

Weekly Connection

For the Week of July 2, 2017 - July 8, 2017

For the Week of July 9, 2017 - July 15, 2017

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



This week the delegation from our Conference will be heading out to the 31st General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Yet, even if you are not traveling with us, you can share in the experience.

This year the UCC has developed an app

for General Synod, which is an awesome tool for being "in the know" and connecting with one another.

The app for General Synod 31 is easy to download. Check it out and pass the word!

You can get it [here](#): On your mobile device, create a login and password. You will have access to all things General Synod via the website. **Make Glad!!**

Important Links

iscucc.org/

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[CHHSM](#)

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[Eden Theological Seminary](#)

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Pray for...

Prayer list for

July 2 - July 8, 2017

Churches & Pastors

- Cahokia Bethel UCC, Rev. Carol (David) Shanks, Sr.



The Amazing People of Illinois South Conference...

In May, Good Shepherd of Faith - E. St. Louis (GSOE) and the ISC Hunger Action Team hosted a raised-bed gardening workshop for surrounding E. St. Louis churches. Member Milton Jones (right) showed attendees the ten raised-beds he constructed in 2016 with grants from ISC Hunger Action and Get Up and Go.

Providing the surrounding community with healthy vegetables is a mission of GSOE, which is in a "food desert" where the only food stores are corner convenience stores that provide snack items, cigarettes and alcoholic beverages with a few canned goods. Milton hopes to expand the garden in 2018 with ten more raised-beds.

In addition to the vegetable garden, Pastor Norma has a dream of growing an orchard of apples, plums, and pears. Fruit is generally not available for the children of the community. She recalls her childhood and seeing apples and plums growing on trees and eating the sweet fruit and preserves. Over the years GSOE has acquired two city blocks of contingent lots through purchases or donations and has ample space for the orchard and community garden.

Pastor Norma and ISC Hunger Action Team are giving a shout out to ISC church members who may love to graft fruit trees and have a few extra transplants to share. We hope to plant some this fall after the leaves go dormant and more in the spring. Contact Pastor Norma 618-271-9770 or Hunger Action, Margie Lindhorst 618-281-4090.



Inclusivity

The following is a true story of something that happened in Poland during World War II, which I believe, is a beautiful example of inclusivity. In a particular village, there was a man that was well known and loved for the care and compassion he had shown to others. He was not a particularly wealthy man; he had not been born and raised in that village and he did not attend the village church.

Although he had been asked on several occasions if he would like to be baptized and join the church, he never showed any interest in it.



Regardless of this, he was highly revered in the village. If a stranger came to the village and needed a place to stay, the man would offer a cot in his little home. If a village family ran out of funds, the man would be the first to offer a loaf of bread or cooking items out of his meager supplies. If someone was in trouble, or if the Germans and Russians were performing a sweep of the village to collect up young men for either imprisonment or to force them into the army, he would help the young men escape to freedom. All of these kind acts were not forgotten.

When the man died, the villagers prepared his body for burial and went to the church to ask the priest to perform the funeral and to bury the man in the church cemetery. The priest agreed to do the funeral, but despite the pleas from the villagers, he told them he could not bury the man in the cemetery. "I cannot bury the man in our cemetery, it is hallowed ground. Since he was never baptized, he cannot be buried there. Those are the rules of the church and I cannot change them."

The villagers appealed even more earnestly to the priest, saying that the man was a good man and surely loved by God as much as any of the baptized-perhaps even more because of all the good he had done. The priest agreed with them regarding the virtues of the man, but he insisted that the rules of the church were clear and could not be broken. Finally, he compromised by saying, "In recognition of your love for him, and his love for you, and all of God's people in this village, I will bury him on church land. It will be near to those who have gone before him, those whom he has loved, but it will have to be beyond the fence that surrounds the consecrated ground of our cemetery."

