

Weekly Connection

For the Week of December 10, 2017 - December 16, 2017
Diverse Minds, Covenant Hearts, Made One in the Body of Christ



The Amazing People of Illinois South Conference...

The doves and cards have been sent to the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, to show support and sympathy for them during this time of grieving for their losses. There were over 250 doves and over 125 cards sent. The churches sending cards and doves were Cahokia Bethel UCC, Collinsville St. John Evangelical UCC, Columbia St. Paul UCC, Edwardsville St. Paul UCC, Floraville St. Paul UCC, Godfrey Evangelical UCC, O'Fallon

UCC, Stone Church St. Peter's UCC, and the entire Illinois South Conference from the doves made as decorations at the 2016 Annual Meeting at Rend Lake, Illinois. If your church has more doves or cards that did not make the mass mailing, please contact Christy at cpursell@iscucc.org or 618-654-2125. She will give you the address to send it directly to them.

Pastor Cory Hartz Is Honored

The ELITE (Extraordinary Leaders Impacting Today's Environment) leaders were honored by Racial Harmony on Sunday, Oct. 22, at the 4204 Banquet Facility and Taphouse in Belleville.

Pastor Cory Hartz was one of the 20 individuals honored as an ELITE leader. Dinner and silent auction were followed by recognition of the leaders for their work in schools, churches, families and communities. Pastor Hartz is the Pastor and Teacher at Belleville Trinity UCC.

The Absurdity of Advent

During the Advent season, the lectionary readings and their vivid imagery portray a "kingdom" reality that seems surreal and other worldly.

Mountains quaking at the very presence of God.
Hills made low.

Rough places made plain.

Swords beaten into plowshares.

Lions lying down with lambs.

And one who will bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and comfort all who mourn.



We declare the beautiful and audacious promises of God, that one day hope, peace, joy, and love will reign supreme.

Yet, then as Kara Root writes in the Absurdity of Advent, "*And then people get into their cars and drive back into the swirling vortex of charity drives, jewelry commercials, consumer guilt, family pressures, and worries about money drowned out by tinsel, carols, baked sweets and promises of incredible interest-free financing for 18 months. And the words of peace and hope for an amped-up and worn-out world seem quaint and pretend. Not really real at all.*"

Root later describes what feels real to her in the weeks leading up to Christmas. She writes, "*I can describe for you the smell walking through the mall, the taste inside my seasonal red Starbucks cup, the sound of the 24/7 holiday music*

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Pray for...

Prayer list for

Dec 10 - Dec 16, 2017

Churches & Pastors

- Nashville St. Paul UCC, Rev. Beverly Kahle
- New Athens St. John UCC, Rev. Dr. Robert (Cathy) Koch

stations and the feeling each time I hand over my credit card. And when I turn on the news and see more war and starvation and sickness, and when I look into my own life and the lives of those I love, and let myself notice all the brokenness and anger, the sadness and stuckness, I can even sometimes admit that there's an easy and sickly sweet comfort in succumbing to the holiday buzz. Where the perfect gift can heal the breach and the brightness of children in scarves and puppies in bows obscures for a while the darkness inside us and around us."

Yes, as she suggests, there is an absurdity to Advent.

It is the absurdity of the incarnation, of God becoming flesh.

It is the absurdity of believing and trusting in another reality, beyond the reality of what we presently know, and in another power above the powers of this world.

It is the absurdity that the kingdom of God is yet evolving, being created, and springing forth each moment, when we as the people of God dare to live in Hope and walk through the dark into the Light of Christ's love.

We are the ones who can participate in the hills of injustice being made low.

We are the ones who can work to smooth out the rough places for those who struggle and suffer under the weight of oppression and inequality.

We are the ones who can beat the swords of intolerance and hatred into plowshares of acceptance and love.

We are the ones who can commit ourselves to empowering the lambs to speak, stand or rise up against the lions who misuse and abuse their power and authority.

How? When we are bold enough to believe and embody the essence of Emmanuel-God with Us, God Among Us and God For Us.

Sounds absurd? Maybe--but this is the absurdity of Advent.

Blessings, Shana

This is your OCWM monies at work.

Retired Pastor

- Rev. Chris and Lena Edwards, Converse, TX

People with Life Concerns

- Keep the family of Gene (Mary) Bergmann in your prayers as Gene deals with serious health issues from a fall. He is the brother of Shirley Bergmann, ISC Treasurer and Finance Coordinator.

- Pray for Nancy (Rev. Bob) Tripp as she deals with health issues. Rev. Tripp is a retired pastor and they are members of Pana United in Faith Church. Cards may be sent to 9008 E South Cir Dr, Effingham IL 62401.

