16:1-8 and John 10:14-16.

We're hoping to inspire people for a passion for evangelism. The kind of passion that says we cannot be the church without reaching out to each other. Cleveland's web counter recorded some tangible results of the previous "Bouncer" ad campaign. 950,000 web site hits had previously been the



Ron Buford greets Shirley Evans. On the right is Larry Waiser, ACM for WINCA. Mark Nanny, in the background, pastors First Christian UCC in Burlington where the North Carolina event took place.

-C. L. Stumb photo

annual norm. 7.1 million visits sharply contrasted that previous figure, with 662,000 persons entering city requests to search for a UCC congregation.

To a question about the conflict in the church, the speaker commented, with some emotion, that "we are focusing on fighting with each other so much that the core business is going unattended."

The pause ... in the name, and where it occurs, also speaks to who "we" are (and who "we" are not). "I want to emphasize that each of those ideas in our name is important."

Conference Configures Church Development for a New Day

by Vertie Powers, ENCA - ACM

The Southern Conference stands just a few feet within the twenty first century and through the rustling

of the wind around us and the roar of thunder above us, we hear the clarion call of Jesus to "Go and make disciples..." If we are to remain faithful to that mandate, and that is our

hope, then we must accept the challenges and opportunities that are opening up to us to reach out to the vast mission field of unchurched and dechurched persons in our communities and the world.

In 2005 we acknowledged that there were thirteen opportunities for new communities of faith and nine opportunities for renewing existing communities of faith. God has begun a new work in us and the call for the establishment of new faith communities remains clear for this millennium and beyond. We have been given power from on high to launch out into the deep and let God's light shine through us, "so they may see your good works and give glory to your God in heaven." Therefore we acknowledge and reaffirm our call to extend the kingdom of God by establishing new congregations. Here in the Southern Conference we have been and are responding to a group of passionate and zealous persons committed to making the mandate of Jesus a reality by investing in new communities of faith.

We have taken that zeal and passion and challenged them to do the impossible with God, to be co-creators in bringing about the present and to come into a realm of God by bringing people into a different world where a relationship with God is possible, and they have not disappointed us or God. We are prayerfully being guided by the Holy Spirit and Scripture and will continue to allow the Lord of the harvest to



Phil Hardy greets Nancy Elsenheimer and Nancy's daughter at initial service of Grace UCC, Elon. Rev. Elsenheimer represents the Evangelism Ministry Team of the UCC as Minister for Local Church Development and Renewal. -C. L. Stumb photo

Continued on B-2: Church Development

section B



Ron Buford leads "Still Speaking" workshop at two locations of Southern Conference in February

Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither do we. No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.



Henry Lister is a trained "Still Speaking" resource person, a member of the SOC Board, and belongs to United Church of Chapel Hill

Lent Calls for time of Prayer

Camp's Notes

by Stephen W. Camp
Conference Minister

I have learned over the years that a wilderness experience is intended as only a momentary stay. Sometimes it is right for the moment. Sometimes it is a place where one's call can become clear. I am reminded that Jesus took time in that place too.

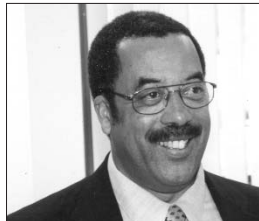
So many persons of faith can recall and give testimony about meeting God, encountering the Holy, being changed by God at various places and positions in their lives. At our recent Southern Conference Board of Directors meeting, a passionate idea surfaced in the midst of serious exchange. It was a call from a place of deep faith, a call to look up and see the presence and power of God, even if it feels like we are living in a time of unsurmountable challenges. The call was for us to pray, to bare witness to God's goodness, to know that prayer and a still speaking God can change things.

If you feel like the obstacles you face these days are bigger than life, remember, God is there.

If you feel like the obstacles you face these days are bigger than life, remember, God is there. When we look at the work of serving in the local church, or even the wider church these days, look up. God is there. Do not lose heart, even if you feel like your world is coming apart.

Likewise, when you feel hopeless, know that you have help, hope, and a God who liberates, saves and unites. In Jesus Christ, none of us was created to be bound. That too is the message of Lent. The way through struggle and crucifixion involves moving toward resurrection. It is about an understanding that God created each person with something special in mind.

