“Standing at the Threshold” was the theme of the 2014 Fall Gathering where you elected me to be your new Conference Minister. We definitely crossed the threshold in 2015, and I am very thankful for the opportunity to help our authorized ministers and every ministry setting become vital and faithful in ways we’ve yet to imagine.

Last year was a General Synod year. I was so proud of our delegation. They participated vigorously in the events of the gathering. At the plenary microphones, in committee hearings and in delegation gatherings for discussion and consultation, they took their role seriously and executed the responsibilities diligently. The allocation of delegates for 2017 in Baltimore means we will bring one less delegate to the Synod, but I know our voice will continue to be heard.

At home in Florida, there were immediate challenges with regard to the location of Conference offices and meeting the staffing needs of the Conference. This was not glamorous work, but it was necessary and important work. In August we welcomed the Rev. Leslie Etheredge as Regional Conference Minister for the Gulf Coast and surrounding interior lands. Leslie is a gift to the Florida Conference and has worked so hard in her initial time to form relationships that can be fruitful for years to come. In December we said goodbye to long-time office staff member Candy Younglove. David Cyril has moved into the position of conference minister.

I was grateful to have the opportunity to serve as the Moderator of the Florida Conference for most of the past year, assuming the post when our Moderator, Rev. Phil Garrison, accepted a Call from a church in Michigan. The commitment, skills, and imagination of the Board of Directors and Conference staff are impressive! This made serving as Moderator a joy! Many thanks!

Here are some of the highlights of the work of the Board over the past year:

- Increased per capita dues from $14.50 per member to $15 per member
- Approved a new personnel manual for the Conference staff
- Worked on the development and funding of the new Conference Center at 9300 University Boulevard in Orlando
- Looked for new ways to increase per capita dues

The United Church of Christ in Florida
Annual Report + 2015

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Report of the Moderator
Conference Board of Directors

Report of the Conference Minister
Rev. John Vertigan

Celebrating Rev. Bill Klossner being honored as Pastor Emeritus of Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda on February 22

Rev. Kim congratulating Rev. Leslie Etheredge on her installation as Western Regional Minister

continued on page 2
During the period January 22, 2015, to January 21, 2016, the committee arranged for and supervised:

1. An analysis of the energy conservation status of the building before renovations were started
2. Selected Integrity Builders to serve as the General Contractor of the project
3. Organized volunteers to dismantle outside structure no longer serviceable
4. Organized volunteers to remove interior walls and wall paneling not needed
5. Replaced the existing roof with roofing insulation and a rubber membrane roof
6. Added a Drivit sidewalk insulation and sidewall surface
7. Replaced windows and exterior doors
8. Added doors to enclose the open corridors
9. Installed new electric wiring system
10. Removed interior windows
11. Added drywall surface material to the office rooms, meeting rooms and corridors; volunteers were recruited to assist in this process
12. Replaced the HVAC system with one that is much more energy efficient and that allows remote control of temperature settings for each room and corridor space.
13. Replaced lights with LED lighting
14. Replace fire extinguishers, exit signs and smoke detectors
15. Resurfaced the concrete floor in the corridors
16. Installed motion detectors to turn lights on and off when needed/not needed
17. Reused, donated or recycled all old materials removed to a partnership with the Pathways ministry leadership program of the Southeast Conference as a means of offering quality lay and professional development education. This is an important development here in Florida where there is no UCC-related seminary or training program. Summer Hutcheson (Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami) has been a key leader in advancing the work of that committee and we owe him our thanks, too.

A personal highlight for me was accepting an invitation from UCC/CC-DOC leaders to attend five days of dialogue and consultation in Havana with the Cuba Council of Churches. I’d enjoy presenting to your church group about that trip in these days of normalization. There are ahead of us both challenges and opportunities for partnership, and I am prayer for our facing them together.

I thank you for the way I have been welcomed to the Florida Conference and pray that we will build upon the foundation laid in 2015 to bring about continued growth in our Christian witness here in Florida and beyond. God bless you in your participation in the United Church of Christ.

I’m sure I’ve missed something that was important to you. Be at peace, and be in touch, won’t you.

9300 University Boulevard

Moderator
Rev. Phil Garrison
(St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota) (to May 2)
Rev. Kim Wells
(Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg) (from May 3)

Vice Moderator
Ed Pritchett
(First Congregational Church/Orange City)

Treasurer
Rev. John Allen
(members of the UCC at the Villages) (December 31)
Rev. Gayle Bosley-Mitchell
(member, Coral Gables Congregational Church/Miami) (from January 1, 2016)

Chair, Personnel
Rev. Dr. Laurie Halder
(First Congregational Church/Miami)

Chair, Committee on Church
Rev. Somer Hutcherson III
(Chair of the Open Door Congregational and Miami)

Chair, Budget & Finance Committee
Amy Luek
(First UCC/Orlando)

Chair, Legacy Funds
David McFarland
(First United Church of Tampa) (to February 28)

