

December 30, 2025



Dear Members and Friends of the Illinois South Conference,

As we welcome a new year, we give thanks for each of you and the faithful ministry you offer within your communities. In a world longing for hope, your witness of love, justice, compassion, and welcome reflects the light of Emmanuel—God with us.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership in ministry, your resilience, and your commitment to living out the Gospel in both large and small ways. May the coming year bring you renewed joy, rest, and encouragement, and may the promise of Christ's coming continue to guide and strengthen you in the year ahead.

We wish you a blessed New Year overflowing with hope, peace, and God's abundant grace.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Rev. Shana Johnson, Debbie Kesner, Missy Loyet, Julie Riechmann, and Jason and Leah Petry

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



St. Peter's UCC, Lenzburg-
Rev. Earl (Johanna) Crecelius

Chaplain at BJC Hospital St. Louis-

Rev. Dr. Chance (Christopher Guelbert) Beeler

Retired Pastor- Rev. Charles (Rev. Karla Frost) Preston

Rosemary Oglesby- prayers for upcoming knee surgery and a quick and full recovery.

John Mier, spouse of retired ISC Minister Joan Mier, had his 2nd knee replacement surgery. Requesting healing prayers for a speedy recovery.

[Submit prayer requests here](#)

Frostbite Fun Youth Event Registration Closing January 4th

Don't get bitten
by a missed
registration deadline!

Register your group TODAY [HERE](#)



If inclement weather causes us to postpone this event, it will be held on February 14th-15th

Frostbite Fun Youth Event

January 17 - 18th, 2026

All youth in grades 6-12 are invited to attend this ISC youth event at our camp, DuBois Center.

Weather permitting, horseback riding is available for \$25/person.

2 Ways to Participate
Single Day (\$50): Saturday 10 am to 7 pm
Overnight (\$100): Saturday 10 am to Sunday 11 am

Registration open NOW on Campwise.
Registration closes on **January 4th!**

Each church is responsible for providing the necessary chaperones for the event.

Questions? Contact Jillian Mayer
(jill@stpaulonline.org or 618-939-7123)

DuBois Center is located at 2651 Quarry Rd, DuBois, IL



Dear Churches, Pastors, Presidents, Treasurers, and Office Managers/Secretaries,

As your church prepares for the end of the year, **please mark Thursday, January 8th as the deadline to send in your 2025**

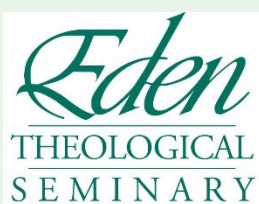
donations to the Conference office. Below are some tips for sending in your end-of-the-year gifts. Please share this information with the staff members or officers of your church entrusted with this responsibility.

- Please mail all your end-of-the-year donations to OCWM, Friends of the Conference, and special missions so they will arrive at the Conference office by Thursday, January 8, 2026. This deadline will enable us to record your giving and complete the process necessary to meet the National setting's deadline of receiving and recording your gifts to the wider Church.
- When you send in your donations, include your Church contribution form so we can appropriately record and credit your church for your gifts.
- Please clarify on the Church contribution forms **if the enclosed donations should be applied to 2025 or 2026.**

If you have any questions, please email Debbie Kesner at dkesner@iscucc.org or call me at the Conference office at (618) 654-2125.

We are grateful for all the ways you support the work and mutual ministry of our Conference and the United Church of Christ.

May we all experience the blessings of hope, joy, love, and peace of this Advent and Christmas season to carry us forward in faith into the New Year.



Beyond Don't Sleep with the Sheep: Boundary Training for Clergy

Through Eden Theological Seminary
Online- **January 23, 2026, 9am-3pm CT**

Together, we'll look at power and positional authority, historical impact, and our roles as leaders within congregations and the communities we are called to serve. Attend this 5-hour Boundary Training, receive a certificate after thinking critically about who you are in the work, and who you want to be.

Come prepared to learn about power and oppression, clergy ethics and ministerial boundaries: both online in the public square, and in your contextualized locations. Participants will leave with a personal code of ethics based on ministerial codes. Clergy may attend for \$50, and [can register here.](#)

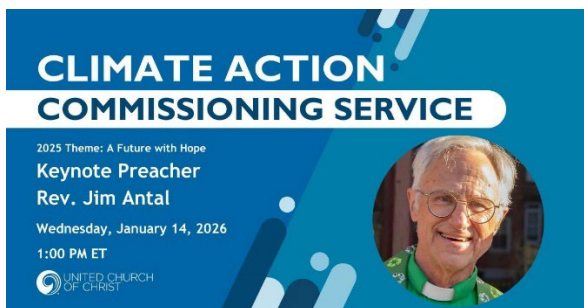


Spring 2026 Ministry Cohorts Are Open!

