John, the Baptist
I have always found John the Baptist intriguing. An eccentric, itinerant preacher out in the wilderness. There is something so authentic about this man who seems very unconcerned with material things and conventional life but is steadfast in receiving and sharing the message the Divine has given to him. His focus is laser sharp. His delivery is no-nonsense. His passion is contagious. And his deep belief in what he is preaching is palatable.

This is what draws the crowds to him. They are not drawn to a smooth-talking, polished, glad-handing, man of prestige and power. They are drawn to his deep convictions which causes the people to follow him and to want to know more. They are seeking to believe in what he believes in. They want to experience his certainty and the vision of the Divine he has set before them.

As the Gospel narratives point out, there were many who wondered if the Messiah of which the prophets foretold was John. And here is where I find John the most compelling. John has disciples of his own, in the sense of what that word generally means—someone who sits at the feet of another to learn. Yet, John never lets ego get in the way of his mission. Until the tragic end of his life, John’s mission never wavers. It was to point people to the only One who would ever be fully human and fully Divine and could bring salvation to the world.

When John was preaching and teaching in the desert, he was living in the not-yet moment. While it would only be a few short years until the Son of God would be teaching, preaching, and performing miracles, John headed out into the wilderness to proclaim that he had been called to help prepare the way. The world had not fully realized the power and presence of Christ.

John asked those who gathered to hear him preach, those who would be baptized by him, and those

Prayer list for
Dec 12 - 18, 2021
Churches & Pastors
- Breese St. John's UCC
- Biddleborn Trinity UCC
Retired Pastors
- Revs. Robert Goddard and Jan Dashner, O'Fallon, IL

People with Life Concerns
- Please pray for the family of Rev. Howard (Barbara) Thomure (89) as they mourn his death on Sat, Nov 27. Rev. Thomure was a minister for 64 years, serving most recently at St. Peter's UCC in Lenzburg. Services were held last weekend. Condolences may be sent to the family here. Read the full obituary.
- Pray for the family of Joy Horn as they mourn her passing. on Nov 28. Joy was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Robert Horn who served as pastor at Belleville St. Paul UCC and East St. Louis Immanuel UCC. Private services were held yesterday. Read the entire obituary. Condolences may be made online.
- Please pray for the family of Harry Alfred Fluck as they mourn his passing. Harry is the brother of Rev. Louis Fluck, who served as pastor of several ISC churches as well as being very active in the ISC and scanning important historical ISC information. Arrangements were pending at the time of this edition.
- Pray for Rev. Bill Causer, as he deals with some health issues. Cards may be sent to him at 1315 N Presley Ln, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864.
listeners and the preacher. After hearing John preach in which he has challenged them to “bear fruits worthy of repentance,” the crowd asks, "What then should we do?"

John’s response reveals once again the clarity of his mission and of those who will ready themselves for the receiving of Jesus. When the general people in the crowd ask, “What shall we do?” he commands them to be generous with one another, making sure no one has need. (“Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise.” Luke 3: 11). When the tax collectors, those who have power and authority over others, ask, “What should we do?” he commands them not to misuse their power. (“Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Luke 3:13) And when the soldiers, those who are commissioned to oversee and protect the well-being of the people, ask, “What shall we do?” he commands them to live out their calling without looking for ways for it to benefit themselves. (“Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation and be satisfied with your wages.” Luke 3;14)

John knows the fulfillment of God’s promises to bring forth the fulness of the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ requires each person to act. This was true then, and it is certainly true now. As the Church faces many changes and uncertainties and ponders its role and relevance in the world, perhaps the question we would be well to ask ourselves, “Well, what shall we do now?” and then lean into the voice which continues to cry out in the expansiveness of God’s creation and created order.

The response will be what it has always been. Live in a way that you are preparing for the way of our Lord to come into the lives of all people. Be kind and generous with one another. Do not misuse your power but rather use your power, voice, and influence to make sure no one has need. Be accountable to all those with whom you share this earth to also know hope, peace, love, and joy. And receive, trust, and believe in the One who can bring salvation to the world.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

**Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response**

**UPDATE #23, Dec. 6, 2021**

**Omicron is Here**

The Omicron variant of COVID-19 has reached the United States. Illinois has seen a steep climb in the number of COVID cases, though as of this writing, Omicron has not been detected in Illinois. Early research indicates the Omicron variant is highly transmissible, even more so than the Delta variant. It’s too early to know if Omicron will make people mildly sick or seriously sick.