Registrar
Bob Oliveira
(Naples UCC) (from March 1)

Conference Minister
Rev. John Vertigan
(First UCC/Orlando)

Local Church <250 members Male Clergy Rep
Rev. Harold Thompson (Miami Beach Community Church)

Local Church <250 members Female Clergy Rep
Rev. Dr. Kathy Rookie (Faith Family UCC/Brandon)

Local Church <250 members Male Lay Rep
Rev. Alan Cox (First Congregational Church/Naples)

Local Church <250 members Female Lay Rep
Dyanne Eddis (Hope UCC/Rockledge)

Local Church >250 members Male Clergy Rep
Rev. Shelly Wilson (United Church of Gainesville)

Local Church >250 members Female Lay Rep
Cross-trained Board Members
Rev. Dr. Bill Wealand
(Chair)
Rev. Shelly Wilson
(Moderator)
Rev. Dr. Laurie Halder
(Finance Committee)
Beth Shedden
(Personnel Committee)
Rev. Gayle Bosley-Mitchell
(Planning Team)

Margaret Mahoney (Miami Shores Community Church)
Local Church <250 members Male Clergy Rep
Rev. Michael Cain (member, First United Church of Tampa)
Local Church >250 members Male Lay Rep
Dr. Phillips Toal (First Congregational Church/Winter Park)
Local Church >250 members Female Clergy Rep
Thaddeaus Elliott (Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami)
Local Church >250 members Female Lay Rep
Rev. Dr. Jean Simpson (member, First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)

Conference Officers and Board of Directors, Staff and Volunteer Leadership 2015

Staff
Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan
Eastern Regional Minister Rev. Dr. Raymond Hargrove
Western Regional Minister Rev. Leslie Ethredge (beginning July 1)
Southeast Regional Rev. Dr. Sheila Galuama
Youth Minister (Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach)
Gulf Coast Regional Commissioned Minister Jeanne Haemelmann
Youth Minister (Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach)
Disaster Response & Recovery Ministry Coordinator Rev. Dr. Bill Wealand
Webmaster Jeanne Haemelmann (service concluded October 31)
Executive Assistant Cindy Younglove (to December)
Communications Director Dave Cyril
Office Manager
MESA Coordinator Rev. Leigh McCaffrey (First UCC/Orlando) (from January 2016)
Financial Assistant Beth Shedden

Volunteer Leadership
Editor, Celebrate Florida Rick Carson
(First Congregational Church/Miami)
(First Congregational Church/Winter Park)
President, Florida UCC Patsy McDowell
(First UCC/Orange) (to January 2016)
Financial Assistant Beth Shedden

Members of the Planning Team of the 9300 University Property Committee

- Rev. Dr. Bill Wealand (Unison Congregational Church/Holly Hill), Chair
- Ron Cross (First UCC/Orlando)
- Barry Rosson (Coral Gables Congregational UCC)
- Rev. John Allen (member, UCC at the Villages)
- Ron Cross (First UCC/Orlando)
- Bob Harris (United Community Church/Sun City Center)
- Rev. Shelly Wilson (United Church of Gainesville)
- Rev. Phil Garrison (St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota), Conference Moderator (portion of 2015) and Rev. Kim Wells (Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg), Conference Moderator (for remainder of 2015) and Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan

9300 University Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32817
(407) 835-7501 / (800) 432-8311
www.uccfla.org
E-mail: CelebrateFlorida@uccfla.org
Conference Minister: Rev. John Vertigan
Editor: Rick Carson
Associate Editor: Tom Mitchell
Graphic Design/Layout Sharon Bond / ZebraGraphicalUSA@gmail.com

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

Report Produced by Celebrate Florida
I am blessed to have a job that is never boring and always full of God’s undying grace. I have learned much, experienced much and look forward to continued growth and challenge.

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

Report of the Regional Ministers

Rev. Leslie Etheredge
Western Regional Minister

The greatest focus of my five months has been on building relationships. To that end, I have had face to face opportunities to meet, worship and/or break bread with pastors and parishioners from the following churches:

• First UCC/Orlando
• Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg
• Fort Myers Congregational UCC
• Mayflower Congregational/Naples
• Pilgrims UCC/Punta Gorda
• Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park
• Spring Hill UCC
• Chapel on the Hill UCC/Seminole
• Church of the Islands/Indian Rocks Beach
• Christ’s Promise UCC/Ambardale
• Longwood Hills Congregational Church
• Pemacoeala Beach Community UCC
• United Community Church/Sun City Center
• Trinity UCC/St. Petersburg
• Naples UCC
• United Church of Tallahassee
• St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota
• Trinity Congregational UCC/Winter Haven
• First Congregational Church/Winter Park
• Pilgrim Congregational UCC/St. Petersburg
• UCC at The Villages
• Emmanuel UCC/Spring Hill
• Faith Family UCC/Brandon
• Faith UCC/Dunedin
• Allamante Chapel/Alamance Springs
• Union Congregational Church/Tavares
• First United Church of Tampa
• Faith UCC/Bradenton
• Holiday UCC

Community Congregational Church/
New Port Richey
North Port Community UCC
Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda
Pass-a-Grille Beach Community
Congregational UCC/Bradenton
United Church of Gainsville
Windermere Union Church
Venice UCC

That equates to 38 out of 45. Out of the seven remaining, I have had communications with four of them and have reached out to the remaining three.

