

June 9, 2026



Reflections From Our Conference Minister

What always strikes me when I read the descriptions of Jesus' ministry in the Gospels is how fully present he seemed in every situation. Whether speaking one-on-one with an individual or standing before a crowd, Jesus seemed able to see what others overlooked and notice what many would rather ignore. Because he was fully attentive to the people around him, Jesus recognized needs that extended far beyond the surface.

Consider the lectionary Gospel lesson for this Sunday from Matthew 9.

In Matthew 9:35-38, we read:

“And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

At first, we see Jesus responding to the physical needs of those he encounters as he travels from town to town preaching, teaching, and healing. Then, when he stands before the crowds who have gathered to see him, we reveal that his sight goes deeper than what is visible. As Jesus looks upon the crowds, he recognizes their emotional and spiritual condition. He sees people who are distraught and destitute, stressed and strained, who are seeking spiritual guidance.

Jesus possessed a remarkable awareness of the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people he had never met. The pain and brokenness he witnessed could have been overwhelming. Yet rather than turning away, he responded with compassion. His heart was moved by the struggles of ordinary people who desperately needed to know that God saw them and loved them.

At the same time, Jesus understood that humanity's needs were far greater than could be addressed during his earthly ministry alone. I believe this is why, after sensing the needs of the crowd, Jesus turned to his disciples and said, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”* (Matthew 9:37-38).

Jesus recognized that even he, the Son of God, could not do it alone. He would need others to carry out his mission and ministry in his lifetime and beyond. He would need people who were willing to see others as he saw them, to love as he loved, and serve as he served. The invitation Jesus gave to those first disciples is the same invitation Jesus extends to us today. Jesus needs us and is calling us to be the laborers in the field.

The labor is choosing to show up as Jesus did—to pay attention to the needs of others and respond with compassion and love. Yet, in a world filled with distractions, it is easy to move through our days without truly seeing the people around us.

The call to serve in the name of Jesus is a call to be more fully present, so we can look and listen to the world around us, noticing those who might otherwise go unseen.

Who among us is carrying a burden in silence?

Who needs a listening ear, a word of encouragement, a prayer, or a simple act of kindness?

As followers of Jesus, we are called not only to recognize these needs but also to respond with the compassion and love that Jesus so faithfully demonstrated.

Dear friends, perhaps it is even truer than when Jesus himself said it — *the harvest is plentiful*. But let it not be said of us in the Church that *the laborers are few*.

There are countless opportunities to share the love of Jesus Christ through our presence, our compassion, and our willingness to serve. We may not be able to meet every need, but we can trust God to use our faithful acts of love in ways that reach far beyond what we can imagine.

May we ask God to open our eyes to the needs around us and our hearts to respond with compassion. As we follow Jesus, may we become laborers in his harvest. In answering the call of Christian discipleship, may we offer hope to the weary and comfort to those who are hurting. And may we remind all we encounter that they are deeply loved by God and by us.

-Rev. Shana Johnson
Conference Minister

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



St. Paul UCC, Carlinville-

Rev. Eddie Burton



Immanuel UCC, Carlyle- Pastor Ken (Barbara) Schafer

Retired Pastor- Rev. Linda (Bob) Coulson

The Weekly Connection will have a break session next week. Here are those we will be lifting in prayer the week of 6-16-26:



Zion UCC, Central City- Rev. Nancy Peebles



St. John UCC, Collinsville-

Rev. Miranda (Courtney) Moeller

Retired Pastor- Rev. Jerry (Lori) McCaskey

[Submit prayer requests here](#)

Please join us to
Celebrate the Retirement of
Pastor Karla Frost

Sunday, June 28, 2026
12:00 p.m.
Fellowship Hall

St. John UCCC
2901 Nameoki Rd, Granite City, IL

Lunch will be potluck.
Feel free to bring a side dish.
Fried Chicken and ham will be provided.

