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## Reflections from Our Conference Minister

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### **“THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE”**

A reflection based on Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed.” The tiny seed holds the potential for expansive growth. When someone plants the seed and tends the mustard plant, it grows to provide shelter, a safe haven, and a home for the most vulnerable creatures.

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast.” Yeast is a single-celled organism, yet when someone mixes it with just the right elements, it becomes a catalyst for transformation. It becomes bread for the journey, bread that nourishes, feeds, and comforts.

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.” A field can hold a priceless treasure. When someone discovers that treasure and truly recognizes its worth, they do all they can. They invest their energy, resources, and joy to obtain it, preserving the treasure’s sacred worth.

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind.” The net itself is not discerning. Rather, the one who casts and gathers the net must discern what is good and what is not, deciding what should be kept and what must be released for the strength, health, and well-being of the community they seek to nourish.

There is a seed.  
There is yeast.  
There is a field.  
There is a net.

Yet alone, they have no power to bring about the kingdom of God. No organism, no living thing, no place, no physical object alone can bring people to fully understand, revere, and trust in the power of God or convince people to commit to the transforming work of Jesus Christ so the beauty, joy, and fullness of the life God intended for all God’s beloved people can be restored.

The metaphors Jesus used, which are elevated in the Gospel of Matthew, remind us that the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven can only be brought about by us.

We are to be the sowers.  
We are to be the bakers.  
We are to be the investors.  
We are to be the fisher folks.

We are the ones who are called to till the ground, plant seeds, water the fertile grounds, and do the weeding.  
We are the ones called to combine the key ingredients, experiment, and wait patiently for the rising.  
We are the ones called to invest ourselves, personal wealth, and resources, taking risks for something beyond ourselves.  
We are the ones called to discern, set limits, make decisions, and be willing to let go.

Dear friends, we are the ones God is waiting for. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the ones needed to use the talents, skills, and resources God has given us to make the commitment, make the changes, and strive to do the work necessary to bring about the transformative, Spirit-centered work of the kingdom of heaven. Let us be the ones Jesus spoke of, entrusted to build His church upon.

*-Rev. Shana Johnson  
Conference Minister*

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



**Good Shepherd of Faith UCC, East St. Louis-** Pastor David (Natalie) Edwards



**Friedens UCC, Farina**

**Retired Pastor-** Rev. Thomas Nadelin

[Submit prayer requests here](#)

UCC Global, National, + Regional News

You are cordially invited to attend the

*Service of Installation*

for

*Rev. Miranda Moeller*

Associate Pastor of St. John UCC

**Sunday, August 9, 2025 | 3:00 pm**

St. John United Church of Christ  
307 West Clay St., Collinsville, IL 62234

Join us as we install Associate Pastor Miranda as the Associate Pastor of St. John UCC. Your presence and support will make this day even more meaningful.

 **St. John**  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

*All are welcome!*

*Information for Visiting Clergy:*

- ★ Please wear your robe and stole.
- ★ Please plan to arrive by 2:45 pm.

*— Fellowship to Follow! —*

The celebration will continue after the ceremony in Fellowship Hall with light refreshments.

*We hope you can join us!* 

# SAVE THE DATE

## Clergy Workshop on Christian Nationalism

featuring Rev. Hannah Kardon

hosted by the ISC  
Justice & Mission Team

**Monday, August 10<sup>th</sup>  
4 pm to 5:30 pm**

ISC  
JUSTICE  
& MISSION

helping to be the good

Dear ISC Clergy,

**Please save Monday, August 10, 2026, from 4 pm to 5:30 pm**

to attend a Clergy Workshop on Christian Nationalism

hosted by the ISC Justice and Mission Team

featuring Rev. Hannah Kardon, a pastor, parent, writer, and advocate for building coalitions committed to interfaith and peacemaking work.

For more information, please contact Rev. John Holst, Rev. Jonathan Banger, or Pastor Tim Burns.

## YOUR CHURCH CAN RESPOND.

VENEZUELA EARTHQUAKE



### Your Church Can Respond

When disaster strikes, churches have an opportunity to bring hope.

Host a CWS Emergency Response Fund Offering.

We'll provide free worship and promotional resources to help your congregation respond.

[Download everything you need to host an Emergency Response Fund Offering](#)

*"On June 24, 2026, two powerful earthquakes struck northwest Venezuela. More than 4,300 people have died, nearly 17,000 have been injured and almost 18,000 families have lost their homes.*

*CWS is supporting local partners and prioritizing the most vulnerable families and communities. Together, we are equipping*

*volunteer engineers to assess the safety of homes and public buildings, supporting local churches and organizations caring for survivors and accompanying communities as they rebuild and recover.*

*Recovery from a disaster of this magnitude will take years. CWS is committed to supporting Venezuelan communities long after headlines fade."*

-Church World Service



# THRIVE 2026

Groundbreaking Professional Development  
for Nonprofit, Community, Social Justice,  
and Congregational Leaders and Laypeople

Saturday, August 15, 2026

9:30 AM – 3:00 PM CT

at Eden Theological Seminary

Attend Online or On Campus



**THRIVE** is a one-day conference designed for nonprofit leaders, clergy, organizers, educators, congregational leaders, community advocates, and laypeople seeking practical tools, spiritual grounding, and transformative leadership development for today's world.

