

August 18, 2026



Reflections for Our Conference Minister

Dear Friends,

As I visit and worship with churches throughout the Illinois South Conference, I often hear pastors, music directors, and lay leaders express a desire to expand the music and video resources available for worship, Bible studies, retreats, and other ministries. One of the best-kept secrets for accessing music that reflects a just, generous, and inclusive expression of the Christian faith is the Convergence Music Project (CMP).

While the name CMP may be new to some, its artists are not. Many of their musicians—including Bryan Sirchio, Ken Medema, Andra Moran, Christopher Grundy, Monty Jackson, and The Many—have joined us for youth retreats, Day of Discipleship events, and Annual Meetings here in the Illinois South Conference.

I want to share two opportunities to learn more about the Convergence Music Project and the resources they offer.

First, October 7–10, CMP will host *Converging 2026: Sing It* in Louisville, Kentucky. This gathering offers continuing education opportunities for pastors and ministry leaders, professional development for worship leaders, and personal inspiration for songwriters and others passionate about music and ministry.

[Converging 2026: Sing It](#) (click this link for more information)

Second, CMP is currently offering a free one-month trial membership for individuals and churches. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore the music, videos, and other resources available through their platform.

[Free Trial Membership](#) (click this for more information)

I hope you and your church will take advantage of these opportunities and discover the many gifts the Convergence Music Project has to offer. I am grateful for the ways CMP and its artists continue to enrich the worship and ministry of churches across our Conference and beyond.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Shana



[Convergence Music Project Facebook Page](#)

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week...



St. John UCC, Granite City



Grantfork UCC-
Rev. Nancy Brooks

WE HOLD IN PRAYER THE HAWAII CONFERENCE

The Conference Minister of the Hawaii Conference, Rev. David Popham, shared with colleagues yesterday that Hawaii Island sustained the brunt of Tropical Storm Lala, with flooding causing the greatest damage. The Kau district, at the southern end of the island, was hit particularly hard.

Our Kauaha'ao UCC church, located in the Kau district, sustained damage from a mudflow. This same church property was also impacted by a mudflow during the Kona Low storms earlier this spring, which damaged an outlying building. We hold the people of the Hawaii Conference, and especially those in the affected communities, in our prayers as they begin assessing the damage, caring for one another, and beginning the long process of recovery.

[Submit prayer requests here](#)

UCC Global, National, + Regional News



Congratulations to Rev. Beverly Kahle of St. John UCC in Nashville, IL, on her retirement! Here are a few highlights from the Sunday, August 16 service. Wishing her all the best as she embarks on this new chapter of her journey.

Join us to Celebrate



Pastor Bob

On September 13, 2026 Pastor Bob will lead his last worship service at St John UCC. After 37 years of faithful service to our congregation and the village of New Athens, we would like to invite family, friends, and the community to join us in an open house to help us celebrate his retirement.

September 13, 2026 Worship 10:00am St John UCC
Open house to follow till 4pm The Bullpen Bar and Grill

Music from The St Louis Stompers

Appetizers, tea, coffee, & cake provided
Questions, please call Susan in the Church office 618-475-2947
St John UCC
301 S Market St
New Athens IL 62264
The Bullpen Bar And Grill
101 N Van Buren
New Athens IL 62264

St. John UCC
New Athens
invites you
to join in
celebrating the
retirement of
Rev. Dr. Robert
Koch

Clergy Workshop on Christian Nationalism

featuring Rev. Hannah Kardon

Monday, September 14th
4 pm to 5:30 pm
via ZOOM

hosted by the ISC
Justice & Mission Team

Register by September 10th
email dkesner@iscucc.org

ISC
JUSTICE
& MISSION
helping to be the good



Dear ISC Clergy,

The Justice and Mission Team has created a unique opportunity for us to gather as colleagues for a timely and important workshop exploring how the principles of Christian Nationalism often stand in direct contradiction to the core teachings and witness of Jesus Christ.

Our presenter, Rev. Hannah Kardon, a United Methodist pastor with roots in the United Church of Christ, will offer valuable insights into how churches can clearly distinguish themselves from messages of hate and exclusion that are driving many people away from the church. Together, we will explore how we can instead embody the welcoming love and transformative message of Jesus found in the Gospels.