Rev. Leslie being installed as Western Regional Minister at Fall Gathering

I have met with most clergy groups (the last to be in January 2016), most on more than one occasion. I am gathering birthdates of all pastors in my region and sent Christmas cards to all of my churches. I have joined a church (Faith UCC/Dunedin) and am becoming

as involved as my time allows.

I have also attended Christmas bazaars, seminars on grief, human trafficking, UCC history and polity and Faith Formation and several concerts to be of support to the ongoing programs of the churches in the Western Region.

Pastoral Searches

Conferred/met with the following churches regarding their Search and Call process:

• Spring Hill UCC
• St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota
• Community Congregational Church/
New Port Richey
• Hollidale UCC
• Union Congregational Church/Tavares
• Pemacoeala Beach Community UCC
• Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda
• Fort Myers Congregational UCC
• Trinity Congregational UCC/Winter Haven

Installations

Preached/attended installation services at:

• Longwood Hills Congregational Church
• Church of the Isles UCC/Indian Rocks Beach
• …and, of course, enjoyed my own at First Congregational Church/Winter Park at the Fall Gathering

Support to Congregations/ Pastors

Met consulted with pastor and/ or lay leader of:

• Emmanuel UCC/Spring Hill
• Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks Beach
• United Community Church/Sun City Center
• Holiday UCC/Hollidale
• Alamante Chapel/Alamance Springs
• Christ’s Promise UCC/Ambardale
• Fort Myers Congregational UCC
• Pilgrims’ UCC/Fort Myers

Preaching

Preached at:

• First Congregational Church/Orange City
• Faith UCC/Tampa
• Trinity Congregational Church UCC/West Palm Beach
• First Congregational Church UCC/Port St. Lucie
• First Congregional Church UCC/Orange City

Support to Congregations and/ or Pastors

Met and consulted with pastor and/ or lay leader at:

• Seabreeze UCC/Dunedin
• The Lord’s House UCC/Hallandale Beach
• First Congregational Church/Lake Helen
• First Congregational Church/Orange City
• First Congregational Church/Port St. Lucie
• Hope UCC/Rockledge
• Faith UCC/Tampa
• New Vision Congregational UCC/Yulee

Met and consulted with Pastor and/ or lay leaders of following churches:

• Seabreeze UCC/Dunedin
• The Lord’s House UCC/Hallandale Beach
• First Congregational Church/Orange City

Greetings, Brothers and Sisters of the Florida Conference UCC. Another year of ministry with and among the churches of the Florida Conference has passed. As always, it has been a challenging but good year. Some of the ministries and activities that I’ve been involved in this past year are:

Church Growth and Vitality

• Coordinated and participated in the “New Beginnings” church growth and vitality leadership training at Port Orange UCC led by the Rev. David Schoen, the UCC Minister for Congregational Assessment & Support/Local Church Ministries
• Coordinated and participated in the “New Beginnings” church growth and vitality initial on-site assessment sessions at each of the three participating congregations: Seabreeze UCC/Dunedin Beach, Longwood Hills Congregational Church UCC/ Longwood and Union Congregational Church UCC/West Palm Beach
• Led leadership development workshop at First Congregational Church UCC/Port St. Lucie
• Met and consulted with Pastor and lay leaders at Faith UCC/Tamarac and First Congregational Church UCC/Orange City on issues related to church growth and vitality
• Began meeting with the Pastor and several lay leaders of Riverside UCC/Jacksonville to help develop strategies related to leadership development, church growth and vitality.

Preaching/Participation in Special Services/Celebrations:

• Participated in Services of Installation for Rev. Patrick Rogers (UCC/Fort Lauderdale), Rev. Al Bunis (Plymouth Congregational UCC/Miami), Rev. Dr. Diane Langworthy (UCC/New Smyrna Beach), Rev. Tim Woodard (Riveria UCC/Palm Bay) and Rev. John Vertigan (Florida Conference Minister)
• Participated memorial services for Rev. Al Goddard (retired) and Paul Simpson (lay member of First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)
• Participated in Services of Ordination and Installation to a 4-Way Covenant for the Rev. Star Valino (Arlington Congregational UCC/Jacksonville) and the Rev. Sonja Williams (Faith UCC/Tamarac)

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

Community UCC and Miami Lakes Congregational UCC
• Met and consulted with candidates seeking ministerial authorization in the UCC
• Met with and offered pastoral support to clergy and congregations as requested
• Participated in regularly scheduled regional clergy gatherings as able
Regional Minister Report... from page 5

- Participated in a Service of Ordination and installation as Associate Pastor for the Rev. Jennifer McDowell (Arlington Congregational UCC/Jacksonville)
- Participated in a Service of Farewell for the former Pastors Rev. Claire Mitchell (Hope UCC/Rockledge) and Rev. Dr. David Schneff (Jensen Beach Community Church)
- Participated in an ecumenical Service of Consecration for Bishop Tom Sterner at First Congregational UCC/Key West.
- Participated in a Service of Recognition for Bishop Tom Sterner at First Congregational UCC/Key West.
- Participated in the annual Spring and Fall Gatherings of the Conference.
- Participated in a Service of Ordination.
- Met and consulted with Pastors and lay leaders from the church community who made our stay remarkable.

