A Year in the Life of the ... UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST in Florida

Annual Report 2016

Report of the Moderator
Conference Board of Directors

by Philip Toal
Member, First Congregational Church/Winter Park

I continue to count it a blessing to serve as Moderator of the Florida Conference Board. Having served on the Board for one year and then taking on this new role, I have enjoyed getting to know our Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan and the Conference staff. With each meeting or event I have come to not only enjoy working with John but have come to admire him greatly. He is truly an inspiration to me and I believe to the Conference, and we are very blessed to have him among us. The hard work of the Conference staff including Rev. Raymond and Rev. Leslie and all of those in the Conference office is truly amazing. Having now facilitated three board meetings and a Fall Gathering, I am getting to know the Board better. I am truly amazed at the level of commitment and dedication of each Board member but, quite frankly, I am not surprised as it speaks to the faith and of all UCC members.

This past year has certainly brought a great deal of high points and low points for all of us in this nation but a few particularly difficult ones for us here in Florida. The Pulse tragedy in June of last year and the shooting in Fort Lauderdale are two that readily come to mind. However, as in typical UCC fashion and with its deep and abiding believe in Just Peace, the Conference and its staff, congregants and believers supported one another and responded with true faith, compassion and love.

On a much brighter note, here are some of the highlights of the work of the Board over the past year:

• The Board continued to support the growth and development of the Conference headquarters
• The Church House was dedicated in August with a well-attended service that was enjoyed by all; the continued use of the space and its usefulness to the community demonstrates the good works of our Conference
• The Board and the Conference supported an event on October 5, 2016, that brought a small but vocal group continued on page 2

Report of the Conference Minister

REV. JOHN VERTIGAN

A n ancient Greek philosopher gets attribution for this quote: “The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we hit it.” (Aristotle) Writing a report for “The Year in Review” offers me the opportunity to look back over the last 12 months and see where we have aimed high and where we have aimed too low.

The world moves and changes so fast these days and much of 2016 feels as ancient to history as does Aristotle’s quote. Still, some highlights from times we aimed high include:

• The dedication and expanding use of our new office and meeting space at 9300 University Boulevard
• The work of an excellent Committee on Church & Ministry that is as high-functioning as any I have ever seen; they provide for the authorization, support and accountability of UCC ministers in Florida
• The outstanding Spring and Fall Gatherings at UCC/Fort Lauderdale and First Congregational UCC/Sarasota under the extravagant hospitality of Rev. Patrick Rogers and Rev. Dr. Wes Bixby and their congregations
• The UCC national youth event held right here in Florida that changed lives and made disciples in Jesus’ name
• The work of our Legacy Funds Committee (the successor to the Endowment Corporation); because of their work we were able to begin offering grants to churches and pastors for renewal, growth and innovation and those opportunities will grow in 2017
• A growing sense of relational partnership between settings of the church all over the state; building a feeling that when it comes to the Gospel, we are all in this together
• Similarly, we continue to want to instill in the people of the Conference that we have their local ministries at the core of who we are: the Florida Conference exists for the local church

Some initiatives haven’t gone as planned and will receive increased focus or re-direction in the new year including:

• A growing sense of relational partnership between settings of the church all over the state; building a feeling that when it comes to the Gospel, we are all in this together
• Similarly, we continue to want to instill in the people of the Conference that we have their local ministries at the core of who we are: the Florida Conference exists for the local church continued on page 2
Conference Minister’s Report from page 1

Worship services in Spanish offered at First United Church of Tampa

- Outreach to and partnership with Spanish language communities across the state — we simply must do a better job of communicating progressive Christian values into the growing communities where Spanish dialects are the primary means of communication.
- Solar power at 9300 University remains the uncompleted centerpiece of our environmental initiative at the Conference headquarters

I pray for the day we might take Conference initiative in growing interfaith partnerships: the world needs us to do this and our traditions and history make us the right people to be leaders in this regard

So, those are the hits and misses of the year 2016 from where I sat as Conference Minister. I’m sure there were more on both ends of the scale. This annual review allows the many ministry leaders across the life of the Conference to lift up their perspectives, too, and I would be remiss if I did not take this moment to thank each and every one of our staff, the authorized ministers from around the Conference and all the people of the Florida Conference for being the United Church of Christ in this time and place where we seek, in Jesus’ name, to build a home for all where justice is the rule of the day.

Be at peace, and be in touch, won’t you.

Moderator’s Report...from page 1

of interdenominational clergy and lay people to address the issues of moving beyond Pulse and next steps as they relate to Just Peace actions
- Oversaw the sale of the Fruitland Park property (Pilgrims’ UCC), which demonstrated significant dollars to the Conference financial picture
- Gave careful consideration to budget, finance, property and personnel issues as needed
- Offered guidance and support for the planning of the annual Fall Gathering

In early January 2017 the Board participated in a two strategic planning session that offered vision and guidance for plans which will further the work of the Conference; the goals were focused on three areas designed to increase awareness of the Florida Conference and meet the needs of our local churches

I look forward to helping represent the Florida Conference at General Synod in Baltimore this summer and to continue to work with you and alongside each of you as we share the good news of Jesus Christ and the good news that our Conference and our domination have to offer.