We will have a cookie and pie bar
Bring your favorite homemade
cookies and favorite pies.

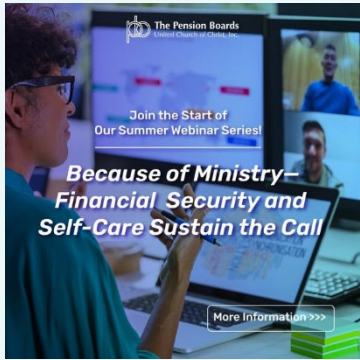


Entertainment will be provided.

Please RSVP to:

KarlaRSVP@stjohnuccgranitecity.com or
call Donna Brandes at 618-802-1072





You are invited to join the Pension Boards and your ministry peers for a special

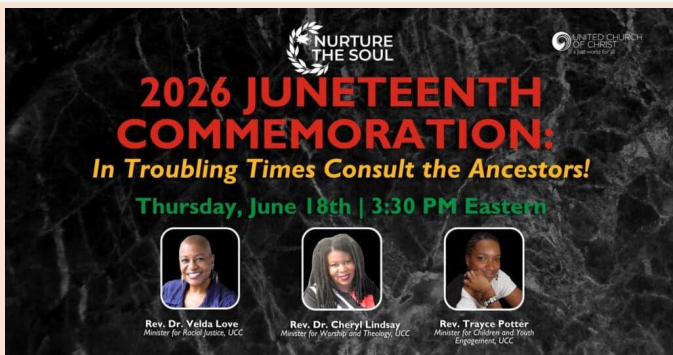
summer encounter.

Because of Ministry—Financial Security and Self-Care Sustain the Call is a summer webinar series designed for clergy, lay leaders, caregivers, and ministry employers who are navigating change and ministry demands with resilience. Gain practical strategies and peer insights into how to sustain your call while balancing money, ministry, family, and securing retirement income with purpose and confidence.

See webinar session descriptions by clicking on the topics to the right and register today!

Webinar Sessions

1. [Multi-Vocational Strategies](#)
2. [Burnout Prevention](#)
3. [Mid-Career Check-In](#)
4. [Sustainable Investing](#)
5. [Leadership Skills](#)
6. [Money & Ministry](#)
7. [Employer Support](#)
8. [We're Here to Help You Every Step of the Way](#)



Juneteenth Commemoration 2026: In Troubling Times Consult the Ancestors!

Thursday, June 18 - 2:30pm CT

Juneteenth marks the official end of the enslavement of African descended people in the U.S. The original legal declaration was signed into law by Abraham Lincoln January 1, 1863, which instituted The Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth is also known as Freedom Day nationally...

CLIMATE HOPE AFFILIATES NATIONAL WEBINAR

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR CLIMATE ADVOCACY



SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER
JOHN SABIN
Bringing the Insights of Psychotherapy to Advocacy

SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2026 | 10 AM PT / 1 PM ET

If you are interested in witnessing Climate Hope Affiliates in action while also learning about effective communication for climate advocacy, join the next Climate Hope Affiliates national webinar on Saturday, June 20th at 1 pm ET/10 am PT. John Sabin combines his background as a psychotherapist and as a climate advocate to offer advice. [Register](#)



OPEN AND AFFIRMING SUNDAY
JUNE 28, 2026

THEME: WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED: ROOTED IN LOVE, JUSTICE, AND AFFIRMATION!

WORSHIP RESOURCES:
[OPENANDAFFIRMING.ORG/ONA26](https://openandaffirming.org/ona26)



Open and Affirming Sunday— June 28, 2026 Worship guide, readings, sermon pathway, children’s moment & more!

Theme: We Shall Not Be Moved: Rooted in Love, Justice, and Affirmation
by: Rev. Derek A. Terry, Acting Executive Director of the Open and Affirming Coalition
There are a lot of resources below scroll through and use and adapt anything that makes sense for your congregation.

