

Weekly Connection

For the Week of December 3, 2017 - December 9, 2017
 Diverse Minds, Covenant Hearts, Made One in the Body of Christ

The Amazing People of Illinois South Conference... Ecuador Partnership Committee Says "Thank You!!!"

We have just moved through the season of Thanksgiving. What better time for the Ecuador Partnership Committee to say thank you to those who decided we would receive the Annual Meeting noisy offering and to those who gave so generously. We feel blessed by the outpouring of love for the people of Ecuador. Just as there is great need here at home, we must not forget that God wants us to reach out to "all the world". It was such a joy to see the love expressed in your faces as many of you came by the Ecuador Partnership Committee table at the annual meeting to share how you used the Blessings In Blocks as a means to gather your offering. So it is twice blessed. Once when it was given and again when the people of Ecuador receive it. As a result of your efforts, we have many blessings to take with us and place in the walls of the homes to be built. Again, thank you and please keep the Ecuador Partnership Committee in your prayers as we work to partner with Advent St. Nicholas who helps support our ventures in mission, the Kiwanis Club Chuquiraguas supporting the education of young women, Habitat Ecuador helping build decent housing, CIF helping individuals, couples, and families find healthy ways to resolve conflicts and domestic problems, and FEDICE working with rural communities to improve working and living conditions. As we go into this Christmas season, let us share the GIFT with ALL. CAN WE GET AN AMEN?

Important Links

- iscucc.org/
- duboiscenter.org
- ucc.org
- [Back Bay Mission](#)
- [CHHSM](#)
- [Ecuador Partnership](#)
- [Eden Theological Seminary](#)
- [Deaconess Foundation](#)
- [Deaconess Nurse Ministry](#)
- [Emmaus Homes](#)

[Hitz Memorial Home](#)

[Hoyleton](#)

[Insurance Board](#)

[LIFE Program](#)

[Neighborhood Houses](#)

[New Athens Home](#)

[St. John's Community Care](#)

[St. Paul's Home](#)

[Uplands Village](#)

[UCC Campus Ministry](#)

[Uni-Pres Kindercottage](#)

[ISC Directory](#)

Pray for...

**Prayer list for
 Dec 3 - Dec 9, 2017
 Churches & Pastors**

- Midway St. John's UCC, Rev. Lori (Wayne) Schafer
- Murphysboro St. Peter's UCC



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.

Giving Tuesday is November 28!

Give the gift of clean water for Puerto Rico & U.S. Virgin Islands!

Each \$20 filter produces 1 million gallons of clean water. Click [here](#) to give.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria have thrown our neighbors in the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico into crisis. Severe power outages have disabled water treatment facilities and purification systems, leaving people with



contaminated, disease ridden water. According to the Department of Defense, 55% of Puerto Rico was left without clean drinking water.

Your help is needed. This #GivingTuesday, the United Church of Christ is coming together to make a difference. We've set a goal of \$10,000 to provide 500 water filters to people living in the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.



United Church of Christ

Portable water filters help alleviate the need for people to boil water, consume plastic bottles and navigate the distribution/logistics issues for transporting large amounts of water.

Please join us in expressing our love for God and our neighbors. Your gift of \$20 is enough to ensure a community has 1 million gallons of fresh water. By providing clean water, you are directly contributing to the health and well-being of these communities. You are restoring hope.

Drop Your Blankets!

Before you could buy a DVD or had access to video streaming services like Netflix, you checked your local TV guide to find out when all the Christmas movies and specials would be on. Since the networks only played Christmas movies and specials once a year, you made sure to remember the date, channel and time they were on. Growing up, one that my family always made sure to watch every year was *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. To this day, I can probably quote most of the lines. This, now over 50-year-old Christmas special, features the Peanuts gang, especially Charlie Brown, trying to discover the true meaning of Christmas. Charlie Brown had volunteered to direct a Christmas program. Yet, as often is the case for Charlie Brown, things do not go well. His friends do not like his ideas or his choice in a Christmas tree.