I would like to offer a very special thank you to Dave Cyril in the Conference office, who works to support the Board with meeting design, set up and resources.

May the peace of our God and Savior be with each of you.

Church House Dedication

The move of the Conference office from rented space on Magnolia Avenue became “official” with the dedication of the Church House property at 9300 University Boulevard on August 6.

The celebration included the presence of many members of the former University Congregational Church, whose legacy gift made the Church House possible. Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan also thanked the Friends of the Conference for their financial support, Rev. Dr. Davida Fay Crabtree who was Interim Conference Minister as the dream was becoming a reality and Rev. Dr. Bill Wealand and the other members of the 9300 University Property Committee who shepherded the transformation of the property into its new configuration with its heavy emphasis on incorporating energy conserving components.

The dedication liturgy was led by Conference Moderator Dr. Phil Toal (First Congregational Church/Winter Park) in which he asked the assembled, “What hopes and dreams do you have for this place?” Spoken responses included: unity, example, fun, education, peace and extravagant welcome.

In his message to the gathered, the Conference Minister’s remarks included the vision for the Church House to be shared with the community, sending a welcoming message to all. There are plans for a community garden, a labyrinth, allowing the nearby University of Central Florida to cut a nature trail through the property’s wetlands and a community room to be shared with neighbors.

After Communion, everyone gathered outside for a brief dedication of the peace pole, donated by Coral Isles Church/Tavernier.
Officers

Moderator
Rev. Kim Wells
(Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg) [to April 30]

Dr. Philip Toal
(member, First Congregational Church/Winter Park) [from April 30]

Vice Moderator
Rev. Barton Buchanan
(Windermere Union Church)

Treasurer
Rev. Gaye Bosley-Mitchell
(member, Coral Gables Congregational Church/Miami)

Chair, Personnel Committee
Rev. Dr. Laurie Hafner
(Coral Gables Congregational Church/Miami)

Chair, Committee on Church and Ministry
Sumner Hutcheson III
(Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami)

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

Chair, Legacy Funds Committee
Bob Oliveira
(Naples UCC)

Chair, Nominating Committee
Dyanne Edds (Hope UCC/Rockledge)

Registrar
Marty Synnott
(Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks Beach)

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

Board

Board Member at Large
Rev. Dr. Laurie Hafner (Coral Gables Congregational Church/Miami)

Board Member at Large
Rev. Alan Coe (Mayflower Congregational Church/Naples)

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

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

Local Church <250 members Male Lay Rep:
Rev. Alan Coe (Mayflower Congregational Church/Naples)

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

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

Local Church >250 members Female Lay Rep:
Sally Cash (Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach)

Local Church <250 members Male Clergy Rep:
Rev. Michael Cain (member, First United Church of Tampa)

Local Church <250 members Male Lay Rep:
Joshua Lockhart (First Church of North Miami Congregational)

Local Church >250 members Male (under 25) Lay Rep:
Thaddaeus Elliott (Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami)

Local Church >250 members Female Clergy Rep:
Rev. Dr. Jean Simpson (member, First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)

Staff

Conference Minister
Rev. John Vertigan

Eastern Regional Minister
Rev. Dr. Raymond Hargrove

Western Regional Minister
Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillaume

Eastern Regional Youth Minister
(Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach)

Western Regional Youth Minister
Commissioned Minister Jeanne Haemmelmann

Disaster Response & Recovery Ministry Coordinator
Rev. Dr. Bill Wealand (Union Congregational Church/Holly Hill)

Communications Director/Office Manager
Dave Cyril

MESA Coordinator
Rev. Leigh McCaffrey

Financial Assistant
Beth Shedden

Volunteer Leadership

Editor, Celebrate Florida
Rick Carson
(Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach)

Associate Editor, Celebrate Florida
Patsy McDowell
(First Congregational Church/Winter Park)

Women
Sharon Bond / ZebraGraphicsUSA@gmail.com

Thank you for your support of the United Church of Christ in Florida

florida conference
United Church of Christ

Annual Report
Published by Celebrate Florida
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**

Participated on the Planning Committee for *Sacred Conversations on The Front Porch* sponsored by *First Congregational Church UCC/Lake Helen* and held there. This event was “designed to offer a safe and creative space to foster a time of interfaith dialogue at the intersection of faith and race among churches and faith groups around the Volusia County area.”

**Support to Congregations and/or Pastors**

Met, trained and maintained ongoing consultation w/the pastoral search committees at:
- Cocoa Beach Community UCC
- Coral Gables Congregational UCC
- Seabreeze UCC/Daytona Beach
- Church of The Palms UCC/Delray Beach
- Deltona UCC
- Jensen Beach Community UCC
- First Congregational Church UCC/Key West
- Miami Lakes Congregational UCC
- Miami Shores Community UCC
- Sunset Congregational UCC/Miami
- First Congregational UCC/Orange City
- First Congregational UCC/Port St. Lucie
- Hope UCC/Rockledge
- Faith UCC/Tamarac
- New Vision Congregational UCC/Yulee

Met and consulted with pastor and/or lay leaders of following churches at:
- Seabreeze UCC/Daytona Beach
- Deltona UCC
- Church of The Palms/Delray Beach
- The Lord’s House UCC/Hallandale Beach
- First Congregational UCC/Lake Helen
- Sunset Congregational UCC/Miami
- Port Orange UCC
- First Congregational UCC/Orange City
- First Congregational UCC/Port St. Lucie
- Hope UCC/Rockledge
- Faith UCC/Tamarac
- New Vision Congregational UCC/Yulee

Participated in exit interviews related to pastoral transitions at: Cocoa Beach Community UCC, Jensen Beach Community UCC, Miami Lakes Congregational UCC, Sunset Congregational UCC/Miami, Port Orange UCC and Hope UCC/Rockledge.

