



Reflections From Our Conference Minister

YOUR CREATION STORY

In your beginning, when God created you,
before anyone else knew of your existence, God knew.
God was there.

God smiled and said, "Ah, my beloved child. Whoever you become. Wherever you go. You will always be mine.
And you will always be enough."

At your birth, God was there
with those who welcomed you and rejoiced in your safe arrival.

God smiled and said, "Ah, my beloved child. Whoever you become. Wherever you go. You will always be mine.
And you will always be enough."

As a small child, God was there
as you moved and explored, in awe and wonder at the mysteries of this life.

God smiled and said, "Ah, my beloved child. Whoever you become. Wherever you go. You will always be mine.
And you will always be enough."

As you grew, God was there
as you faced your first disappointments and delights, acceptance and rejection,
insecurities and self-reliance, doubts and your certainties.

God smiled and said, "Ah, my beloved child. Whoever you become. Wherever you go. You will always be mine.
And you will always be enough."

As you moved into adulthood, God was there
as you found your voice, then lost it again,
discovered the joy of living out your giftedness,
then the despair of comparing yourself to others,
traveled smoothly on the path of authenticity,
then, losing your bearings and sense of self, stumbling upon the paths that were not meant for you.

And God still smiled and said, "Ah, my beloved child. Whoever you become. Wherever you go. You will always be mine.
And you will always be enough."

Dear friends, in the moments that we forget who we are,
when we cannot see, comprehend,
or accept our worth is not in our doing, but in our being
when our souls are parched for kindness,
connection, and love
may we remember that God is there,

God has always been there,
God will always be there with you,
for you,
smiling and saying,
"Ah, my beloved child
Whoever you become.
Wherever you go.
You will always be mine.
And you will always be enough."

-Rev. Shana Johnson
Conference Minister

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



Murphysboro St. Peter's UCC-
Rev. Dr. Lauren (Greg) Lambert-
Goheen



Moro St. John's UCC Midway-
Rev. Lori (Wayne) Schafer

Retired Pastor-
Rev. Jane Hillman

Healing prayers for Kevin Lee, husband of Rev. Nancy Spier Lee, for a full and complete recovery.

Prayers in the coming weeks for a smooth and swift healing process for John Meir, husband of Rev. Joan Mier.

[Submit prayer requests here](#)

UCC International, National, + Regional News



RESOURCES

Find a therapist, psychiatrist, support group, treatment center, hotline, crisis line and [resources](#) for caregivers.

[988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)

ONLINE 988lifeline.org
CALL, TEXT, CHAT 988

Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Hearing Loss 988lifeline.org/deaf-hard-of-hearing-hearing-loss/



The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ. Order STC Offering Envelopes and other resources [here](#).

Offering Date: Pentecost Sunday, June 8th, 2025

VOICES OF THE JOURNEY

Swords Into Plowshares: the UCC @ the United Nations

by [Rev. Shari Prestemon](#) | published on May 5, 2025

“The Charter of the United Nations...is a solid structure upon which we can build a better world... Between the victory in Europe and the final victory, in this most destructive of all wars, you have won a victory against war itself.... With this Charter the world can begin to look forward to the time when all worthy human beings may be permitted to live decently as free people.” -President Harry S.

Truman, 1945

Walking through the hallways of the United Nations headquarters in New York City is an introduction to the world's nations that gather there and to the work it undertakes. The images and languages that surround you are delightfully diverse. The artwork hung in various exhibits and galleries tell vivid stories of peoples around the globe. The session titles portrayed on screens outside meeting rooms (and the volume of acronyms so overwhelming it made my head spin) offer a glimpse of the daily discussions.

“UNPFII” was one recurring acronym on my recent visit to the U.N.: the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. “FfD” was another one: Financing for (Sustainable) Development. I attended sessions on “Preventing Violence, Investing in Peace” and “Preventing the Use of Nuclear Weapons”, to name just two.