Delighted to lead the Spring 2015 Gathering at Coral Gables Congregational UCC embodied extravagant hospitality in worship, in witness, in the presence of so many volunteers from the church community who made our stay remarkable.

The theme of the Spring Gathering was "Covenant," and that theme was expressed in the worship and the business of the Conference. Workshops reminded us of our covenant with creation, with Israel-Palestine, with the wider United Church of Christ, to continue to assist the homeless and those in need and with a deeper spirituality with God as found in the arts.

In business sessions, we heard from the Board and the Endowment Corporation about the continued streamlining of our organizations for efficiency in ministry to the whole church. The Peter Cheney Award was presented to David McFarland (First United Church of Tampa) in recognition of his service to the Conference, most recently as chair of the Endowment Corporation Board. Finance Chair Amy Luck (First United Church/Orlando), invited us to fiscal health and pointed to the small surplus at year end 2014 as a sign that we are taking better care of ourselves and can thus do better ministry together.

A highlight of the day-long gathering was the music provided by Coral Gables’ ensembles and soloists. The Spirit was present, and we all felt as if we were moved to silence, to rejoicing and to applause at various times in the worship. It was a beautiful day for the Gathering, and delegates enjoyed a barbecue lunch outside and had time to visit with colleagues, friends and meet new friends.

The Conference thanks the members of Coral Gables Congregational UCC and their pastoral staff—Rev. Dr. Laurinda Hafner (Pastor), Rev. Dr. Guillermo Marquez-Sterling (Associate Pastor) and Rev. Megan Smith (Associate Pastor)—for the extravagant welcome they offered and to all who led worship. Conference Moderator Rev. Phil Garrison (St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota) closed the Gathering with an invitation to the Fall Gathering on October 24, 2015, in Winter Park.

Dr. Edward Davis, Conference Minister for the Southern Conference of the UCC, led the service of installation as the Florida Conference installed Rev. John Vertigan as Conference Minister for the UCC in Florida.

2015 Gatherings of the Florida Conference

Spring Gathering – Celebrating “Covenant” [ADAPT numer, May 13, 2015]

D

elegates to our 2015 Spring Gathering at Coral Gables Congregational UCC embodied extravagant hospitality in worship, in witness, in the presence of so many volunteers from the church community who made our stay remarkable.

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Fall Gathering – “Going ‘Green’” [ADAP

T
he sun was shining as the Flori
da Conference met on October 24 for its Fall Gathering hosted by First Congregational Church/Winter Park to discuss “Facing the Crisis: Sustaining Green Faith.” And, yes, a lot information was shared about solar energy and the issues in Florida related to solar power. But the day included much more. The keynote presentation was made by several speakers, activists whose existence and work highlighted several green initiatives that churches can tie into. There were workshops covering how to save money at your church by being green and the Biblical and faith imperatives that call for environmental action, among other green topics. There were ideas shared about how to be green advocates for policies that protect creation.

The Fall Gathering was a chance to connect with old friends and make new ones. And in the midst of the wonderful hospitality offered by First Congregational (led by host Pastors Rev. Shawn Garvey and Tala Raymond), the Conference even did some business under the leadership of Moderator Rev. Kim Wells (Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg). Delegates and visitors received a Nominating Committee report from Chair Dyanne Edds (Hope UCC/Rockledge), an update on 9300 University Boulevard from Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan, Budget & Finance Chair Amy Luck (First UCC/Orlando) provided an overview of the Conference financials as the 2016 budget was endorsed, and the finishing touches were put on a plan to restructure the finance ministries of the Conference.

The Conference is well positioned to offer support to local churches so that our witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ continues to increase in Florida and beyond.

Conference Moderator... from page 1

to staff and fund our Disaster & Recovery Ministry in Florida given the change of funding from the national UCC.
- Supported the transition from the Endowment Fund Corporation to the Legacy Fund Committee with subcommittees for Gift Development, Investment Management, Grants and Awards and Property Management.
- Gave careful consideration to budget, finance, property and personnel issues as needed
- Offered guidance and support for the planning of the annual Spring and Fall Gatherings
- Provided support for the Conference nominating process
- Expresses support for coordination of ministries among the Conferences of the Southeast region of the United Church of Christ
- Worked on creating new ways for people in the Conference to connect and network to share information about ministries and to work together in areas of common interest
- With the staff and volunteer leadership that are in place, the Conference initiatives include: a process for applying for grant funding for special projects, the continuation of Disaster Ministries with a new funding model; creating a new center at 9300 University Boulevard that is a green build rehabilitation project and is becoming a model for others; and a soul-fueling retreat ahead for authorized ministers of the Conference.

