



The first edition of the *Southern Spirit*, a successor to the *Southern Conference News*, was published in November, 2003. Below are three photos from the past six years of publication.



Nov. 2003: Doug Long (North Raleigh UCC pastor), converses with Rev. Charles Brooks



April - May 2006: Ron Buford, creator of "God is Still Speaking Campaign," leads workshop



Oct. - Nov. 2007: Rev. Kate Huey offers direction; Rev. Dale Kennedy, records responses



Linda Carter posts EMAIL News Blast for SOC readers
-photo by C. L. Stumb

Task Force Asked to Stop Look and Listen

"We've been so caught up and drowned in our financial situation so that we've lost sight of ministry. It's all been about money; less and less about people and ministry." -Lilton J. Marks, Fellowship UCC, Chesapeake, VA



Task Force leader Lilton Marks expresses a sense of direction as he converses with committee colleague and staff representative Drew Morris. The two were present (along with Dale Kennedy) to conduct staff interviews in August.
-Photo by C. L. Stumb

by C. L. "Curly" Stumb

"How do we come up with a means to look into the future of Southern Conference and see how it can serve local churches in ministry?" asked The Reverend Lilton J. Marks, Sr., rhetorically. Rev. Marks has been handed the role of chairing a 5-Year Task Force on Conference Restructure. "Our task is not a decision making body; we are a listening body," he added. "We see our task as receiving feedback from the people and churches of the conference."

To the conference staff Littleton re-focused his question: "How can we better inspire min-

istry in Southern Conference?" "Staff," he continued, "is very critical in this process, in terms of doing ministry and bringing the conference" [pausing to think about his choice of next words], "I'll use the words 'back together' in unified ministry."

The Task Force has developed three (3) questions of concentration for which members are designing a process to retrieve feedback. Those questions are: (1) What are your support needs for your ministry? (2) How can the Conference better meet the needs of the churches? (3) What can we do to strengthen corporate trust and Christian unity?

Rev. Marks came to Southern

Conference in January of 2008, accepting a call to Fellowship UCC in Chesapeake, VA, upon retirement as an Army chaplain, and transferring of his standing from SE Conference. He had concluded his military career after a distinguished year of service in Iraq, as Senior Command Chaplain for all the multi-national forces in Iraq, returning from the mid-East in the fall of 2006.

The 5-Year Task Force is comprised of two SOC Board members from each Association, along with Drew Morrison as an ACM staff representative. The Conference Minister [Steve Camp] and

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Communications Move to Cyberspace

Transitioning toward future communications, the SOC office staff has instituted a new format for sending Southern Conference EMAIL NEWS. With the utilization of "Constant Contact," pastors, church members and other interested parties desiring

information about Southern Conference can find regular deliveries of messages to the computer IN Boxes of their designation.

Church "i-reporters" are encouraged to send news from their respective local congregations. The conference invites updates of

additional e-mail addresses for persons desiring to receive SOC communications.

Also continue to check the SOC webpage as a site with featured news stories, Conference Calendar, educational events and resources.

Sharing Random Words of Goodbye

by Vertie Powers
Associate Conference Minister (ENCA)

Vertie's Words



Hello and greetings of grace and peace to all of you, my sisters and brothers in the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ. I write instead of our Conference Minister, Stephen Camp, who is on sabbatical at the time of this writing, to say goodbye to what has become near and dear to us, the *Southern Spirit*.

This is the last issue of the *Southern Spirit* and I feel that in this last article there should be something profound. Maybe a vision of what is to come or a prophetic announcement of what is to be. However I am unable to come up with either. Instead, I feel a sense of loss and sadness. Things change but it is never the end, rather it is a beginning. While I am not comfortable with change, I am accepting of it and the good that normally comes from change.

In the communications and information field things are changing at an exponential rate. Things are changing so fast that I am beginning to feel left behind. Before when things were ending and others beginning I could cope because there was time to process and become acclimated to that which was new. However, because I am not able to keep up with the rapid rate of change I am filled with fear and trepidation.

