The Meaning of Advent
One of my favorite Advent stories is told by a colleague of mine about their first year at a new church. They had started at the new church in October and were looking forward to their first liturgical season with the church. At their first planning meeting with the staff, they had enthusiastically shared their ideas in preparation for Advent. After they had finished, they turned to the staff and asked, “So what do you think? What other ideas do you have? What traditions of our church do I need to incorporate?” To which a staff member rolled their eyes and responded, “Advent, are we doing that again this year?”

Advent, are we doing that again this year?? Maybe this is a more common sentiment than I realize.

For some, Advent can seem like a strange season. While the rest of the world is ready to move straight from Thanksgiving into Christmas celebrations, Advent invites us into a liturgical pause of reflection and waiting. Uncomfortable with this waiting, many approach Advent like a countdown game.

Evidence of this can be found in the plethora of Advent calendars now on the market. There are chocolate Advent calendars, beer Advent calendars, coffee Advent calendars, makeup Advent calendars, candle Advent calendars, Lego Advent calendars, and just about every imaginable thing that is small enough to put in small boxes has been made into an Advent calendar. My dogs even received an “Advent” calendar from my parents. Each day, we open a perforated flap that reveals their treat for the day. While it is a fun activity for them, I doubt my dogs will benefit spiritually from this practice.

In the same way, I doubt we benefit spiritually from the practice of approaching Advent as a countdown to Christmas. This is not the meaning or intention of observing Advent. The English word Advent comes from the Latin phrase—ad venion. Which, loosely translated, means “until the coming.” Advent was created to be a time for Christians to reflect on their outer witness and proclamation of Christ in the world. It is intended to be a time set aside to consider
how the presence of Emmanuel (God with us) can transform how we relate to one another, love another, and how we can further the reign of Christ in the world.

Advent invites us to ask what difference Christ coming to the world has and can have in restoring the goodwill God intended for humanity and all creation. Advent invites us into a time of holy imagining not of what is, but what can be. This holy imagining is not only focusing on what Jesus brought into the world as the incarnation of God, but also what we are called to bring into the world as those who are created in the image of God.

In this season of Advent, may you attune your mind, heart, and spirit to the visions Christ revealed for humanity. Imagine how you might be able to fulfill these visions until Christ comes again. Through Christ’s presence and power, how might YOU bring more hope, more peace, more joy, and more love into the world through Christ? How might YOU live in a way that enables the light of Christ to shine brightly even in the darkest places? This, dear friends, is the invitation of Advent. Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

**Today Is Giving Tuesday**
You can make a difference to the place you love. In 1962, the land that is now DuBois Center was acquired from the Illinois Central Railroad--as the need for a lake to re-water steam engines was no longer in demand for the rail industry. After a few years of planning and infrastructure design & construction, our first summer programs started in 1965. In 2022, we are paying homage to our 60th anniversary as property stewards and ministers--with DuBois 6.0. As our property and features age, we owe it to our ministry to be certain it can withstand the next 60 years. There are no less than 17 designated enhancement and beautification projects to ensure our next 60 years in our fantastic space. A full list of our ideas and projects can be found on our campaign website.

Since our beginning, a substantial and vital source of revenue has been through donations of all styles and sizes--and any amount is welcomed and appreciated. To ensure that we can maintain our missions, take a moment this Giving Tuesday to help secure our future and your family’s memories. As you may already know, so much of what we offer could not be done without donations from you!

Please take a moment to donate what you can this Giving Tuesday. A secure link to donate is on our website. Together, we can all help continue the mission of DuBois Center!

**Addressing Human Trafficking Locally**
On Sun, Dec 5, from 3 pm - 5 pm, Eden's Glory, an organization working to undo the horrors of sexual trafficking locally as well as nationwide, will be at Marine UCC, 111 N. Center St, Marine, IL 62061 to share the essence of their program. A successful survivor and graduate of Eden's Glory will tell her story and light refreshments will be served. The following is from their website:
"Eden's Glory is a home fortifying survivors, educating communities, and working to end human trafficking all for the glory of God."
"We believe ending modern slavery is possible."
Please consider joining them on Dec 5 to learn more about this critical issue.

**DuBois 6.0 Campaign in Need of Freezer**
You may have noticed in the DuBois 6.0 capital campaign that there's a foraged dinner fundraiser planned for next fall. The goal is to have foraged foods from the grounds in the dishes that will be served that night, such as fish, hickory nuts, blackberries and persimmons. These foods will be collected over the course of the next few months and several will need to be frozen when they're gathered. The regular camp freezer fills to capacity in the summer, so we need a freezer dedicated
to storing food just for this meal. We’re looking for a small chest or upright freezer, about 5-7 cu ft in capacity, with a working lock and key. If you have a freezer you’d like to donate that meets these requirements, please contact Jill Baker at jabaker5@aol.com.