The Conference Minister delivered remarks which touched on subjects ranging from gun violence to nuts-and-bolts matters involving the emerging new Conference facilities at 9300 University Boulevard, mini-grants being offered for innovative ministries in our local churches, a new initiative to follow up on General Synod resolutions and preparations for the Spring Gathering to be held at UCC/Fort Lauderdale. He also provided an overview of the vision for the UCC being set forth by General Minister and President Rev. John Dorhauer.

The enriching, energetic day ended with included installing the Rev. Leslie Etheredge as the Western Regional Minister of the Florida Conference and an inspiring sermon by the Rev. Meighan Pritchard, UCC Minister for Environmental Justice and pastor of Prospect UCC/Seattle, sharing inspiring stories to sustain our hope and calling upon us to be one another in sustaining a green faith as we “choose life for the planet” while “living into what we believe.”

Rev. Meighan Pritchard, UCC Minister for Environmental Justice
The details of the 2015 Income and Expense Statement and the Balance Sheet for the past five years can be found on the Conference website. Below is a recap of the Income and Expense for the past five years.

### Income and Expense Comparison

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Transferred Income</th>
<th>Total Income</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
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<td>2011 Actual</td>
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<td>2012 Actual</td>
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<td>2014 Actual</td>
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<td>$141,976</td>
<td>$1,054,140</td>
<td>$1,032,420</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015 Actual</td>
<td>$141,976</td>
<td>$1,038,270</td>
<td>$1,038,270</td>
<td>$1,038,270</td>
<td>$3,028</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can again celebrate that we ended the year with our total income exceeding expenses. Keep in mind that the transferred income includes financial support from the Endowment Funds as well as the transfer of funds of existing accounts held by the Conference that are designed for specific purposes, such as Youth Ministry.

Note, also, that the total income and expense for 2015 includes $158,806 in other miscellaneous giving, such as OCHS and NIN, which is not a budgeted number. Those gifts support missions throughout our nation and globally.

The actual budgeted expenses for 2015 were $985,482, and we again came in under budget. The 2016 budget approved at the Fall Gathering is a reduction in expenses from the 2015 budget. We will have different expenses this year as we have moved out of rental space to our own facility. Every church in the Conference has an impact on the financial well-being of the Conference. With your support we can achieve many great things here in the Florida Conference!

Given my previous career (as a Consulting CPA) and my eight years of service on the Budget & Finance Committee (as well as a 20-year history as a QuickBooks Advisor), together with Amy and Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan we were able to close the year with a massive project to analyze all our financial procedures, update our Conference policies and increase our levels of internal controls. We also combined our Conference and Endowment books such that we feel much more confident about the future audit processes and more confident that our Executive Committee will now have a great handle on our financial picture.

My goal as Treasurer for 2016 is to help lead the effort toward making our financial reporting more intuitive and our financial processes more stream-lined. I hope to be a strong accounting resource for supporting both our Financial Assistant as well as the Budget & Finance Committee and Board of Directors in better understanding exactly where we are, together, as all strive to reach our goals for the future.
During 2015 the Committee:

- Met as a full board twice; regional committees met several times during the year
- Approved one person for Ordination pending an Ecclesiastical Council and a Call
- Approved two individuals for Privilege of Call
- Adopted a updated policy on Boundary Training/Continuing Education

The Board of Directors affirmed this proposal.

Benefits to be offered to all employees who work 30 or more hours a week. The Board of Directors affirmed this proposal.

To be a “just” employer, the Personnel Committee proposed

- That benefits be offered to all employees who work 30 or more hours a week.
- That consistency in our hiring practices and in our expectations continue.

Vacancies have been filled with Board approval during the year including:

- *Emmanuel Philocin First Church of North Miami Congregational* (2015-2017 delegates for General Synod 30 and 32 will be nominated and voted upon at the Spring Gathering 2016)

Nominating Committee

**DYANNE EDDS, CHAIR**

HOPE UCC/ROCKLEDGE

The Committee has worked hard to contact current serving members of Conference committees to secure continuing commitments and seek out new persons to fill vacancies. Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan and Regional Ministers Rev. Leslie Etheredge and Rev. Dr. Raymond Hargrove have provided great assistance.

