

February 13, 2024



Our Conference Minister Reflects on God's Unending Love



Happy VaLENTine's Day

I cannot remember a time in my ministry when Ash Wednesday fell on Valentine's Day. For some, it seems like an odd paradox, but for me, it feels like a beautiful opportunity for us to explore what love is. When my girls were young, I intentionally made a big deal out of Valentine's Day.

I wanted my daughters to know that while some may focus only on romantic love, we must tend to and nourish many types of love as these loves will sustain us and carry us throughout our lives. Romantic love is fleeting but agape; universal, unconditional love is everlasting, and seeking and sharing it is worthy of our attention, time, and energy. The first gift we receive as we enter this world is the Divine love of the One who created us and brought life itself.

Such Divine love was most fully embodied in the person of Jesus. In the fourth chapter of the gospel of Matthew, verses one through eleven, we encounter a story about Jesus' spiritual quest in the desert. The author describes a seminal experience for Jesus before his public ministry in which Jesus faced temptations that would influence how he would choose to live his earthly life. To fulfill his Divine purpose, Jesus would have to choose not to give in to the temptations of worldly security, power, and success.

Perhaps in the desert, Jesus realized that seeking worldly security, power, and success would get in the way of his mission. Perhaps in the dusty terrain, Jesus realized such things were fleeting fascinations of this world that had no bearing on the eternal things that matter in the kingdom of God. Perhaps in the quiet, as he removed himself from distractions, he realized only one thing mattered—the gift of love.



When Jesus left the desert and reentered the realities of daily living, he was focused on sharing the gift of God's love to all. Jesus sought out the lost and lonely, the disheartened and dejected, the outsider and outcast, the unhappy and unfortunate, to show them the way of God's love.

Jesus' life and ministry would forever teach humanity about the power of Divine love to transform the world. Yet, how do we continue to struggle to embrace and embody this love we are so desperately seeking? We are looking for it in all the wrong places. We are looking for it in ways that do not last or will never satisfy.

On Valentine's Day, we often reduce the beauty of love to only one expression of it—romantic gestures. On Ash Wednesday, we often reduce the discipline of faith to only one expression of it—confessional resolutions. Yet, what if we saw this February 14th as an opportunity to remind ourselves of the interconnectedness of these two holy days?

In celebrating Valentine's Day, what if we first acknowledged how we know love exists and how God was the one who first gifted us with love? In observing Ash Wednesday, what if when we say, "From dust, you came, from dust, you shall return," we also remind ourselves that God's promise to us is "From love, you were created, and in love, you shall remain"? What if we saw the ashes on our foreheads as the mark of being God's valentine, God's first love? May we celebrate, observe, and live the power, beauty, and joy of God's eternal love on this Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday.

-Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



-Valmeyer St. John UCC
Rev. Steven
(Carla) Boorsman



-Waterloo St. Paul UCC

-Retired Pastor
Rev. Thomas
Nadelin, Granite City, IL

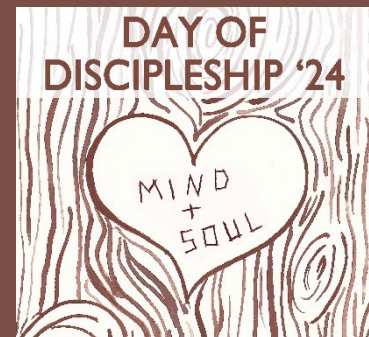
-Keep the **mother of Pastor Norma Patterson** in your prayers as she struggles with health issues. Pastor Norma Patterson is the Pastor and Teacher for East St. Louis Good Shepherd of Faith and has served on several teams for ISC. Cards may be sent to Norma at **5310 DePaul Drive**, PO Box 4235, Fairview Heights, IL 62008.

Illinois South Conference News & Events

Day of Discipleship

Join us at Illinois South Conference's own DuBois Center for the Day of Discipleship event entitled *"Into the Woods We Shall Go...to care for our minds and nourish our souls"* to be held on Saturday, March 9th, 2024, from 9:00am to 12:15pm with optional Friday evening Self-Care Retreat.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



Into the Woods
We Shall Go...

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR DAY OF DISCIPLESHIP](#)

Boundary Awareness Training

For those pastors who are due for Boundary Training this year, ISC has scheduled training for Tuesday, February 20, via zoom from 8:30 a.m. – Noon. This training will be for both active & retired clergy. Email Debbie at dkesner@iscucc.org to register and get the zoom meeting info. Cost: \$20 for retired pastors, \$25 for active pastors, \$25 for non-ISC retired pastors, and \$30 for non-ISC active pastors.

