

Weekly Connection

For the Week of February 24, 2019 - March 2, 2019
Diverse Minds, Covenant Hearts, Made One in the Body of Christ



The Amazing people of Illinois South Conference...

Salem UCC in Alhambra had some excess food after their annual sausage supper. They graciously gave that excess to Uni-Pres Kindercottage. Two members of the Uhe family from Salem UCC, Alhambra delivered the food to them.

The Region 9 UCC Youth Event at O'Fallon UCC on Feb 10 was cancelled due to icy weather, but that didn't stop some youth and adults from O'Fallon UCC to complete the mission. They met on Monday evening to wrap and fill more than 50 Valentine boxes, which were delivered to Brenda Crisp at Kindercottage on Feb 12 in time for Valentine's Day.



Thanks to all from O'Fallon UCC, St. Paul UCC Belleville and St. John UCC Fairview Heights who donated shoeboxes, wrapping paper, lots of candy, Valentine cards and stickers. You helped make Valentine's Day a treat for children at Kindercottage! The Region 9 UCC Youth Event will be rescheduled at O'Fallon UCC in the future. The mission project at that event will be to recycle plastic grocery bags by cutting them into strips and looping to make "plarn" (plastic yarn), which will be crocheted into sleeping mats for the homeless. For more information, contact Rev. Dr. Martha Thierheimer, O'Fallon UCC.

Group photo of O'Fallon UCC youth and adults: (l to r) Lisa & Jack Gibson; Zack Russo; Pastor Martha; Reese & Mary Kay Maskal; Phil, Lauren & Matt Reis; Ella & Jackie Russo; Drew Loyet, youth director. Not pictured: Lois Schmidt.

Shine Light on the Darkness

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."
--1 John 3:1, NIV

Several years ago, I learned the risk and power of confession of sins. The church that I was serving at the time entered into a heated debate about the role of communal confession of sin in the liturgy of Sunday morning worship services. When the topic first came up at a worship committee meeting, I didn't think much about it.

The first time it came up during worship committee, it was addressed with generalized comments such as "it just kind of brings people down," "people should not be made to feel bad in worship" and "worship should be uplifting not negative." Yet, the conversation continued for many meetings to come. At one particular meeting, the conversation got quite intense. By the end of the night, a vote was taken. It would be recommended to the council that the confession of sin and all prayers that had a "confessing nature" be eliminated from all worship services.

In the weeks that followed before the council meeting, I received several anonymous (and not so nice) letters concerning the "inappropriate" and "harming" nature of confession of sin in worship. I was also asked by several church leaders to consider "toning" down the wording of the confession of sin. All of it was kind puzzling and left me to ponder the simple question--Why now?

After five years of serving at the church, why was this now a topic of discussion? It certainly wasn't something that I had introduced. It wasn't something that was

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Pray for...

**Prayer list for
Feb 24 - March 2, 2019
Churches & Pastors**

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

out of line with their historical practices and theology. It wasn't like I was asking people to get up and confess their sins by naming a litany of all of their past mistakes and wrong doings. I was inviting them to join their voices in collective prayer acknowledging our deep brokenness as humans and our unending need for God's grace.

As I looked back at their orders of worship throughout the years, it seemed that a time for confession of sin was a consistent element of their communal worship life. So why was this even a discussion now? Why did it seem so threatening to those who insisted it be eliminated from our practice as a community of faith?

On the night of the council meeting, I discovered the "why." There had been a particular scandal in the community, which involved several of our church leaders. A situation caused many to question the moral leadership of these individuals. They felt publicly exposed, embarrassed, and ashamed at what had been revealed about their character when the full details of their words, actions and behaviors emerged and became public knowledge.

I honestly don't remember what was said or who said it, but it finally clicked. Many church members (including not only the church leaders that had been involved in the scandal, but their family members and friends) were uncomfortable saying aloud certain words that had been included in the prayers of confession because it hit too close to home. In the midst of the council's discussion to take action on the recommended vote of the worship committee, I asked if we could take a break for a moment and then return for a moment of prayer.

