



On Earth, Peace



St. Matthew's UCC, Maiden, NC

Six-year-old Kyle loved the Christmas story, and with a guest in his home, he was anxious to recite it. He did just fine until he came to his favorite part—where the angels appeared to the shepherds and proclaimed, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.” Kyle remembered the “Glory to God” part, but then his mind went blank. He thought hard. Suddenly his face brightened, and he said proudly: “And the angels appeared to the shepherds and said, ‘Glory to

by Joyce Hollyday

(Joyce Hollyday is co-pastor of Circle of Mercy in Asheville, NC, and the author of several books, most recently *On the Heels of Freedom: The American Missionary Association's Bold Campaign to Educate Minds, Open Hearts, and Heal the Soul of a Divided Nation.*)

God in the highest...and I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!”

Sometimes the children get it right. We long for a world that reflects God's intention of peace on earth. But the truth is that we see an awful lot of huffing and puffing. Gale-force winds of war sweep the globe, destroying homes and harvests and hope. Hurricanes of hatred buffet our lands. Tornadoes of terrorism touch down, spinning off into endless cycles of vengeance and counter-vengeance. There is much to fear.

Perhaps we too need a visitation by angels. In all their appearances in the gospel birth narratives, the angels repeated one refrain. To a “much perplexed” Mary, Gabriel declared, “Do not be afraid.” To a “terrified” Zechariah, the angel said, “Do not be afraid.” To

Herod was already sharpening the knives for the slaughter of the children, and both Mary and Joseph's son, and Elizabeth and Zechariah's, would die by violence. Their enemies were clear. As are ours. Yet still the words resound: “Do not be afraid.”

After the September 11 attacks, an email was circulating from a journalist, who wrote of walking with his 4-year-old daughter in the woods. She told him that the woods were full of monsters. The father asked, “What should we do if we see them?” “Feed them,” was the daughter's reply. “If we feed them, they won't want to eat us.”

Sometimes the children get it right. That young girl's idea sounds like the wisest foreign policy proposal I've heard yet—and she probably never even read Jesus' words at the heart of his most profound ser-

Sometimes the children get it right.

a mystified Joseph, and to shepherds quaking in the fields, the words came clearly: “Do not be afraid.”

It would be naïve to believe that the people at the heart of the Christmas story had nothing to fear.

mon: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Perhaps if our nation stopped appealing to fear, if we let go of the hubris and the rhetoric of revenge, if we put an end to waging war and



Wesley Grove UCC, Newport News, VA

instead decided to feed people, to build roads and hospitals and schools—perhaps then our terrorism problem would be largely solved.

This Christmas season, let us hold onto the hope that new winds might blow across our globe. Let us pray that our world would be overrun with monsoons of mercy; with tsunamis of solace; with cloudbursts of compassion. And then, we can join with that angel chorus in boldly proclaiming, with joy, “On earth, peace.”



Vessels of Clay Holds Inaugural Service

Vessels of Clay United Church of Christ, a new church start in the Eastern North Carolina Association, gathered in worship with friends and family on November 5 to officially mark its place amidst the wider community of faith. *Cathedral Brass*, led by Sandy Griffin, and *PRIZM*, a musical group from Holy Covenant UCC in Charlotte, height-

ened the celebratory moment.

“You, Vessels of Clay, have proclaimed yourself a congregation open to all,” stated Nancy Allison, pastor of Holy Covenant UCC in Charlotte, with her charge to the congregation. “You have opened the doors of your hearts to all, and all who enter will be blessed by your welcoming love.”

Rev. Dian Jackson speaks with musician Sandy Griffin prior to service.

—C. L. Stumb photo

To Give or not To Give, Is this really the Question?