Just remember that when we are driven to our knees in prayers, or when we find ourselves in the wilderness of our lives, know that God is in the unseen, the way out of what might seem like a barricaded street. Rising up is the option in a Christ centered world.



The 41st Annual meeting of the Southern Conference will be held June 8, 9, 10, 2006, at Catawba College Salisbury, NC.

The theme of the meeting will be "Live the Vision, Engaged in..." Each day's meeting will be focused around a part of the vision:

Restoring of Faith,
New Communities of Faith,
Faithful Mission.

The Scripture chosen for the meeting is Habakkuk 2:2: "Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets..."

Among the workshops being planned are Christian Education for the 21st Century, Conflict Resolution, and UCC History and Polity. Speakers will be the Revs. Drew Morris, Vertie Powers, and Larry Walsler. Worship services will be held in the now air conditioned Chapel. The Rev. Stephen Camp will stand for re-election as Conference Minister.

Watch for more details as plans are finalized.



www.godsaysitstime.net

Pastoral Leadership Development raises the bar for alternative seminary education

Can you really teach Introduction to the Old Testament in 5 weekends? That was the challenge to Lancaster Theological Seminary professor, Julia O'Brien, who designed the curriculum for the Pastoral Leadership Development (PLD) course this winter and who taught the first and last weekends. Her colleague, Professor Greg Cary, rose to the same challenge with an introductory course in New Testament earlier this fall. Both provided outstanding leadership, scholarship and pedagogy, and received rave reviews from PLD participants. Now the class looks forward to 5 weekends on Preaching taught by 4 outstanding preachers. Rev. Dr. Shelly Stackhouse from Pennsylvania will be joined by Rev. Dr. William Barber, Senior Pastor at Greenleaf Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro, Dr. Andre Resner from Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, NC, and Rev. Vertie Powers, the ENCA Associate Conference Minister. The second year of the program will conclude with a week in residence at Lancaster Seminary in July.

This year's curriculum reflects PLD's ongoing and fruitful partnership with Lancaster Seminary, as well as its pursuit of excellence in preparation for ministry in the Southern Conference. As PLD enters its third year the future looks bright with 6 students poised to graduate in June 2007 and 6 more following close behind set to finish their course work in June of 2008.

Anyone in the Southern Conference who feels a call to ministry but is unable to complete 4

continued from B-1: Church Development

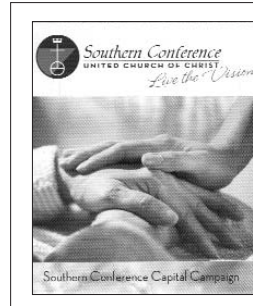
direct our efforts in establishing new congregations where all can encounter the welcome of Jesus no matter where they may be on life's journey.

It is important to note that the Southern Conference is proud of its heritage of being a united and uniting conference of the United Church of Christ. Coupled with us being a united and uniting conference that speaks to conservatives and progressives alike, we extend the radical hospitality of Jesus to our five newest communities of faith.

- Ⓞ Greater Grace Christian United Church of Christ in Wake Forest pastored by Henry Johen
- Ⓞ Grace United Church of Christ in Burlington pastored by Phil Hardy
- Ⓞ Greater Deliverance Ministries in New Bern pastored by Elizabeth

- Green
- Ⓞ Vessels of Clay United Church of Christ pastored by Dian Jackson
- Ⓞ Word of Life United Church of Christ in Sanford pastored by Sheila Crump

We have taken a giant step toward an exciting future for our Conference and we know that if we remain faithful, miraculous things will happen. We are excited about these and all of the other opportunities for church development and vitality that are before us. We also know that this is the beginning of a movement of visionary people on fire for the Lord. Because Church Development is so paramount to the life of the Southern Conference and God we are committing our time, our talent, and our treasure to this movement. Somebody ought to say AMEN!



The "Live the Vision" DVD/Video for use during the capital campaign is completed. The seven minute video not only highlights the details of the campaign but also illustrates the growing enthusiasm for "Live the Vision's" call to deepened and intentional forms of ministry in Southern Conference.

Groups have been trained and are prepared to deliver this message to local church setting. Call the Conference Office for scheduling.

years of college and 3 years of seminary education is invited to join this program that provides 3 years of course work needed to fulfill the education requirements for ordination set by our three Associations. In order to qualify for the program you must have a high school degree or GED, be a member of a UCC church with standing in the Southern

Conference, and be at least 35 years old. You also must meet with your Association's Church and Ministry Committee and receive "In Care" standing. For more information about the program, contact Rev. Margot Trusty Pickett at PLDDirector@nc.rr.com or 919-493-2722. Applications for next year's class are due by July 31, 2006.

