

Illinois
South
Conference



Weekly Connection

Diverse Minds,
Covenant Hearts,
Made One in the Body of Christ

February 1, 2022



On Tuesday, March 15, I will begin going into my sixth year of ministry with the Illinois South Conference. As is often the case in our perception of time, some days it feels like I have just begun this work, and some days it feels as if I have been doing this work for oh so long. In this ministry (much like in any ministry), what I have experienced is the waves of expectations, to-dos, and even crises that just keep coming.

And while there are ebbs and flows in this ministry, for the past few years, the rhythm of the waves has felt a bit relentless and unending. There have been moments when it has felt difficult to even catch my breath in the spaces between one wave receding and the next, which I can see quickly approaching. Most recently, I have noticed that my mind, body, and spirit are aching for a reset, a time of rest and renewal.

Starting May 1st, I will be embarking on a three-month journey of rest, renewal, and recommitment as I will begin my sabbatical. Originally my sabbatical was planned for last summer, but the timing didn't seem right to me. I wanted to ensure we were putting as much intention and effort as we could into a successful summer season at DuBois Center after being shut down in 2020. While a sabbatical every five years is part of my compensation package and call agreement, the Conference Council supported my decision to postpone it. Strangely, even though I knew I could have benefitted from it, I must confess I was a bit relieved.

The truth is I struggle with not being busy. I struggle with taking time off, not being available, or not seeming productive. Sometimes I can carry quite a bit of guilt when I am not working, or I take time off. This guilt is not a response to my faith, rather it is a response to my fear. I was raised to

Prayer list for Feb 13-19, 2022

Churches & Pastors



-Edwardsville St. Paul UCC,
Rev. Dana Schindler

-Evansville St. John UCC,
Pastor Kevin Hirsch,
Supply Lay Pastor



Retired Pastors

- Revs. Charles Preston and Karla Frost,
Granite City, IL

People with Life Concerns

-Pray for the family of **Marian Knobloch** as they mourn her death. Marian is the sister of Rev. Kenneth (Jean) Knobloch and was very instrumental in starting the DuBois Center Auxiliary when DuBois Center was purchased. She was a member of St. John's UCC in Maestown as a child and a member of St. Paul UCC in Waterloo as an adult. She helped develop the nursing program at DuBois Center and worked at the Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing Health Clinic. A graveside service was held at St. John's Cemetery in Maestown on Friday, Jan 28. Memorials can be made to DuBois Center, St. Paul UCC in Waterloo or St. John's UCC in Maestown. Condolences can be sent to Rev. Kenneth and Jean Knobloch, 1518 Mill Street, PO Box 76, Maestown, IL 62256.

-Pray for **Rev. Bill Causer**, as he deals with some health issues. Cards may be sent to him at 11315 N Presley Ln, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864.

value hard work, grit, and a never-give-up attitude. I was also raised in a culture (we all have) that ties our worth, our value, and even our humanity to our productivity. Yet, this is not what God designs or values.

Consider the rhythms of rest God designed for God's creations from the beginning of time. In the creation story found in the first chapter of Genesis, we are reminded that God created and then God rested. In the eighth chapter of Exodus, we are reminded that God consecrated the seventh day as a day of rest, and God ordered all of creation to cease from work on the Sabbath. In the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, we are reminded that God commanded the people to let the land lie fallow every seven years so the land could replenish itself. In the Gospels, we are reminded that Jesus frequently spent time alone for rest and renewal. For me, the times Jesus withdrew from the crowds, his followers, and his disciples to pray, reminds me that if he needed the time to reflect on his call, listen to God's voice, and receive strength and direction for his ongoing ministry, then I do too. I am still fully committed to the ministry to which I have been called here in the Illinois South Conference. I want to be even more engaged, more alive, more energetic, more passionate, more creative, and more Spirit-centered. Yet, to be more, I also realize I will need time to do less and simply be...so that freshness and renewal can be regenerated in me through the Spirit of God. This is the gift of receiving a sabbatical.

