



Reflections From Our Conference Minister



It was the day after Thanksgiving when I realized I couldn't find it. On Thanksgiving Day, I was so focused on the preparation, hosting, and clean-up that I didn't need it. But the next day, as some of my family members were heading home, I suddenly wanted it to know when they got home safely. Sensing my panic, everyone stopped what they were doing to help me look for it. Some delayed their departures and goodbyes to join the search.

Although I would have been fine without it for one more day, I began to panic. It was my means of communication, my calendar, my notes and lists, and my collection of digital memories. Usually, I knew exactly where I had left it last, but my mind went blank, as my well-meaning co-seekers asked things like, "Do you remember where you were when you last saw it?" and "What were you doing the last time you had it in your hands?" We went room by room, opening drawers, cabinets, and lifting cushions on every sofa and chair in the house.

Finally, after a second sweep in the living room, someone put their hand deeply in the side of one of the armchairs and quickly threw their hand back in the air, holding it, and shouting, "I found it! I found it!" Apparently, it had blended in because the case on it was about the same color as the chair. The room erupted with cheers and conversations about the times they had misplaced theirs.

Later that night, replaying the scene in my mind, I found it silly that I had made such a fuss about losing it. But then I thought about Jesus' parable that is found in Luke 15:1-11, in which a woman loses ten coins. In retelling the story, Jesus says, "Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin' (Luke 15:8-9)." The rejoicing was not as much about the lost coins, any more than the rejoicing at my house had been simply about a cellphone, but more about the feeling of losing something and then finding it again.

We all know what it feels like to lose something, yet it is nothing compared to how God feels when a beloved child is lost. Separation from God can take many forms, such as doubt and despair, fear and uncertainty, trauma and pain, frustration and anger, or turning to unhealthy behaviors to numb ourselves from the stressors of life. God senses that separation, will do whatever it takes to seek us out, find us, and reclaim us again as God's own.

We also know what it is like to find something, yet it is nothing compared to how God rejoices when a beloved child is reconnected to God. After Jesus tells of how the woman called her friends and neighbors to join her in celebrating the found coins, he concludes the parable by saying, "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10)."

Dear friends, may we remember that our God is a God who loves us so much that there is no length that God will not go to, no time that God will not dedicate to the search, and no shortage of people and circumstances that God will not use to find us when we are lost. God will always be in relentless pursuit of us, for we are God's most precious treasure. And this is truly something to celebrate.

*-Rev. Shana Johnson
ISC Conference Minister*

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



St. Paul UCC, Carlinville- Pastor Eddie Burton, Jr.



Church of the Good Shepherd UCC, Carbondale
Rev. Kim (Dr. Aaron Newcomb) Magwire

Retired Pastor-
Rev. Gary (Joyce) Kniepkamp

[Submit prayer requests here](#)

UCC International, National, + Regional News

61st ISC Annual Meeting

**Saturday,
October 18, 2025**

**St. Paul UCC
Belleville, IL**



Annual Meeting Checklist:

~Register Today ! Register yourself, pastors, and delegates at <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/rp7y78y>.

Registration will close at noon on Friday, September 26th. Please register by that date so that we can know how many attendees the caterer will need to prepare for.

~Share Share the information with all those you would like to invite to register and attend. Here is the [Registration form for the 2025 Annual Meeting](#).

~Look for meeting reports and materials at <https://iscucc.org> next week.

~Get ready to make some waves as we go INTO THE DEEP !

SCHEDULE OF THE DAY:

8:30 am	Doors Open and Check-in Begins
9:00 am – 9:30 am	Opening Session
9:30 am – 9:45 am	Break / Visit the MarketPlace
9:45 am – 11:00 am	INTO THE DEEP Worship in the Sanctuary
11:00 am - Noon	Updates and Celebrations
Noon – 1:30 pm	Lunch / Visit the MarketPlace
1:30 pm – 1:45 pm	State of the Conference Address
1:45 pm – 2:45 pm	Business Session
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Break / Visit the MarketPlace
3:00 pm – 3:45 pm	Resourcing Sessions
3:45 pm – 4:00 pm	Break / Visit the MarketPlace
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm	Closing Worship





Our 2025 Annual Meeting Keynote Speaker Rev. Shari Prestemon is the 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 \(Disciples of Christ\)](#). We look forward to joining Rev. Prestemon in common witness!



