

May 12, 2026



Beyond the Empty Pew

The following is an article that was featured in the most recent Convergence newsletter. Rev. Dr. Hall addresses realities we are seeing in our churches. I find her assessment of what we can do as we all sit in the gap between what was and what is becoming quite helpful and I think you will too. I encourage you to share it with your leadership teams in your church for reflection, deeper understanding, and hopefully, generative and spirit filled conversations.

In hope,
Rev. Shana



Beyond the Empty Pew **What you should know about attendance patterns in small congregations** by: Rev. Dr. Anna Hall

Do your pews look empty? If you are worshiping in a sanctuary built for hundreds, they likely do. According to **the latest research from Faith Communities Today and Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations**, the median in-person attendance in Mainline Protestant congregations is now 50 people. While some traditions are seeing an upward trend in attendance, Mainline Protestant churches continue to shrink. Congregations that are the smallest, with 50 or fewer in attendance, saw declines of 25% or more over the past five years.

I write all this to not make you feel all hope is lost for your congregation. I simply want you to know you are not alone. While attendance patterns do ebb and flow, and some congregations are seeing a rebound in recent years, the overall decline of attendance in US churches means that median attendance has left the median attendance across all traditions at 70, a little more than half of the 137 it was in 2000. There are many more shrinking congregations than growing ones. We are living through a massive religious realignment that impacts every congregation.

I also want you to know that God can and does do amazing things with small groups of people. Do not assume the only thriving church is the large one down the street. A truly Biblical model of church might be 12 people in an upper room around a dinner table, or a few dozen meeting in a member's home, or an outdoor gathering listening to a teacher or preacher. Church buildings did not emerge until the 2nd or 3rd century C.E. When we compare our churches to a large steepled sanctuary with full pews at 11 a.m. on Sunday mornings and only see deficits, we are measuring according to an outdated model that thrived 50-75 years ago.

When we measure that way, we can miss the real story. In fact, the same study of congregations today indicated that 92% of congregations see potential in their present or future. 58% say their vitality is the same or stronger now than before the pandemic. Technology has expanded the reach and connectivity of congregations. Volunteering and programming have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, and perceptions that respondents' congregations are vital and alive are now more likely than in 2020.

Becoming smaller isn't a cake walk, of course. There are a few complications in returning to a smaller, less institutional church. Buildings and organizational structures from 50-75 years ago won't work for most churches of 2026. We can't assume growth is a given if we just shift gears and get things "right." Congregations will have to think about survival and legacy differently.

What can we do with this tension between what was and what is becoming?

We can first acknowledge the reality we are seeing around us. Failing to talk about it prevents us from seeing what God is doing in and among us. Name it, sit with the grief and loss of these changes, and support each other through it all.

We can stop blaming ourselves or our leaders. This is a global realignment, not a local failure. A new pastor or a new program won't "fix" a tectonic shift in culture. A personnel change or winning the latest church conflict will not overpower this global religious realignment. Just as changing internet providers will not overpower the massive technological changes we are facing as a society. Love each other even more boldly in the midst of this change.

We can let go of structures that no longer serve God's calling for our gathered body. God calls 40 people differently from a group of 400. Don't let your building get in the way of your calling, or your committee structures, or a program that has lived out its useful life. Be willing to pause or end anything that is not aligned with your calling in this season.

Finally, we can celebrate what is. When I conduct our congregational assessments, I find that the smallest of congregations are giving thousands of hours to helping their local communities. They are supporting one another in illness and life changes. They are praying together, singing together, and laughing together through all the pains and joys of life. Notice these things in your congregation and give thanks loudly and often.