- Participated as a member of a peer review team for a UCC Chaplain serving in a hospital in eastern Florida
- 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.

**Preaching/Participation in Special Services/Celebrations**

- Participated in the Ecclesiastical Councils for: Allison Baker (Windermere Union UCC), Sara Martz (The Community Church UCC/Vero Beach) and Amy Rovell-Rixx (United Church in Gainesville)
- Participated memorial services for Ms. Sandy Cencebaugh (Licensed Minister at First UCC/Hollywood).
- Participated in Service of Ordination for Rev. Allison Baker (Windermere Union UCC)
- Participated in a Service of Installation for the Rev. Kerby Avedovech (Coral Isles UCC/Tavernier) and Rev. Aaron Lauer (Associate Pastor, Coral Gables Congregational UCC)
- Participated in Service of Release for the former pastors of: Seabreeze UCC/Daytona Beach, United Church of Gainesville (Associate Pastor), Jensen Beach Community UCC, First Congregational UCC, Orange City, Port Orange UCC, Hope UCC/Rockledge and Union Congregational UCC/Tavares
- Participated in Festival of Lessons & Carols at First Congregational UCC/Lake Helen
- Preached, worshipped and made pastoral visits to churches throughout the region

**General Participation**

- Met and consulted with Pastors and lay leaders from the UCC/St. Augustine and The Lord’s Temple to help develop plans for Sacred Conversations on Race
- Participated in an ecumenical (UCC & PCUSA) Bi-vocational Ministry Conference at St. Simon’s Island, GA
- Participated in two Conference-wide Youth Ministry events
- Participated on the authorized clergy retreat planning committee
- Participated in the meetings of the Northeast and Southeast Regional Church and Ministry Teams
- Participated in the spring and fall meetings of the Conference Committee on Church and Ministry
My first full year in the Florida Conference has been one filled with opportunity and challenge, along with rich experiences and multitudes of blessings.

Relationship Building
The greatest focus of my first year has been on building relationships. To that end, I have had face-to-face opportunities to meet or break bread with each of my pastors, many of their parishioners and I have worshiped at all 45 of my churches.

I have also attended and been a part of many Christmas and Lenten events, seminars, picnics, PRIDE events, clergy retreats and clergy group gatherings, parties, three church anniversary celebrations, presentations, several UCC Women’s events--and even an “unveiling” at Western Region churches.

Pastoral Searches
I have conferenced/met with the following churches regarding their Search and Call process:

- St. Andrew UCC/ Sarasota
- Union Congregational Church/Tavares
- Fort Myers Congregational UCC
- Trinity Congregational UCC/Winter Haven
- United Church of Gainesville
- First Orlando UCC
- Church of the Isles UCC/Indian Rocks Beach
- Chapel on the Hill UCC/Seminole

Installations, Ecclesiastical Councils and Ordinations
I have preached/attended services at:

- Naples UCC — Rev. Dr. Dawson Taylor
- Chapel on the Hill, Seminole--Rev. Dr. Martin Lewis
- Congregational UCC, Punta Gorda — Rev. Mike Ford

Support to Congregations/Pastors
- Met/consulted with pastor and, lay leaders, councils/Training PPRC’s/Educational Offerings of:
  - Community Congregational UCC/New Port Richey

Support and Accountability staff
- Participated in webinar on Call Agreements in the UCC (organized and supported by UCC Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization staff)
- Participated in Justice and Witness team planning meetings at First Congregational UCC/Winter Park
- Participated in the UCC National Youth Event held in Orlando
- Serve on the Daniel Hand Fund Committee (Local Church Ministries)
- Served on jury duty.

I remain excited about ministry with and among the churches of the Florida Conference and am especially grateful for the opportunity to work with gifted staff colleagues. I look forward to the future as God allows it to unfold before us.
Spring Gathering — The Face of Human Trafficking: It’s Happening Here!

The Spring Gathering took place on Saturday, April 30, at the UCC/Fort Lauderdale but got off to an early start on Friday with an “Evening at Pops” concert featuring the church’s Director of Music, David Dunlap, with a reception following. When the Gathering got underway the next morning, 55 congregations were represented, which included 139 delegates and 60 visitors. Host Pastor Rev. Patrick Powers welcomed the assembled and Moderator Rev. Kim Wells (Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg) presided.

Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan’s address began with a review of the comments he had made a year previously about his hopes, visions and goals and how they had (or had not) been addressed. He then switched to a look at the present and the year ahead, focusing on the three basic elements of his “elevator speech”: our core values, our progressive Christian witness and our mission to “gather the church, engage the community and honor the earth.” He concluded with a brief overview of his eight priorities for the coming 12 months.