Anchor Scripture: Jeremiah 17:5–8

5 Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. 6 They shall be like a shrub in the desert and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. 7 Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. 8 They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of

drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. (NRSVUE)

Access the full Open and Affirming Sunday worship resources:

<https://openandaffirming.org/ona26/>



UCCMA NATIONAL BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

United in Spirit: Diverse in Sound

July 8 – 11, 2026

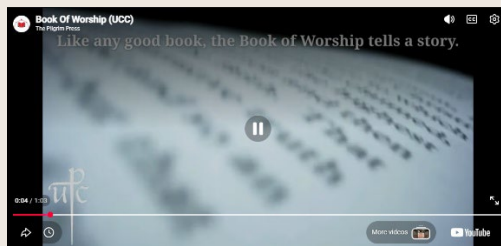
First Community Church

Columbus, Ohio

CONFERENCE INFORMATION: [START HERE](#)

REGISTRATION: [GO HERE](#)

Local Singers & Ringers Choir Tracks Only: [GO HERE](#)



Preparing for an update

The [Book of Worship](#) tells the UCC story through the lens of worship:

- our liturgical roots,
- our covenantal relationships,
- our ecumenical commitments, and
- our expressions of sacred community.

In every generation of the United Church of Christ, we retell our shared story – often with fuller understanding (like the recent acknowledgement of the [Afro-Christian Convention](#) as a fifth stream in UCC history).

As our story of the UCC's past, present, and future grows deeper and richer, our Book of Worship's story of the UCC needs to be similarly updated.

A multi-year revision process began in the Summer of 2025 with a yearlong period for feedback and submissions. Please use the links below to learn more.

United Church Press/[The Pilgrim Press](#), which manages the Book of Worship, is spearheading this update. [Feedback](#) is being welcomed as well as [Submissions](#) through August 2026



desk calendar and plan book
July 2026-December 2027 

The popular 18-month UCC July 2026 - December 2027 calendars are now available to pre-order and will begin shipping June 2026!

Click [HERE](#) to order.



ISC VBS X-CHANGE

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

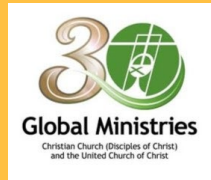
The exchange of VBS materials can help elevate your program or another church's program. Click [HERE](#) and send in the following info and we'll add it to this section of the Weekly Connection: **(Church name)** will be hosting the **(insert name of the VBS curriculum)** on **(insert dates)** and is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

-St. John UCC, Maestown 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



Global Ministries

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



What does it mean to be a Global Mission Church? One congregation finds out by [Donna Jackson](#) | published on Jun 9, 2026

This past January, [First Congregational Church of Tallmadge](#) became a [Global Mission Church](#). The congregation enthusiastically voted and signed the [covenant statement](#) with Global Ministries to intentionally pray for, learn about and support its siblings — spiritually and financially — around the world. [Global Ministries](#), the joint witness of the United Church of Christ and the [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#), has been providing churches like First Congregational with the support needed to cast a wider mission net for 30 years — [a milestone being](#)

[celebrated](#) throughout 2026. [Read](#)

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>

TOGETHER, WE CAN FILL THE SHELVES.



The JB Patriot Pantry is running low on food and household essentials for local veterans and their families.

*They served for us.
Let's show up for them.*

The Hunger Action Team would like to recognize **ST. PAUL, COLUMBIA** for their continued support of those in need. St. Paul members are invited to donate non perishable food items: canned goods, pasta, rice, and similar pantry staples. Food donations will benefit the JEFFERSON BARRACKS PATRIOT FOOD PANTRY, helping provide meals and essentials to veterans and active duty military families. Supporting those who have served our country. Heartfelt thanks to St. Paul members. Under the leadership of pastor and teacher, Rev. Jonathan Bangera.