After council members had a moment to stretch their legs and then came back to the table, I began to explain the role of confession. I invited them into a conversation about what might happen if we eliminated a time and space for people to be honest, vulnerable, and remorseful. I then invited them to consider how we help people to see that confession can enable us to grow, change, and learn how to be and do better.

I believe the role of confession is to shine light on the darkness. To shine a light on the darkness that exists when we keep the truth hidden and secret. To shine a light on the darkness that exists when we do not acknowledge the destructive and harmful nature of certain words, actions, thoughts, and beliefs. To shine a light on the darkness that exists when we ignore the evil and ugliness that exists in humanity and in ourselves. To shine a light on the darkness that exists when we try to pretend that we are not flawed, imperfect, fallible, frail and in need of the assurance of grace, love, and forgiveness from others, and especially from our God.

In the end, that council voted not to eliminate communal confession of sin as part of our worship services. Instead, they voted to enter into a time of reconciliation and healing. The result was creating spaces for members to have the hard conversations they had been avoiding. Eventually, we created a series of evening worship services that led to grace and forgiveness, as well as honesty and accountability. It was not easy, as true confession never is, but it was transformative to the lives of those who were willing to participate in the process.

May we be committed to being a people who acknowledge and practice the power of confession. May we allow the light of honesty, vulnerability, and remorsefulness shine in the dark corners of our lives and spirits, so that we might grow in that light of God's truth and grace.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, Conference Minister

SHANA'S UPCOMING WORSHIP SCHEDULE

February 24 Preaching at Zoar UCC, New Hanover for their 175th church anniversary

March 3 Guest preacher at St. John UCC, Weldon Springs

March 10 Worship at United In Faith, Pana

If you would like our Conference Minister to participate in a worship service or special event at your church, please invite her. Please reach out to Rev. Johnson at the office at 618-654-2125 or her cell phone at 618-882-8247 with some possible dates. You can also send her an email at sjohnson@iscucc.org.

- Fairview Heights St. John UCC, Rev. Rosemary Captain
Retired Pastor
- Revs. Earl Menchhofer and Pamela Smith, Conyers, GA

People with Life Concerns

- Keep Viv (Rev. Ivan) Horn in your prayers as she recuperates from surgery. Viv is the wife of Rev. Horn, who serves as pastor for Hecker Friedens and is the ISC Secretary. Cards may be sent to Viv at 727 Gall Rd, Waterloo IL 62298.

- Please pray for Pastor Nancy (Scott) Shubert as she deals with some health issues. Pastor Shubert serves Holy Ghost UCC in Darmstadt and Trinity UCC in Biddleborn. Cards may be sent to 12691 State Route 177, Okawville, IL 62271.

- Keep Pastor Don (Lois) Propeck in your prayers as he deals with some health issues. Don is the pastor of St. Paul UCC in Jamestown and is currently serving on the ISC Committee on Ministry. Cards may be sent to him at 2163 E 1150th Ave, Loogootee IL 62838.

- Keep Kyle Nuetzel (24) in your prayers as he continues rehabilitation at home. Kyle is the son of Kathy & Rev. Patrick Poole.

- Keep Marilyn (Rev. Paul) Thompson in your prayers as she deals with health issues. Rev. Thompson is retired, but serves on the ISC Recruitment Committee. Cards may be sent to her at 910 Circle Drive, Red Bud, IL 62278.

UCC Resources



UCC Resources are the nuts and bolts that your church needs for doing GOOD ministry! Register for **Day of Discipleship** on Feb 23 at the St. Paul UCC in Belleville from 9:30 am - 2 pm (registration at 9 am). Hear presentations from the UCC General Legal Counsel, Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization (MESA), Office of Philanthropy, and The Pension Boards of the UCC. Send several leaders of your church to find out more about resources that are available from the UCC denomination which will support your local church. Click [here](#) for the registration form and map to the church. A bulletin [insert](#) will help you spread the word to your congregation.