INTO THE DEEP: Poetry & Arts at Annual Meeting

This year's Illinois South Conference Annual Meeting invites you to wade *Into the Deep*—where worship meets the creative spirit.

Join **Rev. Tim Powers-Reed** for a breakout session exploring the power of **arts and poetry in worship**. Together, we'll discuss how words, images, and creative expressions can breathe new life into our liturgy and community.

We are also seeking poets, spoken word artists, painters, sketchers, photographers, and other creators to share their masterpieces with the Conference.

- One poetry/spoken word submission will be chosen to be featured during worship at the Annual Meeting.
- Five other written submissions will be shared during the breakout session.
- Visual art—paintings, sketches, photography, sculpture—will help create a sacred atmosphere in the worship space and breakout room.

Submission Deadline: September 26, 2025

Please send written works and/or photos of visual pieces (paintings, sculptures, etc.) to illinitchr@gmail.com by the deadline for consideration.

Come share your gifts. Come inspire. Come create space for God to speak in ways that words alone cannot.



September is Hunger Action Month. There is enough food for everyone-the problem lies in access. Donate. Volunteer. Advocate. Educate yourself. Educate others. Host a drive. Wear orange. AND...Visit the ISC Justice and Mission Resources link below!



ISC Justice and Mission Resources

When the Justice and Mission survey results were analyzed, hunger concerns overwhelmingly were identified as a priority within the ISC churches that responded. Once again, we thank you for your responses. The ISC Justice and Mission Team researched, and found links that we think you may find interesting and useful. [>> ISC J & M Bible Study Resources](#)



Neighbors in Need Special Mission Offering October 5th is the **Neighbors in Need offering** which supports ministries of justice and compassion, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries.

In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering supported 26 grant recipients across the UCC who were engaged in projects of direct service and advocacy.

While many of our churches collect the offering on part of World Communion Sunday, contributions to this offering can be collected on any Sunday during the calendar year. Thank you for your support and generosity!

Creation Justice Webinar

EMERGING STRATEGIES TO FIGHT AI DATA CENTERS

Wednesday, September 10th
1:00 PM Eastern

Emerging Strategies to Fight AI Data Centers September 10 Noon to 1:00pm Central

Emerging threats demand emerging strategies. The rise of AI data centers has been a driver in the rise in power demand and increasing greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Moreover, the advanced cooling systems required by these data centers... [Learn More and Register](#)

NURTURE THE SOUL

Clergy Conversation Series on Addiction & Families-3 Part Series

Thursdays @ 3:30 PM Eastern
September 11th, 18th, & 25th

Hosts: Erica Poellot, MEd, MDiv, MTh, PhD, Director of the Center for Faith & Family, and Dee-Dee Stout, MEd, MTh, PhD, Director of the Center for Faith & Family

Clergy Conversation Series on Addiction & Families: Family Matters/Families Matter - Part I September 11 2:30pm Join us for a 3-part series on Addiction & Families: Family Matter/Families Matter. Part I, Language Matters: Defining the Words We Use. In this webinar, we (Erica Poellot and Dee-Dee Stout) discuss how our language around substance use has changed... [Learn More and Register](#)

Metro East

PRIDE FEST

Diversity • Equality • Inclusion

Presented by
Meridian & Scott Credit Union

SATURDAY
11am-10pm

OCT 4th 2025

VETERANS MEMORIAL
FOUNTAIN & EAST MAIN ST
BELLEVILLE, IL

WWW.METROEASTPRIDE.ORG



ORDER YOUR 2025 STEWARDSHIP THEME MATERIALS

Coordinated stewardship materials for your congregation's annual stewardship efforts.