Find a home for professional and spiritual growth at Eden that allows you to combine building concrete skills with a deep connection to your faith and community. Through workshops, networking, reflection, and collaborative learning, THRIVE creates space for leaders to grow their impact while remaining rooted in purpose and community.

### Why Attend THRIVE?

- Strengthen your leadership capacity
- Build practical skills for ministry, organizing, and nonprofit work
- Connect with faith-rooted and justice-centered leaders
- Learn from experienced practitioners and educators
- Explore sustainable models for community transformation
- Participate online or on campus in St. Louis

### Strengthen Your Congregation or Organization with an Educational Partnership

Educational Partnership is an in-depth relationship between Eden and your congregation or organization. When you partner with Eden, we dedicate ourselves to helping your congregation, nonprofit, or organization educate its staff, laypeople, and leaders while deepening the bonds within your community.

THRIVE is an opportunity to explore how educational partnership can support leadership development, organizational growth, and long-term community impact.

### Who Should Attend?

- Clergy and ministry leaders
- Nonprofit professionals
- Community organizers
- Social justice advocates
- Lay leaders and volunteers
- Emerging leaders and students
- Faith-based organizational teams

Can't make the entire event but don't want to miss the information?

*Thrive Happy Hour*

2PM online or on campus  
(meet program directors, sign-up, and learn more)

Learn more & register:  
[www.eden.edu](http://www.eden.edu)

## Eden THRIVE 2026

Leadership Development for You. Resources for Your Organization.

Join us for a free one-day conference designed to equip clergy, nonprofit professionals, community leaders, and laypeople with practical tools for faithful leadership.

Discover how Eden's innovative theological education supports individual leadership development beyond degree programs while also helping congregations, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations strengthen their teams through customized educational partnerships.



**On July 17th, St. Paul UCC of Columbia, IL, concluded its service at Back Bay Mission.**

*"Today, we say goodbye to a small but mighty mission group from*

**St. Paul United Church of Christ!**

*This group has "wow"ed us with their humility and heart of service. They joined us all the way from Columbia, IL, and truly made a difference here in our Gulf Coast community!*

*Thank you for helping us strengthen neighborhoods, seek justice, and transform lives."*

*-Back Bay Mission*



**In Honor of their 150th Anniversary, O'Fallon UCC Collects Hygiene Products for Hoyleton Youth and Family Services**

The ladies from Mary and Martha Society from O'Fallon United Church of Christ decided to commemorate our church's 150th anniversary by collecting personal hygiene product for Hoyleton. We started our anniversary year in November and December 2025 with collecting toothpaste and toothbrushes. Each month is a different hygiene item and our goal is to collect 150 of that item. Our congregation has been extremely supportive of this endeavor and several months we have collected more than 150 items to date more than 1000 hygiene products have been delivered to Hoyleton Youth and Family Sevices. We will complete this project by our anniversary in October 2026.





## Special Church World Service Kit and Bucket Drop Off Location in St. Louis -A message from Priscilla Self, ISC Disaster Recovery Coordinator

There will be a local site receiving CWS kits. The special drop off location and event date is:

**Sharefest at the LifeWise location at 1321 South 11<sup>th</sup> in St. Louis, MO 63104**

**Saturday, October 10, 9:30- 11:30 am**

Susan Kendrick - Sharefest Coordinator

[skendrick@moumethodist.org](mailto:skendrick@moumethodist.org)

(573) 473-6850

Your support helps CWS put hope into the hands of families recovering from disaster. From hygiene items to clean-up tools, your generosity fills the kits that help communities rebuild. Our warehouse shelves are running low. Help us stock up and stay prepared: <https://cwskits.org/>

[Matching grant through the Global HOPE office](#)

<https://www.ucc.org/post-disaster-resources-for-churches/>

Contact Priscilla if you need more info or have any questions.

**Priscilla Self, ISC Disaster Recovery Coordinator**

618/318-0083

[pjj48@hotmail.com](mailto:pjj48@hotmail.com)



Deadline to register is *this* Thursday,  
July 23rd!

Church records span the entire history of your church, and no matter the age, are important to be preserved. But knowing what to preserve can be daunting work, especially if those with institutional knowledge have moved on.