The Amazing People of Illinois South Conference...

Pana United in Faith Church surprised Uni-Pres Kinder cottage with a new coat for each child at Kinder cottage. They made the children SO happy!

Godfrey Evangelical UCC brought Thanksgiving food bags for the Uni-Pres Kinder cottage families. Many will now have nutritious and delicious meals this week.

The New Baden Zion UCC Sunday School recently sponsored a Thanksgiving for Kinder cottage project where they collected money to purchase meals for the children at Kinder cottage. They were able to provide grocery gift cards for 49 families by collecting offerings each Sunday morning as well as asking the congregation for help. The program was so successful this year that there may be some Christmas surprises as well! Several students are pictured here in front of the turkey farm wall!

In October, UCC Global H.O.P.E. Approved Grants to:
Southwest Association of the UCC’s Michigan Conference – $3,500 – to help residents of Benton Harbor, Mich., get through a water crisis that has gone on for more than three years.
St. Paul’s United Church of Christ, Pottstown, Pa. – $3,000 – to help the church cover uninsured repair costs for its fellowship hall, flooded in Hurricane Ida in September. The grant will help community programs that use the space, including two Scout troops and an outreach to hungry children, to return more quickly.
St. Andrew’s United Church of Christ, Perkasie, Pa. - $3,000 – to help the most vulnerable survivors of Hurricane Ida in September 2021 with repairs or relocation.
Church World Service Kenya --$5,000 - for life-saving assistance to 6,000 households (61,825 people) affected by Kenya’s national drought disaster. Specific inputs will include water, food, cash and training in conflict prevention.
Hurricane Dorian Response, Bahamas - $35,000 – to support Church World Service work to strengthen Haitian migrant communities’ abilities to plan and undertake disaster preparedness and response actions.
Complete List of Grants.

Hurricane Recovery for 14 Texas Families, with Help of UCC grant
A World Renew volunteer repairs a hurricane-damaged home in Victoria County, Texas. Photo left courtesy Victoria County Long-Term Recovery Group, used with permission.
Repair of 14 homes damaged by Hurricane Harvey in 2017 is proceeding with the support of a $7,000 UCC Global H.O.P.E. grant to the Victoria (Texas) County Long-Term Recovery Group. Funds
contributed to the Hurricane Harvey Appeal are helping meet needs for temporary housing and storage, exterior and interior work, utilities, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, debris removal, household goods/appliances, and foundation repairs.

**Becoming a WISE Conference**

In the United Church of Christ, the Mental Health Network is committed to working “to reduce stigma and promote the inclusion of people with mental illnesses/brain disorders and their families in the life, leadership, and work of congregations.” (This is the stated mission of the UCC Mental Health Network.)

**What It Means to Be a WISE Conference:**

**WISE** stands for Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged. To engage in the process of becoming a **WISE** Conference, it would first enter a period of education, discernment, and decisions about how the Illinois South Conference might live out a commitment to be welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged with persons who have mental health conditions/brain disorders in the life and leadership of our Conference. (This includes pastors, church leaders, church members, and veterans in our churches.)

A Conference-wide **WISE** team consisting of five to seven members of the ISC would be selected to help name the commitments and resourcing we could engage in to develop a **WISE** Covenant for the Conference. The **WISE** team would work with the Mental Health Network of the UCC to create a covenant and action plan. At the 2022 Annual Meeting, the delegates will vote whether to adopt the presented covenant and action plan to officially become a **WISE** Conference.

**How the WISE Task Force Will Be Chosen:**

Applications of interested persons will be sent to and reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Illinois South Conference. It is a shared belief that the **WISE** team should consist of a wide demographic of the Conference whose participants have the passion, experience, and availability to carry out the necessary steps of the process.

**Timeline of the WISE Process:**

- **November 2021** - Applications for the **WISE** exploratory team are online and due to the Conference office by December 3.
- **December 2021** - The **WISE** exploratory team is selected; participants are notified; and the team is announced.
- **January 2022** - The **WISE** exploratory team begins an intensive process of education, discernment, and planning with the help of the Mental Health Network of the United Church of Christ.
- **Summer 2022** - The proposed **WISE** Covenant and action plan are finalized.
- **September 2022** - The proposed **WISE** Covenant and action plan are shared widely in the Conference.
- **2022 Annual Meeting** - Delegates to the 2022 Annual Meeting vote on becoming a **WISE** Conference.
- **Beyond Annual Meeting** - If the resolution passes at Annual Meeting for Illinois South Conference to become a **WISE** Conference, the real work begins.