As it is so succinctly said in the document *A Sure*

Foundation, which was written by the UCC MESA (Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization), "for pastors, the sabbatical is time to nourish their relationship with God, recommit to their call, and provide renewed vision is not a vacation, but it does provide time away from the daily work of ministry. Sabbatical leave may include study or a project, but its first goal is reconnecting with one's sense of vocation through rest, reflection, and prayer."

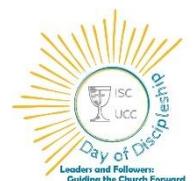
In the next couple of months as I continue to plan my sabbatical, you will be hearing more about this time and what it will mean for me and you as well. In the meantime, I offer my deep gratitude that this Conference has made sabbaticals for their Conference Ministers a priority by creating a sabbatical fund and ensuring sabbaticals would also be a part of the call agreement. Thank you for your foresight, your care, and your support from which I know I will greatly benefit. Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

-Keep **Rev. Gus (Sue) Kuether** in your prayers as he recovers from surgery. Rev. Kuether is a retired ISC pastor and has served on many ISC teams and committees. Cards may be sent to him at 536 Pebble Brook Ln, Belleville IL 62221.

-Pray for those recovering from natural disasters:

1. August 2021: Earthquake Kills 2,248 in Haiti
 2. December 2021: Super Typhoon Rai Kills 375 in the Philippines
 3. July 2021: Floods, Landslides in China Kill at Least 302
 4. July 2021: Floods Kill More than 200 in Germany, Belgium
 5. April 2021: Cyclone Seroja Kills at Least 222
 6. October 2021: Flash Floods, Landslides Kill 201 in India, Nepal
 7. May 2021: Cyclone Tauktae Kills at Least 200 in India
 8. August 2021: Hurricane Ida Kills 91 Across 9 U.S. States
 9. December 2021: Tornado Kills 90 Across 5 U.S. States
 10. December 2021: Volcano Eruption Kills 45 in Indonesia
 11. January 2022: Tsunami affecting Fiji, Japan, Peru, Samoa and Tonga
- Please pray for all of those affected by natural disasters.

Mark your calendars for March 19, 2022, to attend **Day of Discipleship**. The 2022 theme is Leaders and Followers: Guiding the Church Forward. Find out more about ISC initiatives and two workshops sharing ways that your leaders and followers can enhance the life of your church.





Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response UPDATE #24, February 1, 2022

COVID-19 cases are moving, but in which direction?

Covid number shot up dramatically in some parts of the state, particularly across our Conference in the past few weeks. Omicron blew into town quickly, though it now seems to be dropping just as fast as it came. We've seen Illinois case totals go from over 45,000 in a day to under 10,000 in just a week. On a county basis, numbers are dropping from North to South, with our area still pretty high, but they're starting to move downward.

How is your congregation supposed to react to this? Many, many folks we know have contracted the virus. In response, many of our churches have suspended all in-person worship and events moving everything to online. Some others have been able to continue to worship and gather in person by practicing good protocols and reducing the risk of exposure.

The best guidance we can give is, hang on a little longer, and let the drop in cases reach our area. Staying the course, even two more weeks, might make a big difference. While we are all weary, let us not neglect to practice compassion and kindness by continuing to practice good safety protocols. In our offices at the Conference and for in-person events we sponsor we will continue to wear masks, practice social distancing, and good cleaning practices. In your church, we encourage you to do the same. For in-person worship, social events, meetings, or gatherings that are held indoors, we strongly encourage you to continue to wear masks indoors, practice social distancing and good cleaning practices.

Helpful Information

To keep tabs on Covid in your immediate area, the Illinois Department of Public Health has an excellent map that shows infection rates and hotspots in the state. [Go here](#) to see the most current numbers.

Together in Christ's ministry with you,
Dr. Jill Baker, Conference Moderator
Rev. Christy Eckert, Conference Vice-Moderator
Rev. Steve Boorsma, Conference Secretary
Mr. Dwight Asselmeier, Conference Treasurer
Rev. Shana Johnson, IL South Conference Minister

Solar Power Report

The Justice & Mission Team asked **St. Paul UCC in Columbia** to give a report on their savings from solar power. Here's what was reported by Bob Habermehl, member of St. Paul UCC.