Vacancies have been filled with Board approval during the year including:

- Rev. Gaye Bosley-Mitchell (member, Coral Gables Congregational UCC) as Treasurer and Inez Couch (Church by the Sea/Bal Harbour) on Budget and Finance.
Educational Opportunities from A-to-Z

Our churches presented workshops, seminars and forums on a wide-range of topics and concerns during 2015 including:

- “Mindfulness” (St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota)
- “Liberating Religious Liberty and Affirming Our Faith Through Action” (Miami Beach Community Church)
- “Planned Giving & Stewardship” (Miami Lakes Congregational Church)
- “Grief” (North Port Community Church)
- “Parenting” (First Congregational Church/Winter Park)
- “Mental Health and the Faith Community” (Venice UCC)
- “A Festival of Art and Spirit” (UCC at The Villages)
- “The Community-Police Relationship” (First Church of North Miami Congregational)
- “Culture and Politics and the Intersection of Faith and Religion” (UCC/New Smyrna Beach)

Several churches, including First Congregational Church/Winter Park and the United Church of Gainesville, offered a detailed program of diverse and varied educational opportunities. Noted scholars appeared at several churches in 2015, including: Bishop John Shelby Spong (Naples UCC); Dr. Budd Friend-Jones (The Community Church of Vero Beach); Rev. Dr. Elias Bouboutsis (Coral Gables Congregational Church)

Same-Sex Marriages

Same-sex marriage ceremonies were conducted at a number of our churches in 2015 including:

- First Congregational Church/Winter Park
- Coral Gables Congregational Church
- First United Church of Tampa
- Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda
- Riverside UCC/Jacksonville
- Faith UCC/Dunedin
- Union Congregational Church/Holly Hill
- UCC/Fort Lauderdale
- Emmanuel UCC/Sebring

Building Bridges

A “Sacred Conversation on Race” began between UCC/St. Augustine and a nearby black Pentecostal church (photo) while The Community Church of Vero Beach used its Easter offering in 2015 to join hands and visions for ministry with the historically black Center of Joy Church.

Naples UCC mobilized to package foods for the area’s needy

A 31-year love story celebrated with a same-sex marriage ceremony at the UCC/New Smyrna Beach
Youth Ministry

Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillame
Southeast Region Youth Minister

I am truly a blessing to have served another year as the Southeast Region Youth Minister for the Florida Conference. The following is a report of the year in review.

At the top of the year, planning was well underway for the annual Walk on Water Youth Retreat, which was held at Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach and included our Florida Conference Minister, the Rev. John Vertigan, along with our UCC Youth and Young Adult Advocacy Minister, the Rev. Waltraud Middleton, who came from Cleveland. Both speakers were powerful in meaningful conversation with our youth. The time spent together highlighted creative opportunities for engaging in spiritual development while building relationships through fellowship.

I also have spent time collaborating and sharing ideas alongside colleagues around the issue of Confirmation within the Florida Conference. In an effort to maintain an active dialogue with these partners, I am an active participant in a social network page specifically designed for this purpose.

Additionally, I attended the UCC Florida Women’s Spring Gathering and engaged with several churches about questions they had regarding youth ministry in the Florida Conference. In an effort to maintain an active dialogue with these partners, I am an active participant in a social network page specifically designed for this purpose.

In short, the year in review has involved my being available as a spiritual resource for Conference youth ministry and communicating with congregations in this regard, especially with those churches interested in developing new youth groups and exploring new ideas for Confirmation. To this end, I have the privilege of communicating resources and/or youth ministry opportunities with the following churches:

- Port Orange UCC
- First Church of North Miami Congregational
- Miami Beach Community Church
- Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami
- Church by the Sea/Bal Harbour
- Coral Gables Congregational UCC
- First Congregational Church/Port Saint Lucie
- Faith Congregational Church/Port St. Lucie
- Congregational Church of Boca Raton
- UCC/Fort Lauderdale
- The Lord’s House UCC/Hallandale Beach
- Christ Congregational Church/Miami
- Naples UCC
- Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami
- Community UCC/Lake Park
- Arlington Congregational Church/Jacksonville
- Shalom Center Ministry/Jacksonville
- Jensen Beach Community Church
- Key Biscayne Community Church/Miami
- CrossRoads Community Church/Melbourne
- Riviera UCC/Palm Bay
- Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks Beach
- UCC/S: Augustine
- Community Church/Vero Beach
- Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach
- First Congregational Church/Lake Worth
- First Congregational Church/Winter Park

In addition, Gulf Coast Regional Youth Minister Jeanne Haemmelmann and I were involved in the youth involvement of the 2015 Fall Gathering planning team. The youth who participated in the Gathering planted two trees at the new Conference facility. The youth also had the opportunity to speak before the entire Gathering alongside our Conference Minister about their tree-planting service project.

March 6-8 was the annual Peace River Camping and Canoeing Trip and was attended by 156 youth and adult leaders representing 12 different churches. We celebrated 28 years of Peace River!

I was able to attend Synod in Cleveland and engage with our youth from the Florida Conference as well as assist Rev. Ivy Beckwith in the youth events for all who attended. I am always proud to see how active they are in the wider church.

This year I was pleased to be able to offer a workshop sponsored by our Conference in conjunction with Rev. Ivy Beckwith, our national staff person for Faith Formation, called “Times They Are a Changin’.” We had 11 people from various churches attend, as well as streaming it live for four others. I hope to have more events like this in the future.