Active Disaster Recovery Worksites in 2018 PUERTO RICO Hurricanes Irma and Maria

Hurricane Maria (September 2017) was the worst natural disaster on record to hit Puerto Rico. Nearly 3,000 people died - more than 60 in the hurricane and the rest from the crippling of health, power, water and other systems for months after the storm. Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory, estimates it will need \$139 billion to fully recover.

UCC Disaster Ministries, working hand in hand with the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico:

- immediately responded to partners' requests for generators, water filters, hygiene kits, food, first aid kits, tarps, construction materials, tools, vehicles and medical equipment.
- gave preparedness workshops, funds for tuition assistance and pastoral support.
- deployed UCC Partners in Service Disaster Volunteers Doug and Judy Moore, who set up volunteer housing on the island and scheduled volunteer work teams from across the United States.
- fielded 14 work teams from May-December comprising 96 persons from 20 churches. The value of their labor: \$95,000.
- restored 57 houses since May, with 43 of those completed by volunteers. Almost all needed new roofs and painting. IEUPR repaired additional houses before May.

2018 Funding: \$504,849

What's next? "We need more volunteers to help us stretch our resources and reach," said Zach Wolgemuth, Disaster Ministries Executive. "Many more houses are on the waiting list."

Lavinia's Story

Like nothing she'd ever seen before. That's how Lavinia, 81, described Hurricane Maria and the storm's devastation in Puerto Rico. Her home suffered wind and water damage. In spring 2018, volunteers repaired Lavinia's roof using materials purchased by donations to UCC Disaster Ministries.

"The storm came in very hard," she said. "I am not afraid of much, but when I saw what people were going to lose with all that wind, I thought, 'Oh my God, what is this?' Everybody was afraid. I did not know if Maria would take my life."



CALLING ALL PASTORS! Pastors' Sabbath Retreat

There is still room for more at the Pastor's Retreat on February 27-28. **However, the room rate of \$89 at the Doubletree in Mt. Vernon is only good if booked before February 20.** So, if anyone is still interested, get in your registration forms to ISC, 1312 Broadway, Highland, IL 62249, and book your hotel room today (618-244-7100)!

The event will include a get together the first evening for fellowship and food. The next day will be filled with conversations and activities designed especially for you as a time of reflection and inspiration, as well as more food! Cost is \$30 per person. It is our way of saying thanks for all you do for your congregation and the Conference. Click [here](#) for a registration form.



Green DuBois Stewardship Day: 6 People + 1 Hour = One Full Dumpster!

Six people on the Green DuBois team navigated the mid-morning chill on Sat, Feb 16 to make a noticeable difference around the lumber shed at DuBois Center. Wood and scrap were sorted on an earlier Stewardship Day,

so the team could work quickly to fill a 10-yard roll-off dumpster to the top. Metal recycling will be removed and some remaining brush will be burned on work days later this spring. The lumber shed sits in the heart of a stand of Buffalo Clover. Improvements to the area support the habitat for this rare plant, while making it safer and more pleasing to the eye for hikers and trail riders.

Yearbook Information Due March 6

If you haven't sent in your yearbook information for the UCC Yearbook and keeping records for your church's 11 year report, please do it soon. Deadline is creeping up on us!! If you have issues, please contact Lynnette at lschuepbach@iscucc.org on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday morning.

DuBois Center News

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



HIGH SCHOOL WEEK - June 16-21

One week, two great options: Wranglers and X-Plore! All the favorite DuBois Center activities plus MORE! More fun, more adventure, more friends, with an extra special treat - more meals served in the Rustic Village. Choice times return with even more fun and unique options. If you have completed grades 8-12, this is a great

week to build community, grow closer to God, experience nature and have some great unplugged FUN! Plan now to attend and watch for details in the coming weeks.



SPRING BROCHURE

Check your mailbox! Spring brochures are headed your way. If you're not on our mailing list but would like more information about our Father-Son Retreat, Wrangle & Ride, Service Saturdays or Block Party, check out the [brochure](#) and registration [form](#) online. If you'd like to be added to our

mailing list, send your contact info to dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or call 618-787-2202.

