Report of the Conference Minister

Rev. John Vertigan (First UCC/Orlando)

It’s right there on the wall across from my desk in Orlando. It’s the mission statement of the Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ. I look at it every day that I sit here administering our common life.

“It is the primary goal of the Florida Conference to encourage, help foster, and equip local congregations to become vital and faithful communities.”

I recognize, at the end of 2019, that we have some large congregations who might be able to thrive without a denominational connection but who nonetheless maintain strong covenantal ties with the United Church of Christ. I recognize, too, that we have some smaller congregations who could thrive if they would choose to enter into stronger relationship with us in their historic denomination. It’s a heady and exasperating time in which to try and figure out just which church is which and how we can best foster the kinds of relationships that will engage the local church toward more powerful witness to the gospel in the communities where they live and serve. I continue to be thankful for the stories of mission and ministry that I read in local church pages and in publications like Celebrate Florida.

As for our primary goal, we work at it every day. Your staff is focused on strengthening the ministries of our pastors, directing your mission dollars in appropriate ways, helping with search and call, conflict intervention, resourceing for vitality and so many other local church issues. A key to our success, to date, is a focus on relationship and presence; being in the places where mission is happening demonstrates the liveliness of our belief that the local church is the primary unit of the United Church of Christ and the place from which witnessing with members from Christ Congregational Church/Miami

Witnessing with members from Christ Congregational Church/Miami

Justice for Farm Workers

Justice for Farm Workers

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

Annual Report 2019

Report from the Board of Directors

Rev. Barton Buchanan (Windermere Union Church) Conference Moderator

Last year was a very productive year for your Board of Directors. We started the year with governance training facilitated by Heather Kimmel (General Counsel to the UCC office at the Church House in Cleveland). Our Board learned the importance of how we conduct the business of the Florida Conference and our fiduciary responsibilities.

For the last three years I have served on the Board of Directors, I have observed a high level of commitment from our staff and volunteers. All those who serve on our committees give so much of their time and energy. Our Treasurer and finance team worked diligently in monitoring and reporting on the 2019 budget while providing an accurate budget for 2020. The Legacy Funds are well-managed, and they will continue to provide many opportunities to expand and support our Conference ministry and initiatives. The Church & Ministry Committee is not only vetting and bringing in new talent for ministerial leadership, it also takes on the difficult challenges reviewing pastors who have made unhealthy choices for themselves and their congregations.

All of our Conference staff work very hard and provide excellent leadership for the Florida Conference and the national UCC. I know from personal experience every time I needed some information or feedback I received an immediate and helpful response. The Conference staff is highly skilled and resourceful in assisting and offering our churches opportunities to grow and thrive.

We are a Conference that is managed well. However, here is the thing I am most in awe about. We are also a compassionate Conference. We have reached out to churches and leaders who have been estranged from us. Our staff offered them an invitation back to our table of fellowship and ministry.

The Florida Conference made a $100,000 contribution to the...
most of our ministry should emanate. Thank you for being the United Church of Christ in your community!

This annual report will, of necessity, draw a picture in numbers, statistics and other such things required of such a sharing. And have no doubt: those numbers are important! Your generosity in sending dollars beyond the local church empowers the Conference and national settings to act in the name of the whole church when it seems appropriate so to do — and those dollars put you in places of ministry you might never see or know about, touching the lives of people you will never meet. So, let this annual report tell a story of relationships in whatever way they are reported. And let this annual report serve as invitation to churches of every size and shape and in every locale to continue and deepen your connection with the United Church of Christ, that we may all be one.

We are faced with a moral crisis as a country, not a border crisis, nor a national emergency.

— The Rev. Jerry Dale Brown
United Church of Christ General Minister and President

More importantly, after receiving Alan’s report, we jumped into action. The Board of Directors was challenged from the floor of the meeting to free $100,000 in matching funds from churches and individuals in order to purchase property that would provide affordable new homes for the workers. All of the money was raised!