As we move through the Advent season, pastors and congregations should be prepared to move to virtual church life if needed. If you are meeting in person, we encourage you to continue to wear masks indoors, socially distance, use hand sanitizer, and maintain 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.
Click here for a copy of this letter to share with others.

**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

**Year End Donations**
Donations for the end of the year must be sent to the Conference office to arrive by **Monday, January 10, 2022** in order to get all ISC donations to the National UCC by the end of the month. The check needs to specify that the donation is for 2021 and the date on the check should also be dated for 2021. Thank you for helping us to clear our financial 2021 records in a timely fashion.

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**Kindle a Fire – Songs of Advent and Christmas**
Eden Seminary and guests will gather around the ancient fire, honoring the light and the shadows of the Advent and Christmas season with carols, poems, and musical selections that help us prepare our hearts for Christ’s coming. Recorded and live musical offerings will be paired with beloved seasonal music sung by students, faculty and staff in the Chapel. Guest musicians include countertenor Tai Oney, the Eden Seminary Upper Voice Choir, and Kendall Moore, accompanied and directed by Paul Vasile.
Current students, faculty and staff will be participating via Zoom and in person. The wider community or your congregation may want to participate using a Zoom link or Facebook Live or through a recording of this service to use during your own Advent celebrations. Click here to find out how.

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**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.

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**United Church Funds (UCF) Announced Open Application for the Helen and Richard Brown Endowment for Pastoral Scholarships** for the 2022-2023 academic year beginning on December 1, 2021. The Brown Endowment derives from a generous gift received in the 1990s, designated to support pastoral ministry in the United Church Christ (UCC). UCF serves as trustee of the endowment, helping to ensure funding for pastoral education and development. Since its inception, the initial gift of $5 million now provides over $300,000 annually to UCC Conferences, seminaries and global partners, providing individual scholarships for seminarians, grants for continuing education for authorized ministers and support for seminarians in UCC/Disciples global partner churches. The endowment provides funding for students seeking a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree or equivalent. Potential Brown Scholars must demonstrate at least a year
of active membership in a UCC church and maintain a GPA of at least 3.0. Eligible candidates can apply to become a Brown Scholar for the coming academic year by submitting an online application here. The submission deadline is March 1, 2022.

The Amazing People of Illinois South Conference...
The **ladies of Mascoutah St. John UCC** have been busy this fall making blankets, hats and pj's (with shirts and socks) for each child at KinderCottage. Kudos to you all and thank you for your generosity and skills!

The Community Christmas Concert was held at the Staunton St. Paul UCC on Sunday, December 5 in the afternoon. You can experience the concert at this [link](#). Musicians included a harpist, bell choir, vocal choir, a string duet with keyboard, and various other instruments. It will put you in the Christmas mood.

**Laypersons Needed**
Dear Members of Illinois South Conference,
We have had plenty of pastors apply to be a part of the WISE Exploratory Team, but no lay members yet. The WISE exploratory team is a vital part of the process in our Conference considering if we will become a WISE Conference. It will be the WISE Exploratory Team that will engage in a process of education, discernment, and planning with the help of the Mental Health Network of the United Church of Christ to create the proposed WISE covenant and action plan which will be shared at our 2022 Annual Meeting for a vote.

If you are a layperson and you are interested in helping our Conference consider how to make a commitment to be welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged with persons with mental health conditions/brain disorders, we need YOU.

Please fill out an application as soon as possible or reach out to me directly for more Information at **sjohnson@iscucc.org** or 618-882-8247.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

**Boundary Training 2022**
As part of our clergy's covenant and standing with the ISC, clergy are required to attend Boundary Training every three years. Boundary Training dates in 2022 are set for Tuesday, January 18; Tuesday, March 22; and Tuesday, August 30 from 8:30 a.m. – Noon each day by Zoom.

**Fee:**
ISC Clergy - $20 for retired pastors and $25 for active pastors.
Non-ISC Clergy - $25 for retired pastors and $30 for active pastors.

Christy sent an email to clergy who are listed as needing boundary training in 2022. To register or pay by credit card, contact Christy at **cpursell@iscucc.org** with the following information: Name, phone number, email, church name/city, active or retired, ISC or non-ISC.