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



Christ UCC, Belleville-
Pastor Jon (Lisa) Tinge

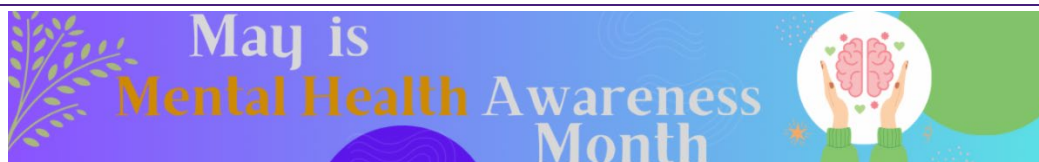


Concordia UCC, Belleville-
Pastor Greg (Renee) Seaman

Retired Pastor- Rev. Dr. Richard (Johann) Ellerbrake

[Submit prayer requests here](#)

UCC Global, National, + Regional News



**MENTAL
HEALTH
SUNDAY**

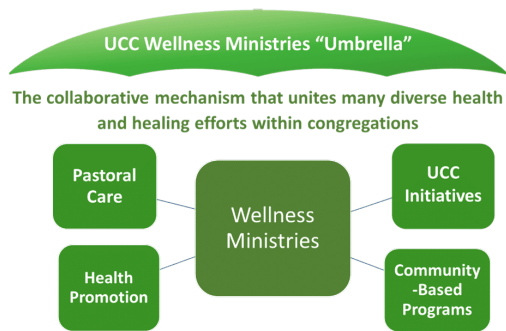
MAY 17, 2026



Resources



United Church of Christ™
**MENTAL HEALTH
NETWORK**



May 17th – Mental Health Sunday – Mental Health Sunday is recognized within the UCC on the 3rd Sunday of May, or any other Sunday a church chooses. Identifying a Mental Health Sunday is a way for your congregation to begin or continue providing education and support to your members on mental health and wellness. [Worship Resources](#) are available from the UCC Mental Health Network. Other [Resources](#) are also available.



Being 5 for 5 means that your church is a leader, giving to Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support and the Four Special Mission Offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen The Church, Neighbors In Need and The Christmas Fund.

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM): Provides funding from congregations for Conferences and the national ministries of the UCC.

Special Mission Offerings: These are four specific offerings that support various ministries and causes within the UCC.

1. One Great Hour of Sharing: Supports refugee and emergency relief efforts.
2. Strengthen the Church: Supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations.
3. Neighbors in Need: Supports local and national justice initiatives.
4. The Christmas Fund: Provides assistance to persons in need who have served the church.

Click [HERE](#) for a 5 for 5 flyer to share with your church and church boards (and bulletin boards!) to highlight each of the missions. **Thank you!**

-Special Mission Offerings with suggested dates of collection-

One Great Hour of Sharing <i>Our Love Offering to the World</i> Humanitarian Assistance and Sustainable Development	March 15
Strengthen the Church <i>Sent Forth in Love</i> New Church, Leadership, and Youth Cultivation	May 24
Neighbors in Need <i>Walk in Love</i> Advocacy and Justice Ministries	October 4
Christmas Fund <i>The Greatest of These...Love</i> UCC Clergy and Employee Assistance	December 20

Thank you to our 2025 ISC 5 for 5 churches!

Addieville Zion UCC
Alhambra Salem UCC
Belleville Concordia UCC
Belleville St. Paul UCC
Belleville Trinity UCC
Biddleborn Trinity UCC
Carbondale Church of the Good Shepherd Carlinville St. Paul UCC
Carlyle Immanuel UCC
Central City Zion UCC
Collinsville St. John UCC
Columbia St. Paul UCC
Darmstadt Holy Ghost UCC
Dupo Christ UCC
Edwadsville St. Paul UCC
Fairview Heights St. John UCC
Godfrey Evangelical UCC
Granite City St. John UCC
Grantfork UCC
Hamel Immanuel UCC
Hecker Friedens UCC
Highland Evangelical UCC
Smithboro St. Peter UCC-Hookdale
Hoyleton Zion Evangelical UCC
Irvington Friedens UCC
Lebanon St. Paul UCC
Lenzburg St. Peter's UCC
Marion Zion UCC
Marissa Friedens UCC
Mascoutah St. John UCC
Moro St. John's UCC of Midway
Murphysboro St. Peter's UCC
Nashville St. Paul UCC
Waterloo Zion UCC - St. Joe
New Hanover - Zoar UCC
O'Fallon UCC
Okawville, St. Peter's UCC
Plum Hill St. John's UCC
Red Bud St. Peter UCC
St. Jacob UCC
Smithton St. John's UCC
Staunton St. Paul UCC
Stone Church St. Peter's UCC
Trenton St. John UCC
Valmeyer St. John UCC
Waterloo St. Paul UCC



Strengthen the Church

The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC.