Camp's Notes



Steve Camp

by Stephen W. Camp
Conference Minister

Many of you, loyal readers of the *Southern Spirit*, have received a personal letter from me asking for a donation to our year end effort, the *Friends of the Southern Conference*. This extra mile gift helps us meet our obligations to the various ministries we are in partnership with each year. We value our partnership with organizations like the Virginia and North Carolina Council of Churches, our Southern Conference related institutions that we support, the support and new dialogue with the Alliance of Baptist and small grants given to seed new projects underway in our local church settings. Your gift to the *Friends of the Southern Conference* does valuable ministry that makes a difference in many places, touching many people.

We also have a *Live the Vision Capital Fund Raising Campaign* underway, and now is the time for each local church to make a pledge toward this vital effort too. Think of the good we will do when we raise the goal of one million dollars or even the challenge goal of two million. Thanks to those who have pledged a total of more than \$400,000 to date. Your gifts make a difference.

This campaign is special for us in SOC. With this campaign we will have the means to help develop leaders, both young and more mature for the ministries of the Southern Conference and our local churches. We will enhance our ability to teach in vital areas of evangelism and stewardship, Christian education and the how to workshops; i.e. how to be a better deacon, or trustee or moderator/president, consistory or council member.

We will have seminars to strengthen our understanding of the polity and programs of the United Church of Christ. Church development will happen with this campaign effort. With this campaign we will be able to enhance our financial development capabilities and use the media to get the word out about the Still Speaking God that we celebrate and know. With the *Live the Vision Campaign* we will be better able to share the story of good news of the alive Christ that we know and carry out what we know is our mandate through scripture to make disciples, to support and care for one another. This campaign is more than dollars and cents; it is substance and spirit for our future in the Southern Conference. Please encourage your church to get on board with a three year pledge toward the *Live the Vision Capital Fund Raising Campaign* now in the Southern Conference.

Third, we have the ongoing financial ministry of *Our Churches Wider Mission*. Many ask what these dollars do for me or for us. A better question

might be "what are these gifts doing for others?" Some still believe that the dollars given, all goes to the national setting of the United Church of Christ. The truth of the matter is that only a small portion goes to the national setting and the lion's share stays in the Southern Conference to do ministry here in SOC. Your church's giving to *OCWM/Our Churches Wider Mission* is the life blood of our Southern Conference's financial life. Without it staff and salaries would not happen, thus vital ministry would be curtailed, lights would be turned off in our association offices, meeting and events would cease, youth programs, clergy and laity gatherings, training programs and many services that local churches have come to expect would have to be cutback severely or discontinued. Your dollars do a lot, more than we can sometimes imagine.

The Southern Conference has developed for those churches that quarrel with national, or for churches that would like to make a special gift that strictly helps Southern Conference ministries, a new way to send your dollars to the Conference. Through the Board of Directors led *Conference Ministry Fund*, be assured that 100% of those dollars will stay in the conference for its use. I am thankful that a few churches that were withholding *OCWM* have now resumed their giving. One church that pulled out/disaffiliated has even decided to return to us. Still we have a need for every local church to make certain that your church makes a gift to *Our Churches Wider Mission* by year end 2006. We have cut our budget in the Southern Conference by more than one third, to meet the financial concerns. We need your help to stay afloat in these lean financial times. We have an important need to finish this year strong financially, to not be in the red and wondering whether our dedicated staff will all have employment as we enter 2007. I

urge each local church to make the effort and send in your donation before the end of the year. Be a blessing to your Southern Conference this year with your church's *Our Churches Wider Mission* gift sent to the Southern Conference by year's end 2006. What a difference it will make!

The Southern Conference has sought to be a faithful partner with each church in the Southern Conference and in this season of Advent, this time where generosity abounds and care for others is at its height, we share this information. We want you to know that your giving to the wider church has meaning, is worthwhile and makes a difference to many. Often your financial gifts stretch around the world. During this season of Advent, this time of new beginnings and new opportunities for service please do your best, be good and faithful servants within the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ. Rather than grumble about what was, let's smile about what God is about to do with us.

