

July 7, 2026



## Urgent Appeal for Venezuela Earthquakes

### A Prayer for Venezuela

God of the broken and the buried,  
Hear us as we pray in sorrow and hope.  
We hold before you those whose lives have  
been shaken,  
Let your peace, comfort and love be known  
To those who search, those who wait,  
and those who grieve.  
Let your love be a source of light amidst the  
chaos of uncertainty.  
In your name we pray,  
Amen

Photo used with permission from: LWF/Mas Ciudadanos via ACT Alliance



*-Photo used with permission from: LWF/Mas Ciudadanos via ACT Alliance and UCC National Ministries*

### Venezuela Earthquakes

On June 24, 2026, two earthquakes of magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5 struck northern Venezuela. Significant damage has been reported across northern Venezuela, including the capital city Caracas and the government of Venezuela has declared a state of emergency. Immediate impacts include loss of shelter, infrastructure, disruption of basic services, and psychosocial distress. Long-term impacts are expected to include prolonged displacement and loss of livelihoods.

As of June 30, 2026, over 1,900 have perished and thousands were injured. These numbers are expected to rise as rescue crews continue search-and-rescue efforts. More than 46,000 people remain missing.

The Global HOPE team is in working with its partners through ACT Alliance and Global Ministries to accompany those most deeply impacted by this tragedy. Members of ACT Alliance are working to provide shelter, mental health and psychosocial support services, food security and nutrition support, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) support in the immediate future and plans are being developed for long-term accompaniment and recovery support.

David Giron, Global Relations Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean, reports that Venezuelan aid workers, rescue teams, and citizenry have mobilized immediately, carrying relief supplies and searching for those caught under the rubble and debris. The search and rescue effort has been impeded by significant aftershocks, including a 4.6 magnitude aftershock on June 29, 2026, off the northern coast.

While communication remains slow due to collapsed infrastructure, we will continue to provide updates as we receive them. We invite you to please continue to keep all those impacted in your prayers.

\*mail a check payable to the United Church of Christ, PO Box 71957, Cleveland, OH 44194. Please be sure to note "Venezuela Earthquakes 2026" in the memo section of your check. Donations should not be sent to the conference office.

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



**St. John's UCC, Du Quoin-**  
Rev. Robert Morwell



**St. Paul UCC, Edwardsville-**  
Rev. Dana (David) Schindler

**Retired Pastor-** Rev. Pamela Gale (Rev. Earl Menchhofer) Smith



Continue to hold everyone impacted by the powerful storms on Sunday, June 21st that struck several Illinois South Conference communities in your prayers as they continue to heal, pick up the pieces, and recover from loss and devastation.

[Submit prayer requests here](#)

UCC Global, National, + Regional News

### Faith & Recovery Collaborative Training Coming to Trinity UCC Belleville

How can faith communities become places of hope, healing, and recovery? On **Saturday, July 18, 2026**, Trinity UCC Belleville will host a **Faith & Recovery Collaborative Training** in partnership with the **Illinois Faith & Recovery Collaborative** and the **Center for Community Engagement at Chestnut Health Systems**. This one-day training is designed for clergy, lay leaders, caregivers, and anyone who wants to better support individuals and families affected by mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and recovery journeys.

As people of faith, we are often among the first to encounter individuals who are struggling. This training offers practical tools, education, and resources to help congregations respond with compassion, understanding, and effective support.

#### Workshop Topics Include:

##### Mental Health 101

Learn the basics of mental health challenges, crises, and illnesses, including how to recognize symptoms and respond with care and support.

##### Substance Use 101

Gain a better understanding of addiction, recovery-friendly

language, and ways to identify warning signs in yourself or others.

**QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)**

A nationally recognized suicide prevention training that equips participants to recognize warning signs, offer hope, and connect people with life-saving resources.

### **NARCAN® 101**

Learn about the opioid epidemic, overdose prevention, and how to administer NARCAN®, a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose.