And so it was. On the day of the funeral, the priest conducted the service and all the villagers processed to the appointed spot. The grave was filled. A stone was placed to mark the grave. Night fell. Yet, that night, something very beautiful happened. During the night, the fence that surrounded the cemetery had been moved by some of the villagers so that it now took in the grave in which the man had been buried.

For me, this story captures the essence of Jesus himself. It was all about the essence of the good news he came to bring, namely inclusivity. Just as those villagers expanded the fence, which enclosed hallowed ground to include the grave of their friend they dearly loved, so God, through Jesus Christ, expands the boundaries of the sacred to include both those whom the rules of religion would exclude and those that the ways of this world would exclude.

Robert Frost once wrote, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." That is good news for us, because we live in a world of walls. Dividing walls are everywhere we look. Yet, there are also abundant opportunities to expand the boundaries of grace, of mercy, of acceptance, and, most importantly, of love. May we be open to the ways Christ is calling us, Christ is nudging us, Christ is challenging us to widen and expand the sacred to include those who might otherwise be excluded.

Blessings, Shana

SHARING IN WORSHIP WITH YOU

A Note from Shana: My worship schedule for upcoming weeks:

July 2

Worshipping with our ISC delegation at General Synod in Baltimore

July 9

Participating in the Service of Farewell for Rev. David Riebeling at St. John UCC, Valmeyer

July 16

Preaching at St. John's UCC Brighton

I am currently planning my worship schedule for October 2017 and beyond. If I have not been at your church yet, I would love an invitation! Please reach out to me at the office at 618-654-2125 or on my cell phone at 618-882-8247 with some possible dates. You can also send me an email at sjohnson@iscucc.org. I am looking forward to meeting you and sharing in worship with you.

Blessings, Shana **Your OCWM monies at work.**

Pastor

- Cahokia Bethel UCC, Rev. Libby (Jane) Feagans-King, Associate Pastor

Retired Pastor

- Rev. Gus and Suzanne Kuether, Belleville, IL

There will not be a *Weekly Connection* on July 4 because Lynnette will not be in the office.

Pray for...

Prayer list for July 9 - July 15, 2017 Churches & Pastors

- Carbondale Church of the Good Shepherd, Rev. Kim (Dr. Aaron Newcomb) Magwire

- Carlinville St. Paul UCC, Rev. Kevin (Shellie) Strope

Retired Pastor

- Rev. Gail and Ronald Geisel, Affton, MO

People with Life Concerns

- Please pray for Priscilla (Rev. Howard) Self as she has surgery scheduled for early July. Priscilla works part-time for DuBois Center. She is a member of St. Peter's UCC in Okawville and the ISC Church & Ministry Church Committee. Cards may be sent to her at 12922 County Hwy. 27, Nashville IL 62263.

- Pray for Rev. Dr. Douglas Anders as he continues treatment for ongoing illness. Douglas is currently the Supply Pastor for Belleville Concordia UCC. Cards may be sent to him at 2921 Moniteau, St Louis MO 63121.

- Keep Dorothy Edwards in your prayers as she deals with health issues. Dorothy is a member of the East St. Louis Good Shepherd of Faith and the mother of Pastor Norma Patterson.

- Prayers of thanksgiving from Rev. Jim (Lelynna) Langdoc, former ISC Associate Conference Minister, as he celebrates continued remission and good health. He thanks you for your prayers.

Tornado Recovery Volunteers Needed in Ottawa, IL.

I pass on a message I received from Zach Wolgemuth, Executive for UCC Disaster Ministries regarding an immediate need for Volunteers.

Priscilla Self, Illinois South Conference Disaster Coordinator.

Dear Friends,

We are in need of volunteers in Ottawa, IL to assist with rebuilding for families who were impacted by an early 2017 tornado.

This is the site where we (UCC, Disciples, Brethren) deployed our pilot project Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI) with the goal of shortening the time between response and recovery. We have been successful in doing so but now need volunteers.

The current need is for small teams (5-6 individuals) of skilled roofers. Housing is provided and there is currently a skilled DRSI construction advisor on site. If you have a team or teams that can assist please contact Tim Sheaffer at 717-713-3834.