Together with my colleague, Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillame, we provided a hands-on work event for youth at the Fall Gathering held at First Congregational Church/Winter Park. We had several youth attend and spend the morning at our new Conference office raking leaves, cleaning up the memorial garden and planting two fruit trees.

In December I attended the NOWCYM UCC (Network of Wider Church Youth Ministry) gathering, which was held in St. Pete Beach. I am honored to be the Moderator of this group for another two years. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet and interact with other Conference Youth Ministers, as well as have the opportunity to share time with presenters. This year we had the opportunity to engage in conversation with Rev. John Dorhauer, our denomination President and General Minister. It was exciting to hear his vision for the future of the church and the involvement of youth.

I continue to love my interactions with various churches and leaders throughout the Conference. I have gone and shared presentations for parents and youth to several churches during the year. The opportunity to be an ongoing resource is one I cherish. It continues to be an honor to serve the Florida Conference.
The following is a review of what we Florida UCC Women did during 2015.

**Regional Meetings**
- **Gold Coast**
  - January 25 at First Church of North Miami Congregational
  - January 31 at First Congregational UCC/Sarasota
- **Miami-Dade/Monroe**
  - February 7 at First Church of North Miami Congregational
- **Central West Coast**
  - February 14 at Faith UCC/Dunedin
  - February 28 at Faith UCC/Tamarac
- **Central East Coast**
  - February 21 at CrossRoads Community UCC/Melbourne
- **Southwest**
  - Open

**Annual Conference May 29-31** at Life Enrichment Center, Fruitland Park

Theme “Sisterhood of the Traveling Faith” (Scriptural reference - Ruth 1:16)

Guest Speakers: Kelly Leonard from the Police Department and Becky Diamond and Christa Humphreys from Hepzibah House with entertainment provided by Christian comedian Juanita Lolita

Workshop Presenters: Laverne Goforth (Community UCC/Lake Worth) – “Sisterhood of Faith”

Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillaume (Union Congregational Church/West Palm Beach) - “The Journey”

Rev. Vonshelle Beney (member, UCC/New Smyrna Beach) - “Your Roots are Showing”

Rev. Dr. Jeannette Sherrill (member, First Congregational UCC/Sarasota) - “Seasons of our Faith”

Patsy McDowell (Church of the Open Door Congregational Miami) - “Daily Walk, All Day, Every Day”

**Election of Officers:**
- President: Patsy McDowell (Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami)
- 1st Vice President: Laverne Goforth (Community UCC/Lake Worth)
- 2nd Vice President: Judi Wilson (Pilgrim UCC/Port Charlotte)
- Recording Secretary: Rhea Taie-Tehrani (Miami Shores Community Church)
- Treasurer: Barbara Coons (Fort Myers Congregational Church)
- Historian: Bunny Guntler (Miami Shores Community Church)
- Spiritual Life: Sandy Cencebaugh (First UCC/Hollywood)
- Mission Study: Rhea Taie-Tehrani (Miami Shores Community Church)
- Social Concerns: Bert Perry (New Hope UCC/DeLand)

**Regional Representatives:**
- Miami-Dade/Monroe: Jan Steinberg (First Church of North Miami Congregational)
- Gold Coast: Camille Moite (Faith UCC/Tamarac)
- St. Johns: Gert Spencer (UCC/New Smyrna Beach)
- Central East Coast: Dyane Edds (Hope UCC/Rockledge)
- Central West Coast: Marlys Johnson (United Community Church/Sun City Center) & Betty Schattschneider (First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)

**2015 YEAR IN REVIEW**

We held two face-to-face Board meetings: May 31 to welcome new Board members and begin planning the 2016 conference; and September 11 to continue planning the 2016 conference and finalize new by-laws. Because the Board is spread across Florida, we do a lot of meeting through e-mail and phone calls.

At the Southern Regional UCC Women gathering (see photo) October 16-18 at Su matanga Conference Center/Alabama, Florida was represented by 37 women.

It has been challenging, but also rewarding, looking forward to this year’s conference May 13-15 at Canterbury Retreat and Conference Center in Oviedo.

**Blessed are the...**

The Blessing of the Animals or Blessing of Pets ceremonies are very popular at our churches; the following were among our congregations which offered this service to members and the community at-large:

- Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg
- St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota
- Community Congregational Church/New Port Richey
- Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda
- Miami Lakes Congregational Church
- Faith Family UCC/Brandon
- UCC/Fort Lauderdale
- Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach

*Santa was featured at the Christmas season pet blessing at Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park*
MINISTERIAL CHANGES IN THE FLORIDA CONFERENCE (since our 2015 Spring Gathering)