DuBois Center News

The Camp and Retreat Center of the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ



YEAR-END SUPPORT for Ministry at DuBois Center

At this time of year, we are more mindful of giving thanks - for family, friends, our church community and God at work in our lives. At DuBois Center, we are also thankful for stories, especially ones of connection, challenge and transformation. These stories tell of new-found confidence

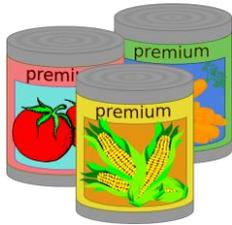
for first-time campers, deepening parent-child relationships, faith discussions that come alive, individuals transformed into communities, unlikely friendships built on respect, and so

much more. Scores of dedicated volunteers, staff members and donors make DuBois Center a place of welcome and hospitality, a place to connect, belong and grow... a place where faith is nurtured and stories are written. With your financial support this work continues. You may have received a letter lifting up "snapshots" of our ministry in the outdoors. If not, click [here](#) to view the letter online. DuBois Center is your ministry, the work of your congregations, the work of the Illinois South Conference. We hope you will consider a tax-deductible year-end gift. You may use our donation site to safely donate [online](#). If you prefer to mail your donation, use this [form](#). With so many demands on your resources, we are truly honored by your gifts of financial support as well as offerings of prayer, time and talent. Thank you.



FOLLOW US on Instagram

Winter is a beautiful time here at DuBois Center. Be sure to follow us on [Instagram](#), so you don't miss out on any of the great scenery! Also, be on the lookout for pictures of events, guest groups, horses and the occasional barn cat.



BUNCO NIGHT - The Challenge **Saturday, Feb 24**

Calling all churches and youth, fellowship and community groups! Join Region 2 for a night of winter blues-busting fun - support DuBois Center and a local food pantry!

There's nothing wrong with a little friendly competition, so this year's Bunco Night is joining forces with an effort to "Fill a Food Pantry." Besides a lively game of Bunco, cool Silent Auction treasures and a 50-50 drawing, bring a food item and take on The Challenge! By February, the major "food" holidays will be distant memories and pantry shelves will need restocking. We can help and have a lot of fun - all at the same time.

The Challenge:

1. Bring a can or box of nutritious food to donate to a local food pantry. For each item you donate, you will receive one ticket for a special drawing - the more items donated, the more chances to win. The prize will be a fun basket of items appropriate for a variety of ages.
2. Recruit Bunco players from your local church or community group. The church/group with the most individuals who pay and play Bunco at the event will have the honor of selecting the food pantry to receive the night's collection.

CAMP NURSES **Servants with Sunscreen**

Despite the chilly temperatures - finally - it's never too early to think about summer. One setting for ministry at DuBois Center is our health center. Volunteer camp nurses, most of whom are RNs, are a vital piece of our summer camp program. Many find serving at DuBois Center to be a rewarding mission opportunity, one that is quite different from their regular job. Responsibilities include reviewing camper medical forms, conducting health screenings, receiving & administering medications, providing first aid & basic medical treatment, and documentation. However, when you really get down to it, nurses spend most of their time removing ticks, soothing rashes, distributing medications and providing extra TLC for homesick and nervous campers. If you are an RN, please consider serving with us for a full or partial week. The living quarters do have AC and there is often time to join us for worship, explore the woods or just sit back and read a book. For more information, contact Shirley at DuBois Center at shirley.director@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202.



GIFT CERTIFICATES

Looking for a unique gift for someone special in your life? Hate crowded malls and overwhelming online sites? **Gift Certificates** for DuBois Center camps, events and items in the camp store might be just the answer to your shopping conundrum. Consider giving your child or grandchild the gift of a week at camp or your son and grandson a weekend together just for Fathers & Sons. Love your old camp t-shirts and sweatshirts? Share that love with all the grandkids, nieces and nephews. Certificates are available for any amount of \$10 or more. For more information contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202.



DuBois Center is your OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) monies at work. When you or your congregation gives to OCWM, you are directly supporting the work of DuBois, a Camp and Retreat Center of the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ. Thank you for your ongoing support of OCWM!



CHHSM News

Council for Health and Human Service Ministries

In time for Christmas gift giving!

Order your tickets for the whole family, and maybe a few friends, for the 2nd Annual Night at the Improv benefitting Uni-Pres Kindercottage on April 14, 2018. They will send you the tickets and some Christmas cards in which you can enclose the tickets. Just tell them how many cards you will need and they will send those to you with the tickets. Order by December 15 to make certain you get your tickets and cards by Christmas!

Tickets include dinner and the show and are just \$40 each or 8 for \$300. Send your name and address with your ticket order, check, and the number of cards you need to Kindercottage, 564 Veronica, East St. Louis, IL, 62205. Have a Merry Christmas and we hope to see you on April 14!