A better question might be "what are these gifts doing for others?"

Alan Miller Rallies *Live the Vision Campaign*

(from sermon text delivered by Rev. Miller at an SOC event hosted by First Christian UCC, Burlington, NC, on September 23, 2006).

Southern Conference, you see you don't have a choice. You must continue. You must grow strong, because: You are a light in this world.

You are a city built on a hill that cannot be hid.

No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but they put it on a lampstand so that it may give light to all who are in the house.

In the same way Southern Conference ... you do not have a choice ... for God wants your light to shine before others. So that they may see your good works and give glory to God in heaven!



Making Our Churches Safe for All

by H. E. "Hunter" Thompson, Jr.

Does your church have comprehensive child protection management and screening procedures in place? If not, you aren't alone and help is on the way. At the 40th Annual Meeting of the Eastern North Carolina Association, the Southern Conference announced a critical and timely initiative called *Making Our Churches Safe for All*. "Now is the time for every church in the conference to be safe places where families and children can worship without the fear of child abuse, sexual harassment or exploitation," said H. E. "Hunter" Thompson, project leader. The purpose of the program is to help churches in the conference develop site-based policies and background screening procedures to fully comply with recent liability insurance changes by Zurich, United Church of Christ Insurance Board's vendor. The changes went into effect this past August. "Time is short" explained Vertie Powers, association

minister, "but we're committed to helping every church implement comprehensive child protection management practices within the next year."

Thompson outlined a fast-track program to help churches get started. The conference will provide initial training, technical support and training resources. They will also provide technical assistance for congregations that need direct assistance. The initiative will begin with two information sessions, hosted by Southern Mutual Church Insurance Company to help churches understand their legal responsibilities. The dates for these sessions will be announced in the coming weeks.

In preparation for these sessions, churches are encouraged to implement temporary policies and procedures. Interim policies are necessary to comply with the new insurance guidelines, until a more comprehensive program can be established. Several templates have been reviewed by the Insurance Board and the Parish and Life Leadership Team and are available for church use. Manuals, planning guides, sample policies, form templates and a calendar of Safe Church events will

be posted on the ENCA website <http://www.enca-ucc.org/safe>.

Next, congregations should consider working through an educational process to raise awareness of the problem and explain the need for new site-based procedures. Background checks is one of the areas where churches may need assistance. The conference has established a centralized background screening service through Intellicorp, a national leader in personnel security screenings. Using the conference's online request form, churches can receive a five-state, criminal background checks for any staff member or volunteer. The service is confidential and offered at cost to churches. Most searches are less than ten dollars. If you would like to take advantage of this service please contact H. E. "Hunter" Thompson at het101@nc.rr.com or (919) 550-7615.

How safe is your church? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your church have comprehensive child protection management and screening procedures in place?

- Does your church require personal interviews for all employees and volunteers?
- Do you require signed and dated applications for all employees and volunteers?
- If so, does the application ask if the individual has ever been convicted of any crime including any sex-related crime or child abuse?
- Does your church have written policies with procedures for screening and performing background checks of all prospective employees and volunteers?
- If so, are background checks done on all employees and volunteers? Do they comply with applicable state and federal guidelines?



Catawba College's Abernethy Hall Comes Down to Make Way for Abernethy Village

While students, faculty and staff of Catawba College looked on, Abernethy Hall began to come down on the overcast morning of Thursday, October 19. The Knoxville, Tennessee-based E. Luke Green, an environmentally sensitive demolition company, used a track hoe to claw away and push on the walls of the building, gradually destroying portions of it.



By day's end, the demolition was complete. Then, work will begin to prepare the site for construction of the five new apartment-style residence halls, collectively to be called Abernethy Village.

"Get her done!" one College staffer yelled as the hard hat-clad operator of the track hoe waved to those gathered and hauled himself up into its cab. Others clapped and whooped in anticipation, a few waved Catawba blue and white pompoms.