Clergy New to Florida
Judith Bagley-Bonner ................................................. Faith UCC/Bradenton
Mike Ford ........................................................................ Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda
Ty Sweeting ....................................................................... Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks Beach
Victoria Snow .......................................................... Community Congregational Church/New Port Richey
Kerby Avedoech .................................................. Coral Isles Church/Tavernier
Leslie Etheredge .................................................. Regional Minister/Florida Conference
Meg Watson .......................................................... Miami Shores Community Church
David Johnson ............................................................... The Community Church/Vero Beach
Brian Fertig ............................................................ Chaplain, Federal Prison System/Florida
Kenneth Walsh .................................................... Transfer in/retired
Ellen Maurey ............................................................ Transfer in
David Houseal .............................................................. Transfer in/retired
Phyllis Evelyn ............................................................. Transfer in/retired
Karen Christiansen ................................................... Transfer in/retired

Installations
Pamela Braid ....................................................... Christ’s Promise UCC/Auburndale
Tim Woodard .......................................................... Riviera UCC/Palm Bay
James T. Mory .............................................................. Longwood Hills Congregational Church
Louise Tallman ............................................................... UCC at The Villages
Hank Johnson ............................................................. Holiday UCC
Ty Sweeting ............................................................ Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks Beach
Mike Ford ............................................................. Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda
Robert Hunter ............................................................. Faith Congregational Church/Port St. Lucie
Bruce Turner ......................................................... CHS Wuesthoff of Brevard County
Guillermo Marquez-Stirling ....................................... Pass-a-Grille Beach

Ordinations
Martin Lewis ............................................................. Chapel on the Hill UCC/Seminole
Diane Langworthy .................................................. UCC/New Smyrna Beach
Patrick Rogers ............................................................. UCC/Fort Lauderdale
Camille Gamara .......................................................... Pilgrims’ UCC/Flintland Park
Alvin Bumis ............................................................... Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami
John Vertigan ............................................................. Conference Minister

Licensure
Jacques Mervil .......................................................... Salom Center Ministry/Jacksonville
Souvenir Emilcare ........................................................ Church of the Palms/Delray Beach
Bob Robidas ............................................................. Community Congregational Church/New Port Richey

Privilege of Call
Johnathan Rosch .......................................................... Pending a call
Fernando Bernard Davila ............................................ Pending a call

Retired
Roger Richardson
Gail McDougle

Disaster Response & Recovery Ministry

During the past year the Disaster Ministry team of the Florida Conference was active in a number of ways in several locations:

1. Accepting the recommendation of the National UCC Disaster Ministry Coordinator, this new logo was adopted to be in sync with the new national UCC Disaster Ministry logo.
2. Three tool trailers were deployed to Pensacola, Fort Walton Beach, Vernon and Hudson during the past 12 months. They supplied tools for more than 380 volunteers working at 21 long-term recovery projects. It is expected that one trailer will be redeployed to Pensacola and one to Century within the next month.
3. Assistance was provided to interested congregations to create an on-line data gathering system to enable planning and delivering help to individuals/households.
4. Training was provided for the use of the Red Cross Ready Rating system designed to guide organizations in planning and preparing for disasters.
5. Using a modified version of the Washington Department of Emergency Response “MAP YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD” program, congregations were guided in the organization of its immediate response plan.
6. As Coordinator, I was appointed to serve on Executive Committee of the Florida VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster).
7. Rev. Alan Coe (Mayflower Congregational Church/Naples) continued to serve on the National VOAD Housing committee.
8. Rev. Alan Coe became the South Florida Regional Disaster Ministry Coordinator, working with congregations in the southern half of the Conference. David Heald (Union Congregational Church/Holly Hill) became the North Florida Regional Disaster Ministry Coordinator, working with congregations in the northern half of the Conference.
9. For the third consecutive year, Pensacola and the surrounding area have been hit by severe flooding and tornadoes, which caused severe damage. More than 200 homes will need the assistance of volunteer workers and help to acquire the necessary construction materials. An appeal was made for funds to help with this long-term recovery.
10. Heather Meals were introduced. Congregations are encouraged to gather orders and payments to forward to the Florida Conference, for the purchase of these self-heating packaged meals, which will enable people to shelter-in-place following a major disaster in their community.
11. David Heald and I participated in the Florida Preparedness Preparedness Association training event.
13. The Florida VOAD established an Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee, and I was appointed to serve as its chairperson. Judy Johnson, Pastoral Assistant at UCC/ St. Augustine and Rev. Steve Heath, Pastor of Union Congregational UCC/Holly Hill, are also serving as members of the committee.
Making a Joyful Noise, Giving Praise, Having Fun

Our churches celebrated holidays and special occasions in a variety of ways.

Children from a local charter school sang for a December holiday open house at First Congregational Church/Lake Helen.

Sanibel Congregational UCC invited the Blue Dirt Dixieland Band for its Mardi Gras celebration.

A liturgical dance brightened Christmas at the UCC/Fort Lauderdale.

Trunk or Treat at Emmanuel UCC/Sebring.

Port Orange UCC celebrated its Easter sunrise service with communion on the Atlantic shore.

Members of First UCC/Orlando marched in the Orlando Pride parade.