

*Read pastoral letter from Revs. Davis & Dorhauer*

**Southern Conference  
United Church of Christ  
*Special Epistle / September 5, 2017***

September 5, 2017

My Brothers and Sisters of the Southern Conference,

You may have heard the news story surrounding one of our local churches, Bethany United Church of Christ in Winston Salem , NC and their pastor Rev. Robert Lee. In my conversation with our General Minister and President, you will find his prepared statement to the whole Church that will speak to this situation and concern. Let me say that we are the United Church of Christ in the Southern Conference and it is in love that this statement has been drafted:

*The United Church of Christ honors and supports the right of a pastor and a congregation to determine under what circumstances their relationship should continue. I have spoken with Rev. Lee, and appreciate his decision to leave the church he was serving. He felt like his actions and his words had created some division in the church that members needed to fully process. He wanted to afford them an opportunity to do that without him being at the center of it all. I think it was noble on his part. I appreciate the courage he showed in standing up for racial justice. I think it is unwise for any of us to speculate about what the church would have done had he stayed, and any assumptions we make that they would have terminated him for his actions are premature, and may not at all reflect the actual spirit of this congregation.*

*Shalom,*

*Rev. John C. Dorhauer (D.Min.)*

General Minister and President, United Church of Christ

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*Rev. Edward Davis (D.Min.)*

Conference Minister