In frustration Charlie Brown cries out, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" His friend Linus responds, "Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about." Then he heads to the stage where they had been rehearsing for the Christmas program.

When Linus reaches center stage, he gives a simple stage direction, "Lights, please," and begins to recite the words from Luke 2: 8-14.

"And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid, and the angel said unto them, 'Fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.'"

Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will towards men.'"

In a devotion by Jason Soroski entitled *Drop The Blanket*, Soroski writes about a moment that probably many never noticed. He writes about watching *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and being struck by the image of Linus dropping his blanket during his speech. Now I admit when I first read this I watched the scene several times before I caught it.



Here is the video. Pay close attention to when Linus says, "And the angel said unto them, fear not..."

Did you see it?

Did you notice what happened when he recited the words of the angel-FEAR NOT?

Yes, he dropped his blanket.

Jason Soroski believes Charles Schultz did this intentionally, recalling that in the famous Peanuts comic strip, Linus never drops his blanket. He writes, "The

birth of Jesus allows us to simply drop the false security we have been grasping to so tightly, and learn to trust and cling to Him instead. This simple cartoon image from 1965 continues to live on as an inspiration for us to seek true peace and true security in the one place it has always been and can always still be found."

As we enter into the Advent season, we will read and recall familiar stories of encounters with angels and unexpected announcements. Yet, because they are so familiar, it is easy to dismiss the ways ordinary people like Mary and Joseph had to be willing to let go of false securities and trust God completely.

Their journey was not easy and every step took a great deal of faith. They had to let go of their fears and insecurities. They had to be willing to leave behind the safe and familiar. They had to drop their own blankets in order to follow the path God had planned from them and the Christ child.

Retired Pastor

- Rev. Loren and Grace Windhorst, Vernon Hills, IL

People with Life Concerns

- Pray for Priscilla Self as she has surgery on Dec 1. Priscilla worked at DuBois Center for over 30 years (and still does part time). She is a member of the Okawville St. Peter's UCC and secretary for Hoyleton Zion Evangelical UCC. Cards may be sent to her at 12922 County Hwy 27, Nashville, IL 62263.

- Pray for Cheryl (Matt)

Gusewelle as she recovers from surgery. Cheryl is the daughter-in-law of Joyce & Richard Gusewelle. They are members of St. Paul UCC in Edwardsville and Joyce is a member of the ISC Conference Gatherings Team.

- 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.

Imagine if they had not been willing to trust?
We tend to romanticize and sanitize their faith journeys.
But make no mistake, it was difficult.
It was difficult to know that there were people who were criticizing, judging, and gossiping about them.
It is difficult not to second-guess themselves for believing in the messages of the angels and not to second-guess God along the way.
We do not know the conversations they had with themselves and with each other.
We do not know the dark and doubtful moments they faced.
Yet, I believe the greatest thing they did was that they took steps forward trusting that God was with them.
Dear friends, all of us have taken and will take unwanted journeys.
When we find ourselves in situations that we did not expect or did not want, let us remember that the message of the angels to Mary, to Elizabeth, to Mary and Joseph, and to the shepherds is the same for us.
FEAR NOT...for I am with you.
God WILL walk with us.
Remember this, God works through every journey, every situation and is able to redeem it in order that our difficult journeys will never be the end of our story! We just need to trust and drop our blankets.
Blessings, Shana

SHARING IN WORSHIP WITH YOU

December 3

Preaching at St. Paul UCC, Staunton

December 17

Worship at St. John's UCC, DuQuoin

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 date. You can also send me an email at sjohnson@iscucc.org.

Blessings, Shana

This is your OCWM monies at work.