Church Alert: If you'd like a stack of Spring Brochures for an event or to insert into Sunday bulletins, call DuBois Center at 618-787-2202. Help spread the word!

Note: Brochures will be available at the Day of Discipleship this coming Saturday. Let us know how many you'd like and we'll have them ready for you.

WRANGLE & RIDE

Saturdays, March 23 & April 13

Spring is a great time to explore DuBois Center from horseback! Join our equestrian team on Saturday, March 23 and/or April 13 from 9am - 5pm for a full day of fun with the DuBois Center herd. Designed for both beginner and more experienced riders, these are horse-intensive days of grooming, tacking, riding, instruction and other horse-related activities. Beginners will be introduced to basic skills, while more experienced riders work on advanced options. Minimum age is 12. The cost is \$65 per day with lunch included.

Online registration is now open, or complete and mail this [form](#). Questions? Check out this [flyer](#) or contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@duboiscenter.org or 618-787-2202.



VACATION REQUEST DUE?

Consider a week (or even a few days) at DuBois Center and join our Summer Camp 2019 team! Wanted: fun, engaging and caring volunteers to serve as nurses, chaplains, cabin counselors, activity specialists and barn helpers.

Minimum age is 18 for most positions; young adults and older adults are welcome. Give of your time and talent, make a difference, and gain a wonderful sense of satisfaction... and even perhaps a bit of joy! For more information, check out the volunteer [page](#) of our web site or contact DuBois Center at 618-787-2202 or dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org.



SNEAK PEEK - Summer Camp 2019!

The countdown has begun! Here at DuBois Center we are busy planning yet another incredible summer! Use this [schedule](#) to begin planning your summer now! Check out our [Facebook](#) page to stay up-to-date. Questions? Contact us at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202

UPCOMING EVENTS

3/14	Thursday	Green DuBois Meeting - Highland
3/23	Saturday	Wrangle & Ride - Horse Day Service Saturday - Lenten Work Day
3/29-31	Fri-Sun	Father - Son Retreat
4/10	Wed	Nature 's Classroom Season Begins
4/13	Saturday	Wrangle & Ride - Horse Day Service Saturday - Lenten Work Day
4/27	Saturday	Green DuBois Stewardship Day
4/28	Sunday	DuBois THANK YOU Party
5/5	Sunday	Block Party for Middle Schoolers
5/13-16	Mon-Thurs	Work Days - Christ UCC, Dupo
5/20-22	Mon-Wed	Southern Illinois Art Workshop
5/29	Wed	Summer Camp Staff Training Begins
6/9	Sunday	1st Day of Summer Camp 2019

For information about other events at DuBois Center, contact us 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

United Church of Christ
**Church Building
& Loan Fund**



A NETWORK FOR
**GROWING
STEWARDS**

Need to energize and revitalize your church's strategies for faithful generosity? Does your church find it hard to talk about money? UCC Church Building & Loan Fund would like to make you aware of the Ecumenical Stewardship Center's (ESC) "Generosity transformed! your mission*your ministry*your money Conference, April 30 - May 3, 2019 in Indianapolis. For complete conference information and to register, visit [ESC's website](#). UCC Church Building & Loan Fund can help your church with stewardship and much more! For more information about all the services we offer, please contact Priscilla Bizer, Regional Mission Interpreter, bizerp@ucc.org.

LIFE at Eden: Informed by Grace

March 2, 2019 at Eden Theological Seminary

The next LIFE class offers something for everyone. The Certificate course is a fascinating tour of the Old Testament taught by Rev. Dr. Clint McCann and the Elective course is an intriguing look at the Enneagram of spirituality.

Certificate Course: Old Testament Survey

Rev. Dr. Clint McCann will lead us from creation, through the wilderness, into wars and reconciliation, liturgy, lament, praise informed by GRACE! ALL IN ONE DAY! ZOOM!