Jesus once said, “When you did it for the least of these, you did it for me.” I look forward to serving this incredible Conference of committed and compassionate people for the year 2020. I am anticipating we will continue to create something beautiful and powerful that changes the lives of individuals, churches and the world around us. Thank you so much, Florida Conference UCC!
Conference Staff, Officers, Board and Committee Members and Synod Delegates
(for all or a portion of the 2019 calendar year)

Conference Staff
Rev. John Vertigan - Conference Minister
Rev. Dr. Raymond W. Hargrove - Eastern Regional Minister
Rev. Leslie Etheredge - Western Regional Minister
Neal Watkins - Minister of Faith Formation
Rev. Alan Coe - Disaster Response & Recovery Ministry
Dave Cyril - Communications Director/Office Manager
Beth Shedden - Financial Assistant
Rev. Leigh McCaffrey - MESA Coordinator
Dana Ney – Administrative Assistant

Volunteer Leadership
Mr. Rick Carson - Editor, Celebrate Florida
Mr. Tom Mitchell - Associate Editor, Celebrate Florida
Ms. Jo Pritchett (First Congregational UCC/Orange City)
Ms. Sammie Hartwell (Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach) – 3 Great Loves Ambassador
Rev. Sheila Guillaume (Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach) – 3 Great Loves Ambassador
Ms. Terri Crawford - President, Florida UCC Women

Officers and Board Members
Rev. Barton Buchanan (Windermere Union Church) - Moderator
Mr. Sumner Hutcheson III (Church of the Open Door Congregational/ Miami) - Vice Moderator
Rev. Dr. Doug Borko (Cocoa Beach Community Church) - Treasurer
Rev. Dr. Dawson Taylor (Naples UCC) - Chair, Personnel Committee
Rev. Steve Heath (Union Congregational Church/Holly Hill) - Chair, Committee on Church & Ministry
Mr. Raymond Peidl (UCC at The Villages) - Chair, Budget & Finance Committee
Mr. Michael Downs (Naples UCC) - Chair, Legacy Funds Committee
Rev. John Vertigan (First UCC/Orlando) - Conference Minister
Ms. Lynn Jones (First Congregational UCC/Sarasota) - Registrar
Rev. Paul Werner (St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota)
Rev. Dr. Kathy Roko (Faith Family UCC/Brandon)
Rev. Alan Coe (Mayflower Congregational UCC/Naples)
Ms. Dyanne Eds (Hope UCC/Rockledge)
Rev. Shelly Wilson (United Church of Gainesville)
Ms. Sally Cash (Pass-A-Grille Beach Community UCC/ St. Pete Beach)
Mr. Rodger McDowall (UCC at The Villages)
Mr. Thaddeaus Elliott (Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami)
Rev. Robin DeAngelis (Spring Hill UCC)

Church & Ministry Committee
Rev. Steve Heath, chair (Union Congregational Church/Holly Hill)

Northeast
Rev. Timothy Woodard, chair (Riviera UCC/Palm Bay)
Ms. Sammie Hartwell (UCC/New Smyrna Beach)
Rev. Karen Curtis-Weakley (Hope UCC/Rockledge)
Mr. Tom Besaw (Port Orange UCC)
Ms. Jo Pritchett (First Congregational UCC/Orange City)
Rev. Donna Cooney (United Church UCC-DOC/St. Augustine)
Mr. John Fox (Crossroads UCC/Melbourne)
Rev. Ed Middleton, Jr. (Cocoa Beach Community Church)
Rev. Mary Moore (Arlington Congregational Church/Jacksonville)

Southeast
Rev. Jason Fairbanks, chair (First Congregational Church/Lake Worth)
Rev. Dr. Fay Golding (Faith United Church UCC/Tamarac)
Rev. Gregorio Marin (Sunset Congregational Church/Miami)
Rev. Phyllis Panthemer (Jensen Beach Community Church)
Rev. Megan Smith (Coral Gables Congregational UCC)
Ms. Suzanne Lewis (UCC/Fort Lauderdale)
Ms. Joycelyn Patrick (Church of the Palms/Dayton Beach)
Mr. William Generette (Miami Shores Community Church)