**Finding God at DuBois Center**
A Testimonial - "Ever since I was a child, DuBois Center has felt like a second home to me. I started coming to Fall Festival when I was maybe one or two years old and, once I learned about camp, I couldn’t wait to become a camper! My dad and I started You & Me Camp the first year I was able to
go, and I continued to be a DuBois Center Camper every single summer for many years until an injury in early high school sadly kept me from attending camp. I also attended multiple retreats throughout the school year and basically found every excuse I could to make it out to camp, even if it was just for the day.

I came back after high school as a staff member and I loved sharing my love of camp and my love for God with a new generation of campers. Now, I make an effort to volunteer multiple Sundays each summer for registration (come find me – I’m the loud red head!) and am trying to find time in my grown up work schedule to come back as a volunteer counselor.

I have never felt closer to God than when I stand on the dock of Lake DuBois in the early morning when all is still quiet, or when I take a seat in one of our outdoor chapels to worship with friends, or when I’m simply exploring the trails, enjoying God’s Creation. DuBois Center helped shape the person I am today, and I could not be more happy that I still get to call it my ‘second home.” Kara G. - Camper/Staff/Volunteer

You can make a difference to the place that many have found God. 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, a capital campaign to beautify and enhance no less than 17 designated projects. A full list of our ideas and projects can be found on our campaign website. Help us secure the future of DuBois Center and many memories such as the one above by donating what you can. A secure link to donate is on our website. Together, we can all help continue the mission of DuBois Center.

Now Accepting Applications for Summer Staff 2022
Applications are open for Unit Coordinators, Barn Assistants, and Counselors. View our website in the weeks to come for updated employment information and job descriptions. Contact Rylee (program@duboiscenter.org) for an application. Please share the news far and wide! We are looking forward to summer 2022.

Now Accepting Volunteer Applications for 2022
We are also now accepting volunteer applications to help with our summer 2022 schedule. Can’t come all summer but want to donate a week of your time? Contact Hayley (director@duboiscenter.org) for an application or to talk about how you can make an impact. Starting in 2022, volunteers at DuBois Center will need to complete additional diversity and inclusion training, so plan now to help us in the spring and summer!

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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**The Insurance Board Presents a Webcast, Conducting Church Safety Inspections**, on Thurs, Dec 9 at 1:00 pm CST to discuss the importance of conducting regularly scheduled safety inspections of church grounds and facilities as well as dive into the specifics of what needs to be evaluated. This webcast will be facilitated by Howard Sewell, retired insurance risk manager and IB board member. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. Previously recorded webcasts can be found [here](#).

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**Eden Bookshop and Merchandise**

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

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**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 8 - Lebanon St. Paul UCC will offer ‘A Blue Christmas Service’, on Sun, Dec 19 at 3 pm (masks are required). A Blue Christmas Service is designed to allow those who are in the midst of grief during Advent to find solace and expression on the way to Bethlehem. If you or someone you know is grieving, know that you are invited and welcome in this Service. This service is designed for all those who grieve, wherever they are on the spectrum of faith and understanding, to give voice to their pain, heartache, emptiness, loneliness and anger before the God who comes as a Baby to Bethlehem. Come, as you are, with the burden you carry, and allow the Spirit to give you rest in the Hope and Love of the One who is born in Bethlehem. You are welcome here.

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. Part-Time Organist Position - Immanuel UCC in Ferguson, Missouri, is seeking a part-time organist for the music ministry on
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.

**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-Pres 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 responsibilities include:
- Visit congregants who are hospitalized, in long-term care facilities, and homebound
- Assist with and lead funerals as needed
- Assist in worship elements
Send a resume and 3 references to visitationsearch@stpaulucc.org

**Director of Faith Formation**

**Belleville St. Paul UCC** seeks a Director of Faith Formation (18 hrs. per week). Job responsibilities:
- Plan and execute the church's education program for all ages in collaboration with the Sr. Pastor and Christian Ed. Team
- Sustain and expand the youth group
- Assist in worship elements
Send resume and 3 references to email.

**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 stpauluccwaterloo@gmail.com.

**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. The schedule will be coordinated with the church’s music director, Connie Plocher. To express an interest, please 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