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

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/>



Got a golf cart collecting dust, or know someone who does? DuBois Center is on an urgent hunt for a four-seater golf cart, or even a zippy side-by-side/Gator, to help their healthcare team transport campers. While the supervised areas use gravel roads, there are hills to navigate. If you've got a lead or want to lend a hand, shoot an email as soon as possible to director@duboiscenter.org with contact info. Your ride could be the hero of the summer!



DuBois Merch Promo!

Ready for summer?! We are!!

To celebrate the upcoming 2026 camp season, we are offering a limited-time promotion on our 3/4 sleeve retro baseball tees!

Purchase any variety of these super-comfy high quality shirts and use code DBC2026 at checkout for 10% off now through June 20th!

Start summer in style!

<https://www.bonfire.com/store/dubois-center-merch/>



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.



ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

EVERY YEAR IS DIFFERENT AND NEW!

A handful of camps still have room but they're filling up fast! The updated summer camp schedule is shown below—check it out and sign 'em up! Click below to register

TO REGISTER, VISIT DUBOISCENTER.ORG

Council for Health & Human Services Ministries News



Thank you to everyone who joined us for the 3rd Annual Tropical Trivia!

Your support helps [Puentes de Esperanza: Bridges of Hope](#) continue connecting Hispanic families throughout Southern Illinois with resources, support, and opportunities. We are grateful for each and every one of you. Thank you for making Tropical Trivia a success!



Ever wondered what it's like to volunteer in Back Bay Mission's Food Pantry?

Our latest blog covers recent changes to the pantry, how we serve housed and unsheltered guests, and what volunteers can expect during their shift.

At Back Bay Mission, we are always looking for ways to better serve our community. Over the past year, we've seen a **significant increase** in the number of individuals and families turning to our Client-Choice Food Pantry for assistance. To meet this growing need, we've made a few key changes that've allow us to serve more people efficiently!

A New Shopping Process

One of the biggest changes involves how guests receive their food from our

pantry. [Read](#)



Hoyleton Youth & Family Services



2026 Career Assistance Scholarships

Applications are now live!



Investing in Potential.
Building Stronger Futures.

Scholarships to support education, training, and career development.



APPLY NOW!

Applications are open. Don't miss this opportunity to invest in your future.



Applicants must have previously received services from Hoyleton Youth and Family Services or Puentes de Esperanza.



Council for Health & Human Services Ministries

Thursday's "Dine and Discover" online seminar will feature Valerie Honea, senior account manager with The Pension Boards UCC. Honea partners with employers to support retirement, health, life, and disability benefit programs. She works closely with organizations to provide education, guidance, and resources that help employees prepare for financial wellness and retirement security. She is passionate about building strong client relationships and helping employers maximize the value of their employee benefit offerings through practical support and personalized service.

When: **Jun 11, 2026 03:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/61082ZjpqTumA...>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



The Emmaus Summer Auction Is Now Open!

It's time to bid, win, and make a difference. The Emmaus Summer Auction is officially open, featuring incredible experiences, local favorites, family adventures, golf packages, and unique baskets—all supporting adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities served by Emmaus.

This year's featured packages include:

- Waves of Wellness
- Adventure Awaits: The Ultimate Family Fun Package
- Sip & Savor
- Fairway Favorites
- Brews Around Town
- The Emmaus Experience

Every bid helps create opportunities for greater independence, connection, and community for more than 220 adults supported by Emmaus.

Don't wait—many items will attract competitive bidding. Start exploring, place your bids, and support the mission of Emmaus today.

Uni-Pres Kindercottage Field Trip Adventures!

This spring, our children enjoyed exciting educational adventures to the Saint Louis Zoo and The Magic House! At the zoo, the children had a wonderful time exploring different animal habitats and learning about wildlife from around the world. During our visit to The Magic House, they engaged in hands-on exhibits filled with creativity, discovery, and imaginative play. These memorable trips gave the children the opportunity to learn outside the classroom while making lasting memories with their friends and teachers.