The theme for 2026 is "Sent Forth in Love." Congregations are invited to participate in a scripture study, share announcements in your newsletters or bulletins, and display a poster to promote the offering. Participating in the offering helps foster connections with the wider church and create possibilities for the church of tomorrow.

Grab your materials [HERE](#).



Breaking: Rev. Jennifer Sowell elected to serve as Associate General Minister of the United Church of Christ by [Charles Jefferson, Jr.](#) | published on May 9, 2026

The Rev. Jennifer Sowell, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ with more than two decades of pastoral leadership experience, was elected to serve an unexpired term as the next Associate General Minister (AGM), Love of Church on Saturday, May 9, 2026 at a special meeting of General Synod 35, which officially ends a several year process that began at the end of 2023. Sowell's election is a historic one, marking the first time in the denomination's nearly 70-year history that leadership of the church is all women. [Read](#)

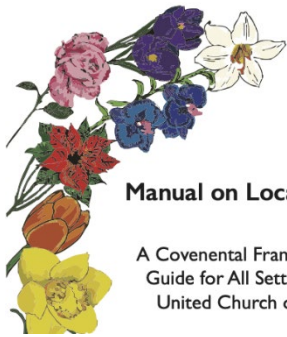
'Not the church of 1957': Special Meeting of Synod elects new AGM, looks toward future of the UCC by [Charles Jefferson, Jr.](#) | published on May 12, 2026

For the first time in the United Church of Christ's nearly 70-year history, a Special Meeting of the General Synod was called to elect the Associate General Minister, Love of Church. The virtual gathering, which was also an opportunity for fellowship and worship, took place on Saturday, May 9, 2026 and marked both a historical and pivotal time in the denomination's history and future.

Election of a new AGM

The only item on the agenda for Saturday's Special Meeting was to elect the Associate General Minister (AGM), Love of Church to an unexpired term, filling a key role within the UCC that had been vacant since December 2023. The Rev. Jennifer Sowell, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ with more than two decades of pastoral leadership experience, [was elected to serve as the next AGM](#), concluding a process that yielded [two separate search committees, the first one being unsuccessful in identifying a candidate](#).

Sowell's election marked another significant first in the denomination's history, as all three elected officers of the church are women. Sowell was confirmed on Saturday with 87% of delegates voting to affirm her appointment, exceeding the required 60%, per the UCC Bylaws. [Read](#)



Manual on Local Church

A Covenental Framework and Guide for All Settings of the United Church of Christ.

Do you and your church have a copy of the Manual on Local Church? The United Church of Christ is rooted in covenantal relationships that shape who we are and how we live in community. **The Manual on Local Church** is a new resource (released at General Synod in 2025) developed by and for the United Church of Christ that helps Local Churches, Associations, and Conferences understand and fully embrace these covenants, providing clear guidance on governance, leadership, and ministry practices. With resources ranging from the Congregational Code and Marks for Faithful and Vital Local Churches to practical tools for accountability and support, this Manual equips every setting of the UCC to engage faithfully, grow in vitality, and live out our witness in the world. Check out [The Manual on Local Church website](#) to learn more. You can download a free pdf of the Manual [here](#) or order a paper copy from UCC Resources [here](#).



Cornerstone Fund News

"Our theme for this impact report is 'Good Soil' because the Cornerstone Fund helps create the rich, fertile 'soil' from which so many church and non-profit program 'seeds' sprout nationwide."