This free workshop, originally scheduled for Monday, August 10, has been rescheduled for **Monday, September 14, from 4:00–5:30 p.m. via Zoom.**

Because this workshop will be interactive, with opportunities for participants to ask questions and reflect on their own experiences in ministry settings, we will not record our time together. This will help us create a braver space for honest conversation and sharing.

I encourage you to join us for what promises to be an engaging time of learning, conversation, and reflection—one that I hope will strengthen and enrich your ministry.

Because we will not be publicly sharing the Zoom link, and our presenter would like to know how many people will be attending, please email Debbie Kesner at dkesner@iscucc.org by noon on Thursday, September 10, to let her know that you plan to attend. Debbie will then send the Zoom link to everyone who has registered.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me directly at sjohnson@iscucc.org.

I hope you will join us, and I look forward to seeing you online on Monday, September 14.

Rev. Shana Johnson



Registration for the 2026 ISC Annual Meeting opens Tuesday, September 1



Fall 2026 Eden Seminary 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

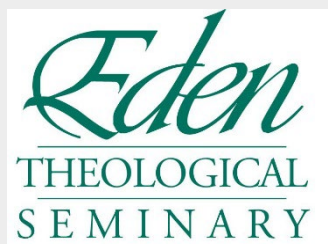
and anyone interested in the topic. UCC members will recognize the Marks for Ministry woven throughout the cohorts, though anyone from any denomination, or no denomination, is welcome to attend.

Fall 2026 Themes

- Spiritual Care Basics for Lay People
- Race, Class and Gender in the Forgotten Creed
- United Church of Christ History and Polity
- Spiritual Care for the Unhoused
- Gender and Sexuality in the Bible

Fall 2026 Eden Ministry Cohorts

Upcoming Boundary Trainings approved by Illinois South Conference Committee on Ministry



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

Friday, September 11 9:00AM - 3:00PM CT via Online Together, we'll look at power and positional authority, historical impact, and our roles as leaders within congregations and the communities we are called to serve. [Register](#)



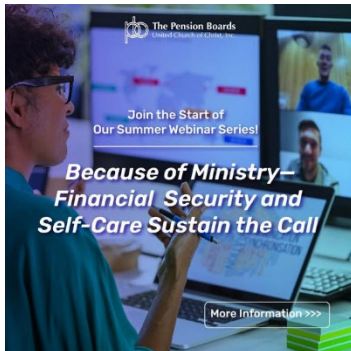
A boundary awareness training for members in discernment and authorized ministers of the UCC. **Thursday September 24, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM CST** via Zoom and the Damascus Project Learning Network. [Register](#) by September 22nd.



Led by the UCC's Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization Team (MESA) This training is recommended for retired clergy and for pastors who are preparing for retirement. **Thursday, October 15, 1:00 – 4:00pm CT**, Boundary Training for Retired Clergy; register [here](#), with the Revs. Tara Barber and Melanie Oommen.



Boundary Training for Authorized Ministers Registration closes when limits are reached. All trainings are spread out over two days and take place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. CT each day. **November 5 & 12, November 17 & 18**
Links for more [information](#) and to [register](#).



Pension Board Summer Webinar Series

Wednesday, August 19, 2:00 pm CT -

[Money, Ministry, and Meaning: Financial Wellness as an Act of Pastoral Self-care](#)

Monday, August 31, 2:00 pm CT -

[Employer-Focused Workshop: Building Healthy, Sustainable Ministries Through Better Benefits Education](#)



August is National Make-a-Will Month

Create a free and legal will with Freewill for National Make-a-Will Month

The Pension Boards and Rev. Dr. [Paul Leon Ramsey](#), Director Church Relations and Philanthropy, is pleased to partner with the [United Church of Christ](#) in its Together for Tomorrow shared legacy campaign, which offers FreeWill, an estate planning tool to create your, free and legal will. Observe National Make-A-Will Month and secure your legacy today at FreeWill. Visit <https://freewill.com/pbucc>.



Lunchtime Film Series on Caring for the Earth

Join Blessed Tomorrow for 6 lunchtime screenings of the film series: Caring for the Earth: Stories from Faith Communities! Created for pastors and faith leaders of all ages. We will watch each film over the 6 weeks and then hear directly from the powerful faith leaders featured in the films. **Wednesdays from September 2nd through October 7th 12:00 pm- 12:45 pm CT**. Register [here](#)!