West
Mr. Joseph P. Ebbing, chair (Faith Family UCC/Brandon)
Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell-Jackson (First United Church of Tampa)
Rev. Deborah Kunkel (Sanibel Congregational UCC)
Rev. Donna Ives (Spring Hill UCC)
Mr. Mark Devore (Trinity UCC/St. Petersburg)
Ms. Kate Howe (Union Congregational Church/Tavares)
Ms. Marty Szymkot (Church of the Isles/Indian Rocks Beach)
Rev. Michael MacMillan (Faith UCC/Dunedin)
Rev. George Miller (Emmanuel UCC/Sebring)

Budget & Finance Committee
Mr. Raymond Peidl, chair (UCC at The Villages)
Mr. Jeff Ruoff (UCC/Fort Lauderdale)
Mrs. Mickey Wich (First Congregational Church/Port St. Lucie)
Rev. Booth Iburg (Eternal Hope UCC/Fort Walton Beach)
Rev. Ken Frey (Union Congregational Church/Tavares)
Rev. Barton Buchanan (Windermere Union Church)
Mr. Michael Downs (Naples UCC)
Rev. Dr. Doug Borko (Cocoa Beach Community Church)

Legacy Funds Committee
Mr. Michael Downs, chair (Naples UCC)
Mr. Ed Pritchett (Grants & Awards chair) (First Congregational UCC/Orange City)
Mr. Allan March (Planned Giving chair) (United Church of Gainesville)
Ms. Lynn Bunis (Investment Management chair) (Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami)
Rev. Barton Buchanan (Windermere Union Church)
Rev. Dr. Doug Borko (Cocoa Beach Community Church)
Mr. Raymond Peidl (UCC at The Villages)

General Synod Delegates
Rev. Barton Buchanan (Windermere Union Church)
Mr. Bill Detore (2017 & 2019) (Arlington Congregational Church/ Jacksonville)
Ms. Elizabeth "Lisa” LeSueur (2017 & 2019) (Coral Gables Congregational UCC)
Ms. Virginia Somervile (2017 & 2019) (First Congregational Church/Lake Worth)
Rev. Robin DeAngelis (2019) (Spring Hill UCC)
Ms. Maria Burt (2019) (Plymouth Congregational Church/Miami)
Mr. Daniel Best (2019 & 2021) (Christ Congregational Church/Miami)
Ms. Dyanne Eds (2019 & 2021) (Hope UCC/Rockledge)
Ms. Lynn Jones (2019 & 2021) (First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)Ms. Kate Howe (2019 & 2021) (Union Congregational Church/Tavares)
Rev. Ed Middleton, Jr. (2019 & 2021) (Cocoa Beach Community Church)
Mr. John Havens (2019 & 2021) (Arlington Congregational Church/Jacksonville)
Ministry in the Florida Conference continues to be both challenging and exciting. I can’t believe that I am in my fifth year of ministry here. When I began to learn about and experience judicatory ministry, I considered my job to have four components: Committee on Church & Ministry, Search and Call, conflict resolution/mediation/education and that of being a pastor to pastors. I’ve taken very seriously the need to establish relationship with pastors, leadership and congregants. After five years, I consider those relationships solid and am happy to have moved from establishing to nurturing.

While those four major components consume the majority of my time, there are so many other facets that make up this work. There is absolutely never a dull moment. Beyond the scope of those major pieces, in 2019 I led a women’s retreat, a leadership seminar, talked with a confirmation class, established communities of practice, coordinated affinity groups for the annual Gathering, participated in fund raisers, dedications, installations, ordinations, services of release and so much more.

In 2019 the Western Region saw pastoral transitions in 12 churches — that’s almost 27% of the churches in this area. There are more to come in 2020. As difficult as transitions can be, they can also bring a fresh vision and opportunity for churches that must constantly be looking to do church and ministry in different ways. Pastors and church leaders are rising to the challenge and many are doing phenomenal work in our Conference.