The idea of the United Nations was conceived amid the crucible of World War II. Allied world leaders who had collaborated to end that war were determined that such a war and its devastating toll should never again come to pass. They knew that preventing future wars would require a space where the world's nations could hold each other accountable and build relationships that would make instead for peace. That space would become the “United Nations”, a name originally suggested by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. At the U.N.'s inception in 1945, there were 51 Member States. Today there are 193 Member States.

The four main purposes of the United Nations remain as relevant and urgent in today's global context as they were in 1945:

1. To keep peace throughout the world
2. To develop friendly relations among nations
3. To improve the lives of the poor, to eradicate hunger, disease and illiteracy and to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedoms
4. To be a center for helping nations achieve these goals.



Acting AGM Shari Prestemon with the UCC's Representative to the United Nations, Donna Bollinger, on the grounds of the U.N. Headquarters in New York City

It might come as a surprise to United Church of Christ members that we actually have a staff person who is our U.C.C. Representative to the United Nations: Donna Bollinger. Her vast experience in complex global spaces, including the World Council of Churches, and her dedication to lifting a voice of faith in public spaces, make her a perfect fit for this work.

Why does the United Church of Christ even have representation at the United Nations? [Continue reading>>](#)

Isn't Every Day Earth Day?

CREATION JUSTICE CHURCHES EXPANDS!

More than 30 denominations will now be able to participate in Creation Justice Churches!



Berndt later announced a new partnership agreement with [Creation Justice Ministries](#), that will expand the UCC's [Creation Justice Church](#) program into an ecumenical program that will be available to over 30 other denominations. “We will be connecting, uniting, and working with other denominations on creation justice like never before. This will also extend to our new Climate Hope affiliates program, which has from the start been ecumenical,” said Berndt.

Berndt announced that the speaker for the [monthly webinar on May 14 will be Charles Lee](#), the lead author of a landmark UCC report on toxic waste and race in

the United States. “A Relentless Struggle for Justice” will take place at 12 p.m. Central, and you can [register here](#).



Colorado church Repair Cafe mends items and a throw-away mindset

by [Kayla Berkey](#) | published on May 6, 2025

Unraveling wicker chairs, dull gardening shears, and broken necklaces are all items that routinely end up in landfills – a reality that folks from three churches in the Denver area set out to change by organizing a Helping Hands Repair Café. ...“Our main goal was keeping stuff out of landfills that could be repaired and helping people to do a mindset shift that we can repair and reuse items. The other main goal was building community. People were coming together, getting to know other people, sharing skills and interests,” said Ann Karlberg, one of the organizers from Kirk of Bonnie Brae. “We offered food and coffee as a way to welcome the community in.”

Read entire article [HERE](#).



St. John UCC in Maeystown has been given the opportunity to assist the families enrolled at Uni-Pres Kindercottage.

These families have lost their food support from the St. Louis Food Bank and are in need of help. With your monetary support we are sure to make this new endeavor a success. The food will be purchased by us in bulk once a month and will be delivered directly to Kindercottage. The staff there will distribute it to each family based on their needs. The cost needed each month is \$850. Your monetary contribution would be greatly appreciated. If you feel moved to donate to this much needed cause please write your checks to the St. John UCC Mission Team and put Kindercottage in the memo. Checks can be mailed to St. John UCC in Maeystown to the attention of the Mission Team. The address is [1301 Franklin Street Maeystown, IL 62256](#). Thank you so much for your consideration of this very important mission. Laurie Knoll - Mission Team Leader St. John UCC Maeystown



Preaching and Worship Summit to develop 'courageous, compassionate, compelling public voices'

by [Kayla Berkey](#) | published on May 6, 2025

The acts of preaching and worship hold a unique power to address the challenges and opportunities of the current moment.

Each day from **Monday, May 19, through Thursday, May 22**, the Summit will offer a collection of videos that focus on preaching, leading worship, and digital ministry and online church. Read entire article [HERE](#).