Join the [Congregational Library & Archives'](#) archivists Billy McCarthy and Zachary Bodnar for a program focused on the first tangible steps a church can take to begin organizing their existing records and ensuring the long-term preservation of the records they produce today. [Register here.](#)



### Pension Boards Webinar Series

**Because of Ministry—Financial Security and Self-Care Sustain the Call**

Tuesday, July 28, 2:00 pm CT - [Building a Life of Impact: Investing Your Values Through Sustainable and Faith-Aligned Retirement Strategies](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2:00 pm CT - [Mid-Career Check-In: What's Working, What's Not, and What Needs to Change Now](#)

Wednesday, August 5, 2:00 pm CT - [Navigating Ministry in an Era of Change: Leadership, Resilience, and Adaptive Skills](#)



### 2026 Boundary Trainings with Enkei Resolutions

Remaining 2026 training dates and registration links are posted below. There are still openings but register soon. Registration closes when limits are reached.

All trainings are spread out over two days from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. (CENTRAL TIME) each day.

Links for more information and to register:

[Boundary Training Information](#)

**Dates: September 8 & 9; November 5 & 12; November 17 & 18**

[Boundary Training Registration](#)

# RISE: Break of Day Retreat

## ISC Winter Youth Event

*Save the Date!*



## 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 your VBS info and we'll add it to this section of the Weekly Connection

**-THEY HAVE PUPPETS!** St. John UCC, Maeystown is 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



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

### GLOBAL MINISTRIES 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY WEBINAR

## CONGREGATIONS DOING CHRIST'S WORK

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2026 AT 7:00PM ET



REV. DR. CRISTAL WILLIAMS  
REGIONAL MINISTER  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN INDIANA  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST



REV. DR. CHAD ABBOTT  
CONFERENCE MINISTER  
INDIANA KENTUCKY CONFERENCE  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



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

### Congregations Doing Christ's Work

How can your congregation deepen its connection to the global church? Join Rev. Dr. Christal Williams and Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott for the second webinar in Global Ministries' 30th Anniversary series as they explore how congregations have built meaningful relationships with global partners and how your church can do the same.

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**So grateful for the DuBois Center Volunteer Photographers!**

Thanks to our many volunteer photographers for the week: Alan Rushing, Nicole Gilley, Will Layman, Jaime Miers, Cara Magee, Kelly Neighbors, and everyone else who shared pictures. [Click to see all their snapshots on Facebook](#)

**FALL FESTIVAL** Sunday, Oct 4 from 11-5  
**DuBois Center**

**Family-friendly event!**  
Admission & parking are free, and there's something for everyone to enjoy. Gather your friends and family!



Food Trucks, Live Music, Rope Making,  
Kids Korner, Pony & Hay Rides, Silent Auction, and  
**OVER 40 CRAFTERS & ARTISANS!**

 2651 Quarry Rd. DuBois, IL  **DuBois Center**  
The Camp and Retreat Center of the Illinois South  
Conference of the United Church of Christ

 [www.DuBoisCenter.org](http://www.DuBoisCenter.org)



# 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.

Council for Health & Human  
Services Ministries News



## From Uni-Pres Kindercottage

With much gratitude

We are grateful for our dedicated staff, families, volunteers, and community partners who continue to support our mission. Together, we are helping children discover the world around them while building the skills they need to grow, learn, and thrive.

Please continue to uplift UPK in prayer as we work through the growing need for additional care and support for children and families in our community. We welcome you to reach out and ask how you can help uplift a child or family facing hardship. No gift is too small, and every act of kindness, prayer, and support makes a meaningful difference.

We deeply appreciate your continued prayers and support.

With care,

**Aimee Hart**

Executive Director

**[-Click to read the latest Director's Corner newsletter-](#)**



## BACK TO SCHOOL DONATIONS



Mark your calendars! Join us on Friday, September 18 for the Hoyleton Youth & Family Services Golf Classic. Registration is now open! Click the link below to learn more and secure your spot today. [SIGN UP](#)




**DO YOU CARE FOR A LOVED ONE WITH ALZHEIMER'S?**

Join our Alzheimer's Support Group to receive the **emotional, educational, and social support** you need. Offered in collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association and facilitated by an expert in dementia and aging.

**2nd Tuesday of Every Month  
1:30 – 3:00 p.m.  
St. John's Community Care  
222 Goethe Ave., Collinsville**

**ALSO ON ZOOM!**

EMAIL US FOR THE LINK  
[INFO@STJOHNSCC.ORG](mailto:INFO@STJOHNSCC.ORG)




**PARKINSON'S CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP**

*For those who care for someone who has PD. These groups are open to anyone free of charge. Caregivers will find both emotional support and practical tools to help navigate the day-to-day responsibilities of Parkinson's care.*