SOUTHERN REGION YOUTH EVENT - 2006 June 22-25 at Elon University

EARLY REGISTRATIONS ARE DUE APRIL 1

This summer's 2006 Southern Region Youth Event is an incredible opportunity for the youth of our conference, the Southeast, Florida and South Central Conferences to get excited about their faith and to meet other youth in the UCC from the Southern region of the country. An exciting array of guest speakers, musicians, workshops and free time activities are already lined up. For the very latest information, go to the official web page at www.godsaysitstime.net.

Early Bird registration deadline is due in the Southern Conference office by April 1. Each church may send in a \$100 deposit per person to hold their space at the \$275.00 cost. The final date to receive the balance is May 15. After that date, the registration cost will be \$300.00 per person. Please contact the conference office immediately to reserve space for your youth group. This cost covers meals, lodging, a name wallet, a t-shirt, and a backpack as well as the cost of having speakers, Eric Smith, Jose Malayang, Da Vita Carter McCallister, and musicians Brian Serchio, Greg Milton, and 15 workshop leaders. The excitement is building and every church is needed to send representatives. Limited scholarship funds are available. The event is open to middle high students through 2006 high school graduates. Every five youth must have an adult leader. Make your check payable to Southern Conference UCC and mail it to PO Box 215, Elon, North Carolina, 27244.

Bullying and Terrorism, Violence and Trauma: A Grandfather's Response by Rev. Randall Mishoe

(editor's NOTE: The word 'bully' has become a buzzword in a cross section of professional circles. Educators struggle to understand a new climate in the schools. American Camp Association offered a keynote speech on this topic at its national conference, and has secured an expert as a resource to camps for generating bullying prevention programs. Bullying was among the topics listed in a call for papers for the "Sixth International Conference on Occupational Stress and Health held in Miami on March 2-4.

The term crept into a discussion around finances at the most recent SOC Board meeting when one Board member said, "I don't want financial bully's money. Give them time to sort things out." Another Board member stated: "We're dealing with people who don't understand the meaning of covenant. They want to control something."

Rev. Randall Mishoe is a Pastoral Counselor and Jungian Psychoanalyst with a practice in Charlotte. He pastored Holy Covenant UCC in Charlotte from 1987-2000. Currently, Randall serves on the Board of Johns River Valley Camp where he has been helping that body understand these issues and work toward a Bullying Prevention policy. He has written the following article for the wider church family.

This article was edited to accommodate space for publication. The full article is available on the SOC website... www.soc-ucc.org at the 'resources' page.)

Since I last spoke with many of you, I have become a grandfather, a relatively young and modestly proud grandfather. Mariella was born last May in Berkeley, California. Daughter Lee and son-in-law Hassan are doing well and appear also to be doing a remarkable job as parents.

Mariella quickly engages you with her deep, dark eyes, her intent study of your speech and gestures, her quick smile and laughter, and her open and trusting arms. So trusting, she easily reaches out and invites you into her life.

She is blessed at the beginning of her life to experience this basic trust. It is a psychological as well as a spiritual gift inasmuch as "trust" plays a foundational role in the development of a child. Basic trust provides the psychological health for a child to venture from the safe, holding arms of a parent; trust also provides the capacity for faith to mature in its seeking of understanding.

With basic trust, our children feel safe to enjoy and explore the

unfolding mysteries of this marvelous world. From their felt sense of well-being, they have an opportunity to develop a reverence for life. Such a reverence may foster a value for all creation; it encourages a respect for the boundaries of other people, as well as their own; and the reverence kindles a desire to give back to life, to make a positive contribution in service to others.

From the foundation of basic trust, as our children are nurtured in a household of faith, they come to know and value "shalom." The biblical understanding of shalom is a peace that embraces the totality of one's being - emotionally, mentally, physically. Jesus taught this peace as a distinguishing quality of his ministry. Shalom, peace, is what Jesus instructed his disciples to extend to the houses they were to visit, the strangers they were to meet. Shalom is a blessing of God that can take root in a person's soul, making possible a life that is harmonious within, productive outside, and lived in right-relation with others.