We're excited to announce the Spring 2026 Ministry Cohort Themes:

- [How's My Preaching? Check-In and Level Up](#)
- [Intergenerational Faith Formation](#)
- [Creative Conflict Resolution](#)
- [The Body of Christ and the Body Snatchers](#)
- [Making Strangers Neighbors](#)

[>>Learn more and sign up for the Cohort that intrigues you most!](#)



Climate Action Commissioning Service Wednesday, January 14th 12:00pm Central

As we enter a year of critical importance in the struggle for climate justice, the UCC is holding a Climate Action Commissioning Service. Gather with us as we faithfully prepare ourselves to take action in the coming year. The theme for this service and for the 2026 Climate Hope Art Contest is "a future with hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). Our preacher will be the Rev. Jim Antal, author of "Climate Church, Climate World" and Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the UCC General Minister and President. [Learn more and Register](#)

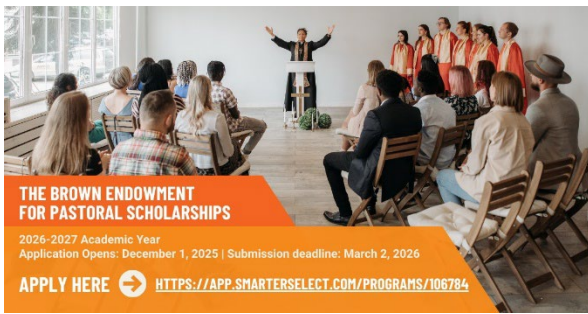


Meeting is via Zoom. Reach out to Rev. Tim at illinitchr@gmail.com for the Zoom link.



Deaconess Foundation Policy Campaign Grants

January 30th is the deadline to apply for our Policy Campaign Grants! These grants offer up to \$100,000 in general operating support for timely and urgent issue-based campaigns that advance public policy through voter engagement, civic activation, and community organizing. Organizations that operate within Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois can [learn more and apply here](#).



The Brown Endowment Scholarship application period is open! M.Div. students with active **United Church of Christ** membership and Member in Discernment status are encouraged to apply. Apply using this [online form](#). Applications are due March 2, 2026. Learn more about the Brown Endowment program at ucfunds.org/brown-endowment/.



Gateway ONA Annual Convocation Saturday, March 7, 2026

Check-in at 8:30 AM and light breakfast food available; the program will begin at 9:00 AM. Ending at 3:00 PM

Place: Parkway UCC on Ballas Road, St. Louis, MO

Theme: "ONA: Sacred, Seen, and Called"

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Derek Terry, Interim Executive Director of the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ

[2025 General Synod - Derek Terry Full Speech](#)

The Eden Seminary Bookstore will again be on site with lots of resources

Registration information will be sent in mid-January.

If you have event questions or if you believe you are not on the Gateway ONA monthly mailing list and would like to register for this event, please send an emailed request to: buckeyeohio@hotmail.com. Cost: \$25 per person



STRONGER TOGETHER

The ISC Conference Gatherings Team members came 'together' to 'shake up' excitement for the upcoming Day of Discipleship. During this event, we will unite in worship and fellowship, and participate in workshops inspired by Acts 2, stirring churches into a vibrant, Spirit-filled body of Christ. You're going to want to SAVE THIS DATE!

—Saturday, March 21, 2026 at St. John UCC, Mascoutah—

All who believed were together and had all things in common

-Acts 2:44



Global Ministries

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
and the United Church of Christ



This Month at the UN | Jan 6, 2026 1:00 PM

Join us to learn more about what the UCC does at the United Nations! Hear updates from the UCC Main Representative to the UN, Donna Bollinger, on program updates, our interfaith and ecumenical partners, and upcoming events. [Register](#)



People-to-People Pilgrimages

Pilgrimage Opportunities from Local/Global Partners:

Global Ministries welcomes congregations, regions, conferences, and other related organizations to consider meeting international partners virtually or in person. A mission pilgrimage is a transforming experience through which participants listen, learn, share themselves, and receive God's love from siblings around the world. Participants take common steps in faith by walking with our partners, sharing their joys, understanding their challenges, and experiencing their unique connection to our wider Church. The People-to-People Pilgrimage Program assists in planning and preparing for life changing pilgrimage experiences. It is through this program that your local church can connect with international partners and share in their work and witness.