Thank you for your attention to this need.

Peace,

Zach Wolgemuth

Executive, UCC Disaster Ministries

www.ucc.org/disaster/



Informing the Congregation about Embezzlement

By Richard R. Hammar

Reprinted from the Insurance Board's *The Steward* summer 2017 edition

Church leaders often refuse to disclose to the congregation any information about an incident of embezzlement for fear of being sued for defamation. This concern is understandable. However, serious problems can occur when the pastor or church board dismisses a long-term employee or volunteer for embezzlement and nothing is disclosed to the membership. Church leaders under these circumstances often are accused of acting arbitrarily, and there is a demand for an explanation. Refusal to respond to such demands may place the church leadership in an even worse light.

There is a possible answer to this dilemma. Many states recognize the concept of "qualified privilege." This means that statements made to others concerning a matter of common interest cannot be defamatory unless made with malice. Statements are made with malice if they are made with a knowledge that they are false, or with a reckless disregard as to their truth or falsity. In the church context, this privilege protects statements made by members to other members concerning matters of common interest. Such communications cannot be defamatory unless malice is proven. Read the entire [article](#).



In May the Hunger Action Team met with food pantry leaders from Community Interfaith Food Pantry in Belleville, Murphysboro Food Pantry, St. John UCC for Mascoutah Weekend Meals Program, Collinsville Food Pantry, St. Paul UCC - Lebanon Food Pantry. Many ideas and resources were shared among this group of very resourceful leaders. We want to pass on an invitation from a group that has been meeting for about a year. Metro-East Food Pantry Network is having a networking workshop on August 30, at 2 pm, at the University of Illinois Extension Office, #1 Regency Drive, Suite 200, Collinsville, IL. The agenda includes networking with area food pantry leaders and a program on volunteer management presented by Rich Skinner, VP United Way Volunteer Center. All are invited. Please RSVP Amy Funk at 618-344-4230 or amyfunk@illinois.edu. Click [here](#) for a flyer about the workshop. Click [here](#) for Metro-East Food Pantry Network's topics of interest.



A Ministry of Illinois South Conference
of the United Church of Christ

**Having too much fun to write home!! These Photos Say It All!
Love, DuBois Center Campers**



PRAYER REQUEST

Summer camp at DuBois Center is in full swing. Throughout June and July scores of enthusiastic campers, hopeful volunteers and dedicated staff members will journey together and embrace God's creation, dig in scripture, build amazing relationships and have loads of fun. Please keep these individuals and God's ministry through DuBois Center in your thoughts and prayers each day. Thank you!

PRAYER
changes things

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



Register now for Hoyleton Youth & Family Services Golf Classic, July 14th at Tamarack Golf Course! Four person scramble, \$90 per player/\$360 per team. Check in and lunch at 11:30am, 12:30pm start. Register [online](#). Sponsorships and volunteer opportunities available. For more info, call our office at 618-688-4770 or email drenegarbe@hoyleton.org



Your Gift to Back Bay Mission Could Be Doubled!

A generous donor has offered to match up to \$10,000 for Back Bay Mission's client sustainability programs. That means your gift to the Mission could be worth twice as much! Back Bay Mission's client sustainability programs meet the immediate needs of the poor and marginalized of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and help people begin their journeys out of poverty. This year, we're raising \$150,000 for three of these vital programs: Bridges Out of Poverty, our community health partner, and our veterans support fund. Until August 31, 2017, up to \$10,000 in gifts to these programs will be matched! You can learn more about these programs, and make your gift, on the Mission's [website](#).

Job Opportunity: Deaconess Foundation is searching for a Director of Advocacy. The Director of Advocacy stewards strategic communications to advance the foundation's public policy agenda for child well-being. The Director will establish and maintain relationships with targeted constituents, policymakers, researchers and media through personal contact and media platforms. S/he will support the CEO in development and implementation of the organization's leadership strategy and annual communications plans. To learn more about this opportunity including responsibilities, qualifications, and how to apply, visit the Deaconess Foundation [website](#).