- Maria Coyne, Cornerstone Fund President & CEO

See our 2025 Annual Impact Report: <https://cornerstonefund.org/2025-annual-impact-report/>

**Cornerstone Fund Welcomes
New Chief Relationship Officer
Rev. Kimberly Wood**

"This role sits at the intersection of everything I value: transformational partnership, faithful stewardship, community investment, and relational leadership. I am eager to support the Cornerstone Fund's work of building a more just, sustainable, and thriving future for all."
- Rev. Kimberly Wood



Learn more about Rev. Wood:
cornerstonefund.org

Click the image to read more about Rev. Kimberly Wood.



888-UCC-FUND (888-822-3863)
Monday - Friday, 9 AM - 5 PM EST
1300 E. 9th Street, Suite 1605,
Cleveland, Ohio 44114



Unsee(n) Indifference

by [Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson](#) | published on May 12, 2026

Last week, along with the members of the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and its staff, I visited the **Bergen-Belsen Memorial**. Between 50- 70,000 people died at Bergen-Belsen including Anne Frank and her sister Margot, who were 16 and 19 years old at time of death from typhus. [Read](#)



Upcoming Nurture the Soul Webinars

(All sessions times are 2:30pm CT)

Thursday, May 7 - [Proclaiming “Love Knows No Borders”: Moving from Desolation to Action](#)

Thursday, May 14 - [Emotional and Spiritual Care Resources Post Disasters](#)

Monday, May 18 - [Future of Faith: Small Town – Full Building](#)

CLIMATE HOPE AFFILIATES NATIONAL WEBINAR

BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION IN 2026

**SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER
XAVIER BOATRIGHT**



Sierra Club's Deputy Legislative Director for Clean Energy and Electrification

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2026 | 10 AM PT / 1 PM ET

May Climate Hope Affiliates National Webinar

If you are interested in witnessing Climate Hope Affiliates in action while also learning about current bipartisan legislation in Congress that relates to climate change, housing, and weatherization, join the next Climate Hope Affiliates national webinar on Saturday, May 16th at 1 pm ET/10 am PT. We will hear from Xavier Boatright who serves as the Sierra Club's Executive Director for Clean Energy and Electrification. [Register](#)



The next UCC Climate Action Assembly will feature two presentations.

First, members of Wellesley Village Church will share about how they replaced their oil-fired HVAC system with a geothermal system as they strive for net-zero emissions. Second, we will hear about a program of international solidarity centered around the climate leaders in the Mayan communities of Belize. [Register to join us on Wednesday, June 3rd at 1 pm ET/10 am PT.](#)



The Pollinator

Sharing, Connecting, Inspiring
FOR GOD'S CREATION

Beyond Progressive Bubbles

by [Brooks Berndt](#) | published on May 6, 2026 A fancy academic-sounding phrase sometimes used to describe the politics of Jesus is “prefigurative politics.” This refers to the idea that the desired society of the future is prefigured or already made manifest in one’s immediate life or community. In Luke 17:21, Jesus states it this way: “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” The ministry

of Jesus and his followers embodied the just and egalitarian world they wanted—a world that was the exact opposite of the Roman Empire. It was utopia in microcosm. [Read](#)



Church World Service (CWS) Period Packs: Plan Your Packing Event for International Menstrual Hygiene Day on May 28, 2026

CWS Period Packs are shared with people facing difficult times in the U.S. and around the world—through trusted partners, community organizations and emergency response efforts.

If you’re wondering how to begin, you can order a CWS Kits Party Pack to simplify the process. When you order a Party Pack, we send the supplies,

instructions, boxes and return shipping labels — you gather your group and assemble.

Perfect for youth groups, mission committees and service days.

[Get started here.](#)

Witness for Justice

Looking for up-to-date social justice commentary? [Check out Witness for Justice](#), a weekly editorial opinion column written by the National Staff.



ISC VBS X-CHANGE

Are you looking for VBS materials or to share your VBS materials?

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)**.