Through this program you can:

- Draw on the expertise and guidance of our area offices and partner organizations in planning and preparing for your pilgrimage
- Explore the various possibilities that best match the interests and gifts of your group
- Receive orientation materials/resources and guidance before, during, and after your pilgrimage
- Explore opportunities for engagement after the pilgrimage

Learn how to take a People-to-People Pilgrimage [HERE](#)

Job Opening: Global Engagement and Logistics Manager Global Ministries is seeking a dynamic and detail-oriented Global Engagement and Logistics Manager to oversee the administration of the People-to-People Pilgrimage program, coordinate interpretation for staff, mission co-workers, and international partners throughout the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ and provide logistical support for organizational events. [Download job description](#)

ISC Hunger Action Team - Facing Hunger in Your Community



The Hunger Action team would like to recognize ISC Congregations for their continued support of local families in need. Our mission is to educate and inspire churches to conduct "Hunger Action" projects. Heartfelt thanks for the amazing 2025 mission projects - including food drives, community blessing boxes (mini food pantries), weekend backpack and summer lunch programs, free community meals, and collecting food donations for Uni-Pres Kindercottage. Thanks for serving others as stewards of God's Grace. Such a blessing!



The Hunger Action Team would like to recognize CHRIST CHURCH, DUPO for their new "BLESSING BOX". It's a Mini Food Pantry with 24 hour accessibility. Thanks to church members Larry Godare, Rusty Portell, and the confirmation class for building and painting the Blessing Box. Special thanks to Paige Mushaney for bringing the idea and plans to the church. Members of the congregation are invited to donate non perishable food and hygiene items to replenish the Blessing Box. Priority items: peanut butter, nuts, rice, crackers, instant oatmeal, granola bars, jelly, syrup, dried fruit, microwaveable meals, dish liquid, soap and shampoo. Thanks to Christ UCC, serving others as stewards of God's Grace. Under the leadership of pastor and teacher, Rev. Todd Mushaney. Neighbors helping neighbors!

By 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.](#)

DuBois Center Spring Events

Join us at one of our spring events or retreats!
Registration opens January 1st, 2026

MARCH 7 **Service Saturday**
Everyone is invited to lend a helping hand as we prepare our facilities for the spring season. We'll provide lunch; RSVP at duboiscenter.org/support-dubois/work-days/

MARCH 13-15 **Women's Retreat**
Get the girls together or come on your own and make new friends! This retreat is all about relaxation and self-reflection! Choose a short getaway (Fri-Sat) or a longer stay (Fri-Sun).

APRIL 11 **Father-Daughter Day**
Dads and Daughters - spend the day at DuBois Center! Enjoy camp fun - one on one: brunch, horses, crafts, canoeing and worship!

APRIL 24-26 **Father-Son Retreat**
Join us for our annual Father-Son Retreat. Boating, horses, archery, fishing, games and plenty of guy time! Fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles, nephews are welcome!

MAY 9 **Ride Day**
Sign up for a ride time that fits your schedule best!
10:30 am: *Arena Ride for ages 3-7 with parent walking alongside.* \$18 per child.
1:00, 2:30, 4:00: *Trail Ride for ages 8+.* \$30 per rider.

MAY 9 **Service Saturday**
Everyone is invited to lend a helping hand as we prepare our facilities for the summer season. We'll provide lunch; please RSVP at duboiscenter.org/support-dubois/work-days/

For information or to register,
visit duboiscenter.org/retreats/dbc-retreats.

NOTE: RETREATS MAY BE CANCELLED IF FEWER THAN 15 PEOPLE REGISTER.

~2026~ DuBois Center Spring Events

REGISTRATION OPENS JANUARY 1st

[More Info Here](#)

DuBois Center needs your TLC! March 7th SERVICE SATURDAY

Youth and adult fellowship groups, families, individuals, everyone is invited to lend a helping hand as we prepare our facilities for the busy spring and summer season. Projects vary, depending on the skills of workers and the weather, but a tired muscle or two and a great sense of satisfaction are guaranteed. There is wood to be stacked, leaves to be raked and buildings to be cleaned and painted. There are carpentry projects, as well as others requiring special skills. The work may not be glamorous, but it makes a BIG DIFFERENCE!

We'll provide lunch, so please [RSVP here](#) so we can make sure we have enough food for everyone!