The delegates received and approved a resolution from the Board of Directors that the Florida Conference endorses the Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ call for an economic boycott of Wendy’s and endorses other such theological witness to justice and peace as may support the cause of the CIW and farmworkers across North America.

The presentation by Budget & Finance Chair Amy Luck (First UCC/Orlando) and Treasurer Rev. Gaye Bosley-Mitchell (member, Coral Gables Congregational Church) highlighted the summary provided in the 2015 Annual Report, which showed the Conference ending 2015 in the black. Churches were thanked for their generosity. Vice Moderator Ed Pritchett (First Congregational Church/Orange City) spoke about available grants from the Conference’s various Legacy Funds.

A straw vote was taken to gauge preference between having a one-day Conference annual meeting twice a year or one two-day meeting; the latter received more hands. The slate of candidates for Board and committee positions recommended by the Nominating Committee under Chair Dyanne Edds (Hope UCC/Rockledge) was unanimously accepted by the delegates. Phil Toal (First Congregational Church/Winter Park) was elected Moderator and Rev. Barton Buchanan (Windermere Union Church) Vice Moderator. Amy Luck, chair of the Conference Budget & Finance Committee, was the recipient of the Peter L. Cheney Award, which is presented to a layperson who has “demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to God through ministry and service” in the Conference.

With the business portion of the Gathering concluded, Dr. Stephanie Goins, Executive Program Director for LOVE146 (an international human rights organization working to end child trafficking and exploitation through survivor care and prevention; www.love146.org/) presented the keynote address, “The Face of Modern Slavery.” After lunch two sets of workshops were offered, focusing on aspects of human trafficking.

Host Pastor Rev. Patrick Rogers, Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson and our Conference Minister preparing communion.

The closing worship was led by Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson (First United Church of Tampa). The special offering was shared with safe houses and shelters in Sarasota, Orlando, Jacksonville and South Florida.

Being Church  2016
Fall Gathering — Connections

The Conference Fall Gathering began on Saturday, October 22, at First Congregational UCC/Sarasota after a kick-off Friday evening bluegrass concert and reception at the church. Forty-seven churches sent 171 delegates as representatives. Saturday’s meeting began with host Pastor Rev. Dr. Wes Bixby inviting each attendee to tie the piece of cloth they had been given upon entering the Sanctuary to a neighbor’s piece of cloth, demonstrating the Gathering’s theme of connectedness as covenantal partners. Moderator Dr. Phil Toal (First Congregational Church/Winter Park) delivered a brief Board of Directors report, citing the creation of a Solar Task Force to focus upon the 9300 Church House as well as a strategic planning process that will be getting underway to consider the Conference vision for goals and programs. He announced that beginning in 2017 there will be only one Gathering a year (in October).

Budget & Finance Chair Amy Luek (First UCC/Orlando) gave a PowerPoint presentation, detailing each budget category and underscoring “the value of your participation with the Conference” and “who we all are together” in covenant and connection with one another.

Keynote speaker Rev. Da Vita “Day” McCallister, Associate Conference Minister for Leadership and Vitality in the Connecticut Conference, used her presentation “The Common Good” to expand upon “Who is my neighbor?” and “Who decides the common good?”

After lunch Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan delivered his address, whose message was the “urgency of now.” He touched on five “things” he had shared with the search committee that had recommended him to the Conference and how he had tried to address them, concluding with the “urgency of now...that the Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ will rise to the moment at hand: gun control, cultural competence, climate change.”

Five afternoon workshops were offered on a range of topics around the theme of connections and working together...for the common good.

The closing worship was enhanced with a brass quintet, singing from First Congregational’s choir and a sacred dance performed by two youth from Union Congregational Church/West Palm Beach. The special offering went for Haitian relief.

Some members of Eternal Hope Church travelled all the way from Fort Walton Beach to be welcomed by the Conference.
The details of the 2016 Income and Expense Statement and the Balance Sheet for the Conference will be posted on the Conference website (www.uccfla.org). Below is a recap of the Income and Expense for the past five years.

### Income and Expense Comparison

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<th>2012 Actual</th>
<th>2013 Actual</th>
<th>2014 Actual</th>
<th>2015 Actual</th>
<th>2016 Actual</th>
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<td>Income</td>
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A few things to note:

- $393,533 was received from the sale of Pilgrims’ UCC/Fruitland Park and was invested in the General Reserve Fund of the Conference. That is not reflected in the figures above. Including that amount in the Income above would eliminate the deficit and reflect a net income of $308,776.

- In 2014 and 2015 “Other Mission Giving” was included in the Income and then in Expenses as these are funds remitted to the National UCC, such as the Neighbors in Need offering and One Great Hour of Sharing. In 2014 that amount was $137,758 and in 2015 it was $156,806. Other Mission Giving for 2016 was $168,953; as a Conference we are steadily increasing our support to the missions of the National UCC and this is to be celebrated!

For 2016 both the Income and the Expense of remitting to the National UCC are reflected in the Income of $658,617 for 2016 to report the income that actually remains in Florida to support the mission of the Conference.

There were several churches that reduced their OCWM and Per Capita giving in 2016 and we exceeded the Budgeted expenses on several accounts, which resulted in the deficit of $84,757 for 2016.