-St. John UCC, Maeystown is having their VBS early – May 26-29 and are willing to share their extra supplies and puppets after their event – They are offering items from: **Snowball Mountain Challenge – by Cokesbury** If you are interested call the church at 618-458-6940



Are you interested in serving as Pulpit Supply?

Reach out via email to the
ISC Committee
on Ministry Co-chairs:

Rev. Lisa Hart- lisa@revhart.net
Mark Walz- mewalz5925@hotmail.com



Global Ministries

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



30 Years of Faith in Action Reflection

In villages across Ghana, communities are coming together to protect children and confront trafficking and gender-based violence. Through the Christian Council of Ghana's Community Watchdog Movement—supported by Global Ministries and One Great Hour of Sharing—teachers, nurses, elders, and young people are building cultures of safety and dignity. The initiative has already reached 36 communities, helping reduce trafficking and empower local leaders to stand up for the vulnerable. As we celebrate ****30 Years of Faith in Action****, this reflection reminds us that when communities are equipped and supported, faith becomes a force for protection, justice, and lasting change.

Read the full story: <https://ow.ly/kZRu50YC1xh>

THE KICKOFF WEBINAR

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES

WEDNESDAY MAY 13, 2026 AT 7:00PM ET

Featuring partner guest Mery Kollimon of the Protestant Church in Timor.



REV. DR. LAMARCO A. CABLE
GLOBAL MINISTRIES CO-EXECUTIVES
PRESIDENT AND CEO
DISCIPLES OVERSEAS MINISTRIES

REV. SHARI PRESTEMON
GLOBAL MINISTRIES CO-EXECUTIVES
ASSOCIATE GENERAL MINISTER, UCC



Celebrating 30 Years of Global Ministries

Join Global Ministries for a special kickoff webinar as it begins its 30th anniversary celebration. The theme, 30 Years of Faith in Action, celebrates the countless ways faith has moved us beyond words into meaningful partnership, advocacy, and service.

[Register](#)

Now Hiring: Development Officer (Hybrid – Indianapolis, IN)

Global Ministries is seeking a relationship-driven Development Officer to help grow fund development efforts and connect generosity to global impact.

In this role, you'll cultivate donor relationships, lead campaigns, and support work advancing justice, reconciliation, and peace in partnership with Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ.

Learn more: <https://ow.ly/yjPe50YviGV>

ISC Hunger Action Team - Facing Hunger in Your Community



The Hunger Action Team would like to recognize ST. PAUL, WATERLOO for their continued support of families in need. Since 2012, St. Paul hosts a FREE COMMUNITY MEAL - "MARTHA'S KITCHEN/ MARY'S HEART" every Monday night. This program has been run by volunteers from the congregation and community. Sustaining this vital mission costs \$400 per week for food and "to go" containers. Pictured are volunteers from the MONROE COUNTY HOUSE of NEIGHBORY SERVICE. Heartfelt thanks to MCHNS for providing the meal and volunteering to serve more than 100 guests on May 4th. "Neighbors helping neighbors". Thanks St. Paul UCC- Under the leadership of pastor and teacher, Rev. Kyle Timmons.

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...

...share stories of fighting hunger in YOUR community.

News from DuBois Center



Help us welcome campers and families this summer!

We are looking for friendly faces to help with camp check-in on Sunday afternoons from 1:30-3:30 pm. Join our welcome team for one Sunday or as many Sundays as you want! Volunteers help greet families, assist with the check-in process, and hand out camp t-shirts. Sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/.../10C084DA4AD28A2FCC34...>



More than just another summer job! Give DuBois Center a look-

The most impactful piece of our summer camp programming is our staff. Year after year, young adults dedicate the bulk of their summer to providing the best experience possible for the children and youth in their care – from time in the lake to vespers around the campfire. Campers look to their counselors for guidance, safety, inspiration, leadership, and fun. Counselors spend long hours in hot weather cultivating “camp magic,” and in return they build life skills and lifelong relationships with their fellow staff members.