### **Event Information**

**Date:** Saturday, July 18, 2026

**Time:** Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. | Training concludes at 3:30 p.m.

**Location:** Trinity UCC Belleville, [47 North Douglas Avenue, Belleville, Illinois](#)

Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

### **Why Attend?**

Whether your congregation is just beginning conversations about mental health and recovery or is interested in becoming a Certified Recovery Congregation, this training offers valuable information, practical skills, and opportunities to connect with others doing this important work.

As host Rev. Tim Powers-Reed shares, this work is deeply personal. Living with OCD and PTSD has reinforced the importance of creating communities where people can seek help without shame and find support without judgment. Faith communities can play a vital role in reducing stigma, offering hope, and helping people discover that they are not alone.

### **Registration Required**

Advance registration is required. Go to <https://forms.gle/r4jLQBAJWmgXgZat7> to register by **July 15th**.

For more information about the Faith & Recovery Collaborative and its programs, visit: [www.coalitionsupport.org](http://www.coalitionsupport.org)

Questions may be directed to:

**Rev. Tim Powers-Reed**

Trinity UCC Belleville

636-248-6468



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 Bangera, or Pastor Tim Burns.



## 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](#)



**Help us restock our shelves.**

### 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**

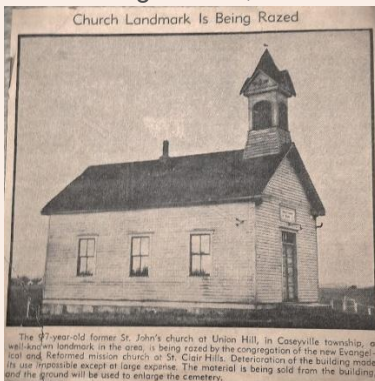
618/318-0083

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

## 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 1951. That same year, on January 10, a group of 40 people met at a store front and home, which later became Moody Drug and Dr. Raset's office. With the encouragement of the Evangelical and Reformed Board of Missions, two weeks later the store had been transformed into a worship space. On the last Sunday in January, 1951, the first worship and Sunday School were held. By Palm Sunday that year, 59 charter members joined the church. Rev. Paul Schnake was called to be pastor. By 1953, the congregation had bought land for and approved plans for a new church along Highway 50. The church was dedicated on June 5, 1955. That sanctuary served the congregation until 1970, when it was enlarged and a narthex was added to the front of the building. The parsonage was built in 1956. An educational wing was added to the building in the 1950's.

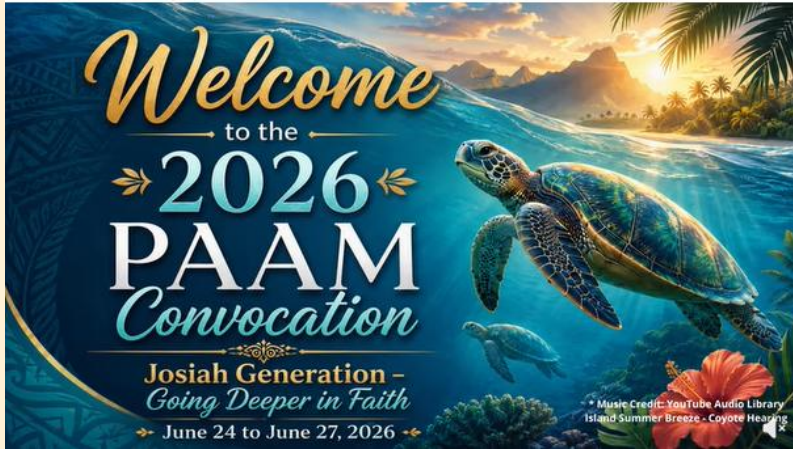


Since then, St. John has served Fairview Heights and surrounding communities. **We are blessed to celebrate 75 years of St. John's ministries on Highway 50 (Lincoln Highway) on Sunday, August 9, with worship at 10:00 a.m., followed by fellowship hosted by "The Circle". We hope to see past members, confirmands, and friends of the church. All are welcome!**



Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries UCC is 🥰 feeling blissful at Irvine Un...  
July 1 at 11:46 AM · Irvine, CA · 🌐

2026 PAAM Convocation Welcome Video is here!  
A special thanks to our General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. [Karen Georgia A. Thompson](#), for sending us a warm greetings, and [Hawaii PAAM](#)'s energetic video! More Convocation highlights and videos are coming soon! Thank you all who made it wonderful!  
Mission: tag your church under this video and connect us all!  
[#PAAM2026](#) See less



**PAAM Convocation 2026**  
The UCC Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries Convocation took place June 24 - 27th in Irvine, California.  
Click the image to go to the PAAM Facebook page to read stories, view video and images capturing the beauty and excitement of this event!