We will need to carefully control expenses in 2017. But every church in the Conference can also impact what we accomplish together as the Florida Conference by their giving and financial support of the Conference. We have much to celebrate and much to share!

The good news is that our preceding “Legacy” generations have put us in a wonderful position to enter into a new world of ministry! Our donors have given $4.3 million in gifts to be used for a wide variety of purposes: church development, education/outdoor/youth ministries, and various smaller projects (such as the People’s Empowerment Fund and Labyrinth Fund). Of course, approximately $1.7 million of those funds are permanently restricted in order to continue producing investment income for future generations.

Also, our Board of Directors has earmarked around $1.1 million for various purposes as well. Both these Designated Funds as well as our $2.3 million Unrestricted Funds are available to us to dream into our future! So while we certainly need to be extremely careful to not rely needlessly or casually on our predecessors’ hard work, we are in a great position to be able to do great ministry in our lovely state of Florida.
The Legacy Funds Committee (LFC) is a standing committee of the UCC Florida Conference. Members are appointed by and report to the Conference Board of Directors. The LFC serves the Conference through the Board in several areas. It:

- manages the investments of the Conference’s Donor Designated, Board Restricted and Unrestricted Funds
- promotes grants and awards
- promotes legacy gifts
- manages all properties owned by or given to the Conference as legacy gifts

The day-to-day work of the LFC is accomplished through the following four subcommittees: Investment Management; Grants and Awards; Property Management and Development; Gift Development.

It is my pleasure to report the following progress and actions accomplished by the LFC this past year.

**Investment Management Subcommittee — Dianne Townsend, Chair**

The Funds Management Subcommittee oversees the investment assets of the Conference. This committee meets a minimum of four times each year to review and evaluate the performance of the Conference investments. This past year this committee embarked on a project to meet with several fund managers to evaluate alternate investment options that fell within the investment objectives and guidelines required by the Board of the Florida Conference. The Committee also established operating policies that were approved by the Board.

**Property Management and Development Subcommittee — Mike Downs, Chair**

An accumulation of historical matters such as insurance, minor city code violations, replacement cost values and market appraisals have been cleaned up and resolved on properties owned by the Conference and managed by the property committee. This time-consuming effort was beneficial in developing protocols for the future when dealing with the custodial, general maintenance, valuation, leasing and sale of properties given to the Conference as legacy gifts.

**Grants and Awards Subcommittee — Ed Pritchett, Chair**

Several awards/grants have been made since 2015; they were made to five churches and one individual totaling $25,375. These awards/grants enabled churches to do the following:

- Begin an After School Program
- Start a Social Media Program
- Begin an Everlasting Revelation Program to assist mothers in training their children to deal with future responsibilities
- Participate in the New Beginnings Assessment Program
- Offer a Sunday Evening Educational Event featuring a renowned speaker
- Links for all the Legacy Funds and the application forms are on the Florida Conference website (review them at the Grants or Awards tab under Resources)

**Gift Development Subcommittee — Rev. Don Stoner, Chair**

This committee has been working behind the scenes developing materials to promote legacy gifts to add to the current funds and establish new funds.

A legacy brochure is planned along with a letter to prospective donors. In the works is a plan to bring in a speaker/trainer on faith-based solicitations.

Don is looking to populate this committee with members who have some gift development experience. Please contact the Conference office if you are interested.

### NEW CLERGY, ORDINATIONS AND LICENSURE IN THE FLORIDA CONFERENCE

#### Clergy New to Florida
- Rev. Kathy Burton, ......New Vision UCC/Yulee
- Rev. James Coyl.............Pensacola Community UCC
- Rev. William Dunlap......Deltana UCC
- Rev. Theresa Hood........Florida Hospital/Orlando
- Rev. David Johnson......The Community Church of Vero Beach
- Rev. Robin LaBolt.........Spring Hill UCC
- Rev. Aaron Lauer............Coral Gables Congregational UCC
- Rev. Ed Middleton........Cocoa Beach Community Church
- Rev. David Westcott......First Congregational Church/Orange City

#### Ordinations
- Alli Baker.................Windermere Union Church
- Martin Lewis...............Chapel on the Hill UCC/Seminole
- Sarah Martz ...............The Community Church of Vero Beach

#### Licensure
- Thomas Lippert........SouthShore UCC/Sun City Center
- Sherian Butler............Port Orange UCC

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Legacy Funds Committee

**Robert Oliveira**, Chair  
Naples UCC

**Dianne Townsend** (UCC at the Lighthouse/Naples); Chair, Investment Management Subcommittee

**Rev. Donald Stoner** (member, Community Church of Vero Beach); Chair, Gift Development Subcommittee

**Mike Downs** (Naples UCC); Chair, Property Subcommittee

**Ed Pritchett** (First Congregational Church/Orange City); Chair, Grants and Awards Sub-Committee

**Rev. Gaye Bosley-Mitchell** (member, Coral Gables Congregational UCC), Conference Treasurer

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

**Dr. Phil Toal** (First Congregational Church/Winter Park), Conference Moderator

**Rev. John Vertigan**, Conference Minister
Church & Ministry Committee

Sumner Hutcheson III, Chair
Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami

The Committee:
• Met as a full Board twice; Regional Committees met several times during the year
• Approved four persons for Ordination pending an Ecclesiastical Council and a Call
• Reviewed and denied one individual for reinstatement
• Recommended Eternal Hope Church/Fort Walton Beach be received as a Church in Discernment
• Approved that Regional Committees approve transfers for Standing out of the Florida Conference
• Approved affiliation with Southeast Conference/UCC PATHWAYS program
• Approved loan request for one individual

Church & Ministry Committee
Sumner Hutcheson III (Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami) - Chair

Northeast
• Rev. Steve Heath (Union Congregational Church/Holly Hill) - Chair
• Jo Pritchett (First Congregational Church/Orange City)
• Paul Capaldo (Hope UCC/Rockledge)
• Rev. Dr. Diane Langworthy (UCC/New Smyrna Beach)
• Bil Detore (Arlington Congregational Church/Jacksonville)

Southeast
• Andrea Burt (Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami) - Chair
• Rev. Dr. Fay Golding (member, Faith UCC/Tamarac)
• Rev. Harold Thompson (Miami Beach Community Church)
• Josef Spencer (Coral Gables Congregational UCC)
• Rev. Phyllis Parthenier (member, Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach)
• Suzanne Lewis (UCC/Fort Lauderdale)
• William Generette (Miami Shores Community Church)
• Rev. Candace Thomas (member, Miami Beach Community Church)

West
• Jackie Sorensen (First Congregational Church/Winter Park) - Chair
• Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson (First United Church of Tampa)
• Rev. Deborah Kunkel (Sanibel Congregational UCC)
• Rev. Donna Ives (member, Spring Hill UCC)
• Jerry Holderness (Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach)
• Joseph P. Ebbing (Faith Family UCC/Brandon)
• Marty Synnott (Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks Beach)
• Rev. Phil White (member, Fort Myers Congregational Church)
• Rev. Candace “Candy” Thomas (member, Miami Beach Community Church)
• Rev. Jason Fairbanks (First Congregational Church/Lake Worth)

While there had not been urgent personnel matters facing the Conference in 2016, we are mindful of the daily challenges of such a small staff serving such a large Conference. The outstanding work they each do in building up a vital, faithful and active Florida Conference is a testament to the staff’s devotion and dedication.

The Personnel Committee continues to seek ways for the Florida Conference to be a just employer and to provide the support and care that each employee deserves.

We remain so very grateful for the work and ministry of the Florida Conference staff.

Members of the Personnel Committee
• Rev. Dr. Laurie Hafner (Coral Gables Congregational UCC) – Chair
• Rev. Dr. Dawson Taylor (Naples UCC)
• Ed Pritchett (First Congregational Church/Orange City)
• Gary Hill (UCC/Fort Lauderdale)
• Margaret Mahoney (Miami Shores Community Church)
• Robert Harris (United Community Church/Sun City Center)
• Valerie Thomison
• William Clarke (Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami)
• Rev. John Vertigan – Conference Minister (Ex-Officio)
• Philip Toal (First Congregational Church/Winter Park) – Conference Moderator (Ex-Officio)

Ordinations
Alli Baker, Windermere Union Church (July 31, 2016)
Martin Lewis, Chapel on the Hill UCC/Seminole (December 4, 2016)
Sarah Martz, The Community Church of Vero Beach (November 6, 2016)
Nominating Committee

**DYANNE EDDS, CHAIR**
**HOPE UCC/ROCKLEDGE**

The Committee has worked hard to contact 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. A vacancy has been filled with Board approval during the year for a Synod attendee: Marty Synnott (member Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks Beach).

With the Board decision to go to one statewide meeting a year, the new slate of officers and committee members will be presented in October instead of April or May in 2017.

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Members of the Nominating Committee

- Dyanne Edds (Hope UCC/Rockledge) – Chair
- Rev. Linda Girouex (Riverside UCC/Jacksonville)
- Dory Lingo (Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami)
- Rev. George Miller (Emmanuel UCC/Sebring)
- Bert Perry (New Hope UCC/DeLand)
- Jan Steinberg (First Church of North Miami Congregational)
- Rev. Drew Willard (UCC at The Villages)

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... Some 2016 Dates of Note

- **January 15-17**…….Walk on Water Youth event, Union Congregational Church/West Palm Beach
- **February 2-4** ……..Authorized Ministers Retreat, Oviedo
- **March 4-6**……….Peace River Canoe/Camping Youth event, Arcadia
- **April 29-30**……….Spring Gathering of the Conference, UCC/Fort Lauderdale
- **May 13-14**…….Florida UCC Women Annual Conference, Oviedo
- **July 26-30**……….UCC National Youth Event, Lake Buena Vista
- **August 6**………Dedication of the Church House, Orlando (photo right)
- **September 21-23**……Environmental Justice Workshop, Church House
- **September 28-29**…Retired Clergy Gathering, Church House
- **October 15**………Florida UCC Women, “In the Company of Women” Retreat, SouthShore UCC/Sun City Center
- **October 21-22**…… Fall Gathering of the Conference, First Congregational UCC/Sarasota

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**Being Church + 2016**

Peace Cranes were accepted by Rev. Dr. Shawn Garvey and First Congregational Church/Winter Park from Circular Congregational Church/Charleston, SC, in response to the Pulse shooting