"This is sad, but exciting," another College employee noted, while a nearby student explained he just came to watch the demolition of his old room in Abernethy, located on the third floor.

A symbolic groundbreaking ceremony for Abernethy Village was held on campus Sept. 19. At that event, College President Dr. Robert Knott announced that the new residence halls would be named as both a tribute and memorial to the Abernethy family which has long supported the institution. Abernethy Hall and the Abernethy Physical Education Center on-campus were originally named for long-time College trustee, the late Julius W. Abernethy of Catawba County.

Claude and Shuford Abernethy also of Catawba County, respectively Julius W. Abernethy's nephew and great-nephew, both now serve as College trustees.

The five new residence halls will be ready next August, the start of the 2007-2008 academic year. Collectively, they will provide 125 beds which will be occupied by upper-class students. Two of the new residence halls will feature apartment-style living, with kitchens and common living space, while three of the new halls will offer suite-style living. Each of the five three-story halls will house between 24 and 28 students.

Two of the new residence halls will sit on Summit Avenue between Pine Knot Residence Hall and the Ruth Richards House and will face each other, sharing a common courtyard. The other three residence halls will be sited on the footprint of Abernethy Hall, and these three will face the campus interior.

The Knoxville, Tennessee-based higher education consulting firm of Lawler-Wood is acting as project manager for the Abernethy Village construction and other facilities renovations on campus.

Peace UCC Calls Youth Director



Rosina Whitfield has joined the staff of Peace United Church of Christ as Youth Director. In this position, she will develop and coordinate programs and activities for the children and youth.

Mrs. Whitfield was previously director of Children's Ministries at Faith United Church of Christ in York, PA.

In addition to her work at Peace Church, she is the Youth Theatre Director at The Arts and Drama Center of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department.

Mrs. Whitfield has a degree in Performing Arts from American University in Washington, DC. She and her husband, Daniel, are the parents of 12-year-old Skyler Whitfield.

The Whitfield family moved to Greensboro in 2005.

Associations Gather for Business, Word and Sacrament on Consecutive Saturdays in October

Western North Carolina Association

Theme: Live the Vision ... Here

1) Warren Cassiday offered a memorable meditation centering on a debate -- in pantomime - between a teenage girl and the Pope. Mary's response to her triumphant debate with the Pope: "But when he broke out his lunch [the apple], I knew we had him beat [with the broken bread]."

2) Eulene Shepherd, as part of her Church and Ministry Commission report, highlighted anniversary years (in multiples of 5) for 45 ministers.

3) *Circle of Mercy*, a church in Asheville, NC, was received into membership of the Western North Carolina Association. Co-pastors include Ken Sehested, Nancy Hastings Sehested and Joyce



Revs. Eric Griffin (host), Warren Cassiday ((WNCA VP and meeting preacher), and Larry Walsler (WNCA Associate Conference Minister) prepare for worship.

Hollyday. The congregation believes that doing justice and loving mercy are intimately tied to walking humbly with God. The church describes its purpose as nurturing spiritual formation in ways

that support prophetic and redemptive work in the world.

4) Revs. Nancy Allison and Bob Thomson co-chaired and co-presented the nomination report as a gesture of hope and renewal.

Eastern North Carolina Association

Theme: New Beginnings: Responding as Stewards

1) Students of the PLD (Pastoral Leadership Development) program - an alternative education route leading toward ordination -- were visibly present and integrated into roles of the association meeting.

2) "It was great to hear Ruth [Edens] talking about sharing her gifts globally," stated Margot Picket. Rev. Vertie Powers highlighted Ruth's Global Ministries intern role in Lebanon as an example of OCMW dollars at work.