But, of course, that picture of shalom is an ideal one. In this world, this time and place, we have fallen victim to our power complexes. The centuries-old impulse toward aggression has been unleashed in the world with great fury, and we are terrorized by acts of violence that now appear to have become simply a way of life.

And, in real life when children act out their aggression toward other children, we might refer to the behavior as bullying. But in the larger context those acts of aggression may also be described as terrorism. In a spectrum of conflict ranging from personal bullying to large-scale political terrorism, someone or some group is violating the boundary of another individual or group. Such violent domination of another may be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual or psychological in nature; but regardless of the form it takes, violence traumatizes the victim and shatters trust as well as a capacity to trust.

Even seeing or hearing acts of violence may traumatize us. Small children begin to cry when they hear other children cry; we wince and turn away instinctively when we see an

accident about to happen. The scenes of 9/11 fascinate us but also terrorize us and seem to be unbearable to witness or even contemplate.

Little do we know how the many acts of violence in our world take their toll upon us unconsciously: the spreading genocide in Darfur, the brutal mistreatment of animals, the widening destruction of our environment, the road rage, state-directed torture of persons, the abduction and abuse of children, office bullying, hate crimes, domestic violence and the cruel betrayal of trust in the wars between and within religious groups. All of these images may be traumatizing because they are deep violations - whether experienced directly or witnessed - that cause seemingly unbearable pain, physical or psychological. And if we understand, further, that trauma need not be a one-time violent event but can be cumulative (like the incessant drip of water), then we understand how trauma seeps into our daily lives.

The greatest loss in these painful experiences of aggression is the loss of basic trust, the loss of a capacity to believe in, strive for, and realize shalom. I believe it was for this reason that Jesus gathered little children around himself, to protect them and nurture the earliest beginnings of faith through their trust in him.

You recall the story in the synoptic Gospels. Parents bring their little kids to Jesus, the disciples try to protect Jesus from being bothered by the children, and Jesus has to remind the disciples that he wants the children to come to him (Mt. 19:13-15; Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 18:15-17). Jesus then says something quite startling to the disciples who had been competing for power and squabbling over religious matters. Jesus directs the disciples back to the foundation of basic trust. "It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Anyone who does not welcome the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." For out of that basic trust the realm of God grows in the world, blossoming to bear much fruit on each of its limbs, healing individual lives, and bringing us all together in a covenant of shalom.

To that experience and reality, I invite Mariella, and all the children of our conference, and their parents, and to all who have been children, and to all who will come after us;

... Shalom.



The represented photo is not Mariella, but Harper Daniel, a file photo of Curly Stumb's grandson at three weeks. Perhaps there is something universal about those open and trusting arms.
-C. L. Stumb photo



A young Dale Bennett and former Conference Minister Jimmy Lightbourne converse between sessions at a Southern Conference Annual Meeting hosted by Elon Community Church in 1974. Notice the banner.
-photo by C. L. Stumb

Catawba College Plans New and Improved Residence Halls and Academic Center

New and improved residence halls, a refurbished academic center, and a renovated student center are in Catawba College's immediate future. At their annual meeting February 21, college trustees authorized administrators to proceed with an ambitious plan for making capital improvements on campus.

Wachovia Bank has agreed to finance \$15 million in bonds to launch the projects and college officials will immediately seek to supplement those bonds by raising another \$6 million for capital improvements. The Knoxville, Tennessee-based higher education consulting firm of Lawler-Wood is working with the college to finalize plans for the construction.

In addition to plans for a new residence hall, discussion is underway concerning upgrades and refurbishing some of Catawba's nine existing residence halls or conversion of a residence hall for a new and alternative use.

"More of today's students are looking for private rooms, suites or apartment style living on campus," explained Catawba College President Dr. Robert Knott. "As an institution, we are committed to our heritage as a residential college, and embarking on these projects will help us affirm that commitment and help us remain competitive in today's marketplace.

"We are doing our due diligence now. Working in conjunction with Lawler-Wood, we are carefully exploring the options available to us. We want to make the most of this opportunity and of our investment," he continued. "Also among our priorities is our commitment to upgrade our existing library facility and turn it into a genuinely inviting academic center with an information commons where students can gather, work and study using today's technology to access resources that are available electronically. The library as we have traditionally known it is expanding to reach the students and faculty throughout the campus."