Camper numbers this summer have already surpassed last year, and we still have time for kids to sign up. In order to provide the best experience for our campers, we need your help to recruit additional counselors. If you or someone you know is a responsible, caring, fun-loving young adult in search of a fulfilling and exciting summer job, please email us at director@duboiscenter.org or visit duboiscenter.org/summer-camp-staff/ for an application.

WISHLIST WEDNESDAY!

Summer Program Needs

- Hammocks & Shelters
- Craft Supplies
- Personal/Health Items
- Program Supplies
- Barn Needs

Thank you!

DuBois Center

WISHLIST WEDNESDAY!

Our final Wishlist Wednesday of the Spring!

We cannot say THANK YOU enough to those who have been purchasing these items for us, because they really do make a HUGE difference!

This week, new to the list, are a number of **story books** specially curated for our summer curriculum! Every story tells a different piece of the larger theme for the week.

Also, please take a look at the other items from past weeks--and if you are so moved to add one of those to your cart, we will certainly appreciate!

If you'd rather make a [monetary donation](#) to the cause, that is perfect too!

Every little bit helps! Our full Amazon list is found at: <https://a.co/0gHfHUGc>



FALL FESTIVAL DuBois Center

Folks, it is not too early to start thinking about those creative baskets you donate for the Silent Auction at DuBois's Fall Festival **October 4**. Take advantage of end-of-season sales, which combined with your imaginative spirits will yield good returns from those baskets Fest participants cannot resist. Again, we appreciate your support of DuBois in this way and look forward to seeing you in a few months.

Mark Your Calendars
AUGUST 7-8, 2026
RAINBOW CAMP
An LGBTQIA+ Friendly, Family Camp Experience!
At the DuBois Center in Dubois, Illinois

For more information
<https://duboiscenter.org/retreats/rainbow-camp/>



2026 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 2026

	Main Camp	Rustic Village
June 14-16	Discovery (1st-3rd) GIRLS: Almost Full BOYS: Full	
June 14-19	Settler (3rd-5th) ALL: Full	Horse Play (5th-7th) ALL: Full
	LIT Camp (11th-12th) Leadership in Training	Outback (7th-9th) BOYS: Full
June 17-19	Camp Quest (1st-3rd) GIRLS: Full BOYS: Almost Full	
June 21-26	Settler (3rd-5th) ALL: Full	Splash (5th-7th) ALL: Closed
	Art Explosion (5th-8th) ALL: Closed	Saddle 'Em Up BOYS: Closed GIRLS: Almost Full
	Base Camp (6th-8th) ALL: Full	Rustic Sampler BOYS: Almost Full GIRLS: Full
June 24-26		
June 28-30	Just You & Me ALL: Full (Adult & Child ages 5-8)	
July 5-10	High School Week on Rustic (9th-12 th grades)	Drenched GIRLS: Full
		Wrangler GIRLS: Full
		X-Plore ALL: Full
July 12-14	Discovery (1st-3rd) ALL: Full	BOYS: Full
July 12-17	Settler (3rd-5th) ALL: Full	Trekkin' It (5-7 th) GIRLS: Almost Full
		Giddy Up (6-8th) ALL: Full
		Dunk'd (7-9th) ALL: Full
July 15-17	Quest (1st-3rd) GIRLS: Full BOYS: Closed	
July 20-22	Just You & Me (Adult & Child ages 5-8)	
August 7-8	Rainbow Camp (all ages)	

DuBois Center is the Camp & Retreat Center of the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Council for Health and Human Services Ministry News



Hitz Memorial Home Celebrates Commemorative Stone Garden and Retirement of Debt

Rev. Jeremy Wood shared from Sunday, May 9th celebration-

Today was a glorious day at Hitz Home. Thirty years ago the administrator of Hitz embezzled over \$1.5 million from Hitz Home and a few of its residents. None of that debt was ever paid back, and for 25 years Hitz carried over \$1 million in debt, only able to pay the interest and never paying down the principal. When I began my service on the Hitz Board in October of 2021, our debt was \$1.1 million.