**LOCATION:**

St. John's Community Care  
222 Goethe Ave, Collinsville IL, 62234

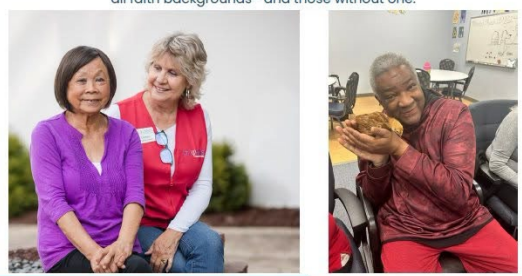
**4th Wednesday of the month  
12:00pm**

[www.seniorservicesplus.org](http://www.seniorservicesplus.org)  
Questions? Call 618-465-3298 ext 120



**HIGHLAND ADULT COMMUNITY CARE**

Providing compassionate care for older adults with early memory loss, disabilities, and chronic conditions, this program welcomes participants of all faith backgrounds—and those without one.



[www.stjohnscc.org](http://www.stjohnscc.org)  
618-975-6565  
[info@stjohnscc.org](mailto:info@stjohnscc.org)  
2420 Poplar St.  
Highland, IL 62249

Located on the grounds of Highland Evangelical United Church of Christ, just behind the main church building.



Need a safe and enjoyable day program for your loved one?  
Give us a call or email for more information.

**Discover Care, Companionship, and Connection at St**



*St Paul UCC*  
**RUMMAGE SALE!**  
*Great finds. Great prices. Great cause!*

| THURSDAY<br>JULY 30                          | FRIDAY<br>JULY 31 | SATURDAY<br>AUG. 1 |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 5:00 – 8:00 PM                               | 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM | 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM |
| EARLY ENTRY FEE<br>4:00 PM<br>\$5 PER PERSON |                   |                    |

♥ SHOP • SAVE • SUPPORT ♥  
*Proceeds go to the Youth Scholarship Fund.*  
St Paul UCC 200 N. Main Street  
Waterloo, IL 62298  
*We appreciate your support!*

★ *Something for Everyone!* ★  
CLOTHES • FURNITURE  
BOOKS • TOYS • HOME DÉCOR  
and much more!

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY! ♥



wants to invite you to our  
***"Dine to Make a Difference"***  
fundraising night for our friends from  
Trinity United Church of Christ.

**Sunday, August 2nd  
from 4pm to 8pm.**

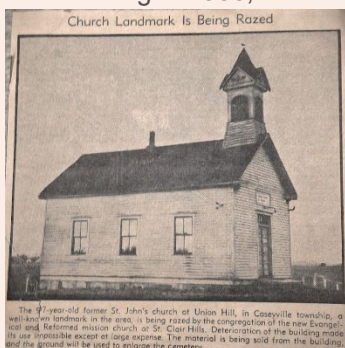
Please join your family & friends at our Belleville  
location at 20 S Belt W (618-257-9000).  
Present this flyer to the cashier and  
BEAST Craft BBQ Co. will donate a portion of the  
proceeds to Trinity United Church of Christ.

Dine-in or Takeout.

### St. John UCC Fairview Heights - 75th Anniversary Invitation

**History-** Do you know how old your congregation really is? St. John, Fairview Heights has a rather interesting history. The original St. John was on what is now Union Hill Road. Back then it was called "Poor House Road". Perhaps you have seen the St. John Cemetery on the hillside, about a quarter mile south of Lincoln Trail. The original church stood next to it, beginning in 1854. It was a one room frame building. It shared pastors with other area congregations. There were 28 charter members, all men of age.

After closing in 1936, the church sat abandoned. The building was razed in



**150 YEARS**  
*Shining Brightly*  
O'FALLON UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**PART 2!**  
**The story continues...**  
Brian returns to continue his historical account on the impact our church had and still has in the community.

**YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS WHAT'S NEXT!**

**AUGUST 19, 2026 • 6:30 PM**  
IN THE SANCTUARY

**OUR PAST. OUR IMPACT. OUR FUTURE.**  
Celebrating 150 Years of Faith in Action!

1876-2026  
**150 YEARS**



### 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](mailto:lisa@revhart.net)  
Mark Walz- [mewalz5925@hotmail.com](mailto:mewalz5925@hotmail.com)

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](#)

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

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

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



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](mailto:mloyet@iscucc.org) with any questions or with news for the *Weekly Connection*.

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## Contact Us - Your OCWM Monies at Work

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**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](mailto:dkesner@iscucc.org).

For communicating within the Conference, the Conference website, Facebook page or Weekly Connection, contact **Missy Loyet** at [mloyet@iscucc.org](mailto:mloyet@iscucc.org).

For DuBois Center Co-Executive Directors, contact **Jason Petry** or **Leah Petry** at [director@DuBoisCenter.org](mailto: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](mailto:jriechmann@iscucc.org) or (618) 357-1809.

For **Rev. Shana Johnson**, ISC Conference Minister, contact her at [sjohnson@iscucc.org](mailto: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](#) <