The work of the Committee on Church & Ministry — one of the most important standing committees in the Conference and our denomination — can be gut-wrenching. In 2019, it was just that. Those who serve on this committee are extremely dedicated and take this work very seriously. Fortunately, there is shared pride and gladness at journeying alongside our Members in Discernment and our candidates for Privilege of Call in the UCC as they answer the call to ministry. This has definitely been the good payoff in COCAM work in the past year.

Since I am an admitted worship/church geek, I love the diversity of worship services that I am privileged to attend and be a part of in the Western Region. Out of 52 Sundays in the year, I was in one of my 45 churches on 31 occasions. From Pensacola Beach to Marco Island and everything in between, the variety in worship styles and theologies makes this an exciting endeavor! When I am asked to preach, it is both a delight and a humbling experience. I am so enamored and encouraged by the myriad ministries of our churches and the dedication and wisdom imparted by their pastors each and every Sunday. It brings my soul joy and makes me want to shout to a troubled world that “God IS still speaking.”

The pace of this ministry is fast yet exhilarating. I look forward to even more challenges and celebrations that 2020 is already delivering.
When talking about Conference ministry and what I do as a Regional Minister, I often use a description that I heard years ago but I think that it still pretty accurate. I say that I am a “pastor-to-pastors and a pastor at-large to congregations.”

Much like a local church pastor, most of what I do may not be readily apparent to most people beyond times when I am physically present among them. The unseen part of my ministry often involves numerous phone conversations, electronic communication, one-on-one meetings and — even with all of the technology we utilize — a significant amount of travel as I work with congregations from Yulee to Key West.

One of the many things that I appreciate about serving as the Eastern Regional Minister is the opportunity to experience the diversity that exists among our congregations. I think that it goes without saying that no two congregations are the same. While they may share a similar faith journey, each is unique in unto itself.

Every church has its challenges, but one that seems to be most common among them all is the struggle to define who they are in the midst of the cultural changes that are all taking place all around us. The central question that many congregations seem to be wrestling with in one way or another is “who is God calling us to be; what does mission and ministry look like in this place and time?”

I get to work with congregations who, in a variety of ways, are slowly and sometimes reluctantly coming to grips with a “new normal” but are gradually discerning their way into the future to which they are being called. I see this most prominently when working with churches that are going through a pastoral transition.

In 2019 four congregations in the Region called a new pastor, seven are currently going through a pastoral transition and three are engaged in the New Beginnings program.

One other thing that I will mention is that I, along with several staff colleagues, get to staff the work of the Committee on Church & Ministry. I am always impressed with and grateful for the people whom God is calling to seek ministerial authorization in the Florida Conference UCC. I am encouraged as we hear candidates’ stories of their respective life journeys, journey in ministry and get a sense of the gifts that they bring.

I also participated in the Conference Committee on Ministry Response Team training in Orlando (a national gathering of Associate Conference Ministers) and serve on the Daniel Hand Fund Committee (UCC Local Church Ministries).

I’ll close this part of my time by saying that it continues to be a blessing to serve with and among members of the Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ.
The vision for the Minister for Faith Formation position has been on developing relationships for the sake of determining:

• what resources exist within the Florida Conference for Faith Formation

• what resources for Faith Formation are within the grasp of the local churches of the Florida Conference (that can be developed with the support of Conference staff and other Conference churches)

• what new and fruitful ways can the passions for Faith Formation challenge the members of the Florida Conference to be bold, biblical and beautiful in its witness to our local communities and beyond

One point of work has been to foster relationships among the youth ministries of the Florida Conference. On a wider level, this has been done through the work of visits to local churches, the coordination of retreat possibilities (in the spring a regional youth event was held at UCC/Fort Lauderdale) and through our annual fall retreat which was held at the DaySpring Retreat Center in Bradenton. In 2019 our attendance grew from 45 participants to 70 and was a time of growth, fellowship and, of course, faith formation for students in the 6th through 12th grades.