In my youth this was not always the case. Because I was the Great Grand-daughter of Angeline Powers I was fearless in the face of adversity. Angeline Davis Powers was born into slavery, witnessed Emancipation Proclamation, walked from her home into the unknown to freedom and lived to be approximately 107 years. She witnessed change in her personal life; slavery, freedom, new home, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, husband dying, children dying, travel by horse and buggy then car; and progressive strides in society: radio, television, cars, telephones, schools for her children and the ability to receive an income from labor rendered. With hindsight and some maturity I now know that Grandmother often times felt lost, afraid, unsure and that society had left her behind because of

the speed of the advances.

Technology is moving ahead by humongous leaps and bounds and at some point you get on board or you are left behind. The information highway is moving at warp speed. The 6pm and 11pm news is old by the time it reaches the air. Organizations, secular and religious, are becoming more and more aware that the internet is the more viable way of doing and being. Not only is it more economical but it is more environmentally friendly. More and more church folk are on *Face Book* or *Twitter* than are writing letters and talking on the telephone. In the next five years technology will move forward quicker than it has in the last twenty years. It is no wonder we try to keep things the way they were thirty, forty, even fifty years ago.

One way of communicating is coming to an end. Another way of communicating for us as a Conference is just beginning. Let us not hold on to the old and refuse to contemplate the new. Rather let us

Technology is moving ahead by humongous leaps and bounds and at some point you get on board or you are left behind.

celebrate the former and reach out with faith to the new. Scripture is full of instances where God does a new thing and the people always want to go back

to what they think is familiar and personal. From Genesis to Revelation we hear the stories of a new nation, freedom, liberation, inclusion, hospitality and in each instance of newness the people moaned and groaned and did not want to move forward and grasp the new opportunities.

We are the Southern Conference, clergy and lay. We are the people of God in whom God is continually doing a new thing. There are no endings rather beginnings that continually come up. The *Southern Spirit* newspaper is gone, but the Southern Spirit is alive and well. Let us walk forward into this new opportunity presented to us and embrace it and then mold it and fill it with the unique way that is us, the Southern Conference. Let us with God's help determine how we will make personal the Internet, this new way we are called to communicate.

John Thomas says good-bye to SOC friends and colleagues during final visit in his current role as General Minister and President of the UCC.



John Thomas and Julie Peebles at Abernethy Laurels event in May

Amidst the hospitality of Abernethy Laurels (United Church Homes & Services in Newton, NC), Rev. Johns Thomas lamented, "This feels like the great good-bye which has gone on for much too long." His term of office will conclude at the end of September, 2009. Sharing personal stories

spanning Afghanistan to Johns River, he recalled a string of connections with Southern Conference people.

In a second engagement during the May 9-10 weekend, Thomas delivered a sermon at Bethany UCC (Claremont, NC), sharing in that congregation's cele-

bration of their 100th anniversary.

Chicago Theological Seminary has named the Rev. Thomas as Senior Advisor to the President and Visiting Professor in Church Ministries. Thomas' new appointment will take effect Jan. 1, 2010.

Southern Conference Foundation Formed

On August 8 the Board of Trustees for the newly formed Southern Conference Foundation met for the first time. Tom Cantrell, Earl Potts, Sheila Bynum, David Sanford, Phil Hardy and special consultant Mary Wesley met at the Southern Conference office in Burlington to begin its work on a Planned Giving program aimed at supporting and sustaining the ministries of the Southern Conference and its churches.

Among the business done at this first gathering was the creation of a mission statement. The Southern Conference Foundation will exist "to provide needed support to local congregations and ministries in their effort to fulfill the Biblical call to be blessed and be a blessing to others." Over the

coming months representatives of the Foundation hope to visit churches to discover what ministries and outreach programs the churches would hope to do if not for the limitation of resources. It is the aim of the Foundation to help churches in the Southern Conference and the Conference itself engage more effectively in their calls to ministry.

At each Association meeting this fall, announcements will be made about the first churches to receive funds from the Foundation and the ministries made possible.

If you and your congregation would be willing to have a conversation about the ministry needs in your church and the ways the Foundation can help, please call Phil Hardy at the Conference office.

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Conference president [Dale Kennedy] will serve ex-officio. Lilton Marks and Julia Muse [EVA]; Jill Edens and Sheila Bynum [ENCA]; along with Doug Sink and Paul Davis [WNCA] add representative voices and ears from their respective regions.