JOIN US IN THE FIGHT FOR AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS IN ILLINOIS

We believe the rising costs of prescription drugs in our state is not just a financial injustice; it is a moral and spiritual injustice. No one should have to choose between filling a prescription and putting food on the table. That is why our Conference has become a supporting sponsor of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board. We are working with groups like the AARP and Citizen Action Illinois to encourage our elected officials to support legislation to help lower costs for expensive lifesaving medications that are out of reach for too many Illinoisians. By setting payment limits, the Prescription Drug Affordability Board would save money for patients by reducing their out-of-pocket costs and monthly insurance premiums. This proactive approach has been adopted in eight other states, with your help we hope Illinois will be next.

Here are some ways you can get involved:

Contact your legislators by using the link below and filling in the appropriate information: <https://citizenactionillinois.salsalabs.org/ilpdab/index.html>

Attend a town hall teleconference with Senator Koehler sponsored by AARP Illinois on February 15 at 11 am. To register: <https://events.aarp.org/event/affordablemeds/summary>

Write letters to your local paper. Email sjohnson@iscucc.org for templates and resources to help you write letters.

Share your stories: Send us stories we can share with our elected leaders about how the rising costs of prescription drugs have affected you, your family, or someone you know.

Email sjohnson@iscucc.org

Join us for an all-Conference Zoom session on Monday, February 19, at 6:30 pm to learn more about how you and your church can get involved.

Prescription Drug Affordability Act Town Hall--Time: Feb 19, 2024, 06:30 PM Central Time (US and Canada)Join Zoom

Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6349352317?omn=82987576616>

Meeting ID: 634 935 2317

Prescription drugs cannot work for those who cannot afford them.

ONLINE EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS BY THE MINISTERIAL, EXCELLENCE, SUPPORT, AND AUTHORIZATION (MESA) MINISTRY TEAM OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

To register, please click the highlighted title of the event. Also, please note these offerings are in the Eastern Time Zone, not the Central Time Zone, so you will need to make this adjustment on your calendar when registering and participating in an event. These courses are approved by our COM.

--**Monday, March 4, 1:30 – 4:30pm ET, Retired Minister Boundary Training with Rev. Tara Barber**

--**Wednesday, March 13, 4:00 – 5:30pm ET The Interim Time: What Do We Do? with the Rev. Jeff Nelson**



April 23rd-24th, 2024

ISC MINISTRY LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Ready to **Open Your
Eyes?**

All current and retired pastors and lay ministry leaders are invited to participate in the retreat to be held at Toddhall Retreat Center* on Tuesday, April 23rd (noon) through Wednesday, April 24th (noon).

[CLICK HERE FOR RETREAT INFO AND REGISTRATION FORM](#)

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER ONLINE FOR RETREAT](#)

Show the Pastors of the Illinois South Conference Some LOVE.

Our Local Church Ministries Team is hoping you will be able to help them again this year by donating ~40 items for the Pastors' Retreat Goody Bags. (Request is not intended for retreatants.) Examples are homemade treats or crafts, pens, journals, handwritten thank you notes or \$ to help purchase items. Bring/send items to either St Paul UCC, Columbia or the ISC Office by April 8th. Alternatively, you can bring items to the [Day of Discipleship](#) on March 9th. Click [here](#) for info or reach out to Denise Johnson at christianed@stpaulcolumbia.org. Thank you in advance!!

Project Angel Gowns: Crafting Comfort for Precious Lives

What is Project Angel Gowns?

Project Angel Gowns is a ministry dedicated to bringing comfort to families with infants in the Rankin Jordan Pediatric Hospital *Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)*. We are seeking talented and compassionate volunteer tailors to join us on this meaningful journey. Our vision is to repurpose wedding gowns into beautiful christening gowns for the little warriors in the NICU, offering solace and a tangible keepsake to families during challenging times.

Why does this matter?

The NICU journey is an emotional rollercoaster for many families. Project Angel Gowns aims to provide a ray of hope, creating gowns filled with love and memories. Whether these

infants grow up to lead remarkable lives or their time is brief, we strive to offer families a cherished memento to hold onto.

How can you get involved?

If you possess the skills of a talented tailor or know someone who does, we invite you to join us in making a difference. Your expertise can bring comfort to families when they need it most. Additionally, if you have a wedding gown that is gathering dust but still holds sentimental value, consider donating it to our cause.