Additionally, I serve as staff liaison to the Youth Ministries Task Force which has been created to provide curriculum, relational and programmatic support to the youth ministries of the Conference. I am excited to share that in addition to rich relationships in a time of shifting paradigms in youth ministry, this group has also produced the bones and muscles of a Conference-wide mission trip for the summer of 2020.

Further, a great deal of time was spent in the coordination of logistics for the 2019 Annual Gathering. While others focused on strategic and practical logistics, my position in partnership with Rev. John Vertigan and various members of clergy throughout the Conference, focused on thematic logistics including worship, breakouts and workshops, Local Church University and engagement with the representatives of the local churches.

Communication with the local churches has been floated through such vessels as the Florida Conference Writer’s Collective Lenten Lectionary Series and the Advent Calendar devotional.

One area I am perhaps most excited about is the opportunity that I have had to partner with several local churches in a time of Bible study and strategic discernment and visioning. This has happened in the form of all-church retreats (Faith UCC/Bradenton) and more focused leadership retreats and conversations (Coral Isles Church/Tavernier, Miami Lakes Congregational Church and Emmanuel UCC/Sebring) focusing on utilizing the gifts and passions of our local churches to be unique and effective through Christian identity, volunteer development and clarity of calling as disciples of Christ. Great efforts are being made to expand and articulate these processes to widen the accessibility in 2020.

Finally, as faith formation is such an intimate, unique and powerful process, I continue to be in discernment as to how to help equip and engage the churches of the Conference. Thus I continue to find opportunities to join in worship, in conversation and in communion with the churches from Miami to Gainesville, Pensacola to Jacksonville and everywhere in between.

It remains a pleasure and honor to be serving the Florida Conference in such a time as this.

Neal Watkins
Minister for Faith Formation
(Community Church of Vero Beach)
### Ordinary Income/Expense

#### Income

- Income from Congregations
  - Congregational Support: $727,765.89
  - Missions/OCWM Pass-Thru: $(214,932.47)
  - Total Income from Congregations: $512,833.42
- Income from Programs/Meetings: $48,034.01
- Misc Income Items
  - Investment Income - UNR: $418.84
  - Rentals - University Prop: $7,300.00
  - Disaster Ministry Giving: $0.00
  - Total Misc Income Items: $7,718.84

#### Total Income

- Total Income: $577,676.27
- Gross Profit: $577,676.27

#### Expense

- Staff Expenses
  - RM Car Purchases: $17,114.00
  - Salaries: $342,959.32
  - Housing Allowance: $79,103.75
  - Self-Employment Tax Reimburse: $23,296.80
  - Payroll Taxes: $8,305.66
  - Health/Life Insurance: $97,740.87
  - Pension: $55,320.24
  - Travel: $23,566.69
  - Meals: $4,343.99
  - Vehicle Expenses: $3,394.15
  - CM Prof. Expenses: $4,003.49
  - Total Staff Expenses: $659,148.96
- Program/Meeting Expenses: $94,529.14
- Administrative Expenses: $79,815.63
- Property Expenses: $46,650.05

#### Total Expense

- Total Expense: $880,143.78

#### Net Ordinary Income

- Net Ordinary Income: $(302,467.51)

### Other Income/Expense

#### Other Income

- Transfers from DES/RES Funds: $303,508.38

#### Total Other Income

- Total Other Income: $303,508.38

#### Net Other Income

- Net Other Income: $1,040.87

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**2019 Budget and Finances**

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On the theme of “What Wondrous Love,” the United Church of Christ in Florida assembled at the Wyndham Orlando Resort October 10-12 for its 2019 Annual Gathering. It was our larger faith community’s once-a-year opportunity to learn, transform and experience our covenant. Sixty three congregations were represented with 146 delegates registered.