But... by the generosity of many, the amazing leadership of the recent Hitz Board, the driving passion of Rich Suhre, and, quite frankly, the gracious and miraculous kindness of God, in January we completely retired that debt! Today we celebrated and burned the note.

We also dedicated our beautiful new Stone Garden, where many amazing folks are honored or memorialized and will continue to be in the future. Hitz Home is a unique place filled with amazing people. Just today, 3 different residents shared with me how much they love Hitz, because it really feels like home, not just a care facility. As a member of the Hitz Board, I was able to share with all gathered today this comforting passage of Scripture which so beautifully reflects God's work at Hitz:

But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the LORD
never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in him."
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.
It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.
- Lamentations 3:21-26 (NRSVUE)



Hoyleton Awarded Poshard Foundation Grant to Enhance Outdoor Spaces

Hoyleton Youth and Family Services has been awarded a 2026 grant from The Poshard Foundation for Abused Children to improve outdoor spaces on its therapeutic residential campus.

Through this funding, Hoyleton purchased six picnic tables—two ADA-accessible and four standard—to support youth in its Therapeutic

Residential Program, which serves up to 36 individuals ages 9 to 21 who have experienced significant trauma and developmental challenges. The tables provide safe, welcoming spaces for small group interaction, recreational activities, and family visits, helping youth build critical social and life skills.

“Through the support of the Poshard Foundation, we are improving the outdoor spaces on our residential campus so we can provide our youth with comfortable shared outdoor settings for them to enjoy while practicing their life skills,” said Tamara Sadler, Director of Residential Services.

Two ADA-accessible tables are located near the All Abilities Playground to ensure accessibility for youth with mobility needs, while additional tables are placed near residential cottages to encourage daily social engagement.

The tables were purchased through Leaps of Love, an Illinois nonprofit supporting families affected by childhood brain tumors and pediatric cancer, extending the impact of the grant to another mission-driven organization.

About Hoyleton Youth and Family Services

Hoyleton has served children and families since 1895, providing residential treatment, foster care, and community-based services across Southern Illinois.



MINISTRY COHORT

Expand Your Range Eden Ministry Cohorts

Ministry cohorts allow you to sample many theological themes, offering peer learning with your ministry context in mind. Scholars have chosen a specific lens on a particular topic and share their expertise through digital content you watch on your own time. Four monthly online meetings are interspersed, where you and your cohort members gather for facilitated discussion with an experienced church leader.

Cohorts support lifelong learning and are for anyone- authorized clergy, chaplains,

Christian educators, lay leaders and anyone interested in the topic. UCC members will recognize the Marks for Ministry woven throughout the cohorts, though anyone from any denomination, or no denomination, is welcome to attend.

Completion of each Ministry Cohort provides 9 contact hours of continuing education, subject to approval by the participant's credentialing body.

Summer 2026 Themes

Who are the "We" We're Becoming?

The Big Reveal: Reading and Responding to Revelation

Public Spiritual Care

Spiritual Care Basics for Lay People

6+ Makes a Cohort – Bring a friend!

Multi-Cohort Bundle- Choose three Cohort themes over the next two years for yourself or purchase 3 seats in a single Cohort for members of your group. Save \$100 over purchasing them individually.

Visit: <https://www.eden.edu/ministrycohorts/>

Please contact Dr. Jill Baker with questions. jbaker@eden.edu

3rd Annual
Tropical Trivia

June 6, 2026

Doors open at 5PM, Trivia begins at 6PM
Belleville/Swansea Moose Lodge #1221
2425 N. Illinois St., Swansea

Proceeds from this event will go to Puentes de Esperanza, a trusted resource in the Hispanic community for more than 20 years. Funds will be used to support Spanish-speaking members of our community with interpretation and translation, bilingual therapy, case management, resource linkage, and educational workshops on healthcare, finances, family engagement, and nutrition.