3) Darek McCullers represented *Praise Him Fellowship*, a congregation received into full standing of the ENCA Association in the course



Revs. Vertie Powers (ENCA Associate Conference Minister) and Phillip Myers (host pastor) exchange final thoughts prior to meeting.

of the meeting. The Church is pastored by Benjamin and Elgean McCullers. Darek, their son, is an ENCA student in-care.

4) Betty Klutz and "Hunter"

Thompson outlined an ENCA initiative regarding *Child and Youth Protection*, with the goal of making our churches safe for all. (See related article on B-2.)

Eastern Virginia Association

Theme: Moving On, Growing Strong

1) EVA president, The Reverend Thomas Hart, in his moderation of the meeting, spoke pointedly to the theme. "We have come this far by faith," he said. "The Conference Minister and others have worked on the healing and reconciliation process. It is time to move forward."

2. Drew Morris, in an introduction of new leadership for the Filipino-American congregation *Faith Christian Fellowship*, said "He's very creative. He [Jeremias M. Lagahit] has a lot of energy."



Revs. Drew Morris (EVA Associate Conference Minister) and Stephen Camp (Southern Conference Minister) co-celebrate communion.

3. EVA Leadership announced intention to initiate a formal review of the Association's Constitution and By-Laws.

4. After a candle lighting service of closing, Drew Morris spoke prayerfully of a God who is "calling us not to argue but to love."

SOUTHERN SPIRIT

The Reverend Stephen Camp Conference Minister and Editor

Janelle Bunn Administrative Secretary and Managing Editor

C. L. "Curly" Stumb, Irwin Smallwood, Linda Carter Communication Team

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News items and pictures of interest are welcome. Send to P.O. Box 215, Elon, NC 27244
Deadline is the tenth of each month prior to published editions.



Pipewort; Hatpins
Ericosolan
 Photographed at Johns River Valley Camp
 by C. L. Stumb

2006-07 Calendar

December 2: Johns River Valley Camp celebrates 70th Anniversary

December 7-8: New Church Start Pastors

December 15: NC Council of Churches judicatory heads

December 25: Christmas

December 29: All OCWMM Monies are due in the Conference Office.

February 9-11: UCC Ski and Tube Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center

February 19: UCC and Alliance of Baptists

March 2-4: UCC Middle School Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center

March 17: Johns River Valley Camp spring Work Day

April 8: Easter

April 20-22: Mothers' Retreat at Johns River Valley Camp

June 21-22: Southern Conference Annual Meeting on Elon University campus

Photographs: Front page, Association Meetings, Outdoor Ministry and Chapel Hill Cake
 by C. L. Stumb

**UNITED CHURCH
 OF CHRIST**

God
 is
 still
 speaking,

LEONARD CHAPEL UNDERWAY AT NAZARETH



Rockwell, NC--In April 2006, construction began on what will soon be Nazareth's On Campus Chapel. Thanks to the largest one-time individual gift ever received at Nazareth Children's Home, The "Leonard Chapel" is expected to be complete in the next 13 months, and will later open for worship not only for our children and staff, but the entire community. With a total cost just over \$1.3 million, Nazareth is appealing to individuals, churches, foundations, and corporations for support in raising the balance which is roughly \$250,000.00. To support the Leonard Chapel, please contact Josh Regan, Director of Development at Nazareth Children's Home.

In 1906 the Rev. J.M.L. Lyerly in partnership with the then Reformed Church founded Nazareth Children's Home as an orphanage. Today 100 years later, Nazareth continues to be a safe haven for children ages 4-18 who have been abused, neglected or abandoned and taken from their homes because of these and/or other reasons. Currently there are 55 children living at Nazareth's campus in Rockwell, along with 28 children, ages infant-18 living in Nazareth's Foster Care programs throughout the local communities in NC. Programs offered to children at Nazareth include The Teaching Family Model, Transitional Care, Preparation for Adult Living, Adoption & Family Foster Care, Acute Care & Emergency, On Campus School, and the Child Sponsorship Program.