These can be watched for free during the Summit. [Learn & Register](#)



FROM GRIEF TO GRACE:
**The Healing Faith Journey
 of LGBTQ+ Christians**
 A DAY OF REFLECTION WITH GARY BEHRMAN

SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2025
 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM | SHRINE VISITORS CENTER
 COST: \$60 (LUNCH INCLUDED)

TO REGISTER: CALL 618-397-0584

WE WILL:

1. Explore how we transform our wounds into wisdom by understanding and embracing our losses.
2. Identify what is unique and common in our grief.
3. Discuss what we are called to let go of to grieve in grace-filled ways.
4. Learn to honor our grief as a sign of the depth of our love.

Identifying as both LGBTQ+ and Christian poses many challenges to integrate our faith in grace-filled ways. Together we will explore how we transform our wounds into wisdom by understanding and embracing our losses. We will discuss what are some of the unique losses that we grieve as individuals and as an LGBTQ+ Christian community. How do we grieve these losses in grace-filled ways that transform our lives rather than destroy our faith? Time will be provided to reflect upon the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and how this grace-filled passage is also our story.

**WE SINCERELY APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT OF OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES, BUT
 THIS EVENT WILL BE FOR MEMBERS OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY ONLY.**

700 N 66th St Belleville, IL, United States, Illinois 62223



King's House at the
 NATIONAL SHRINE of
 OUR LADY of the SNOWS



We will gather together for our ISC Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 18, 2025. We are excited to announce that our Keynote Speaker will be Rev. Shari Prestemon Associate General Minister and Co-Executive of [Global Ministries](#). Her role includes overseeing [Global H.O.P.E.](#), [Gender and Sexuality Justice Ministries](#), [the Office of Public Policy and Advocacy in Washington, D.C.](#), and the [UCC presence at the United Nations](#), as well as serving as Co-Executive of [Global Ministries](#), the shared witness of the UCC and the [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#).

Prepare to launch out into the deep. Go ahead and mark your calendars now and make plans to attend this year's meeting!

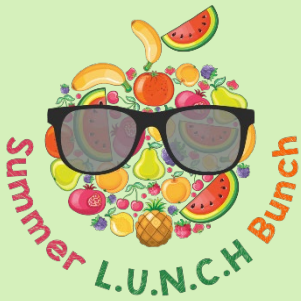
2025-26
UCC DESK
CALENDAR

Place Your
Orders Now!

Speaking of calendars!

The UCC 2025-2026 calendars are now available to order.
Click [HERE](#) to order.

ISC Hunger Action Team - Facing Hunger in *Your* Community



The Hunger Action Team would like to recognize EVUCC, HIGHLAND for their Summer mission project: L.U.N.C.H. BUNCH: "Loving United Neighbors Crushing Hunger" that provides free summer lunches on Mondays (2 days of lunches) and Wednesdays (3 days of lunches), from May 28th through August 6th. This ministry, now in its ninth year, takes many volunteers from several local churches and, to date, more than 63,000 lunches have been provided for children in need. Thanks, Highland EVUCC for this much needed mission project. Under the leadership of pastor and teacher, Rev. Bill Kapp. Such a blessing!

Share your outreach stories with the ISC HUNGER ACTION TEAM

News from DuBois Center



We are sending a big **THANK YOU** to our donors who gave items to DuBois Center from our **Wishlist Wednesday Campaign**. Your donations make all the difference in our ability to provide safe and fun programming for our campers!

-DuBois Center

-DuBois Center- Celebrating 60 Years of Stories

May 18th from 1:00-5:00pm, we are celebrating the past, present, and future of DuBois Center!

With tables of old photos and places to share old stories, a ceremony to bless the DuBois Center property, and activities to see what is currently happening at camp, plus tours for new campers and past campers, alike! Come celebrate the past 60 years and help look forward to the future of DuBois Center! Questions? Contact us at dcinfo@duboiscenter.org.