- Solar output for 11.25 months of 2021 is 48,300 KWH
- Total cost of power per kwh is 11.183 cents per KWH
- Savings for 2021 is \$5,401.00
- WE have received \$ 9,243.78 in Solar Renewable Energy Credits MINUS operation fees, which have been used to pay off the loan
- Our Solar System is working very well.

If you wish to learn more about solar power for your church, contact St. Paul UCC office at 618-281-5102.

On February 8, 2022, at 6 pm, there will be a public Zoom meeting on Self Generation (of electricity) for southern Illinois today to educate about the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act that passed in September. It allows for much more opportunity for individuals, businesses, schools, churches and others to use solar and wind. There have been lots of barriers erected by the municipal and cooperative electric utilities that have severely limited the use of solar and wind. Some of those are now overcome with this new law.

If you are interested in attending the Zoom meeting, use this link.

<https://prairierivers.salsalabs.org/self-generate-solar-town-hall/index.html>

Ministers' Financial Vitality Initiative

In 2017, the **Pension Boards** responded by creating the **Ministers' Financial Vitality Initiative (MFVI)**, a cohort-based program of financial education, debt-reduction, and personal empowerment around money issues. As of December 2021, 150 UCC ministers have participated and been impacted by the practical management tools provided in the program, and by a \$9,000 grant for debt reduction, \$1,000 to seed or augment a retirement account, and the support of their cohort and financial experts. Two more cohorts of 60 new UCC ministers each are scheduled to start the program in January 2022.

The UCC Board of Directors endorsed MFVI as a first step in addressing this systemic concern, and three years ago the National Setting and the Pension Boards entered a partnership to raise \$3 million to establish an endowment fund guaranteeing the long-term viability of this program. You may donate now! Make an online gift at ucc.org and choose "Securing the Future-- MFVI" from the dropdown menu. Checks, made out to the United Church of Christ, can be mailed to the United Church of Christ, PO Box 71957, Cleveland, OH 44194. Please note MFVI on the memo line. For more information, please click [here](#) or contact Paul Ramsey, Pension Boards Philanthropy Officer, at pramsey@pbucc.org.



United Church of Christ, Disaster Ministries, and Environmental Justice present a webinar on Feb 9 at 12 noon CST entitled

"When Disaster Strikes: Faith Communities Responding with Equity and Justice." Faith communities are often on the frontlines of responding to climate-related disasters. More than a spirit of goodwill is required to effectively respond and minister in such critically important times. Because disasters often expose, widen, and

exacerbate the gaps of pre-existing disparities, it is essential that communities of faith prioritize and hold fast in their commitments to equity and justice. This webinar will equip faith communities with the knowledge and awareness required to act in accordance with our values. The featured speakers will be Marcus T. Coleman, Jr., Director of the DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and Marcie Roth, Executive Director and CEO for the World Institute on Disability and Rev. Fred Meade, Senior Instructor for the National Disaster Interfaiths Network. Register [here](#). Even if you cannot make the webinar at its scheduled time, sign-up, and a link to the recording will be sent to you.

Pretrial Freedom: Facts vs Myths

On January 22, 2021, Governor J B Pritzker signed the Illinois Safety, Accountability, Fairness, and Equity Today Act (SAFE-T Act). As we are close to the one-year anniversary of the passage of the Pretrial Fairness Act and prepare for its full implementation in 2023, you may help strengthen the movement for pretrial freedom and safer communities in Illinois. You can learn about the facts and myths surrounding the Pretrial Fairness Act and influence your legislators. The War on Drugs demonstrates the failure of harsh punishment to provide public safety. Safer streets come with investments that provide jobs, education, and health to marginalized communities.

Explore the connection between these scriptures: Leviticus 19:9-18, Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 25:42-43, 45, and Luke 4:18-19

Reactive and punitive legislation is proposed for the Illinois General Assembly 2022 session. Join us in these efforts by taking two key steps:

- Attend the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice [On Faith and Freedom](#), a faith focused virtual teach-in on the Pretrial Fairness Act, on February 16 from 6 pm-7:30 pm. You can [register here](#).
- Build relationships with your State Representative and State Senator. Thank your legislators who support your view.