**Damascus Project Open to ISC Lay People and Members in Discernment**

During these challenging times, you are invited to a community of people like yourself who are growing in faith and developing as leaders in their local churches with the **Damascus Project**, a program to transform and equip people of faith for a changing church and a changing world. A collaborative ministry of the Minnesota and Wisconsin conferences is now open to participants from across the United Church of Christ. Two unique courses, Faith Foundations and Leadership Skills, are available for lay people and Members in Discernment. Both courses begin in January.
and have multiple registration options and price points. **The deadline for ISC registration is December 27, 2021.**

You might be interested in **Faith Foundations** if:

- You enjoy attending (or providing leadership for) adult educational forums, book studies and Bible studies and are seeking more
- You are experiencing a life transition, e.g., retirement, children leaving home, job change) and are wondering what is next in life or in faith
- You are a curious seeker in the faith.
- You want to gain confidence in speaking about your beliefs.
- You recently joined a UCC congregation from some other religious traditions.
- You are curious about pastoral ministry or sense God’s call in this direction.

You might be interested in **Leadership Skills** if:

- You are a key lay leader, e.g., church council member, board or team chair or council/consistory president or moderator
- You are a volunteer or paid staff member, e.g., Sunday school teacher, youth ministry leader, church and administrative personnel
- You are a leader in your congregation’s community outreach ministries. You want to connect leadership in your day-to-day life with your faith walk.

Check out these invitations to community:

- **Invitation to Faith Foundations**
- **Invitation to Leadership Skills**

Visit their [website](#) for more information on pricing and registration options.

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**Announcing our Spring 2022 Retreat Dates**

Save the date!

In addition to a confirmation retreat, May 18-19, and pastor’s retreat, March 26-27, planned in conjunction with teams from the Illinois South Conference, we are happy to be offering the following retreats and opportunities to enjoy DuBois Center this spring. Follow along at our [website](#) for more information announced soon!

- **April 1 – 3, 2022** - Father-Son Retreat
- **April 9, 2022** and **May 15, 2022** - DuBois Center Open House Events
- **April 15, 2022** - Stations of The Cross at DuBois – Good Friday,
- **April 23, 2022** - Volunteer Workday
- **April 29 – May 1, 2022** - Women’s Retreat
- **May 20 – May 22, 2022** - Volunteer Retreat Weekend

We are also finalizing dates for a Spring Horse Retreat, a Green DuBois Stargazing Retreat, and a Green DuBois Nature Photography Retreat. Stay Tuned for more information on all of our exciting spring programming offerings!

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**Elmhurst University turns 150!**

On Monday, December 6, 2021, alums and friends of Elmhurst University in the Metro Area will gather for a celebratory reception. This “watch party” will begin at 5 pm in the Schroer Commons of Eden Theological Seminary, 475 East Lockwood Ave., St. Louis, MO. 63119. At 5:30 pm, we will live stream into the campus of Elmhurst University to hear the speech from President Troy VanAken and toast the Sesquicentennial. Please join in this historic moment as we recognize Elmhurst University and its relationship with the United Church of Christ. All are invited to this blessed event! For more information or to RSVP, please contact the Chaplain of Elmhurst University, H. Scott Matheney, at hscottm@elmhurst.edu or 636-617-3025.
Hitz Memorial Home Tasting Bee
This year, the Hitz Home Auxiliary’s Tasting “B,” The Music of Christmas, will be on Fri, Dec 3, at 1 pm in the activity/dining room area of the Hitz Memorial Home. There will be tasty foods, a special program, quilt raffle, silent auction, and attendance prizes to be given away. Auxiliary members will provide the meats and some sides. Foods that are brought for tasting by various church groups and individuals are very much appreciated. Items for the silent auction would also be welcomed. The quilt raffle also includes several gift cards. The tickets for the drawing are $1 each or 6/$5 and can be purchased at the door or from members of the Auxiliary in your local churches. Get a group together or come alone to enjoy laughter, good food, and fellowship for a good cause. Proceeds will benefit the activity fund for the residents.

What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

FREE TO A GOOD HOME: St. John's - Midway has 2 brass candelabras to donate. They have been replaced and are no longer being used. Each holds 7 taper candles. Contact their Church Office at 618-377-9288 if you are interested.

FREE TO A GOOD HOME: Kimball spinet piano. Contact Salem UCC at 618-488-3215.

FREE TO A GOOD HOME: Two (2) Peavey Impulse 500 Speakers. Contact Salem UCC at 618-488-3215.

Region 3
It is with great sadness that I announce the upcoming closure of Cahokia Bethel UCC. Bethel began its ministry on September 13, 1959. We will have our final worship service January 2, 2022. We have set aside December 19 as a day that we will celebrate the ministries Bethel has been involved with in recent years. We welcome our Conference Minister, Rev. Shana Johnson, and others from the Illinois South Conference to join us on that day as we celebrate the work done and partnerships formed during the years of ministry at Cahokia Bethel UCC. The final worship service on January 2 is planned as a private service reserved for the current membership at Bethel as a time for us to share stories, laugh, and grieve together as we close our doors for the final time.