DuBois Center
OPEN HOUSE
CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF STORIES



Thank you to the fathers and daughters who spent Sunday, May 4th at DuBois Center for our inaugural Father-Daughter Day! We enjoyed all the memories - from creek walks to horse rides and archery to lightsaber crafts! We loved being in fellowship with you!

-Walkin' on Sunshine at DUBOIS SUMMER CAMP! -

ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

Registration is filling up fast! As of May 6th, 314 campers have signed up. Wow!! If you're hoping you or your youth will be among them for this summer of faith, fellowship and fun—you'll want to sign up really soon!!

EVERY YEAR IS DIFFERENT AND NEW!

TO REGISTER, VISIT DUBOISCENTER.ORG



2025 Summer Camp Schedule Updates
 Camps are filling up quickly!
 Register soon at DuBoisCenter.org
 The grade listed next to each camp is the grade campers will have completed as of Summer 2025

	<i>Main Camp</i>	<i>Rustic Village</i>
June 15-17	Just You & Me <i>Session is Full</i> (Adult & Child ages 5-7)	
June 15-20	Settler (3rd-5th) <i>Session is Full</i> LIT Camp (10-12th) Leadership in Training	Trekkin' It (5-7th) <i>Session is Full</i> Saddle 'Em Up (7-9th) <i>GIRLS: Full</i>
June 18-20	Camp Quest (1st-3rd) <i>Session is Full</i>	
June 22-27	Art Explosion (5-8th) Mad Science (5-8th)	Drenched! (9-12th) Wrangler (9-12th) <i>Almost Full</i> X-Plore (9-12th) <i>BOYS: Full</i>
June 29 - July 1	Just You & Me <i>Session is Full</i> (Adult & Child ages 5-7)	
July 2-3	Rainbow Camp! (all ages)	
July 6-8	Discovery (1st-3rd) <i>BOYS: Full GIRLS: Almost Full</i>	
July 6-11	Settler (3rd-5th) <i>BOYS: Almost Full</i>	Horsin' Around (5-7th) <i>Almost Full</i> Outback (7-9th) <i>GIRLS: Full</i>
July 9-11		Pony Express (4-5th) Puddle Jumpers (4-5th) Rustic 101 (4-5th)
July 13-15	Discovery (1st-3rd) <i>BOYS: Full</i>	
July 13-18	Settler (3rd-5th) <i>BOYS: Full GIRLS: Almost Full</i>	Horsin' Around (5-7th) <i>GIRLS: Almost Full</i> Dunk'd (7-9th) <i>GIRLS: Full</i>
July 16-18	Girl Power (1st-3rd) <i>Almost Full</i>	

An invitation to Eden Theological Seminary's

Sacred Grove Project

JOIN US FOR PLANTING DAY

Saturday, May 10, 2025 @9:00AM

475 East Lockwood Avenue
Saint Louis, Missouri 63119



Come plant a forest! Join the students, faculty, and staff of Eden seminary, along with neighbors, friends, local organizations, and congregations for a community planting day on **May 10 starting at 9:00 a.m.** We are planting a sacred grove on Eden's campus, and we'd like you to feel welcome there, like you helped create this special place. For more information and to register click [HERE](#).

Hello Friends of Uni Pres Kindercottage,

We are thrilled to spring into the fun this season brings—a time of renewal, growth, and joy! Our center is looking brighter than ever with a fresh coat of paint, and our students are busy planting tiny seeds with hopes of growing big, beautiful vegetables in the near future.

We also had a wonderful time celebrating with an exciting day of egg hunting! These special moments are only possible because of the generosity of so many kindhearted supporters. We are forever grateful for your continued kindness, care, and contributions to our children and families.

If you'd like to be part of the mighty mission of Uni Pres Kindercottage, please reach out to Ms. Aimee Hart at aimee@unipreskindercottage.org to learn how you can be a blessing through kindness and service.