The Task Force is in the process of identifying opportunities for listening in both specific congregations [7-10 in each Association], along with several

open sessions [1-2 / association]. While the Task Force function has a designated parameter of existence [5 years], Rev. Marks hopes that there will be enough feedback to make a preliminary report to the SOC Board in March of 2010, so that the Annual Gathering can have access to the progress of the TF work. He has engaged the process, even during the summer months, to establish a foundation for the projected work.

SOUTHERN SPIRIT

The Reverend Stephen CampConference Minister and Editor
Janelle Bunn Administrative Secretary and Managing Editor
C. L. "Curly" Stumb, Irwin Smallwood, Linda Carter Communication Team
The Southern Spirit is published bimonthly as an edition of the United Church News. The publication is a successor to the *Christian Sun* (1894), *The Standard* (*The College Visitor*, 1887), the *Newsletter* (1951), the *News of Southern Conference Ministries*, and the *Southern Conference News*.
News items and pictures of interest are welcome. Send to 252-B West Fifth Street, Burlington, NC 27215. Deadline is the fifth of each month prior to published editions.

And the Word Entered the Internet

by Irwin Smallwood

If this at times begins to read like an obituary, don't think you have taken leave of your senses. It may well be so.

With this final edition of the Southern Spirit, for the first time in more than 100 years the churches that today comprise the Southern Conference will be at least temporarily without a printed journal of consequence. And that makes me very sad.

Really sad, because for the first time in more than 50 years, I will not be writing or editing or working in some capacity to bring such a publication into your home or your church or both. But this isn't about me. It's about how we communicate with each other, and if there is one thing we need to do a better job of in the church we love, it is to communicate more fully and lovingly with our brothers and sisters.

Unfortunately for those who thirst for enlightenment, the printed word is losing its appeal, replaced in large measure by the keystrokes and pictures that turn into instant images on the screen of your friendly computer or, perhaps, your Blackberry. That most of them are destined to eventually vanish into the never-never land of cyberspace seems to be of little concern to many.

It's about how we communicate with each other, and if there is one thing we need to do a better job of in the church we love, it is to communicate more fully and lovingly with our brothers and sisters.

The roots of printed journals of the former Congregational Christian and Evangelical and Reformed churches in the Southern Conference date back to 1894 and 1887, respectively, and the former Convention of the South churches' to 1951. Many, if not most, of those early publications and the rich history they contain are readily available in libraries across the conference.

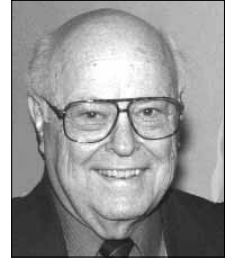
One can only wonder how, 100 years from now, the electronic keystrokes and pictures of today and tomorrow will have been preserved. Let's hope and pray that some one finds a way.

If the tone of my lament seems overly sentimental, and anti-progress (spelled i-n-t-e-r-n-e-t) don't be fooled. The old Christian Sun I helped redesign in the late 1940s is not nearly as attractive and functional as the Southern Spirit our devoted Curly Stumb has developed the past few years. And I am not so blind as not to see the untapped potential of electronic communication in its many forms. I use the internet and depend on its strengths as much as most.

I also suspect - no, expect - that the next generation of communicators will come up with innovations and ideas beyond the wildest dreams of the boldest of today's dreamers.

Let's just hope that, whatever the future brings, it does not completely take from us what so far in our history only the printed word has proven capable of providing.

Irwin's Thoughts



Nothing Ever Changes... a camper perspective



by Anna McKeown
a Johns River camper and member of Umstead Park UCC
reprinted from Umstead Park UCC August 2009 Newsletter

Nothing ever changes at Johns River Valley Camp (JRVC). The beauty silently screams everywhere you turn. The sun still rises, and the stars still twinkle. The rocking chairs rock. The bell still rings. This place still provides exactly what people need to feel amazing. Though, this year at camp, I've never felt so at home. Twenty-seven people gathered on the

porch on the first day. Seventeen campers, eight SCAT members, and two directors. Who knew that these 27 strangers would change my life. I spent my week with new friends that acted like we had known one another forever. Everyone had a different face, a different wish, a different story. We were all our own, but all crucial parts to the group.