For further details and to express your interest in joining Project Angel Gowns, please reach out to Rev. Tim Powers-Reed at 636-248-6468 or via email at trinityuccpastor@gmail.com.

Heartland Community Chorus in Concert

The Heartland Community Chorus, based in Highland, will be in concert at St. Paul UCC, Lebanon IL, on Saturday, March 23 at 7:00 pm. The theme of this concert is "Music of the Heart", a musical exploration of the heart's deepest emotions. The chorus, now in their 11th Concert Season, has singers that come from Breese, Edwardsville, Glen Carbon, Highland, Marine, Maryville, Mascoutah, Pocahontas, St. Jacob, St. Rose, Trenton, and Troy, IL. A number of singers are from the UCC faith family. The chorus performs three sets of concerts yearly. Tickets are available in advance or at the door on concert day. Visit the group website: <https://heartlandcommunitychorus.org> for more information. Please come & support this local group and enjoy some beautiful music.

UCC National and Regional News & Events

*****SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2024 REGIONAL YOUTH EVENT*****

Thursday, July 17 through Friday, July 19

Augustana College, Rockford, Illinois

The Many (who were our keynote musicians at our 2022 ISC Annual Meeting) will be the music and worship leaders for the event. To keep the registration fee for each participant minimal, the Conferences and the National setting of the UCC will offset much of the event's costs.

REGISTRATION WILL OPEN AT THE END OF FEBRUARY (more information to come)

-Early Bird Cost: through March 15, is \$200

-Regular Registration Cost: March 16 to May 15: \$250

-Late Registration Cost: May 16 to June 15: \$300

Please note registration will close on June 15.



MONARCHS Need Our Help- Get Ready for Their Arrival to the Southern Illinois Region in April

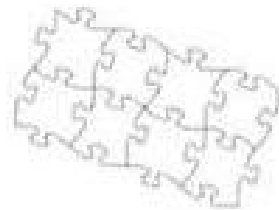
Monarchs have a 9% survival rate when left in the wild, but bringing the unhatched eggs into a protective environment gives them about a 75% survival rate. You can imagine if an initiative to protect monarchs is shared across our nation the difference it could make. As Rev. Mitch Nelson learned--

"congregations really get into it! This project was initiated in my practicum class from my Doctoral work on writing about an earth based Christian Spirituality. The Spirituality is based on the idea that spending more time interacting with nature as Christian's can lead to the healing of ourselves and creation." The Monarch project is one such example. They

collected the caterpillars on milkweed leaves by plucking off the leaf from the plant and then put them into mason jars with a mesh lid. The hope is that in the creative process of this project we can collect data on how many more Monarchs are raised and continue to share this with others to increase their population. At <https://www.ucc.org/raising-monarchs/> learn the simple process, tips for success & stories to inspire your congregation and youth program to raise and release Monarchs.

ISC Hunger Action Team

The ISC Hunger Action Team would like to recognize: St. Peter's UCC and their Outreach Committee as they fundraise for the Irvington /Addieville UCC Food Pantries during their **PUZZLE PARTY Sunday, February 25th 2:00pm-4:00pm** at the St Peter's UCC Okawville Educational Building. **PARTY LIKE YOU'VE NEVER PARTIED BEFORE!** Each team gets the same 500 piece jigsaw puzzle. The 1st team to complete the puzzle is the winner! Also, 50/50 raffle- Heads/Tails game! Max of 12 teams, \$80/team (max of 8 players/team) Call Melinda Albers & reserve a table (618)792-6218. Have fun AND feed the people! Thanks, St. Peter's, for supporting this much needed mission project; such a blessing - under the leadership of pastor and teacher Rev. Jeff Schwab.



[Click here and share your food insecurity outreach stories with the ISC HUNGER ACTION TEAM or email \[kathi1emery@gmail.com\]\(mailto:kathi1emery@gmail.com\)!](#)

News from DuBois Center

Father/Son Retreat Registration is Open

Help us in spreading the word to all the "Dads" and their "Sons". Click on the image below to learn more and register today!



Spring Retreats

AT DUBOIS CENTER

Father-Son Retreat: March 15-17

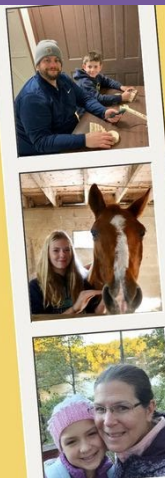
Mother-Daughter Retreat: March 22-24

Adult Horse Retreat: April 6-7

Women's Retreat: April 26-28

Youth Horse Retreat: April 27-28

For more information visit
duboiscenter.org/retreats/dbc-retreats



Register for a DuBois Spring Retreat

BE A SPRING EVENT VOLUNTEER!