Get Your Doves Here

Edna Dell Weinel from Columbia St. Paul UCC decided she would rather make a donation toward ISC's Friends of the Conference fund rather than learn to make the dove. We agreed to have it made for her. If anyone else would like to purchase a dove, email lschuepbach@iscucc.org and we will get one made for you. We will put your wishes and name on the dove. Make checks payable to Illinois South Conference. In the memo, put "Friends - Dove" and mail to 1312 Broadway, Highland, IL 62249. The package will be shipped to Texas the first week of December.

Beat that Deadline!! - Dec 8

The Space Request is due December 8. DuBois can accommodate 100 people, so the space request allows us the opportunity to make sure we can fill the space without overfilling it! So, please complete the [form](#) and return it with your deposit by Dec 8.

As your youth group starts planning for Winter Weekend, please keep in mind that we are asking the youth to help with two offerings.

1. Sunday morning, we will collect a cash (or check) offering to support Uni-Pres Kindercottage.

We suggest the youth of your church connect with the entire congregation as a mission.

2. We also ask the youth to collect and bring facial tissues, toilet paper, paper towels, wet wipes, and or Clorox wipes for Uni-Pres Kindercottage. Let's see how large of a stack we can create.



Upcoming Forum...

Open & Affirming: Living Openly, A Public and Visible Church will be held on Saturday March 3 from 9 am - 3:45 pm at Parkway UCC, 2841 North Ballas Road, St. Louis, Missouri

Registration begins at 8:30 am. Coffee, pastries and fruit will be available. Displays and bookstore will be open. If you are an Open and Affirming congregation, talking about Open and Affirming, thinking about starting the conversation, or wanting to explore how to be effective allies, there will be something for you and your church. Be in conversation with others, learn what it means to be Open and Affirming and how to fully express extravagant welcome to all God's children. Edith Guffey, Kansas/Oklahoma Conference Minister will be our keynote speaker/preacher for the day. For additional information please contact: Lorin Cope, Convener, Gateway ONA at lcope@eden.edu. Registration information will be available in January.

CONTINUED WAYS TO HELP THOSE AFFECTED BY THE HURRICANES

PRAY for those affected by disasters and those who respond.

VOLUNTEER - Volunteers around the country are needed in the months and years ahead. Individuals to be trained and serve for periods of 6-12 months will be needed for leadership. Groups and individuals will be needed to rebuild homes and walk with people as they recover their lives and dreams.

Sign up [here](#) to be the first to receive information on registration for long-term recovery. Past volunteers in long-term disaster recovery have removed carpet and drywall from flooded homes, installed framing, listened to local stories of the disaster, and wrote guest editorials in their local news outlets.

[Register](#) today to serve in Florida and Louisiana in response to Hurricane Matthew which hit in 2016. Skilled roofers are needed beginning on October 15 in Volusia County, FL in response to both Hurricane Matthew and now Hurricane Irma damage.

GIVE generously to support hurricane relief and recovery efforts by clicking on the link to make a secure online donation. Gifts may also be made to your UCC congregation marked for "Hurricane Relief" with the request they be sent through the Illinois South Conference office on to the Disaster Ministries UCC national office at 700 Prospect Avenue, Financial Services, 6th Floor, Cleveland, OH 44115. Mark for "Hurricane Relief", or designate for "Harvey", "Irma" or "Maria".

You will be meeting the needs of affected individuals and families by filling gaps in services through the following provisions:

Spiritual care
Tools

Community organizing
Building materials

Repair and reconstruction of homes
Volunteer coordination

YEAR ROUND - prepare Church World Service Disaster Kits. Follow the link below for Kit information.

Click [here](#) for your UCC Disaster Ministries Kits Matching Grant Application.

For stories of your donations in action, follow us on [Facebook!](#) UCC Disaster [Ministries](#) / Disaster [Updates](#)



DuBois Center News

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

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.



