

UCC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING
March 17-19, 2011
Jane Tedder, Kansas-Oklahoma Conference Representative

The Executive Council of the United Church of Christ met in Cleveland March 17 through March 19, 2011. In addition to its regular business of receiving reports from the covenanted ministries and affiliated organizations, the Council acted on two additional matters of importance. The first item was to receive the nomination of W. Mark Clark to the position of Associate General Minister to replace Edith Guffey, whose term expires in September. Mark is currently the President and CEO of CODAC Behavioral Health Services, Inc. in Tucson, Arizona and is a lifetime member of the UCC. He has long been active in local, conference, and national settings of the church. The Council unanimously voted to forward Mark's nomination to the General Synod for approval at its July meeting.

The Council also reviewed, page by page, the proposed changes to the UCC's Constitution and Bylaws. These changes incorporate all necessary adjustments which will make possible the restructuring of the national setting of the UCC. The changes can be found on the UCC website at www.ucc.org/synod under the "Delegates" tab. After making a few further alterations to the documents presented, the Council voted to forward the revised Constitution and Bylaws to Synod for approval. Don Clark, General Counsel for the UCC, has issued an opinion which essentially states that the only amendments to be allowed from the floor of General Synod will be those of an editorial nature; amendments which would make a substantial change to the intent of the proposals will be disallowed. There will be a special two-hour session for all delegates acting as a "committee of the whole" in which the proposals will be discussed, but the final vote will be either an "accept" or "reject" vote on the changes.

A separate proposal will come before the General Synod regarding a change in the Bylaws. The Illinois Southern Conference is proposing that meetings of Synod be held "every three or four years" instead of biennially, as is the current practice. If the proposal is approved, a separate revision of the Constitution and Bylaws with this change would come to the 2013 General Synod. It would not be a part of the changes recommended at the 2011 Synod because of the notification requirements for any such changes.

As part of my duties as an Executive Council member I also sit on the Organizational Life Committee and the General Synod Program and Planning Committee. The Organizational Life Committee has among its responsibilities the review and recommendation for action of any changes to the Constitution and Bylaws, so the bulk of that committee's meeting was devoted to reviewing the changes which were later presented to the full Council for consideration. We also reviewed and approved changes to the General Synod Standing Rules, a procedure which is conducted prior to each meeting of the Synod.

The General Synod Program and Planning Committee heard an update on Synod plans. We were excited to learn that the keynote speaker will be Leonard Pitts Jr., a Pulitzer Prize-winning commentator, journalist, novelist and UCC member. The list of speakers and performers for the “Suncoast Saturday” events can be found on the UCC website along with the tentative schedule of activities for Synod. The newly-designed Educational Intensives will be for the purpose of learning about the thirteen resolutions which will be considered during this Synod. The usual committee meetings in which the resolutions are discussed and refined will also be held.

This General Synod is extremely important to the life of the national organization. Three new members of the Collegium will be elected: the Executive Minister of Local Church Ministries (the nominee is Ben Guess), the Executive Minister of Wider Church Ministries (the nominee is Jim Moos), and the Associate General Minister (Mark Clark, as mentioned above). Additionally, the approval of the revised Constitution and Bylaws will mark a dramatic change in how the business of the denomination is conducted. All UCC members are welcome to attend Synod in Tampa the first week in July. Although only the delegates can vote, the discussions and Saturday events are open to all attendees. It will definitely be an exciting time—including the Fourth of July fireworks celebration staged for the residents of Tampa, staged in close proximity to the Convention Center!