Prior to the official start of the Gathering, the Local Church University was held on Thursday afternoon with three one-hour modules: “Worshipping with New Creativity,” “Having Good and Productive Meetings” and “A Spirituality of Generosity.” The afternoon program concluded with a lively informal social/reception at an adjacent Tex-Mex restaurant.

Friday began with “table worship” with Communion followed by the first round of 45 minute workshops. These were: “Anti-racism Work in the UCC,” “Breakfast Church,” “Just Peacemaking,” “Going Green: Becoming a Creation Justice Church” and “Touch the Water, Taste the Bread: Exploring the Holy Sacraments with UCC Kids.” The first business plenary session was held, followed by lunch and the second rounds of afternoon workshops: “Global Ministries Southeast Asia Initiative,” “Creating a Sustainable and Achievable 3-Year Plan,” “Coalition of Immokalee Workers Update,” “Interfaith Relations” and “Called as Partners in Christ’s Service: Developing and Nurturing Attitudes of Servanthood as a Matter of Faith, Not Obligation.”

The keynote address was a duo presentation by Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson (First United Church of Tampa) and Rev. Velda Love (Minister for Racial Justice for the national UCC) who discussed the transformative, restorative role the church can play in being a “healing space,” creating a church that does not exclude and the importance of telling that story.

The afternoon business plenary followed led by Moderator Rev. Barton Buchanan (Windermere Union Church) with a report from the Legacy Funds Committee and an overview of the budget and finances. Regional Ministers Rev. Leslie Etheredge and Rev. Dr. Raymond Hargrove read the names and introduced clergy new to the Conference since the last Gathering. Nominating Committee Chair Dyanne Edds (Hope UCC/Rockledge) submitted the report on Board and committee vacancies to be filled. Affinity groups and various ministries were available afterward to share information with interested delegates and visitors.

The day concluded with a banquet followed by a brief program during which Conference Minister Rev. John Vertigan acknowledged various Florida UCC members and churches that had been recognized during Synod in Milwaukee this past summer. Representatives from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers thanked the Conference for its long standing support, and Rev. Alan Coe (Mayflower Congregational UCC/Naples) shared about the Immokalee Fair Housing initiative.

Saturday began with morning prayer and a message about “changing the unchangeable to make the possible” delivered by Rev. Robert Asinger (Church by the Sea/Bal Harbour). Votes were taken on two pieces of business. Names of new Board nominees were submitted and approved as was the 2020 budget. The Conference Minister read the names of those clergy with standing in the Conference who had passed since the last Gathering. The “State of the Conference” address was delivered by Rev. Vertigan in which he commented on the Conference finances, programs and support available to congregations and the Board’s vision going forward. A challenge from the floor was issued to the Conference and Florida UCC congregations to support financially the Immokalee Fair Housing Initiative.

The Conference Minister opened the Gathering to a Town Hall format during which delegates and visitors had the opportunity to ask him questions and share concerns. Issues raised included Legacy Funds grants, the Young Adult Service program, WISE and the Creation Justice Church initiative.

The vespers-style closing worship was led by Rev. Aaron Lauer (Coral Gables Congregational UCC), and the gathered departed, having been anointed with oil and reminded of the “blessing of what we’ve done and a charge to keep the embers going.
It was a relatively calm 12 months as far as disaster response ministry in Florida is concerned. No land-falling hurricanes in 2019 made for a calmer hurricane season — although we were on edge as Dorian at one time was projected to head this way. Hurricanes are not the only disaster that may happen in the state; they just get the most attention. Two other major potential natural disasters are wildfires and tornados.

The two worksites the UCC Disaster Response Ministry has open in Florida continue to look for volunteer groups and host groups from different parts of the country. The two worksites are in Volusia and Bay Counties. More information and how to volunteer is found at www.ucc.org/disaster.

The Florida Conference owns four cargo trailers for disaster response and a variety of tools that are stored in the trailers. The trailers have seen sporadic use since they were purchased, and based on that a decision has been made to sell two of the trailers and consolidate the tools. That will happen sometime in 2020.