A Fun Visit with K-9 Max

Our children enjoyed an exciting field trip to the SIUE East St. Louis location library, where they had the wonderful opportunity to meet K-9 Max from the SIUE Police Department! During the visit, the children learned about Max's role as a police dog and how officers and K-9s work together to help protect and serve the community. The trip was filled with smiles, curiosity, and hands-on learning, making it a fun and memorable experience for everyone involved.



Growing Through Gardening

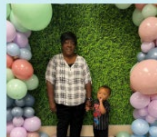
Our children had a wonderful time participating in the SABA gardening program here at the center! Through hands-on planting activities, the children learned about flowers, vegetables, and the importance of caring for the environment. From digging in the soil to watering their plants, each child enjoyed exploring nature while building patience, responsibility, and teamwork. It was a fun and rewarding experience that allowed our little gardeners to learn and grow together!



Exploring the Fire Truck at SIUE

Our children had an exciting visit to the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville East St. Louis location library, where they had the opportunity to see a real fire truck up close! The children enjoyed learning about the important role firefighters play in keeping our communities safe while

exploring the truck's equipment, lights, and tools. This hands-on experience sparked lots of curiosity and excitement, making it a fun and educational adventure for everyone involved.



Mother's Day Celebration!

Our center was filled with love and appreciation as we celebrated all the amazing mothers and mother figures in our children's lives! The children enjoyed creating heartfelt crafts, sharing sweet surprises, and participating in special activities to show just how much they care. It was a beautiful day filled with smiles, laughter, and gratitude as we honored the incredible women who do so much each and every day.



St. John's Community Care Free Medical Equipment Loan Program to Help Those in Need

St. John's Community Care is dedicated to providing quality care and support to those in need. Our free medical equipment loan program is available at our Collinsville location, and it is open to anyone who requires medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, commodes, bath chairs, crutches, canes, and more. We understand that medical equipment can be expensive, which is why we offer this service to ensure that everyone has access to the equipment they need to improve their quality of life. We also welcome donations of small medical equipment to supplement our inventory and help those in need. Your donation can make a significant impact on someone's life. If you have any small medical equipment that you would like to donate, you can drop it off at our Collinsville location between 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on holidays. Contact us at [618-344-5008](tel:618-344-5008) or visit us to learn more about our medical equipment loan program and how you can donate.



Need Medical Equipment? Try St. John's Free Loan Program



Summer Music Series
Immanuel United Church of Christ—Hamel
5838 Staunton Road, Edwardsville, IL 62025
Sunday, June 14, 2026 Silver Creek Bluegrass Band
Sunday, July 19, 2026 Hunter Sharp Band
Saturday, August 15, 2026 Sheafor & Simes
Doors open at 5:00 pm

Music Begins at 5:30 pm
No admission charge. A free will offering will be received.
Refreshments available for purchase
All Are Welcome!
Celebrating and Supporting Local Music!

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Summer BBQ

SATURDAY JUNE 20TH 10AM-2PM
OR SOLD OUT!
RURAL KING PARKING LOT

PORK STEAKS **BRATS** **BURGERS**

740 N Market St
Waterloo, IL 62298

THE GREAT PUZZLE RACE

Thursday, June 25th - 6:30-9:00PM

Be a puzzle sponsor for \$15! *Deadline to sign up is June 12th!* *Families are welcome!*

Cost is \$10 per person (\$5 for ages 6-11)
2-4 people per table

Attendance prizes and a prize for 1st and 2nd place winners.
Bring your own drinks and snacks! Popcorn & lemonade will be provided.

Sponsored by St Paul UCC Mission and Christian Education teams.
All proceeds will be donated to Beacon who provides low income people in need of furniture and household goods for a new beginning.

RSVP by mailing or dropping off a check or cash to the office!
115 W. B. St., Belleville, IL 62220

or Scan the Paypal QR Code
(put puzzle race in the memo)

618-233-3303 or email swilhelm@stpaulucc.org



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



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, videos 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](#)

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](#)