Region 4
Fieldon UCC will celebrate its 155th Anniversary on Sunday, December 12 during the church service at 9 am. All are welcome to join them in the celebration. For questions, call 618-376-4641.

Region 5
Staunton St. Paul UCC Vendor/Craft Fair & Bake Sale
Vendors are wanted for the annual St. Paul UCC Vendor Fair and Bake Sale on Sat, Dec 4 from 9 am - 2 pm. Eight-foot tables are available for $15 each. A Bake Sale and Chili/Hot dog lunch will be served during the day. Please call Pastor Debbie at 618-635-2386 to reserve a spot. This event is part of the Staunton Christmas Walk and local vendors will be having special sales, carriage rides will transport shoppers around town and activities for children will be at each stop.

Troy Friedens UCC will hold its Santa Fest 2021 on Dec 4 from 11 am - 2 pm in the church parking lot. Free admissions but donations accepted. Social distancing applies.
Job Opportunities: Choir Director - Highland Evangelical UCC is searching for a Choir Director, who will be responsible for overseeing the directing, planning, and program development of the music program of the Church. The Director serves as a resource to support, foster, and coordinate the worship life of the congregation through congregational, choral, and special music and other visual worship experiences and reports to the Senior Pastor. For more information, click here. Send resume to EvUCC at BBray@evucc.org.

Media and Technology Director - St. Paul UCC, Belleville is hiring a Media and Technology Director. This position is responsible for the church audio/visual program, video production of worship, and website and social media. This includes:
- Coordinating the audio/visual/lighting elements of our worship service broadcasts
- Developing media and technology program at St. Paul UCC
- Overseeing hardware & software needs
Go to our website stpaulucc.org for a full job description. For those interested, please send a full resume to email.

Communications and Technology Coordinator - Columbia St. Paul UCC seeks to effectively communicate its work and ministry through inspired and creative leadership. They actively seek to fill this newly created role in this exciting period of growth and change. The coordinator will create, organize, plan, and implement effective communication strategies, messaging, and virtual events on behalf of the congregation in collaboration with clergy, staff, and volunteers. Pay range is $18 - $22 per hour depending on experience level. Email a cover letter with salary requirements, resume and portfolio.

Part-Time Music Leader - Pinckneyville St Paul UCC is in search of a Part-Time Music Leader who works well with people. Music skills include the ability to play a piano and a Wick's two-manual pipe organ with pedals. Good vocal skills are a plus but not required. The church does not have a choir but occasionally has special instrumentalists and vocalists. Sunday school children will often perform a song which may or may not require support from the Music Leader. Church services are currently 10 am – 11 am on Sundays with two services on Easter and special services for Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, and Maundy Thursday. Advent and Lenten services are typically rotated with two or three other churches. To apply, send resume with references to: St. Paul UCC, 205 E Jackson St., Pinckneyville, IL 62274 or email.

Part-Time Organist Position - Immanuel UCC in Ferguson, Missouri, is seeking a part-time organist for the music ministry on Sunday mornings and other opportunities. Organist for Wicks 76 rank pipe organ (with digital interface for recordings) will work with the Senior Pastor on music selection based on the sermon and liturgy. Previous church organist experience preferred. Hours established on an individual basis after reviewing experience. Hourly rates are competitive. The church office hours are Mon - Thurs 9:00-1:00. Website Submit a resume, compensation requirements, and references to email.

Youth Ministry Director - O'Fallon UCC is seeking a candidate, age 21 or older, for a part-time Youth Ministry Director position to lead Sunday morning youth Bible Study and fellowship/mission activities (2 Sundays per month). Contact the church at oucc@sbcglobal.net or 618-632-3496.

Nurse - Deaconess Nurse Ministry is looking for a nurse to work part time (9 hours per week) at Uni-Press Kindercottage and a food pantry in Belleville. If you're interested, contact Donna at dpupillo@faithnurses.org.

Minister of Visitation - Belleville St. Paul United Church of Christ seeks a Minister of Visitation (10 hours per week). Job

Director of Faith Formation - Belleville St. Paul UCC seeks a Director of Faith Formation (18 hrs. per week). Job responsibilities:
Facilities Coordinator and Tech Coordinator Positions - Waterloo St. Paul UCC is taking resumes for its Facilities Coordinator and Tech Coordinator positions. Please send inquiries about the Facilities Coordinator, Tech Coordinator, or both to email.

Assistant Church Organist/Musician - Grantfork UCC is looking for a musician to play the pipe organ and/or piano for their Sunday morning traditional worship service once or twice a month. Schedule to be coordinated with the church's music director, Connie Plocher. Contact Rev. Tim Darmour-Paul at 618-675-2595, or at grantforkucc@agtelco.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