Scan here to purchase tickets

Ruertes de Esperanza Tropical Trivia Inviting You to Join the Trivia Fun We are also looking for sponsors, silent auction items and volunteers who would like to help with the event. To learn more about those opportunities please reach out to Mario McCart at mmccart@hoyleton.org or call 618-688-7092

To purchase a table online visit - <https://hoyleton.org/events/3rd-annual-tropical-trivia/>

St. John's is offering an informational series in conjunction with AgeSmart:

Get Your Affairs in Order Planning ahead isn't just paperwork; it's one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself and your family.

What happens if you suddenly can't make medical decisions? Do your loved ones know your wishes? Is your financial future protected?

Join us at **AgeSmart** for the Smart Aging Series where Heidi Dodd will present Get Your Affairs in Order.

We will learn the essentials everyone should understand:

- Advance directives
- Healthcare & financial power of attorney
- Wills & revocable living trusts
- Paying for long-term care, including Medicaid & Veteran benefits

These are conversations many families avoid until it's too late. This session helps you get informed, prepared, and confident.

May 13, 2026 10:00–11:30 AM

AgeSmart, 7 Bronze Pointe S, Suite B, Swansea, IL

Presenter: Heidi Dodd, Attorney-at-Law, Dodd & Wambold

RSVP required: 618-222-2561

Seating is limited.

Our ISC Churches News + Events




ZION NYC CHOIR
BENEFIT CONCERT
& MOSTACCIOLI DINNER
SUNDAY, MAY 17TH 2026
CONCERT 3:00PM
ZION UCC CHANCEL CHOIR
ZION UCC BELL CHOIR
ST JOHN'S UCC CHOIR
MSMC ADULT COMMUNITY CHOIR
DINNER
FOLLOWING CONCERT
ADULTS \$15
CHILDREN 5-12 \$10
CHILDREN UNDER 5 FREE
GLUTEN-FREE AVAILABLE
ZION UCC 930 W CHERRY ST MARION IL
ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT ZION UCC CHOIR TRIP TO SING AT CARNEGIE HALL



St John's UCC, Midway Mystery Dinner Please join us on **May 17th at 5:00 pm** for our mystery dinner production of "Wrangle at Red Mountain Ranch". Don't miss this all-star cast as we solve the mystery together. Dinner will be served and on the menu will be pulled pork and chicken, cheesy potatoes, baked beans, apple sauce and dessert, all of the cowboy fixins! Wear your western wear and be part of the fun! Please invite your family and friends to join us! Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$5 for children. Call the church to reserve your spot (618) 377-9288 7456 Lake St., Moro, IL 62067 **All proceeds will go to our Mission Fund!**



Concordia UCC Belleville Annual Chicken Dinner

Dine-in or Carry-out chicken dinner **Sunday, June 7th 11:00am-3:00pm**. Also, \$5/ticket Quilt Raffle, limited to 200 tickets-drawing held when tickets sold out. 7600 State Route 163, Belleville, IL (3 miles north of Millstadt) Questions? Call 618-476-3377

[Click to view Full Flyer](#)



If you are reading a print version of the *ISC Weekly Connection*, consider scanning the QR code 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 *Weekly Connection*.

[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](#)

[Contemporary Band Leader - St. Paul UCC Waterloo](#)

[Contemporary Keyboard Musician - St. Paul UCC Waterloo](#)

[Part-Time Secretary/Bookkeeper- Friedens UCC Irvington](#)

[Part-Time Behavioral Health Nurse - Hoyleton Youth & Family Services](#)

[Part-Time Faith Community Nurse - Deaconess Nurse Ministry](#)

[Part-Time Administrative Assistant - St. John's UCC Smithton](#)

[Part-Time Administrative Assistant - Church of the Good Shepherd Carbondale Flyer](#)

[Summer Youth Activities Coordinator - Church of the Good Shepherd Carbondale Flyer](#)

[Youth Aide- Church of the Good Shepherd Carbondale Flyer](#)

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](#) [CHSM](#)

[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](#)
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