



Pre-Annual Gathering greetings, Florida UCC members:

Here is the link to [the October/November issue of Celebrate Florida](#).

This issue provides a very brief summary of the upcoming Annual Gathering of the Florida Conference, which runs from October 12-14 in Orlando. Not registered? There is still time to [register on the Conference website](#), [or you can register at Registration Desk A/B at the Rosen Plaza Hotel on Thursday, Oct. 12, between noon and 1 p.m., or Friday morning, Oct. 13.](#)

Articles in this issue which may be of particular interest to you or others in your congregation include:

- Conference Minister **Rev. John Vertigan** notes that almost half our Florida pastors are part-time. What a gift they are! (page 1)
- Moderator **Lynn Jones (First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)** provides insights into the Board of Directors' Strategic Planning process to develop a vision for the Conference and how we can make it a reality. (page 3)
- Associate Conference Minister **Rev. Leslie Etheredge** will be retiring soon, and she shares a goodbye message with us. (pages 4-5)
- An interesting way to collaborate. (page 6)
- What do our churches have to learn from Bass Pro Shops? (page 7)
- Learn how you can contribute to help the residents of the Hawaiian island of Maui recover from the recent devastating wildfires. (page 10)
- "Who Do You Say You Are?" looks at the few select words churches use to describe themselves on their websites and in their communications. How effective are yours in catching a church shopper's attention? (page 11)

- Four of our congregations are still in the midst of recovering from Hurricane Ian, and their progress is noted. (page 13)
- Two of our churches have just begun a cooperative ministry, and their journey is noted. (page 14)
- “Back to School” summarizes how some of our congregations offered blessings to their students heading back to classes and how churches assisted schools in need in their communities. (page 15)
- Who was the pastor who soothed city council members at their meeting by playing her guitar and leading folks in song? (page 18)
- Our churches have been invited to sign a letter to the powers-that-be regarding education issues in the state. Read the letter in this issue, which will be addressed at the Annual Gathering. (page 21)

As always, the issue contains lots of links to helpful resources and programming ideas you may wish to consider adopting or adapting in your own congregation.

If we’ve not been hearing from you -- and you don't see your church mentioned on these pages -- please make sure we're on the mailing list for your newsletter and e-blasts (rickcarson1@gmail.com) -- simple and much appreciated.

We especially welcome your providing the *Celebrate Florida* link (<https://www.uccfla.org/celebrateflorida>) to church members via your newsletters, e-communications and on your website.

Fall blessings from *Celebrate Florida*,
Rick Carson, Editor

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