"Dreaming God's Dream" helps people understand the impact our congregations can make in our communities if we generously support them. Order [HERE](#)

ISC Hunger Action Team - Facing Hunger in Your Community



Needs for the month
of **September** are:

Canned Fruit, Canned Beets,
Canned Applesauce, Cereal,
Kleenex, Paper Towels

The Hunger Action Team would like to recognize St. Paul, Freeburg for serving local families in need with their Food and Clothing Bank. Recipients are students in need enrolled in the Freeburg School District. Including Freeburg, Smithton, Floraville, Paderborn, St. Libory, and Fayetteville. St. Paul provides food items on an emergency basis, as well as Food Pantry distribution days on the 1st and second Tuesday of each month (2 to 4 pm) and the 3rd Thursday (5 to 7 pm). Thank you,

St. Paul, for supporting this much needed mission project - under the leadership of pastor and teacher, Rev. Dr. Andrew Lovins. - Such a blessing!

In sharing your stories of being in service to others, you shine God's Light to all of us in the ISC and beyond! Click below...

to share stories of fighting hunger in YOUR community

News from DuBois Center



Mother-Son Day Sunday, September 28

Closing in on our first-ever Mother-Son Day!

Moms, bring your sons; Step moms, bring your stepsons; Aunts, bring your nephews; all types of families are welcome to come and experience a day of camp fun and grow your bond! Rachael Bearth, the Minister of Youth & Christian Education at St. John UCC in Mascoutah will be leading us in faith activities. **Registration closes September 14th** Pricing: \$46 for adults, \$41 for youth (ages 12-17), and \$36 for children (ages 5-11). Check-in: 9:00 am

Check-out: 4:00 pm

For more information or to register, go to: <https://duboiscenter.org>



Join us for Men's Retreat HURRY! Registration closes the 12th! Activities could include fishing, card games, disc golf, and archery. Rev. Bill Kapp from EvUCC in Highland, IL will be leading us in faith exploration. It'll be a great day for some guy time! Check-in: 6:30 pm on **Friday, Sept 26**.

For more information or to register: <https://duboiscenter.org>

FALL FESTIVAL DuBois Center

Sunday, Oct 5
from 11-5



Family-Friendly Event FREE Parking FREE Admission



Great Food Trucks!

Tater Headz Fry, Dizzy's Wheels, and more!
Plus local non-profits with Kettle Corn, Spiral Potatoes, & Sweet Treats!

Activities for EVERYONE!

Pony Rides, Hay Rides, Crafts @ the Kids Korner,
Pontoon Boat Rides, Rope Making, Silent Auction, and...

Over 40 Crafters & Artisans



Live Music

1:00 Sheltered Reality (on the BB Court)
2:15 Emery Bass (on the main stage)
3:30 Venedy Band (on the BB Court)

No ATM on site! Cash only for DuBois Center activities
We love pets, but only service animals are welcome



DuBois Center

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



2651 Quarry Rd. DuBois, IL



www.DuBoisCenter.org



VOLUNTEER AT FALL FESTIVAL!



JOIN US SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5

Support DuBois Center by volunteering at Fall Festival! Join us on **Sunday, October 5** to help with boat rides, hayrides, horses, Sweet Treats, Kidz Corner, and more.

Sign up to volunteer by **Friday, September**

26: <https://www.signupgenius.com/.../10C084DA4AD28A2FCC34...>



Less than 2 months until DuBois's Fall Fest **October 5**, so be gathering those items for your Silent Auction baskets! Be creative with your themes this year--as always--and put together those unique baskets, large or small, to benefit our wonderful ISC camp and retreat center. Baskets can be dropped off at St. Paul UCC, Waterloo 9:00am - 4:00pm Monday through Thursday or DuBois Center or brought to DuBois the **morning** before or day of. Contact Audrey Hicks 618-939-8673 or audhicks@hotmail.com with any questions.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Receptionists
Program Assistants
Craft Assistants

You choose a time, we'll find a place.

If interested, please call
St. John's Community Care
618-344-5008



Volunteers Needed at St John's Community Care

Call us now to see how you can assist us - helping in the Adult Day, answering phones and helping with admin work, assisting with events, or maybe something we don't even know we need yet! Talk to Becky and make a difference in someone's life.



Join us for Tai Chi classes designed to support:

- Balance and mobility
- Improving relaxation
- Decreasing pain and falls

A suggested donation of \$6 is appreciated.