DuBois Center News



Spring Happenings at DuBois Center

March 4 - New in 2022 - Stargazing Party
April 1-3 - Father & Son Retreat
April 9 - DuBois Center Open House
April 15 - Stations of the Cross
April 22-24 - Wrangle & Ride
April 23 - Volunteer Workday at DuBois Center
April 29-May 1 - New in 2022 Women's Retreat
May 13-14 - New in 2022 Photography Retreat
May 15 - DuBois Center Open House
May 21-22 - Volunteer Retreat
For more information, visit the [website](#).



DuBois 6.0 - On the Move

DuBois Center will get a facelift in 2022. The current donations are at **\$45,021** because of generous donors. Find out [more](#).

How You Can Contribute

- **Sponsor** a project.
- **Share** your mandatory IRA distributions
- **Share Stock** or Bonds
- **Share Tax Refund**
- **Dinners**- Plan to attend two special Taste of DuBois Dinners in 2022
- **Sweat Equity**
- **Cash Online** at www.iscucc.org and www.DuBoisCenter.org.
- **Prayers**

DuBois 6.0 Capital Campaign Goal **\$225,290**

Note: Project order will be determined by availability of materials and funds.

Contact United Church Funds at 212-729-2628 or matt.wagner@ucfunds.org to learn how to donate IRA distributions and stock to DuBois 6.0. Dates and more information on the Taste of DuBois dinners will be coming in early 2022.



Do You Receive an Automatic IRA Distribution?

If you receive an automatic IRA distribution that you don't need for living expenses, perhaps from an inherited IRA, please consider donating it to the DuBois 6.0 capital campaign this year. We have already received over \$44,000 of the \$225,290 needed to complete the 17 projects included in this campaign. The Oak Lodge air conditioning project is almost finished, and three other projects are just waiting on some materials and volunteers to finish them. The second round of projects needs to start soon, some of which includes work on the Deer Run shower house and

lodge, moving the archery range, and building a new bouldering wall. These projects will add tent camping capacity and programming activities to the 2022 summer camp season. Your donations will make a big difference in getting these done in the first quarter of the year.

If you would like to donate an IRA distribution to DuBois 6.0, please contact Matt Wagner with United Church Funds at matt.wagner@ucfunds.org for more information.



CHHSM News

Council for Health and Human Service Ministries

CHHSM Is Celebrating the Leadership of Mike Readinger

In anticipation of Mike Readinger's retirement this spring, we want to let you know of some opportunities to celebrate his 7+ years of leadership as President and CEO of CHHSM and 17+ years of service to the organization! To wish Mike well, we invite you to:

- Send a Card or Message: You may mail a card to CHHSM, P.O. Box 91456, Cleveland, OH 44101, or [email a message](#). Cards and messages received by February 28 will be presented to Mike at the Annual Gathering.
- Make a Gift: We invite you to consider making a gift in Mike's honor to the CHHSM Legacy Fund, which supports leadership development, a passion for Mike. You can [make a gift online](#) (select CHHSM Legacy Fund as the gift designation, click yes on Memorial/Honorarium Gift, and fill in Mike's name) or mail a check made out to CHHSM, to PO Box 91456, Cleveland, OH 44101, with "Legacy Fund/M. Readinger" in the memo line.
- Attend the Annual Gathering: We are planning a dinner celebrating Mike's leadership on Wednesday, March 9, at our [2022 Annual Gathering](#), which will be held March 8-10 in Louisville, KY. We would love to have you join us, but you need to [register](#) and make room reservations by February 10 in order to receive the special conference rate.

Bridges to Care & Recovery - Open Forum for Pastors

Every Tuesday in February at 10 am, Bridges to Care & Recovery presents What's Brewing with Pastors, a virtual forum for pastors over coffee and pastries to discuss mental health. Click this link <https://bhnstl-orgzoom.us/j/4433124650> Meeting ID: 443 312 4650

Kindercottage - Special Urgent Request

Uni-Pres Kindercottage needs help improving its electrical and phone systems. Is there anyone in your church who might help them, or might your church see this as a mission project? If you can help, please call Brenda Crisp at 618-874-6505. Your help will be greatly appreciated. THANK YOU!!