Elective Course: The Enneagram

Dr. Jill Baker will explore "The Enneagram of Personality" which is generally used as a typology to gain insights into workplace interpersonal-dynamics; in spirituality it is more commonly presented as a path to higher states of being, essence, and enlightenment. Both contexts say it can aid in self-awareness, self-understanding and self-development. To register or for more information, click [here](#) or email jschantz@eden.edu



What's Happening at Illinois South Conference...

Job Opportunity: Uni-Press Kindercottage Director

Uni-Press Kindercottage is a child development center located in East St. Louis II. It is a joint mission between the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Christ.

We are announcing the search for a Director of the center. Interested applicants must meet DCFS licensing standards and ExeLeRate standards.

Qualified applicants can find a full job description and application procedures on the [website](#).

Staunton St. Paul UCC's Youth Group, Exhale, is hosting a used prom dress sale on Sat, April 6 from 9 am - 5 pm. They are looking for donations of dresses, shoes, jewelry, etc. If you have something to donate, contact Becca at 618-520-0185. All proceeds will go to support the Exhale Mission Trips.

Region 2

New Hanover Zoar UCC will celebrate its 175th anniversary on Sun, Feb 24 at a 10 am church service. Conference Minister, Rev. Shana Johnson will be their special guest and other ministers will also be joining the congregation for the special day. A luncheon will follow the service. Come and enjoy their celebration.

St. Peter UCC, Red Bud will hold a Spring BBQ (all you can eat buffet) on Sun, March 3, serving at 11 am. Menu includes ribs, rib tips, pork steaks, smoked pork roast and chicken with all the sides, desserts and drinks. Eat in or carry-out. Join us at 403 Madison St., Red Bud, IL.

St. Peter UCC, Red Bud will hold two fish fries during Lent, Fri, March 15 and Good Friday, April 19, serving from 4 pm - 7 pm. Menu includes jumbo cod, catfish cutups and chicken strips with all the sides. Eat in or carry-out. Join us at 403 Madison St., Red Bud, IL

Region 5

Staunton St. Paul UCC's Youth Group, Exhale, presents a Chili Cook-off & Cheesecake Bake-off on Sat, Feb 23 from 11 am - 2 pm at the church. To taste the chili and cheesecake \$10; chili only \$7. Hot dogs, chips and soda for sale. Contact Becca at 618-520-0185 or rjbraundmeier@gmail.com.

CORRECTION

Troy Friedens UCC will hold its Sausage & Kraut Dinner on Sun, March 10 from 11:30 am - 5:30 pm at the church. Buffet menu includes grilled pork sausage, sauerkraut, green beans, mashed potatoes and gravy, applesauce, coffee, tea and dessert. Adults \$10; Children 5 - 10 years \$5; Children 4 years and under Free; Carry-outs and curb service \$10. Call 618-667-6535 for curbside service and pre-orders.

Region 7

The Outreach Committee of St. Peter's UCC in Okawville presents a Puzzle Challenge on Sun, Feb 24 from 2 pm - 4 pm. Doors open at 1:30pm to benefit the CHOW Program (Combating Hunger On Weekends). Cost is \$50/table with up to 6 per table. Silent auction items. Heads or Tails. Attendance prizes. Snacks and lemonade provided. Each team will receive the same 500 piece puzzle to complete. All proceeds from the Puzzle Challenge will purchase food to be distributed.

Region 8

Marissa Friedens UCC will hold its Wurstmarkt on Sat, March 16 from 3 pm - 7 pm. All are welcome.

Region 9

Trinity UCC in Belleville will host its 30th Annual Chicken & Dumplings Dinner on Sun, Feb 24 from 11 am - 3 pm. All-you-can-eat dinner includes fresh, home-made chicken & dumplings, green beans, corn, home-made cole slaw, applesauce, rolls, iced tea or coffee and one dessert. Carry-outs available. Quilt drawing. Bakery, Boutique & Baskets. Adults \$10; Children 5 - 12 years \$5; Children 4 and under Free. Contact 618-233-2941.