Days were filled with dramatic canoe trips, lazy tubing, long hikes, competitive bike rides, ultimate field games, and trying new things. Happiness was a group effort, complaining wasn't tolerated. The group's good mood flooded on to everyone there. There was always someone there to catch me when I fell. We were all together having the time of our lives.

When it was time to leave tears filled everyone's eyes. We were saying goodbye to singing really loud together after every meal. Saying goodbye to midnight dance parties. Goodbye to moments when we laughed so hard we couldn't breathe. Saying goodbye to faithfully playing an out of tune piano. Saying goodbye to a best friend you didn't know if you would ever see again.

Nothing ever changes at Johns River Valley Camp. No matter what, you can leave everything behind when you go to camp. Everything that mattered before suddenly has no meaning. Camp always leaves me with something special—inspiration I suppose. Inspiration to be positive. To see the good in people and to be a friend, to be there for someone. Inspiration to challenge myself, and to listen carefully. Inspiration to forgive, to feel something real, something worth feeling. Inspiration to live life with hope.

Return to Sender - Franklinton Center at Bricks

On Thursday, August 6, 2009, very important and original elements of a historic century old Post Office were returned to their home, Franklinton Center at Bricks in Whitakers, NC, by George Scheitinger. The post office was one of less than a handful operated by African Americans during the early 1900's. It was installed at Franklinton Center in 1902 and was there until the 1970s when the building which housed it was to be torn down.

The post office is solid oak with brass trim and etched glass. It is in excellent condition and simply beautiful. It was built by Corbin Lock Company. The printing over the windows says "General Delivery" and "School Supplies" There is an additional 3 foot section, over which the printing says "Treasurer". The post office served the entire community.

Franklinton Center at Bricks, a center for education and social transformation and a conference and retreat center, is in ministry with Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ. The Center sits

on 250 acres of what was a plantation devoted to punishing slaves who ran or were otherwise deemed to be troublesome. Later, after the Civil War, due to the generosity of a wealthy NY abolitionist, Mrs. Julia Brick, parts of the property became an institution devoted to educating freed slaves and their descendants. It was known as Bricks school. The school had its own post office, with an African American Postmaster. This, in and of itself was a rarity in the early 1900's.

During the 1970's, when the post office building was torn down, Mr. Scheitinger came into possession of the mail boxes and portions of the original counter and windows. He was in conversation with the Smithsonian about the post office furnishings being used in their museum devoted to African American life and history. When those conversations ended because of the economy, Mr. Scheitinger, in a magnanimous gesture offered to return the important furnishings to their original home.

**Working Together:
Stages of Life in Working Relationships**

**November 14, '09
a Johns River Valley Camp Workshop**

Facilitator: Rev. Randall Mishoe

Ministry takes place in community. Ministry is built around groups or teams that gather on many levels for meetings and tasks. Participants will learn stages and acquire tools for developing cooperative teams, more productive work groups, and healthier congregations. www.jrvc.org





Spider Web
Photographed at
Johns River Valley Camp
by C. L. Stumbo

2009 Calendar

September 25-26:
*Fall Clergy Retreat at
Franklinton Center*

October 3: *Western
North Carolina
Association Annual
Meeting, Holy Covenant
UCC, Charlotte*

October 4: *Traditional
date for receiving
Neighbors in Need
Special UCC Offering*

October 10: *Eastern
North Carolina
Association Annual
Meeting*

October 16-18:
*Southern Regional
Women's Meeting,
Brenham, TX*

October 17: *Eastern
Virginia Association
Annual Meeting*

October 19-21:
*Caring for God's
Creation: A Fall Foliage
Retreat at Johns River
Valley Camp*

November 14:
*Working Together:
Stages of Life in Working
Relationships; a Johns
River Valley Camp event*

December 2009:
*Remember the
Christmas Fund, a spe-
cial UCC fund managed
by the Pension Board*

December 27-29:
*Camp Kwanza, a
Franklinton Center holi-
day celebration for youth*

June 10-13, 2010:
*Southern Region
Youth Event*



Raleigh Church Wins Recognition for Green Building

RALEIGH -- Umstead Park United Church of Christ has become the first church in the Southeast to achieve Gold level certification for its building under the national LEED program, which rates buildings for energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction and other environmental standards.