Retreat at One of SOC's Outdoor Ministry Sites

Below: Johns River Valley Camp will complete construction of its new Lavona Black Living Unit in December, making the facility available for use by January of 2007. This and a previously constructed unit will offer a combined 40 bed all season retreat facility. A service of dedication, open house, and luncheon celebration highlighting the camp's 70th anniversary was held on December 2, 2006.

2007 dates include:
 March 17: Spring Work Day
 April 20-22: Mothers' Retreat

www.jrvcc.org/



**Right: The Secret is Out:
 Be a Part of History**

Located off I-95 on Highway 301, in the small suburban town of Whitakers, NC sits the best-kept secret in the world, **Franklinton Center at Bricks**.

These 200+ acres of land, which is managed and staffed by the United Church of Christ's Justice and Witness ministry, was once a plantation. FCAB traces its beginnings to the founding of the Franklinton Christian College in 1871 and the Congregationalist Bricks School in 1895. A merger in the 1950s formed the Franklinton Center at Bricks.

The vision of FCAB is about to change with the construction of its new lodging facility, but the mission, to serve as a retreat, a conference, and an educational center, to UCC and non-UCC constituents alike will remain the same.

Below: Blowing Rock Conference Center plans to host a number of UCC events in 2007, including the following:
 February 9-11: UCC Ski/Tube Retreat



The 22 room, 14,300+ square feet of new living space will take approximately 29,000 bricks and cost roughly 1.5 million dollars. For only \$100.00 you can be a part of history by purchasing a personalized brick to be located in the new building. FCAB has set a goal to sell 15,000 personalized bricks and with your help, we will do just that. Please contact us by telephone at 1-252-437-1723 or 1-800-345-1850 or by e-mail at fcab220@earthlink.net for more information.

March 2-4: UCC Middle School Retreat
 October 26-28: Southern Regional Women's Meeting of the UCC

June Grubb returning from an initial planning session for the Women's event, reports that the event's theme will gather women "In the Fullness of God's Creation... Renewing Spirit / Building Community / Doing Justice." The Conference will attract persons from four conferences, including Southern, Southeast, Florida, and South Central.

www.brccenter.org/



Above: Leonard Lodge Emerges

Construction is well underway on the new Leonard Lodge at **Black Lake Retreat Center**. Sedberry Construction, Inc. from Mt. Gilead, NC, is the general contractor. Likewise, utility connections have been made for municipal water and sewer services. "This phase will put in place facilities for an indoor conference center," states director Tom Benedict. "Construction of overnight lodging accommodations will follow sometime in the future."

Completion of the Leonard Lodge is anticipated by the end of 2006 or early 2007. The Black Lake Retreat Center is an outdoor ministry facility of Southern Conference. It is located just south of Asheboro, near the New Hope Church Road exit of the 220/73/74 corridor.

www.blacklakere retreatcenter.org/

UCC gathers with help of Technology

Persons in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina gathered at



United Church of Chapel Hill to participate in a live web cast from Cleveland on All Saints Day. Says Ben Guess, UCC News editor, "More than 5,400 different computers signed on simultaneously on Sunday, Nov. 5, for the UCC's first-ever, multi-site, experimental webstreaming event in order to help launch the denomination's year-long 50th anniversary celebration."

A cake commemorated the moment in the Chapel Hill setting, baked by Joanna Wolfe (not in the photo). Ms. Wolfe is a professional cake baker and

the daughter of Bill Wolfe, a retired UCC pastor in Pennsylvania. Pictured from left to right in the "cake cutting photo" are Kate Sajjan (a Duke Divinity student in-care at UCCH), Doris Kaneklides, and Henry Lister (SOC Board member).

An online poll asked viewers to choose which metaphor best described the UCC - a "river," a "parade" or a "big tent." "[The poll] shows we can't make up our mind," Thomas quipped, since "river" and "big tent" ran neck and neck in the polling, with "parade" not all that far behind.