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**MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT**

- Jim Andrews………………..Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg
- Ian Beason…………………Longwood Hills Congregational Church
- Darian Boue…………………Church of the Open Door Congregational/Miami
- Jenny Carson………………..Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami
- Cynthia Drew……………..Coral Gables Congregational UCC
- Rick Harrell…………………First Congregational UCC/Sarasota
- Rachel Kirk………………….United Church of Gainesville
- Cynthia Lee………………….Miami Beach Community UCC
- Elizabeth LeSueur………..Coral Gables Congregational UCC
- Thomas Lippert…………….SouthShore UCC/Sun City Center
- Karen Morris………………..UCC/Fort Lauderdale
- Wesley Sneedeker ………..Naples UCC
- Hope-Nock Tena……………First United Church of Tampa
- Ronald Thompson …………Naples UCC
- Neal Watkins………………..The Community Church of Vero Beach
Florida United Church of Christ Women

PATSY MCDOWELL, PRESIDENT FLORIDA UCC WOMEN
MEMBER, CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR CONGREGATIONAL/MIAMI

• Completed regional meetings in January and February
• Held a successful Annual Conference at Canterbury Retreat and Conference Center in May
• Held a successful “In the Company of Women” retreat at SouthShore UCC/Sun City Center in October
• Conducted two Executive Board meetings to plan 2016 and 2017 retreats
• Visited Chateau Elan, the site of the 2017 retreat
• Updated our website and transferred webmaster duties to the Florida Conference
• Placed articles in each issue of Celebrate Florida to better inform members and interest potential participants

We will continue to inform and update all women through Facebook, website and Celebrate Florida.

Above: “In the Company of Women” retreat
Below: Officers

Many of our churches, like Northport Community UCC, held Vacation Bible Schools for their neighbor families. Does yours?

Miami Shores Community Church celebrated Halloween festivities with their members and neighbors. How active is your church in your community?
Zach Wolgemuth, the Executive for the United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries, announced that we are partnering with the Disciples of Christ, the Brethren Disaster Ministries and the International Orthodox Christian Churches to launch a new program. A training event was held September 27-October 6. David Heald (Union Congregational UCC/Holly Hill), the Northern Florida Conference Disaster Ministry Coordinator, attended. Trained participants will be deployed to serve at the scene of the disaster for one or two months. People were trained to serve as Case Managers, Construction Supervisors and Volunteer Group Coordinators.

The Florida Conference had 50 flood clean-up bucket kits on hand when Hurricane Matthew hit. They have been distributed to families in Flagler and Volusia Counties whose homes were flooded.

The Deputy Sheriff who helped to unload the bucket kits asked that “thanks” be extended to all who helped to make the buckets available. Grants are now available to congregations who raise $250, one from the national UCC Disaster Ministries and a second one from the Florida Conference Board of Directors.

Each will provide an additional $250 so there would be $750 available to create 15-20 flood bucket kits. Union Congregational UCC/Holly Hill invited their members to donate the $250 so they would be eligible for the grants. The members of that small congregation donated over $1,000, which when added to the two grants will provide adequate funding to make 40 bucket kits.

The Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee of our Disaster & Recovery Ministry has scheduled its training event to empower emotional/psychological caregivers, spiritual caregivers and team managers to be “at the ready” for deployment to the location of any major disaster, both natural and human-caused. The team will work in close collaboration with a nearby UCC congregation whenever possible. The training will be held in Daytona Beach on July 18-20. Those interested in participating should contact me.

Long term recovery work for Hurricane Matthew-damaged homes continues. Concentrated efforts are being made in St. Johns, Putnam and Volusia Counties to recruit groups of volunteers to assist in the recovery. The first UCC group came from Granville, IL, in March 2017. They were housed in the UCC/St. Augustine and did dry wall installation in two houses in St. Augustine.

It is expected that more than 1,000 households will need assistance to recover. Congregations that frequently recruit volunteer workers are encouraged to contact me for additional information.

Long Term Recovery work for Hurricane Hermine-damaged homes in Pasco and Citrus Counties continues. There are still more than 100 households in need of assistance in these two counties.

The Florida Conference hosted the annual gathering of the Conference Disaster Coordinators of most of the Conferences in the United Church of Christ. The event was scheduled in Florida this time in order to tour the Hurricane Matthew-impacted area. Members of the Cocoa Beach Community Church and the Union Congregational UCC/Holly Hill shared in hosting the visitors by preparing and serving meals.

The Florida Conference Disaster Ministry continues to be participants in the Florida VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters). We meet with our faith and non-profit partners to plan and coordinate our role in disaster recovery work in Florida. I am a member of the Florida VOAD Board of Directors and Rev. Alan Coe (Mayflower Congregational Church/Naples) is a member of the National VOAD Housing Committee. David Heald is an active member of the Volusia COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disasters). Rev. Steve Heath (Union Congregational UCC/Holly Hill) and Rev. Judy Johnson (member, UCC/St. Augustine) are active on the long term recovery organizations in their counties. Rev. Phyllis Evelyn (member, UCC/New Smyrna Beach) is a Case Manager working with VIND, the long term recovery organization in Volusia County. Betzi Yungclas and Rich Tosh are long-term volunteers deployed by the National UCC Disaster Ministries to work in Volusia County in the long term recovery effort.
Youth Ministry

Jeanne Haemmelmann (Commissioned Minister)  Western Region Youth Minister

Western Region

I continue to be amazed at the many churches and youth in our Conference who are willing to be the hands and feet of Jesus as they seek to live out the gospel.