Is your church located in Madison County?
Are you preparing for a church picnic or ice cream social?
Does your church have a coffee hour or fundraising dinner?

If so, please consider using St. John's Community Care napkins. It's one less item your group has to purchase and it will help us to promote our services to those attending the events. The napkins are free. Let us know a few weeks in advance of your event so we can try to accommodate your needs. Napkins are large dinner size. Requests can be for up to 500 napkins. We are happy to deliver the napkins to you or your church.

Call Missy at 618-344-5008 or email your request mathmer@stjohnscc.org.



What's Happening at Illinois South Conference...

Rainbow Camp Registration is now open. Rainbow Camp is Aug. 12, 2017 at DuBois Center, from 9 am - 7 pm. You can ride a horse, paddle a canoe, take a pontoon ride, make several crafts, shoot some arrows, catch a fish and a lot more, while making a bunch of new friends. The day will wrap up with a bbq dinner on the patio of Oak Lodge overlooking the lake. Rainbow Camp is for everyone in the LGBTQ community and straight allies. Register [online](#) now to get the early bird discount. See the camp [flyer](#) for more information.



Region 3

VBS - July

VBS - July

Eden Church in Edwardsville will host a Pastor Resource Day presented by Gift of Voice on Wed, July 19 from 8:30 am - 4:30

July 9 - 13; 6 pm - 8 pm; Granite City St. John UCC; Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God!
July 9 - 11; 6 pm - 9 pm; Midway

July 20 - 21; 6:30 pm - 9 pm; New Hanover Zoar UCC; Campout, Getting S'more of Jesus.
July 23 - 26; 5:15 pm - 8 pm; at

pm. This forum focuses on personal wellness, community collaboration and making a lasting difference. In addition to the terrific keynote speakers, topics include healthy leadership, suicide prevention, integrated health care, trauma - informed ministry and Christ-centered advocacy. Speakers are Nanette Larson, DMH, and Carlton Speight, SAMHSAC. Cost is \$10. Click [here](#) for registration form.

Region 8

Biddleborn Trinity UCC and Darmstadt Holy Ghost UCC will host Chuck Crain from Presleys' Branson & RFD TV in a "Gospel Music!!!" concert on Sun, July 16 at 1:30 pm at Darmstadt Holy Ghost UCC, 2806 Weilmuenster Rd, Lenzburg, IL. There is no cover fee. A "Love Offering" will be accepted.

*St. John UCC; Camp Out VBS. **July 10 - 14;** 9 am - 12 pm; Collinsville St. John Evangelical UCC; Rome: Paul and the Underground Church.*

***July 17 - 21;** 6 pm - 8:20 pm; Red Bud St. Peter UCC; Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God! **July 17 - 21;** 6 pm - 8:30 pm; O'Fallon UCC; Maker Fun Factory: Created by God, Built for a Purpose.*

***July 17 - 21;** 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm; at Centralia St. Peter UCC including 1st Christian Church, 1st Presbyterian Church, 1st United Methodist Church, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Zion UCC, and St. Peter UCC; Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God!*

Metropolis St. Rose Catholic Church joint VBS with Metropolis Zion UCC; Campout, Getting S'more of Jesus.

***July 24 - 27;** 6 pm - 8 pm; Wood River St. John UCC; Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God!*

***July 24 - 28;** 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm; New Athens, St. John UCC; Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God!*

***July 24 - 28;** 9 am - 11:30 am; New Baden Zion UCC; Rome: Paul and the Underground Church. Lunch at 11:30 am as part of the summer lunch program for kids through St. Louis Food Bank.*

***July 24 - 28;** 6 pm - 8:30 pm; Jerseyville Peace UCC; Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God!*

***July 30 - August 3;** 6 pm - 8 pm; Carlinville St. Paul UCC; Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God!*