Once plans are finalized, college officials hope to begin construction and renovations in late summer.

If you believe God is still speaking in the life of your congregation, then share generously by giving to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). Do it today!

If you must speak... SPEAK TO GOD!

Sign in balcony of First Reformed UCC, Lexington reminds worshippers where they are.

Western Outdoor Ministry Sites Welcome New Professional

Johns River Valley Camp has hired Kevin Russell as a half-time Associate Director for Programming. Kevin will assist in program development initiatives, help tell the camp story to more people, and extend stewardship and care for the site and its guests. Kevin is new to Johns River, having worked as a SCAT (Summer Camp Assistance Team) member for five summers. He is a graduate of Elon University and has done a year of graduate work, earning a certificate (in Leadership and Camp Ministry) at Wheaton College.

Kevin wears several hats, and dons another in part time role as Manager of Christian Programming with the Blue Ridge Learning Center. Blue Ridge Learning Center has partnered with Blowing Rock Conference Center in construction of the *Discovery Course* on the Conference Center's property.

Kevin's two outdoor ministry roles are separate and distinct, though each extends gifts of a talented person into the realms of outdoor ministry through these two sites. Kevin can be contacted at vancangogh@yahoo.com.



SOUTHERN SPIRIT

The Reverend Stephen CampConference Minister and Editor
Janelle BunnAdministrative Secretary and Managing Editor
C. L. "Curly" Stumb, Irwin Smallwood, Linda CarterCommunication Team

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Free at Last? Wilmington in 2006

story by By Rev. Nancy Ellett Allison; photos by C. L. Stumb



Showy Orchis
Orchis spectabilis
Photographed at Johns River Valley Camp
by C. L. Stumb

2006 Calendar

April 16, 6:30 AM:
Easter Sunrise
Service at Black Lake
Retreat Center

April 28-30: JRVCC
Mothers' Retreat

May 2-12: SOC dele-
gates to Germany

May 7, 1 - 4 PM:
Open house at
Black Lake Retreat Center

May 15-17: Clergy
Retreat at Atlantic
Beach

June 8-10: SOC
Annual Meeting,
Catawba College

June 18: First day of
summer camp at Johns
River Valley Camp

June 16: First day of
summer camp at Black
Lake Retreat Center

June 21-25: Mix in '06
Women's Event,
Indianapolis, Indiana

June 22-25: Regional
Youth Event, Elon

July 22: Open house at
Johns River Valley
Camp; 12 noon until...
celebrating 70 years of
outdoor ministry by the
Johns River

August 4-6: UCC
(National) Musicians
Event - UC-Chapel Hill

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

God
is
still
speaking,



Rev. Ben Chavis Muhammad

"If you came to be a part of history - you will be satisfied. If you came out of curiosity - you will be satisfied. If you came because you had nothing better to do - even you will be satisfied! Indeed, history will be satisfied in this evening because this event continues the healing so important to our spirits." With this welcome, the Rev. Hudson Barksdale, pastor of Gregory Congregational Church in Wilmington, NC, opened a 35th anniversary event of almost 400 individuals who crowded together to remember "The Wilmington Ten."

Perhaps the persons least expected to be on hand to satisfy and rectify history present in the room were the representatives from "the law." Thirty-five years ago the police department and sheriff's office assumed the worst of the young black organizers who announced a boycott of the city's poorly planned desegregation of the public schools. On this satisfying night of healing, remembering, and challenging the status quo, the Deputy Chief of the Wilmington Police Department and the New Hanover County Sheriff were welcomed to the front row as a way of "standing against" their department's earlier collusion in the tragic events that led to the false arrest of nine black men and one white woman who came to be known as "The Wilmington Ten."

With a grace-filled yet challenging demeanor, special guest Rev. Ben Chavis Muhammad, stepped back into the days when Rev. Eugene Templeton, the white pastor of the black Gregory Congregational church had his life threatened for pastoring such a church and welcoming into his home the young Chavis who had come to help organize the boycott. He recalled the hundreds of children who were marching in the streets; yearning desperately to drop in to the school, not drop out of school and society. "What was happening each day in that church?" asked Chavis Muhammad. "We had day school! The children were taught and tutored. We listened to music!



The celebration offered a time of reunion for members of the "Wilmington 10" and persons in the community.