[Click here to join our volunteer team!](#)

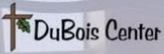
Check out the links below for more information.

- [Typical Schedule and What to Bring](#)
- [Directions and Map to DuBois Center](#)

We are looking for a housekeeper to join us in our Ministry of Hospitality!

This part-time position is a critical piece of the experience we provide for our guests.

Flexible Hours! Gorgeous workplace views! For more information or to apply: <https://duboiscenter.org/support-staff/>



WE ARE HIRING

Join Our Team

Housekeeper
Flexible Hours
Scenic Work Environment

MORE INFO & APPLICATION AT:
<https://duboiscenter.org/support-staff/>

[APPLY NOW](#)



Camps are filling up! DON'T WAIT TO REGISTER!!!

We're *aiming* to have MORE next summer - more friendships, more experiences, more faith formation, and way more fun. If you're not already registered, head on over to <https://duboiscenter.org/summer-camps/> to find the right session for you.



2026 SUMMER CAMP SCHEDULE

Registration Opens November 24th
Early Bird Registration ends February 14th

	MAIN CAMP	RUSTIC
June 14-19	*Discovery (1 st - 3 rd) Settler (3 rd - 5 th) **Quest (1 st - 3 rd) Leadership in Training (11 th - 12 th)	Horse Play (5 th - 7 th) Outback (7 th - 9 th)
June 21-26	Settler (3 rd - 5 th) Art Explosion (5 th - 8 th) Base Camp (6 th - 8 th)	**Rustic Sampler (4 th - 6 th) Splash (5 th - 7 th) Saddle Em Up (7 th - 9 th)
June 28-30	Just You & Me (Ages 5-8 & adult) Main Camp Cabins & Hickory Lodge	
July 5-10	High School Week Drenched (9 th - 12 th) - Wrangler (9 th - 12 th) - X-Plore (9 th - 12 th) All camps are on Rustic	
July 12-17	*Discovery (1 st - 3 rd) Settler (3 rd - 5 th) **Quest (1 st - 3 rd)	Trekkin It (5 th - 7 th) Giddy Up (6 th - 8 th) Dunk'd (7 th - 9 th)
July 20-22	Just You & Me (Ages 5-8 & Adult) Main Camp Cabins & Hickory Lodge	
August 7-8	Rainbow Camp ALL Ages Welcome! Main Camp Cabins & Hickory Lodge	

The grade listed next to each camp is the grade campers have completed.

* Partial-week camp: Sunday-Tuesday / ** Partial-week camp: Wednesday-Friday

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT DUBOISCENTER.ORG

Council for Health and Human Services Ministry News



Early Bird registration is now OPEN for The Gathering: Many Gifts, One Spirit, to be held **March 24-26, 2026**, at the Hyatt Regency in Indianapolis. With the theme, "Many Gifts, One Spirit,"

The Gathering will draw some 500 leaders from Mennonite, Methodist, Presbyterian, Quaker, and the United Church of Christ related health and human service associations for three days of inspirational keynotes, amazing workshops, opportunities to share resources and knowledge, network, and so much more. [MORE](#)

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Your generosity played a vital role in creating meaningful Christmas moments for youth and families in our care. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and belief in our mission. Your compassion makes an impact well beyond the Holidays.

OUR HOLIDAY IMPACT

Youth and Children: 🎁
1,372 Gifts Donated
620 Stockings Made

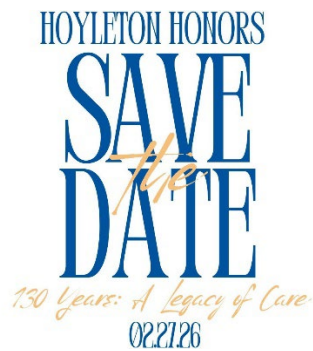
Community Support: 🧑🏻
5,000 Bombas Socks Donated
99 Volunteers -
304 Hours Worked

Families & Clients: 📦
137 Family Bags Delivered
50 Thanksgiving Meals

Extra Warmth: 🧣
139+ Blankets
50 Family Food Boxes



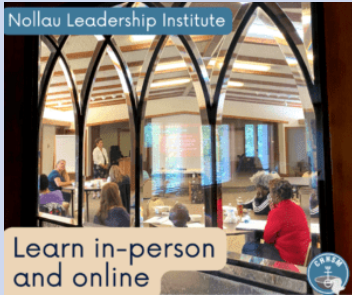
A Sincere Holiday Blessing and a Reflection on Our Partnership
As we embrace this season of generosity and love for the youth and families of Hoyleton, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your dedication to our shared mission. Thank you!