**FAITH, LEADERSHIP, & ORGANIZING FOR THIS MOMENT**

Thursday, July 16th  
3:30 PM Eastern



**Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker**  
Assistant Professor of Community Leadership, Director of Walker Leadership Institute, Eden Theological Seminary



Register

How do faith leaders, organizers, nonprofits, congregations, and community advocates sustain themselves while responding to the urgent challenges of this moment?  
Join Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker from the Center for Faith Lived Organizing for a timely dialogue exploring how today's social, political, spiritual, and community realities are shaping new approaches to leadership, organizing, public theology, and transformative community engagement.  
Register: <https://ow.ly/uHOQ50ZhXIV>



**NEXT STEPS**

**What comes after everything you built?**

NEXT Steps:  
Redefining Retirement as Jubilee

Retirement isn't the end of your story. It can be the beginning of your most meaningful chapter.

NEXT Steps, at Eden Theological Seminary, is a 16-week journey designed to help you discover renewed purpose, deepen your sense of calling, and envision what's next through spirituality, reflection, and community. Whether you're approaching retirement, recently retired, or simply asking, "What's next for me?" this program will help you move forward with intention. Join a community committed to reimagining retirement as a season of growth, purpose, and possibility. [Learn more and register today](#)

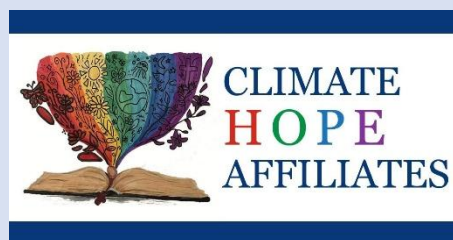


### The Next 250 Years

As America recently celebrated its 250th anniversary, UCC News talks with several UCC ministers as they draw from the past to help continue the fight for justice and equality.

**The next 250 years: A legacy of sacred rebellions informs and inspires today's faith shapers** by [Donna Jackson](#) | published on Jul 7, 2026

[READ](#)



### July 18th: Climate Hope Affiliates Monthly Webinar

If you are interested in witnessing Climate Hope Affiliates in action while also learning about the current legislative struggles in Congress over climate and clean air policies, join the next Climate Hope Affiliates national webinar on Saturday, July 18th at 1 pm ET/10 am PT. Our guest speaker will be Grace Weatherall who serves Senator Sheldon Whitehouse as Climate and Clean Air Counsel for the Environment and Public Works Committee. [Register now!](#)



**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.



The Illinois South Conference Prayer & Lectionary Lunch hour meetings held on Wednesdays from 12:30 to 1:30pm will be on hiatus for the rest of the summer. Watch for relaunch details in August!



## 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 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



### The Good Neighbor Project

with david giron



### The Good Neighbor Project Podcast

What does it mean to be a good neighbor in a deeply connected world? The Good Neighbor Project podcast, hosted by Global Ministries Global Relations Minister David Giron, shares powerful conversations and firsthand stories from leaders, churches, and communities across Latin America and the Caribbean whose voices are too often unheard. Rooted in faith, justice, and human connection, this limited series invites listeners to deepen their understanding of our global neighbors and the shared responsibility we have to seek one another's well-being. Watch now at: <https://ow.ly/rRaS50ZbQ1w>



### Sabeel Wave of Prayer – Week of July 6, 2026

by [Middle East and Europe](#) | published on Jul 7, 2026

Sabeel, in coordination with the churches in Taybeh, recently organized a visit for 30 Christian youth from Jerusalem representing the Armenian, Orthodox, and Syrian Scout groups. [Read](#)