Start Date: October 16th, 2025

Classes run every Thursday | 9:00am

Atrium at St. John United Church of Christ
307 W Clay Street, Collinsville IL, 62234

REGISTER TODAY!

Illinois South Conference
presents

CONFIRMATION RETREAT

NOVEMBER 14TH-15TH

AT DUBOIS CENTER
OVERNIGHT & DAY ONLY
OPTIONS!

Saturday Only Retreat (incl. lunch)	\$30 (per participant/adult)
Saturday Only Retreat (Incl. 2 meals breakfast & lunch)	\$45 (per participant/adult)
Overnight (Friday - Saturday Afternoon)	\$85* (per participant/adult)

Horseback Riding available as add-on option. \$25 for trail ride.

* Contact the Illinois South Conference Office if scholarship assistance is needed.

TEAM-BUILDING . LUNCH . OPTIONAL OVER NIGHT

DISCOVER WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FEARFULLY AND
WONDERFULLY MADE!

Confirmation Retreat 2025 Registration will open
August 1, 2025.

Questions?
Contact Jill Mayer
(jill@stpaulonline.org or
618.978.7123)

St. John UCC | 307 West Clay Street | Collinsville, IL 62234

FALL RUMMAGE SALE

All proceeds benefit the Homework Help & Hoops (HHH) Program

Thursday, September 11 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm,

VIP pre-sale \$10/person + Free Will Offering

Thursday, September 11 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Open to Public with Free Will Offering

Friday, September 12 9:00 am - 11:00 am

Open to Public \$3.00 A Bag

Zoar United Church of Christ

Annual BBQ

Saturday, September 13th

4:00 pm – 7:00 pm



Zoar UCC New Hanover Annual BBQ Saturday, September 13th 4:00pm - 7:00pm Good Food, Country Store, Basket Prizes, Pie Auction, and Entertainment by Sam Morgan and Friends. 9103 D Road, Columbia, IL 62236 [Click for Flyer](#)

GriefShare[®]

SUPPORT GROUP

Consider joining us or passing along the information to someone you know who is grieving a loss.

Mondays - Sept. 22 - Dec. 22

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Evangelical United Church of Christ
2520 Poplar Street, Highland

Join us for a safe, compassionate space where healing begins. Whether you're grieving the loss of a loved one or supporting someone who is, our GriefShare group offers comfort, understanding, and hope.

The group will meet on Mondays starting **September 22, from 6-8 pm**. The group will convene weekly at the Parsonage located at 2520 Poplar Street (look for signage). This 13-week session includes an additional meeting in November titled "Surviving the Holidays". To register, please contact the church office at 618-654-7549. We kindly request a \$10 registration fee, if possible, to offset the cost of workbooks. We look forward to welcoming you.

VENDOR FAIR AT ST. PAUL UCC

SEPTEMBER 27 - 12-5 PM

Our vendors include:

- THREADS OF HOPE QUILTERS
- LILLA ROSE
- CARDS BY DEBBY
- SO SEW FUN CREATIONS
- SUGAR RUSH EXPRESS
- SCENTSY
- WASTE NOT, WANT NOT
- KIMS CREATIONS
- PAMPERED CHEF
- STAMPIN' UP
- AND MORE!



stpaulucc.org

618-233-3303

115 W. B. Street, Belleville, IL

FALL FESTIVAL

SATURDAY - OCTOBER 11, 2025

9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

CHRIST UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
200 SOUTH 3RD STREET, DUPO IL

SOUPS, SANDWICHES
HOMEMADE PIES

PIZZA BOARD
AND
BASKET RAFFLE

YARD SALE

**QUILT DRAWING
AT 2:00 PM**

HOMEMADE
CAKES, COOKIES
CANDY AND JELLY

CRAFTS!

Crafters & Vendors Wanted – Table space \$20
For more information, please call 618-286-4211

Click to submit your **EVENTS + NEWS** to the **Weekly Connection**

Opportunities + Resources

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

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

[Part-time Church Office Clerical Secretary- St. John UCC Granite City](#)

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](#)