Interested
in becoming
foster parents?



Hoyleton Youth and Family Services is expanding their Therapeutic Foster Care services. This expansion presents an opportunity for three identified foster youth, currently in residential care at Hoyleton, to live in community with qualified foster parents in a single-family home.

This program was created to address a service gap that exists in Illinois. The state has limited residential treatment opportunities and even fewer transition programs for youth in care who need additional support. Due to the limited options, youth are residing in Hoyleton's residential treatment program longer than what is needed.

This is an amazing family bonding opportunity for both foster parents and youth. Foster parents will live in the newly renovated home while

providing full-time care for 3 children. Foster parents will receive compensation covering all living expenses and respite time for foster parents is also provided.

Hoyleton is actively searching for interested foster parents. A minimum 2 years of experience fostering youth is preferred. Interested foster parents must not have other children in their care at this time. If this rewarding, yet challenging, opportunity is of interest to you or someone you know, we would love to speak with you.

For more information, contact Mindy Miller at 618-688-4756 or mmiller@hoyleton.org. To learn more about Hoyleton Youth and Family Services click [here](#).

Eden Seminary Events

Feb. 11-12 – LIFE (Lifelong Learning) session – History and Polity of the UCC with Dr. Jill Baker

This intensive class will provide an overview of the predecessor denominations that shaped the United Church of Christ's style of congregational governance. It will also look at how General Synod functions, explore some theological foundations, discuss how the authorization process works and review educational resources available from the denomination. Register [here](#).

Walker Leadership Institute (WLI)/LIFE at Eden: Decolonizing Neurodivergence

Dates & Time: Saturday: 9:00-11:00 am CST

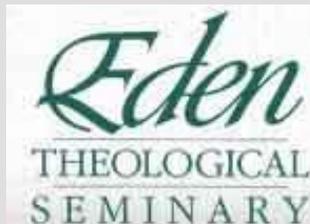
February 12, 19, 26, March 5

Course Description:

A Neurodiverse G-d would have us recognize how White supremacy impacts the lived experiences of Neurodivergent People (ADHD, Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder, giftedness, learning disabilities and others). Neurodivergent People of Color will be of special interest as we engage and deconstruct religious and other social systems that reinforce the relationship between White supremacy and negative outcomes for Neurodivergent People.

Eden Bookshop

Welcome to Eden Bookstore Online, the bookstore for progressive Christians. The Eden Seminary Bookstore online shop offers works on theology and religion. Eden merchandise available [here](#).



The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar for pastors and lay leaders offers an opportunity to **explore faithful, practical, and tested ways to promoting generosity** in our congregations. The seminar draws on current research, seeks guidance from the wisdom of scripture, and discusses the best practices in church-based fundraising. Class sessions held on six Thursdays between Feb. 24 – May 12 from 7:00 – 8:30pm Eastern Time. Between class sessions, the instructors provide materials to help you analyze the culture of your own congregation and learn how to create change. **Register today:** The CGC Seminar is \$300 for a team of two leaders. Register [here](#) by February 10, 2022.



St. John's Community Care presents the Memory Cafe which meets every Wednesday (February 2, 9, 16, 23) from 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm by Zoom. It benefits the person living with mild cognitive impairment, early-stage Alzheimer's or other dementia, and their care partner by providing a way to socialize with compassionate people in a safe, understanding, and relaxed atmosphere. This setting provides attendees a way to interact and connect with others who are sharing a similar journey. If you

would like to join the Zoom Online Memory Cafe, email Gail at gshaw@stjohnscc.org. She will send you information and an invitation to join this fun group.

What's Happening in Illinois South Conference



Find Out More on Facebook

You don't have to wait for this weekly email to find out what's happening in the Illinois South Conference. You can check in with us between emails on Facebook where we will share events and info happening in the moment. Find us on [Facebook](#). Don't forget to like our page when you visit us on [Facebook](#).