## ISC Hunger Action Team - Facing Hunger in Your Community



**The Hunger Action Team would like to recognize Zion UCC, Marion for partnering with churches and businesses throughout their community.** The challenge - to collect 250 food items and \$250 for utility assistance this summer. The hope was that church members can meet this goal 2 Sundays in a row, including the 4th of July weekend. Heartfelt thanks to Zion for serving others, as stewards of God's Grace. Under the leadership of pastor and teacher, Rev. John Holst. 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...**

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

Mark Your Calendars  
**AUGUST 7-8, 2026**  
**RAINBOW CAMP**

An LGBTQIA+ Friendly, Family Camp Experience!  
At the DuBois Center in DuBois, Illinois

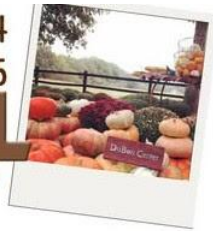


For more information  
<https://duboiscenter.org/retreats/rainbow-camp/>

Deadline to register is Thursday, July 23rd!

[Register HERE](#)

Sunday, Oct 4  
from 11-5  
**FALL FESTIVAL**  
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  
 [www.DuBoisCenter.org](http://www.DuBoisCenter.org)

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



**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.



### Eden Theological Seminary New Website

We've got a fresh new look! Our new website is live, making it easier than ever for individuals, congregations, and nonprofit organizations to belong. Explore degrees, graduate credit certificates, educational partnership for your group, workshops and cohorts, and all that's happening at Eden. Check us out at [www.eden.edu](http://www.eden.edu).



### BACK TO SCHOOL DONATIONS

Serving youth in Madison, St. Clair, Clinton, Monroe, Bond, Washington, and Randolph counties. Items must be received by August 3rd.

Items needed: 3-ring binders, dry-erase markers, backpacks, ink pens, No. 2 pencils, spiral notebooks, pocket folders, pencil bags, colored pencils, and crayons.

- Shop our [Amazon Wishlist](#)
- Drop off supplies or mail checks to:

Hoyleton Youth and Family Services  
8 Executive Dr, Fairview Heights, IL

- For more information, contact Mario at 618.688.7092 or [mmccart@hoyleton.org](mailto:mmccart@hoyleton.org)

Additional drop-off locations:

- Auffenberg Ford Belleville- 901 S Illinois St., Belleville, IL
- Auffenberg Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram- 1108 Auffenberg Avenue, Shiloh, IL
- Auffenberg Ford North in O'Fallon-115 Regency Park, O'Fallon IL



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](#)

**ST. JOHN'S**  
COMMUNITY CARE

**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. John's Highland Adult Community Care.** A safe, welcoming place for older adults and those living with memory loss or other challenges to enjoy meaningful activities, social interaction, and compassionate support. Professionally trained staff provide engaging programs like music, exercise, crafts, and conversation. Helping participants stay active and connected while giving family caregivers peace of mind and a well-deserved break. Learn more how they can support your loved one and your family at [stjohnscc.org](http://stjohnscc.org).

Our ISC Churches News + Events



**O'Fallon United Church of Christ, 206 West Adams, O'Fallon, IL invites one and all to attend:**

**Jazz Concert with "Tony D and Friends"**  
**Sunday, July 12th at 3:00pm**

Mark your calendar, invite your friends and share this info on social media so the community can attend! The 150th Anniversary Committee requested a series of concerts to be held at our church to celebrate, so first up is this jazz concert with Tony DiPasquale and friends! We want to have a great crowd, so please pass the word!

**Other concerts to mark on calendar:**  
**Sept. 27 Kevin Chunko, organ recital**  
**Nov. 15 Tim Jansen, organ recital**

Home-Made Pie Auction  
and  
**Ice Cream SOCIAL**  
Friedens United Church  
of Christ



**17**  
JULY

**5-8**  
PM

307 S. THIRD STREET-IRVINGTON

Sloppy Joes, hot dogs, Brats, chips, drinks and desserts

[WWW.IRVINGTONUCC.COM](http://WWW.IRVINGTONUCC.COM)



## 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](#)

[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](#)



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*.

## 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](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](#) [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](#)