In an unusual arrangement, the church shares the building on Brownleigh Drive, adjacent to Umstead State Park, with BBH Design, an architectural firm that specializes in projects for higher education and health care. The jointly-owned building received the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

BBH Design performed the architectural work that led to the Gold certification for the 32,000-square-foot building. The architectural firm and the church purchased the building, which once housed a home health care business, in 2006. BBH Design and the church then renovated the structure with environmental sensitivity and moved into the building in 2007.

The Gold certification is the second highest of four levels of LEED certification. The certification recognizes the innovative reuse of the building as well as number of green features, such as:

- High-efficiency heating and cooling
- Recycled materials, including recycled carpets
- Priority parking for fuel-efficient vehicles
- Bicycle storage and showers for cyclists
- Water efficiency
- Protection of habitat
- Maximum use of open space
- Construction waste management

The building is a reflection of the theology of Umstead Park UCC, which includes respect for the earth as God's creation, said the Rev. Doug Long, the church pastor. "For us, there's an obvious connection between the creator and the creation, so how we treat the creation is directly related to how we express our love for the creator," he said.

The building also reflects BBH Design's interest in protecting the environment, said Pamela Houston, a LEED-accredited architect who participated in project for the firm. "We believe in the sustainability movement in general and have always felt the best way to show that to the general public was to participate in the LEED certification program," she said.

For more information, contact: Doug Long, Umstead Park United Church of Christ, 844-6661 or doug@upucc.org; Trish Coulson, BBH Design, 460-6700 or tcoulson@BBH-Design.com

About USGBC: The U.S. Green Building Council is a nonprofit membership organization with a vision of a sustainable built environment within a generation. Its membership includes corporations, builders, universities, government agencies and other nonprofit organizations. For more information, visit www.usgbc.org.

About LEED®: The LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™ is a feature-oriented rating system that awards buildings points for satisfying specified green building criteria. LEED can be applied to all building types including new construction, commercial interiors, core & shell developments, existing buildings, homes, neighborhood developments, schools and retail facilities. For more information, visit www.usgbc.org/LEED.

Southern Delegation Gathered for General Synod XXVII

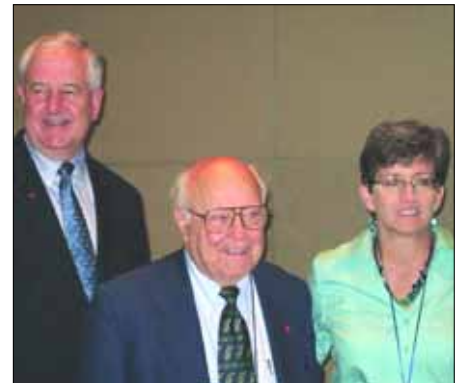


Left: Brenda James (SOC Board member; member of St. Stephens UCC, Greensboro)
Top right: Ron Barlow (SOC Board officer / treasurer class of 2009); member of Peace UCC, Greensboro)
Bottom right: Kristin Andes (SOC Board officer / secretary class of 2009); Yvonne Delk and Ervin Milton (Executive Director - Franklinton Center)

-photos by Paul Davis

Antoinette Brown Award Honors SOC Pastor

The Rev. Julie Peoples, senior pastor of Congregational United Church of Christ in Greensboro, was honored during the recent General Synod in Grand Rapids, MI. She received the 2009 Antoinette Brown Award, given every two years to outstanding female ministers from across the UCC. She was presented by Irwin Smallwood, one of her parishioners and a former president of the Southern Conference. John Thomas, outgoing president of the UCC, also attended the presentation ceremony and made special remarks about her contributions to the church and her community.



John Thomas, Irwin Smallwood and Julie Peoples (recipient of 2009 Antoinette Brown Award)

-photo by Faye Humphrey

SOC Churches Came Together at Catawba in 2009



The 2009 Annual Gathering offered opportunities for worship, business, and awards.

-photos by C. L. Stumbo