Neighborhood Houses has a new name: UP-Unleashing Potential. You are invited to join them in celebrating their new name at the UP Celebration Party on Wed, Dec 6 from 5:30 pm - 8 pm at the Jefferson Room, 2017 Chouteau Ave, St. Louis, MO. Remarks will be given by Rev. Starsky D. Wilson, President and CEO Deaconess Foundation. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP to Jessi Goodhart at jgoodhart@neighborhoodhouses.org or 314-561-3337





Job Opportunity

Uni-Pres Kindercottage is looking for a Part-Time Bookkeeper/Accountant

18-24 hours per week. Knowledge of QuickBooks and Microsoft Office. Responsible for Accounts Receivable/Payable, Payroll and General Ledger. Must also be familiar with not-for-profit organizations. Must be able to work independently and be reliable. Send email with salary requirements and resume to unipres@sbcglobal.net.

Job Opportunities - Adult Day Program Caregivers - Collinsville & Edwardsville

St. John's Community Care is seeking qualified individuals for our Adult Day Programs. Must be enthusiastic, self-motivated, and able to handle a variety of tasks to maintain a safe and fun environment. Experience working with individuals with disabilities, dementia, and aging issues. Experience in assisting with ADL's and social activities promoting mental and physical stimulation. Part-time 25-30 hours per week. For information call 618-344-5008 Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4:30 pm.



Now Hiring Caregivers

St. John's Community Care's Home Services Program provides homemaker and personal care to the elderly and disabled 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in Caseyville, Collinsville, Edwardsville, Fairmont City, Fairview Heights, Glen Carbon, Granite City, Maryville, and Troy. Requirements: Compassion, patience, honesty; sound decision-making skills; dependable attendance; housekeeping experience; willingness to help with personal care; valid driver's license & auto liability insurance; dependable transportation; ability to pass criminal background check. Flexible scheduling; periodic increases in pay; paid orientation & training; paid vacations; attendance bonuses; the reward of making a difference in someone's life. For more information please call 618-344-5008 Mon through Fri from 9 am to 4:30 pm.

What's Happening at Illinois South Conference...



Save the Date - Calling all VBS Directors & Staff

Friday, January 5, 2018, all VBS Directors & Staff in Illinois South Conference are invited to St. John Evangelical UCC, 307 W. Clay St., Collinsville, from Noon - 3 pm. Come take a look at the VBS starter kits for 2018, share ideas, and coordinate sharing decorations and programs throughout the Conference. Lunch will be served! RSVP to Dana Callahan at 618-344-2526.

Irvington Friedens UCC has sixteen(16) 13' pews for sale at \$125 for each. If you are interested, contact Rev. Stacy Tate at sundown6@gmail.com or 618-249-8445.

Region 2

St. Paul UCC, Columbia, will hold their 7th Annual Plowsharing Fair Trade Crafts Sale on Sat and Sun, Dec 16 and 17, 8 am - 4 pm in the Fellowship Hall. There will be many one-of-a-kind pieces, such as jewelry, clothing, art, home decorations, baskets, musical instruments, games for kids, etc. Finely crafted, handmade products provide work and vital income to families in need of adequate food, housing, education and medical care.

Region 4

Brighton St. John UCC will present an Adult Spiritual Enrichment Study following their church services on Dec 10 - 31 titled "Do Not Be Afraid: Defeating Fear with Hope, Peace, Joy, Love and a Wholehearted Life." Delve into ways of defeating fear through the power of hope, peace, joy, love and living a wholehearted life in Christ. This is not a Bible Study, but a way to engage the topic through spiritual practice, practical teaching and shared group discussion. Speaker is Dr. Bren'e Brown, a social worker, researcher and best-selling author. Dr. Brown's work on vulnerability speaks to how we let fear, in many forms, affect our lives.

Region 6

A CHRISTKINDLMARKT will be held at St. Peter UCC in Centralia on Sat, Dec 9, between 10 am and 2 pm. Vendors wares, crafts made by members, lots of cookies and other baked goods plus hot dogs, and pie and cake by the slice will be available for sale. A photo booth will provide fun for all.

Region 4

Brighton St. John UCC will hold a Blue Christmas Service on Dec 21 at 7 pm. Depression and stress can make this time of year difficult. The Blue Christmas service acknowledges sadness and the need for comfort and is held on the longest night of the year. All are welcome.

Region 9

Belleville Christ UCC will feature the Christmas in Belleville Concert on Sat, Dec 9 at 5:30 pm. The concert features Three Bridges and The Rainey's singing groups as well as pre-concert music by Old Friends Choir. Admission is one canned goods to be given to the Community Interfaith Food Pantry.

The St. Louis Symphony Brass Quintet will perform at the O'Fallon UCC on Sun, Dec 17 at 9:45 am. All are welcome.