OUTDOOR SCHOOL at DuBois Center

Each spring and fall, DuBois Center welcomes scores of middle school students as they embark on a journey of discovery. Nature's

Classroom, our experiential education program, was

designed to give students the opportunity to learn about the world around them, while being immersed in a non-traditional setting. By stepping out of the classroom and into the woods, students gain practical skills and knowledge in a variety of areas, while simultaneously disconnecting from electronics and connecting with nature.

"Topics of study" include creek hikes focusing on stream quality and its impact on aquatic life; primitive skills such as building shelters in the woods or making dip candles and clay pots; basic rocket science with 2-liter bike-pump bottle rockets;



SUMMER JOBS - DuBois Center Equestrian Program

Looking for a rewarding summer job working with children and horses? How about hands-on experience managing a trail ride program? DuBois Center has openings for a dedicated summer barn coordinator and two barn assistants/cabin counselors. Spending time with the horses is a highlight for many of our campers. In addition to caring for our 20-horse herd, our summer barn staff utilize basic riding instruction and time "getting to know the ponies" to help campers build self-confidence and learn to respect and appreciate God's amazing creation. For those who have never

predator-prey interactions in a giant game of hide-and-seek tag; exploration of the senses on night hikes; as well as favorites such as archery and horseback riding. Throughout their stay, students are encouraged to cultivate curiosity and critical thinking skills. The residential aspect of our program encourages students to develop stronger relationships with their classmates. We currently have openings for new schools for our Spring 2018 season. Options include 3, 4 and 5-day programs. Click [here](#) to view our Nature's Classroom brochure or contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202 for more information.

experienced a horse up close, the first moments can be overwhelming. However, with nurturing guidance, campers quickly learn that they can overcome their fears and experience something wonderful. Tears often transform into giant smiles. The joy campers show is definitely reward enough, but serving on the summer barn staff also provides hands-on work experience for individuals considering a career in the equine field. For more information, check out the attached [flyer](#) or contact Shirley at shirley.director@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

Hoyleton Youth and Family Services Celebrates National Adoption Day

On Saturday, November 18, 2017, Hoyleton Youth and Family Services celebrated the joys of adoption and encouraged more people to give children permanent families through adoption. Through its broad spectrum of residential and community-based programming, Hoyleton Youth and Family Services enriches the lives of over 2,300 individuals each year. A reception followed at The Foundry Public House, 126 N Main St Edwardsville, IL.

This celebration was part of a nationwide effort to call special attention to the 100,000 foster children waiting in the United States for adoption, and celebrated all loving families that adopt.

"Uniting a child with a family who loves them is one of the best opportunities I have as a Judge to help our community" Judge Sarah Smith says about the program. Judge Smith is the chair of this year's National Adoption Day ceremony. "National Adoption Day is a day to celebrate with the children who have found their forever home, and to raise awareness for children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. This is our second year celebrating this special occasion, and we are excited to see that this event has grown even bigger this year."

Since 1987, the number of children in foster care nationally has doubled, and the average time a child remains in foster care has lengthened to nearly three years. Each year, approximately 28,000 children in foster care will age out of the system without ever being with a permanent family. More than 17,000 children are in foster care in Illinois; 3,347 of these children are waiting for adoptive families.

"For some of these children, they are now part of a new family. Many have had a difficult journey getting to this point, but the reward and opportunity are great," said Sharon McDevitt, Director of Child Welfare for Hoyleton. "This is a new birthday for these children."

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent, please contact Hoyleton for more information at 618-688-4727.



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



The Hitz Home Auxiliary presents Christmas Tasting Bee on Fri, Dec 1 at 1 pm in the Hitz Activity and Dining Room. It's an afternoon of fellowship at their winter wonderland celebration. Bring your favorite Christmas appetizer, dish or dessert to share a delicious meal, Christmas goodies, and entertainment by the Joy Singers. There will be a bake & craft sale by the Hitz Home residents. Donation \$6.