When the police came searching the church for evidence of arms and illicit materials - they found Motown records." He went on to challenge those who now decry the misogyny and profanity of hip-hop and rap music to change "the profanity of poverty" that children are being born into each day

in America. Without a doubt Chavis Muhammad, who claimed his space within the United Church of Christ and characterized himself as a journeying man, obedient to the will of God, had his life changed by venturing to serve God in the seaport town of Wilmington so many years ago.

The audience at the anniversary event was filled with a mixture of adults who had been the children marching in the streets, the historically curious, and dignitaries and members of various Wilmington organizations who now regretted the role racism and prejudice played in setting fire to a grocery store and blaming the action on a handful of student leaders. "Kojo," who was arrested and imprisoned as Roderick Kirby, has not lost his "fire" and rhetorical edge and reminded ministers in the room that you "can't change the world by staying behind the pulpit, you can only change it by being active in the world. We must each move from within the four walls out into the four winds because it is beyond the walls that we will experience the Kingdom of Heaven."

State Representative Thomas D. Wright is the younger brother of Joe Wright, one of the deceased members of the Wilmington Ten. Mr. Wright spoke poignantly about the way his brother's arrest and imprisonment for crimes he did not commit had a painful and life-long impact on the entire family. Thomas, a young child when the protests began said it was always Joe, not Tom, who was "the political one." As a North Carolina legislator, Mr. Wright expressed his gratitude for the societal changes that had occurred in the region "so that a brother of one of the Wilmington Ten could be elected to public office to make a difference."

Is Wilmington, is America, free at last of racial prejudice and tensions? The resounding response from those gathered to remember and revisit Wilmington's history is "No! Black and white, we are not yet free." But the recurring message was as well: We're not where we were yesterday, we're a long way from where we need to be, but by God's help we're on a journey to becoming a whole people. History was satisfied, hearts were healed and the challenge to continue to work for a society where all of God's beloved children are valued and included was lifted up once again.



The Rev. Hudson Barksdale, pastor of Gregory Congregational Church and The Rev. Ben Chavis Muhammad look at preserved Newspaper clipping titled "Anatomy of Violence."

Board Votes Unanimously to put forth the 'Steve Camp' Name for re-election

ELON, N. C. - Most of the chairs were occupied in the elongated board room on the lower level of the Conference Office complex. Members and staff, gathering on March 12 and 13, deliberated at length on a number of issues, including money and mission which challenge Conference leadership. At times, with pleas from various individuals, the Board (by consensus) extended agenda times to allow all members opportunity to reach a comfort level that ultimately produced decisions. Randy Orwig, at the helm of the Board, carefully orchestrated discussions, and often checked with the body to clarify what he was hearing. A number of steps were taken.

*Action was taken to extend the leadership of Steve Camp as Southern Conference Minister into a second four year term. With a unanimous vote, the Board will extend the 'Camp' name to the Annual Meeting as its nomination. "We were planning to take that action at the June Board Meeting," says Randy Orwig, "but the Board wanted to send a clear message of support for the Southern Conference Minister and asked for the vote to be taken. There was high praise for his work in the Southern Conference during these tumultuous times."

*The Board heard a comprehensive year end audited financial report from Jessie Warren-Vinson, and listened to pointed concerns over cash flow problems.

*The Board heard an extensive report, chaired by Ron Barlow, which examined in detail SOC OCWM giving statistics, offered comparisons with five other conferences, and examined per member contribution options as an alternative or supplement to existing OCWM. "Some people think the 'OCWM' means "Our Contribution with Money. The letters are actually an acronym for "Our Church's Wider Mission." Alternatives in the report weighed the pros and cons of OCWM, a per member giving system, or some blend of the two.

*A letter on behalf of SOC Board, requesting short term additional support in a per capita amount for the Conference will be sent to all SOC churches. The letter will also state that the Board of Directors is in process of developing a comprehensive plan to address the current financial situation. A shortfall is anticipated, based on the financial report.

*The Board had seats for a premier showing of a video highlighting the goals of the Conference Capital Campaign. The video is now available for local church viewing, and further illustrates a vision for future conference ministry.

*Reports on New Church Development and Annual Meeting Planning were shared. (Notes on these items appear separately in this edition of the Southern Spirit.)



SOC BOARD / MARCH 2006