2022 Hunger and Health Illinois Regional Conference

The University of Illinois Extension and SNAP Education staff are excited to announce the first Hunger and Health Illinois Conference. Two regional conferences will be held on March 9, 2022, at Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby, IL, and March 17, 2022, at the Salvation Army in Springfield, IL from 10 am - 3:30 pm on both days. An optional pre-conference food handler's training will be from 8 am - 10 am. The cost for the event is \$10 per person and will provide a noon meal. Fee waivers are available.

Participants will be able to attend two workshop sessions from these topics.

- Community Collaboration
- Nutrition Policy
- Intro to Trauma
- Connecting to local produce

The conference will conclude with awards given to food pantry champions around Illinois. The award categories include:

- Exceptional Food Pantry Manager
- Healthy Pantry Initiatives
- Outstanding Health Equity Leader
- Innovative Food Programming
- Volunteer of the Year

Registration opens on February 1, 2022. Click [here](#) for a flyer. Contact: kaitlyns@illinois.edu.

Region 5

Hamel Immanuel UCC will hold its drive thru/carry out Chicken Dinner on Sun, March 20 from 11:30 am - 4:30 pm at the church (1-1/2 miles south of Hamel). Menu includes chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, slaw and applesauce. \$11 per meal. Quilt and TV raffle.

Region 7

Okawville St. Peter's UCC will hold its drive thru only Wurst Markt on Sun, Feb 13 from 3 pm - 7 pm rain or shine. Menu includes pork sausage, sauerkraut, mashed potatoes, green beans, applesauce, and dessert. \$12 per meal.

Region 8

New Baden Zion UCC will be having a drive thru chili dinner on Wed, Feb 16 from 4 pm to 6:30 pm. Price will be \$10 per dinner or for a quart sized container. This is to raise funds for DuBois Center and the renovations they plan to do for various projects at the camp. If you have any questions, call 618-588-4153 or email us at zionucc.sec@zionuccnb.com.

CONTACT US - YOUR OCWM MONIES AT WORK

So we can better serve you, here is a list of your Conference staff and who you should contact, given your church's needs:

For the work of Conference teams and committees or search and call inquiries, contact Christy Pursell at cpursell@iscucc.org.

For financial matters (in terms of your church's giving to the Conference or OCWM), contact Debbie Kesner at dkesner@iscucc.org.

For communicating within the Conference, the Conference website, Facebook page or Weekly Connection, contact Lynnette Schuepbach at lschuepbach@iscucc.org.

For DuBois Center information, contact Hayley Elliott at 618-787-2202 or director@DuBoisCenter.org.

For DuBois Center program information, contact Rylee Hodges-Stone at 618-787-2202 or program@DuBoisCenter.org.

For DuBois Center registration for upcoming events and camp sessions, contact Julie Riechmann at 618-357-1809 or jriechmann@iscucc.org.

To speak with the Conference Minister, contact Rev. Shana Johnson 618-882-8247 or sjohnson@iscucc.org

Inclusivity Statement for DuBois Center and Illinois South Conference of the UCC

Because we affirm the value of all God's people, the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, ability, national origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or gender identity. To the extent possible, we endeavor to accommodate those with a variety of physical, mental, emotional, medical, or dietary needs.

Important Links [Illinois South Conference](#) [Back Bay Mission](#) [CHHSM](#) [Deaconess Foundation](#)

[Deaconess Nurse Ministry](#) [DuBois Center](#) [Ecuador Partnership](#) [Eden Theological Seminary](#)

[Emmaus Homes](#) [Hitz Memorial](#) [Home](#) [Hoyleton Youth & Family](#) [LIFE Program](#) [Unleashing Potential](#)

[New Athens Home](#) [Pension Board-UCC](#) [St. John's Community Care](#) [St. Paul's Sr. Community](#)

[UCC Insurance Board](#) [Uplands Village](#) [UCC Campus Ministry](#) [Uni-Pres Kindercottage](#)