Hoyleton Youth and Family Services Honors Night Save the Date

Friday, February 27, 2026

Follow on [Facebook](#) and other social media to learn more and to hear about available sponsorship opportunities.



Nollau Institute Class of 2026-27

The program consists of two in-person retreats at [Bellwether Farm](#), online interactions in between the retreats, and an additional day of programming at the CHHSM Annual Conference. Graduation and consecration takes place during closing worship on the final day of the Annual Conference. [More info](#)



CALL FOR DONATIONS

FOR OUR ADULT DAY PROGRAM

- GEL PENS
- GLUE
- WET WIPES
- TISSUES
- HAND LOTION
- THIN MARKERS
- TRIVIA OR GUESSING GAME CARDS
- EASY CARD GAME
- 12" BALLOONS
- PUNCH-BALL BALLOONS
- SMALL BLANK CANVASES FOR PAINTING
- AIR-DRY CLAY
- 5X7 OR 8X10 UNFINISHED WOOD FRAMES
- COFFEE PODS (K-CUPS), REGULAR AND/OR DECAF
- STICKERS, STICKER BOOKS
- COLORING BOOKS
- ACRYLIC PAINT, PAINT BRUSHES

St. John's Community Care Volunteers and Donations Needed! St. John's CC is in great need of volunteers to serve as receptionists, program assistants, and/or to assist with craft activities, and craft clean-up. Also, consider picking up an item, or several, needed for the Adult Day Program. Donations can be dropped off at the St. John's Community Care Center, 222 Goethe Ave, Collinsville, IL 62234. Call 618-344-5008 with questions.



Evangelical United Church of Christ in Highland is excited to announce a new partnership with [St. John's Community Care](#), an outreach ministry of St. John UCC in Collinsville. Their mission is simple yet powerful: *to make a positive difference in the lives of people facing the challenges of aging or disabilities.*

We are preparing to transform the EvUCC parsonage into a welcoming space for this vital ministry—a place of care, hope, and support for families in need. This is a beautiful example of stewardship: using what we have to serve others in Christ's name.

Currently, St. John's Community Care operates adult day centers in Collinsville and Edwardsville—and soon, in Highland! To learn more about their work, visit stjohnscc.org.

Other churches may wish to consider this vision of ministry partnership or explore ways to support this effort, such as providing supplies or volunteer help. For more details, contact **Kayla Abbott** or reach out to **St. John's Community Care** at 618-344-5008 or email info@stjohnscc.org.



Our ISC Churches News + Events



Women's Guild Blood Drive
Friday, Jan 9, 2026
St. Peter's Fellowship Hall
Noon-5:30pm
 (Women's Guild to provide Sloppy Joe's!!)

Blood Drive - St. Peter UCC Okawville
January 9th 12:00 - 5:30pm
 Meal is provided. St. Peter UCC, 106 W Church St., Okawville, IL 62271



Arts and Faith St. Louis: Music Unites Us
 January 18, 2026 | 3:00 p.m.
 St. Paul United Church of Christ, Lebanon, IL

Please join us on **January 18, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.** for a **FREE** concert featuring gifted musicians: Christine Brewer (soprano), Angel Love (soprano), Duane Foster (tenor), and Alla Voskoboynikova (piano).

Arts and Faith St. Louis brings together artists from many walks of life to help build a more harmonious St. Louis by connecting the region's religious and cultural communities through shared

arts experiences.

The program will include music from many faith traditions and cultures, featuring familiar spirituals, beloved songs, and a special work commissioned by Arts and Faith and written by composer Kim Portnoy. Admission is free, and all are welcome!

For more information, please contact the St. Paul United Church of Christ (Lebanon, IL) office at 618-537-4991 or office@stpaullebanonil.org.



If you are reading a print version of the ISC *Weekly Connection*, consider scanning the QR code or click [HERE](#) and subscribe to receive upcoming issues straight to your email inbox. Not only does this ensure you won't miss an issue but it gives opportunity to click on the links to full articles, webinar registration sites, and more. It only takes a minute to sign up. Reach out to Missy at 618-654-2125 or mloyet@iscucc.org with any questions or with news for the upcoming 12/16/25 holiday issue which will combine the 12/16/25 and 12/23/25 *Weekly Connections*.

[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 Bookkeeper - St. John UCC Fairview Heights](#)

[Part-time Facilities Manager - St. Paul UCC Belleville](#)

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-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](#)