Thank You!! The Hitz Memorial Home thanks you for your donation of \$2,637 at the ISC Annual Meeting. Your generosity combined with thoughtful gifts of other friends, is a very important part of the Home's commitment to excellence in long term care.

What's Happening at Illinois South Conference...

The Annual ISC Pride Christmas Party will be Saturday Dec 2 from 2 - 4 pm at St. John United Church of Christ, 10207 Lincoln Trail in Fairview Heights. Bring an appetizer or dessert to share, and come prepared for a little trivia and a lot of fun. Our party is the same day as the Christmas party at DuBois Center, but DuBois Center's party doesn't start till 5 pm. We'll wrap up in time for you to attend both, if that's in your plans for the day.

The Illinois South Conference Pastors/Spouses Fellowship group will NOT meet on the 5th Thursday of November because of Thanksgiving. Instead, the group will gather for a pre-Christmas meal and sharing on Thurs, Dec 7 at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville at 11:30 am. The Shrine needs an accurate count in advance because their restaurant is busy this time of year. Please get reservations for this meal to Herb & Bennie Schafale at 618-476-3925 or herbenne@wisperhome.com no later than Monday evening, Dec 4.

Job Opportunity: St. John UCC in Granite City is searching for a part-time cemetery manager. Time requirement is a minimum of 20 hours per week with an occasional Saturday. Duties include supervise grounds keeper; maintain payroll and tax records; grave sales and interment procedures; work with excavation and ground care companies and communicate with funeral director on time and action; work with funeral home prior to interment to acquire needed documents; keep all grave location ledgers and files accurate on a weekly basis; work with the grounds keeper to locate all of the paper files, computer files and ledger tools to find all of the grave sites; write and issue checks and mail all payroll/expense bills with approval of the Cemetery Committee; monitor usage of sick days, vacation usage and personnel holidays for all cemetery employees; forward payroll to accountant via fax or e-mail every two week pay period for processing; put together a monthly list of current bills, burials, the accountants monthly statement and Edward Jones statements for the Cemetery Committee; attend the Cemetery Committee Meeting. Salary will be \$14/hour. To apply, send resume with cover letter to: St. John United Church of Christ, 2901 Nameoki Road, Granite City, Illinois 62040. ATTN: Personnel Committee or e-mail to stjohnucc2901gc@yahoo.com. No phone calls please.

Region 2

St. Paul UCC, Columbia, will hold their 7th Annual Plowsharing Fair Trade Crafts Sale Sat and Sun, Dec 16 and 17, 8 am - 4 pm in the Fellowship Hall. There will 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 income to families in need of food, housing, education and medical care.

Region 4

Brighton St. John UCC will hold a Blue Christmas Service on Dec 21 at 7 pm. Depression, work or family stresses, loss of a loved one may make this time of year particularly hard. The Blue Christmas service is an opportunity to acknowledge our sadness and gather together to give and receive comfort through a service of prayer, reflection and light held on the longest night of the year. This day marks the beginning of the lengthening of days, and is symbolic of the light of Christ brightening our darkness. All are welcome.

Region 4

Brighton St. John UCC will present an Adult Spiritual Enrichment Study following their church services on December 3-31 entitled "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 5

Stanton St. Paul Exhale (youth group) will hold its Vendor Fair and Craft Show on Sat, Dec 2 from 9 am - 3 pm. Bake Sale. Christmas gifts. Proceeds help fundraiser for summer mission trips for the youth group. Contact Becca at 618-520-0185.

Region 5

Let Christmas Begin: A Christmas Concert featuring St. Paul Handbells, Staunton Community Choir and instrumentalists will be held at St. Paul UCC in Staunton on Sun, Dec 3 at 3 pm. Enjoy the sounds of the season. All welcome.

Region 6

A CHRISTKINDLMARKT will be held at St. Peter UCC in Centralia on Saturday, December 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.

Region 9

Belleville Christ UCC will feature the Christmas in Belleville Concert on Sat, Dec 10 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.