David Heald (Union Congregational Church/Holly Hill) resigned in 2019 as my counterpart in the northern half of Florida for health reasons. His work was focused in the north and east coast of the state. David also volunteered in Volusia County where he lives with the long term recovery group VIND. He continues to support the disaster ministry and is available to help on a limited basis.

What I try to do as the Conference disaster coordinator is provide information, be a resource and an encourager to local churches. I visit with people at our annual Gatherings but otherwise face-to-face contact is limited due to time and distance. As a full time pastor, I am not able to travel around the state and visit with churches on a regular basis. A visit to your church to speak can be scheduled if requested. I encourage local churches and members in those churches to be their own “first responders” and get to know the local resources, agencies and key people in the community for disaster planning, preparation, response and recovery.

I represent the Florida Conference by participating in statewide disaster response agencies. I attend the Florida Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (FLVOAD) meetings and serve on its Board of Directors. Some of the quarterly meetings are held in conjunction with other statewide disaster response conferences, which allows for educational opportunities and networking. There is a wealth of information and knowledge at these events and as needed or requested I am able to share some of that knowledge.

Nationally the UCC disaster response ministry is in transition. The Executive for Disaster Ministry left his position in November and the person to whom he reported also accepted a position outside the denomination earlier in 2019. Both of those positions should be filled in 2020. Other personnel are covering what needs to be done in the meantime. The national setting of the UCC also supports the recovery work in Volusia and Bay counties with Partner in Service volunteers and grant funding.

Many Florida congregations pitched in to help with supplies and funds for the Bahamas relief efforts

We remember these authorized ministers who served the Church with grace and are now departed from our midst into eternity*

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>1928-12-03</td>
<td>4/24/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James B Allan</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1916-03-16</td>
<td>12/5/2018</td>
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<td>Richard J. Bailar</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1928-12-29</td>
<td>1/18/2019</td>
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<td>Lyman G. Farrar</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1932-09-18</td>
<td>11/21/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roger B. Seidner</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1926-04-18</td>
<td>11/8/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>William G. Nix</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1926-03-07</td>
<td>6/10/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradley T. Lines</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1924-04-02</td>
<td>10/20/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard W Baker</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>1930-08-03</td>
<td>10/27/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia A. Hillesland</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1950-09-30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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* Passings of which we have learned since our 2018 October Gathering
The 3 Great Loves initiative of the United Church of Christ was created to encourage local churches to share stories of how they are living into Love of Children, Love of Neighbor and Love of Creation. Here in the Florida Conference, we have had many examples of all of these, and numerous articles and photos were contributed to Celebrate Florida throughout 2019.

Specifically, during the month of May, we encouraged all local churches to find ways to demonstrate our Love of Creation. Through an initiative we called “Planting for Tomorrow,” we had our chance to shine a spotlight on our state and to really make a difference both within local church walls as well as in the broader community. Many of our churches stepped up to the plate and proactively participated in such events as tree plantings, beach clean-ups, upgrading of their campus’ landscaping, planting flowers with their Sunday School children and delivering “May Baskets” to local shut-ins and nursing homes. At our Annual Gathering in October, we recognized and awarded those churches and individuals who did an exceptional job in rallying their congregations around the May program, and we are hopeful that the momentum we saw in 2019 will continue into 2020.

During the 2019 General Synod of the United Church of Christ in Milwaukee, our General Minister and President Rev. John Dorhauer announced the 3 Great Loves denomination-wide storytelling initiative will continue until 2021.

3 Great Loves Ambassadors for The Florida Conference

REV. DR. SHELLA GUILLAUME
(Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach)

LYNN JONES
(First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)

Love of children demonstrated at First Congregational UCC/Lake Helen

Planting a tree at Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach

Promoting awareness of the environment at Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach

Greening the campus at First Congregational Church/Lake Worth
According to the UCC Manual on Ministry:

The United Church of Christ locates authority for the authorization and oversight of ministers, including ordination and continued standing, in Associations through Committees on Ministry. In the work of authorization and oversight, Committees on Ministry discern collectively the wisdom of the Spirit, the call of Christ, and the mission of God, on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

I believe everyone on your Committee on Church & Ministry (COCAM) is aware of the heavy responsibility that you have entrusted to us. Most often the task is a joyous one; occasionally it requires of us that we make decisions we find painful. This past year brought us many joys along with pain.