CHHSM 86th Annual Gathering

CHHSM hopes you will join them at the Live by Loews Hotel in St. Louis for CHHSM's 86th **Annual Gathering** March 12-14, 2024! The theme of the 86th Annual Gathering is "Collaboration as the Gateway to Innovation." The focus scripture is: "It's better to have a partner than go it alone. Share the work, share the wealth. And if one falls down, the other helps" Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (MSG). With collaboration taking center stage, we will explore how working together can spark innovation that changes lives.



Building Bright Futures Scholarship Program Dear UCC Family and supporters of Uni Pres Kindercottage,

I am writing to you with an urgent appeal for support in providing tuition scholarships for families facing financial challenges. Recently, our organization experienced Government funding cuts which will have direct impact on the educational services we provide to children and families in need. Many of these families rely on our center not only for educational care but also for a safe and enriching learning

environment, complete with healthy meals.

Our Scholarship Program has three levels of support:

-*Scholarship Level 1:* \$1000.00 monthly This level of support will provide a family with two children access to full day childcare including two nutritious meals and a snack. Additionally, enrolled parents or guardians will benefit from ongoing resources and family support. Your contribution at this level directly empowers a family to access the essential services and support their needs.

-*Scholarship Level 2:* \$ 500.00 monthly: This level of support will provide a family with one child with access to full-day childcare including two nutritious meals and a snack. Additionally, enrolled parents or guardians will benefit from ongoing resources and family support. Your contribution at this level directly empowers a family to access the essential services and support their needs.

-*Scholarship Level 3:* \$250.00, At this level your contribution will provide a half day service for one child including two full meals. Families receiving this scholarship will also have access to resources and services facilitated by our Family Advocate Care Specialist.

What ever level you are able to choose, your generous donation will directly impact the lives of children and families in need, ensuring they receive essential educational services and support. Uni Pres Kindercottage is committed to fostering a nurturing environment where every child can thrive, regardless of financial constraints.

To contribute to these scholarship levels, you may send a check, money order or drop off your donation to our center [564 Veronica Ave, East St. Louis, IL 62205](https://www.uni-pres.org/). For more information, please feel free to contact us directly at (618)874-6505 or click the image. Thank you for considering this opportunity to make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve. Your support is invaluable in building a brighter future for our children and families.





Zion UCC New Baden Fish Fry Friday, February 23rd 4:00pm-6:30pm **414 W. Hanover St, New Baden.** \$15/dinner includes cod tail, catfish or shrimp, mac & cheese, hush puppies, coleslaw, fries and dessert. Drive-thru only. Accommodating large orders! -Call (618)588-4135 for info.

St Peter UCC Fish Fry-Two days to enjoy! Come on into St Peter UCC-Red Bud, IL **Fri, February 23rd & Fri, March 8th from 4pm-7pm** for indoor dining or enjoy curbside pickup. Menu featuring cod, catfish, shrimp and chicken strips--sides include German and American potato salad, french fries, macaroni & cheese, slaw, stewed tomatoes, baked beans and cucumber salad. Call 618-282-2417 for carry-outs.

Concordia UCC of Millstadt, IL Pancake & Sausage Breakfast Join us for and ALL YOU CAN EAT Pancake and Sausage Breakfast with Buttermilk, Oatmeal and Gluten-Free pancake varieties on **Saturday, February 24th 7am-10am.** Adults- \$9, Ages 5 to12- \$6, Under 5- Free. There will also be Baked Goods for sale! Proceeds go to Youth Programs. Concordia UCC, **7600 State Route 163 (Corner of 163 and Concordia Rd)** Belleville, IL 62223

Chili and Beef Vegetable Soup at St John UCC Trenton, IL St. John UCC, 21 N. Walnut Street, Trenton, IL will have a Drive-Thru Chili & Beef Vegetable Soup Lunch on **Saturday, February 24th from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM** (or until chili and soup are gone). Enjoy a delicious, hot soup just \$10 per quart! To access the drive-thru, enter the west side of the alley between the church and the Shell Station.

Zion UCC, New Baden Chicken Dinner on **Saturday, March 2nd 4:00pm-7:00pm.** Dinners are \$15 and include a half a chicken, a variety of sides, and a dessert and can conveniently be picked up in their DRIVE-THRU. For more info contact their office at (618)588-4135.