March 4-6 was the annual Peace River Camping and Canoeing Trip, and was attended by over 150 youth and adult leaders representing 11 different churches.

I attended the National Youth Event in Orlando where I coordinated get togethers with youth from our Conference and along with my colleague, Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillaume, worked to provide ongoing support for youth and adults as the host Conference. I am always proud to see how active our youth are in the wider church. I was honored to participate in the receiving of flags made by youth of the Southern California Conference for our churches in Florida in remembrance of those killed at the Pulse nightclub last spring.

Together with Rev. Dr. Sheila, we planned a workshop that youth led at the Fall Gathering held at First Congregational UCC/Sarasota. It was moderated by Sheila and provided an amazing opportunity for youth to participate and share in worship.

In December I attended the NOWCYM UCC (Network of Wider Church Youth Ministry) gathering, which was held in Austin, Texas. I am honored to be the Moderator of this group for another year. 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 are working on restructuring Regional Youth Events, having greater participation with youth at Synod and collaborating with the National Office on other projects.

I continue to be energized by my interactions with various churches and leaders throughout the Conference. It is always inspiring to hear the ways in which leaders and youth are creating and doing amazing things in our world. I continue to provide ongoing workshops, resources and meetings with churches as they discern the role of the youth and the church today. The opportunity to be an ongoing resource is one I cherish, and I look forward to the new opportunities that await us.

It continues to be an honor to serve the Florida Conference.

Florida youth at National Youth Event
It is truly a blessing to have served another year as the Southeast Regional Youth Minister for the Florida Conference. Following is a report of 2016.

At the top of the year, planning was well underway for the annual Walk on Water Youth Retreat, held at Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach. WOW included our United Church of Christ Ecumenical and Interfaith Minister, Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, who came from Cleveland. She engaged in meaningful conversation with our youth about what it means to love our neighbors, and the time spent together highlighted creative opportunities for engaging in spiritual development while building relationships through fellowship.

I have also continued to be in dialogue with colleagues around the issue of Confirmation within the setting of the UCC. To this end, I have become part of a network of ministers who are sharing practices and ideas about confirmation. This network was formed by our UCC Faith Formation Minister in Cleveland, who invited several of us to attend a national conversation on Confirmation in Cleveland. This network reaffirms for us that there are still wonderful possibilities in the development of the Confirmation process for the youth of the Florida Conference.

Additionally, I attended the UCC’s National Youth Event in Orlando, and partnered with my colleague, Jeanne Haemmelmann, as we offered support as the host Conference. In my role at NYE, I offered faith formation opportunities to youth by leading two workshops. One workshop highlighted music and faith, and the other workshop focused on justice and peace in the UCC. Both workshops were offered twice on consecutive days and were very well attended. During my time at NYE, I engaged with the youth groups of the Florida Conference to serve as a resource in whatever ways that I could.

Jeanne and I were also involved in the youth involvement of the 2016 Fall Conference Gathering planning team. The youth participated in a workshop that was designed especially with them in mind, and I was grateful to have been able to lead that workshop as they shared their thoughts on “why I come to church.” Out of their workshop, the youth created a prayer that was offered during the Gathering’s closing worship. In addition to prayers, the youth also performed a liturgical dance during worship that was well received by the attendees.

In short, the year involved my being available as a spiritual resource for Conference youth ministry by communicating with congregations in this regard, especially with those churches interested in engaging with other youth groups, developing new youth groups and exploring new ideas for Confirmation. To this end, I had the privilege of communicating resources and/or youth ministry opportunities with the following churches: Port Orange UCC, First Congregational Church of North Miami, Miami Beach Community UCC, Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami, Church by The Sea/Bal Harbour, Coral Gables Congregational UCC, Port Saint Lucie (Faith Congregational Church/Port St. Lucie, First Congregational Church/Port St. Lucie, Church on The Hill/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 UCC, Key Biscayne Community Church/Miami, CrossRoads Community UCC/Melbourne, Riviera UCC/Palm Bay, Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks, UCC/St. Augustine, The Community Church of Vero Beach, Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach, First Congregational Church/Lake Worth, The United Church of Sebastian and First Congregational Church/Winter Park.
First United Church of Tampa actively protests gun violence

Venice UCC participates in their local CROP Walk on a regular basis

Sanibel Congregation- al UCC established a “Green Team” environmental task force

The United Church in Tallahassee welcomed refugees

Members of the UCC/New Smyrna Beach participated during March in a “Neighbors Together” rally

This sign at Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park stirred controversy
Coral Gables Congregational UCC was very visible at Miami Beach PRIDE.

The United Church of Gainesville offered a symposium on racial diversity.

First Congregational Church/Orange city collected school supplies for local elementary school children in need.

Teens from Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach helped clean up the Church House grounds.

St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota’s “Teddy Bear” ministry.