This past year, your COCAM (which also meets as the Association Ecclisiasical Council) approved the following persons for ordination in the UCC: Brenda Dowell, Rachel Kirk and Wesley Snedeker. The Committee approved the following persons, who received their ordination in another denomination, for privilege of call in the UCC: Laura Callender, Luigi Chekwa, Mark Dowell and Sharon Harris-Ewing.

COCAM is subdivided into three Regional committees (Northeast, Southeast and Western), which all do an excellent job of supervising Members in Discernment and preparing candidates to come before the full Committee. These Regional teams also handle authorization of Lay Ministerial Standing.

In addition to authorization of ministers, the COCAM is responsible for oversight. As part of the oversight process, two formal complaints were brought before the COCAM this past year. Please note that all letters of complaint are brought to the Committee with names of individuals, churches and any other identifying information redacted. In one case, the full COCAM decided that the nature of the complaint was such that “even if found to be true, it does not call into question the person’s fitness for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.” The other complaint was against the Rev. Bryan Fulwider. The Committee voted to conduct a Fitness Review, and the process outlined in the UCC Manual on Ministry was initiated. Soon afterward, the Committee was presented with compelling evidence that Rev. Fulwider had failed to cooperate with the clearly communicated requirements of the Fitness Review process, which is grounds for termination of standing. The Committee then voted to terminate his ministerial standing. Rev. Fulwider’s arrest received much attention in the Orlando area media, as did his eventual taking of his own life. Your Committee asks that you join us in praying for all the individuals and churches affected by this horrible series of incidents.

We also ask that every congregation in the Florida Conference assist us in doing our job of identifying candidates for authorized ministry within the church by encouraging those within your own congregation who may have a sense of God’s call to ministry.

Florida clergy celebrate the ordination of Wesley Snedecker on July 13 to be Community Minister at Fort Myers Congregational UCC

Florida Conference delegates and staff at General Synod in Milwaukee
The Florida Conference is blessed by generations of faithful giving and the stewardship of these gifts that now supports the funding of various missional programs. The Conference Legacy Committee is tasked with governance and oversight of these endowed funds. This work is accomplished by four subcommittees: Investment, Property, Grants and Development.

The Investment Subcommittee operates in accordance with the Conference Investment and Spending Policy dated October, 2014. All investments comply with socially responsible guidelines. There are nine subaccounts. During 2019, asset allocations for equity ranged from 65-70% and fixed income from 30-35%. Combined performance across all subaccounts was 18.20% net of all fees. Assets grew by $1,195,532.57 during the year totaling $7,542,812.02 at year-end. The Budget Stabilization Fund, invested entirely in short term fixed income, returned $22,779.86 during the year with an ending balance of $559,993.03.

The Grants Subcommittee makes grants/awards/scholarships or loans available to Conference local churches and individuals for:

- educational support
- justice advocacy
- building multi-faith community
- learning experiences for children and youth
- local church revitalization/renewal
- local church development and growth
- training

(see Conference guidelines for applications and criteria specific to each grant or loan category)

There were 10 grants/awards/scholarships made during 2019 for a total of $19,025. There were no loan applications received during the year. It is important to note that because of funds raised for the Burns Fund, interest-free loans are available to new or renewing local churches for land or building acquisition.

The Property Subcommittee manages real property that has been gifted to the Conference, and where possible assists Conference local churches with property acquisition and disposition matters.

The Development Subcommittee supports the Conference in annual appeal activities. The Committee also works closely with Conference staff and local churches in development efforts that secure long-term gifts or bequests that can be used as an endowment or to fund specific programs.