



Reflections from SOC Conference Minister

...the 52nd Annual Gathering of
Southern Conference
...UCC General Synod 31

by Rev. Edward Davis (D.Min.)

I am grateful to have the privilege to be your servant. It is truly a labor of love. I look forward to continuing this journey with you as we together construct a way forward as we discern God's will for our collective future.

I am grateful for everyone who traveled from far and near to participate in our 52nd Annual Gathering of the Southern Conference. I am grateful to the planning committee for their hard work and diligence in making this a most joyous experience for all who participated. The evaluations we gathered expressed appreciation for the program, workshops, and the worship experiences.

The biggest highlight of the gathering for me was our banquet. The event was designed to replicate the "Love Boat" experience. Our hotel accommodations were generous as well as the participation from our sponsors. We have asserted that partnerships and relationships are important to the life of this conference. This was demonstrated with our partnerships with the Pension Boards, Church Building and Loan Fund, Insurance Board and Cornerstone who were all faithful partners in making this event special.

A special thank you to our preachers, Rev. Dr. Kenneth Samuel who opened us up with the notion of miracles and, to our own General Minister and President Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer who lead us in a spirit filled closing message. A special thank you to the youth who contributed to the worship experience as well as sharing space with their peers in making the youth experience at the Annual Gathering a success. Read more about a youth experience attached (see footer photos and quote).

I want to commend our staff for the time and extra effort that they put into the event. We are grateful for their dedicated service to the conference.

We would like to also thank all of our General Synod delegates for their time, talents and treasures in participating fully in what turned out to be a very exciting General Synod 31. Several highlights stand out in particular from this past Synod. One was the powerful preaching and the election of our Executive for Justice and Witness, The Rev. Traci Blackmon. Many individuals, who attended and spoke, quoted many statements from her message as she challenged all of us to "get in the wheelbarrow and go where God is leading us." In addition to her message was

the message delivered by our own General Minister and President who offered his version of the three great loves: love of God, love of neighbor and love of children.

The debates associated with the resolutions were lively and engaging and in some cases exhausting. But, all of the issues presented, gave food for intellectual and spiritual debate. We are grateful for the work of Rev. Richard Edens and Rev. Bob Thompson for skillfully shepherding their committee assignments. We thank God for the young people who made an immense impact on the arena, the activities and their expression of how they want to fit into our grand scheme of things. They expressed themselves with passion and heartfelt emotions concerning the resolutions. And, we are grateful for our National Setting staff for putting on such an inspiring event.

Finally, it is my fervent prayer that our God find favor on each and every one of you in this season of hope, relying on our faith in God, as we express our love for one another.