With heartfelt thanks,

The Uni Pres Kindercottage Team

Aimee Hart, Executive Director

618-874-6505 (work)

618-799-1417 (cell)



ST. JOHN'S
COMMUNITY CARE

WILLS & TRUSTS, IT'S TIME



LUNCH & LEARN

MAY 8, 11:30 A.M.

222 GOETHE AVE, COLLINSVILLE
AND ON ZOOM

Call 618-344-5008 to register



With Todd Sivia,
Attorney

St. John's Community Care Caregiver Wills & Trusts Lunch & Learn Attorney Todd Sivia leads a conversation about creating wills and trusts. You will learn the best way to ensure a smooth transfer of funds after a loved one passes. Join us in person or on Zoom. Bring your own lunch. Please call 618-344-5008 to register or email info@stjohnscc.org



Come join the fun! The Walk, Run, Roll .1K Classic is a short race for people with big hearts! Go the distance - about 100 yards - to support St John's Community Care and St. John United Church of Christ. We will have heats for all ages and abilities and a party afterward. **Saturday, May 17th at 9:00am** at St. John's Community Care Center. [Click](#) to sign up.

Our ISC Churches News + Events



Columbia Zoar UCC 14th Annual Car-Diac Car Cruise and Health Fair Saturday, May 17 (New Date!) - 9:00am-2:00pm to benefit the Parish health Ministry and Uni-Pres Kindercottage. \$15 donation/entry. Dash Plaques for first 50 cars, BBQ and Drinks available for purchase, Cake Walk, 50/50 Drawing, Kids' Games, Attendance Prizes. People's Choice Awards and Free Health Screenings. 9103 D Road, Columbia, IL 62236. For more info contact Pastor R. J. Morgan 618-823-8890 or Shelly-Parish Nurse parishnurse.shelly@gmail.com.

Trinity UCC Belleville Talent Show Saturday, May 17 at 6:00 pm. in the Social Hall - 47 North Douglas, Belleville, IL. If you would like to participate, please contact Peggy Sue Sandage at 618-210-9784 or Peggys1117@gmail.com. If you want to sing, do a magic trick, tell jokes, play an instrument, do a skit, a dance routine, do a stand up comedian routine, let me know. Admission fee is any canned or boxed food items to benefit our Holiday Baskets or donate to our free will offering. Snacks and drinks will be available.



St John UCC Valmeyer Golf Tournament

Saturday, May 17th at the Acorns Golf Links. Four person scramble-8:00am shotgun start. \$100 per golfer-Skins, Mulligans, and lunch provided. Sponsors and Teams -Click [HERE](#) to learn more and to register.



41st Annual St. Jacob UCC Strawberry Festival

Sunday, May 18th 11:00am - 3:00pm Rain or Shine. Live Music, Kids Activities, Crafts, Raffles & Bounce Houses! Pork Burgers, Hot Dogs, Brats, Strawberry Desserts. Township Park, 239 W. Main Street, St. Jacob, IL



Are you looking for VBS materials or to share your VBS resources? The exchange of VBS materials can help elevate your program or another church's program.

Click [HERE](#) and send in the following info and we'll add it to this section of the Weekly Connection: **(Church name)** will be hosting the **(insert name of the VBS curriculum)** on **(insert dates)** and is looking for churches to partner in sharing resources. If you are interested, please contact **(insert name)** at **(insert contact information)**.

Opportunities + Resources

[Part Time Organist/Pianist - Friedens UCC Marissa](#)

[Part-time Music Leader - St. Paul UCC Pinckneyville](#)

[Director of Christian Ed and Faith Formation - St Paul UCC Lebanon](#)

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 Co-Interim Executive Directors, contact **Jason Petry** or **Leah Petry** at director@DuBoisCenter.org or (618) 787-2202 ext. 2 for Jason or ext. 3 for Leah.

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](#)