11th Annual Redneck Trivia Night: Redneck Country Western Style Saturday March 2nd at 5:00pm at St. Mary's Parish Center, Valmeyer. To Reserve a table, email Tammy Netemeyer at skaer68@yahoo.com or call (618)910-3185. Proceeds go to St. John UCC Valmeyer Church and Camp DuBois.

Hamel Immanuel UCC CHICKEN DINNER on **March 10, 2024 11:30am-4:30pm -5838 Staunton Rd. Edwardsville, IL** (1.5 miles South of Hamel). \$12.00 DRIVE - THRU Carryout only. Menu-Fried Chicken, mashed potatoes & gravy, green beans, applesauce and coleslaw. Quilt, Smart TV and gift card raffle, too!

Opportunities and Resources

Godfrey Evangelical UCC is in search of a Nursery Worker for Sundays from 9:45 am to 12:00 pm during the months of September thru May; In June, July and August from 9:45 am to 10:00 am. The children needing care are ages infant through 2 or 3 years. Pay rate is \$25 per hour, which will be paid every 2 weeks. Please contact Pam Kasten at pkasten59@gmail.com with questions or to express your interest.

Part Time Organist/Pianist - Friedens United Church of Christ in Marissa, IL is seeking a part-time organist and/or pianist. Duties include playing organ and/or piano on Sundays for our 10 am worship services as well as Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, mid-week Lenten services, and our Pre-Lenten breakfast. Position includes 4 paid Sundays off (except for Easter) for vacation time. Services normally consist of a prelude, 2-3 hymns, some short, sung responses, and a postlude. To apply or for more information, contact Rev. Brett Palmer at (618)295-2004 or marissafriedens@gmail.com.

Pinckneyville St. Paul UCC is in search for a Part-time Music Leader This position requires excellent people skills in working with the Council, Pastor, Secretary, committees, and Sunday school teachers. Their music skills include the ability to play a Wicks two-manual pipe organ with pedals and piano. Good vocal skills are a plus but not required. The church does not have a choir but occasionally has special instrumentalists and vocalists. Church services are currently 10 am - 11 am on Sundays. Special services include Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and two Easter services. Contact the church secretary at (618)357-8075.

Grantfork UCC Seeks Assistant Organist or Pianist to play for their 10:15 am worship service once or twice a month. Prelude, Postlude, and two or three hymns. Please contact Grantfork UCC at (618)675-2595 if interested.

New Baden Zion UCC -Part-time Organist/Pianist/Music Director

Seeking a part time musician to fill several different roles. The person who fills this position will play at weekly services, along with various special services such as Ash Wednesday, weekly Lent services, etc. Additional possible responsibilities include selecting weekly service music and hymns, directing an adult choir, coordinating special vocal and/or instrumental music, and serving on the worship team. Keyboard skills and church choral experience as a singer or director are preferred. To apply or for additional information, contact council president Rodney Washburn at rodneywashburn1@gmail.com.

St. Paul UCC, Lebanon, IL- Part-time Organist

St. Paul UCC Lebanon, IL, is praying that God will bless the search for a part-time organist willing to share their love of music through worship services (two per Sunday morning) including special services, accompanying the choir, & collaborating with Music Ministries. Specific details regarding pay & benefits can be discussed by calling Patty Cornell (618)920-3661. A video can be sent to office@stpaullebanonil.org.

CONTACT US - YOUR OCWM MONIES AT WORK

Please call (618)654-2125 before coming to the Conference Office or make an appointment with a staff member using the emails below.

For the work of Conference teams and committees or 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 **Missy Loyet** at mloyet@iscucc.org.

For DuBois Center Executive Director, contact **Noah McCarn** at director@DuBoisCenter.org.

For DuBois Center registration for upcoming events and camp sessions or ISC program registrations, contact **Julie Riechmann** at jriechmann@iscucc.org or (618)357-1809.

For **Rev. Shana Johnson**, ISC Conference Minister, contact her at sjohnson@iscucc.org or (618)882-8247.

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.

Illinois South Conference Back Bay Mission CHHSM

Deaconess Foundation Deaconess Nurse Ministry DuBois Center

Eden Theological Seminary Emmaus Homes Hitz Memorial Home

Hoyleton Youth & Family Unleashing Potential

Pension Board-UCC St. John's Community Care UCC Insurance Board

**Uplands Village UCC Campus Ministry Uni-Pres Kindercottage
UCC Newsletter**