Join UCC Disaster Ministries, [Insurance Board](#), [Pension Boards - United Church of Christ](#), and [Cornerstone Fund](#) for a collaborative Preparedness Month kickoff webinar. Through an interactive mock disaster scenario, participants will explore practical strategies for how churches can effectively care for congregants, support clergy, safeguard facilities, and serve their communities when disasters strike.
Register: <https://ow.ly/Txik50ZAAiK>



September 20th: Just Peace Sunday

Each year, the United Church of Christ recognizes the Sunday before International Day of Prayer for Peace as Just Peace Sunday. We take this Sunday to renew our commitment to our Just Peace vision. This year, we gather around the theme "God's Economy: People Over Profit". Stay tuned for more worship resources [here](#).



Nurture the Soul

Faith, Disability, and the Crisis of Homelessness

Aug 20, 2026 02:30 PM in CT

Join the Disability Ministry Board for an interactive conversation around the intersections of disability and economic justice. We'll learn a bit about how the limitations of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) impacts housing and financial stability for the community diagnosed with disabilities. More importantly, we'll ask the hard questions about why we should care beyond being called and led to be a caring, gracious and loving community that honors the dignity of all our neighbors. [Register](#)



July 2026 CWS Disaster Bucket project at Evangelical UCC of Highland, IL

A Message from Priscilla Self, Conference Disaster Response Coordinator—

Church World Service now offers a “Host a Party with a Purpose” option to assemble Kits and Cleanup Buckets.

Whether it's a youth group, Rally Day, mission project, school club, or birthday with meaning—Party Packs are a joyful way to serve together - turn compassion into action; pack some love.

Go to <https://cwskits.org/party-packs/> for all the information about this including an order form. Complete the order form and CWS will ship to you all the supplies needed for these Kits and Buckets: (allow three weeks for delivery after your order is received)

- Hygiene Kits – Case of 24 \$168.00
- Period Packs – Case of 10 \$162.50
- Kids Kits (School supplies) – Case of 12 \$162.00

These Kits include packing boxes and prepaid return shipping labels —just drop completed boxes off at your local FedEx facility.

- Clean-up Buckets – supplies for 36 buckets \$2,160.00

The buckets need to be delivered to a CWS depot and there is still time to order, organize and assemble buckets for the Oct. 10, 2026 drop off at the St. Louis location listed below. Or click the button for additional depot info.

St. Louis, Missouri LifeWise STL

1321 South 11th Street, St. Louis, MO, 63104

Dropoff Dates and Times: First Saturday in October - 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM Contact: Krescene

Beck, krescenebeck@gmail.com

Church World Service Drop Off Locations and Dates



Global Ministries

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



Global Ministries Statement of Support for Venezuela and Colombia

published on Aug 11, 2026

Venezuela

UEPV uses school space to feed children

On June 24, 2026, two earthquakes registering at 7.2 and 7.5 magnitudes struck northwestern and central Venezuela. The impacts of the earthquakes and aftershocks were felt nationwide, particularly in Caracas and La Guaira, where 80% of buildings collapsed. As of early August, more than 6,300 were reported dead,

61,000 hospitalized, and tens of thousands still missing... [Read on from here](#)

Colombia

On August 10, 2026, a 7.4-magnitude earthquake struck Colombia – the most powerful recorded earthquake in Colombia in the past decade. While the details are still emerging, early reports register more than 120 deaths and 1,495 injured – these numbers are expected to rise in the coming days and weeks. Damage assessments and rescue efforts are currently underway to clear debris and rescue those trapped in the rubble. Global Ministries' partner, the **Peace Commission of the Evangelical Council of Colombia (CEDECOL)**, reported that their personnel and campus are largely safe, although several walls came tumbling down in the quake. Global Ministries partner **Justapaz** also reported limited damage, confirming that all staff were safe and accounted for. Both organizations are currently evaluating the full extent of damages nationwide.

Global Ministries remains committed to accompanying our partners and the peoples of Venezuela and Colombia as they navigate these moments of grief and loss. Our partner Red CLAI offers the following resource to guide us in our prayers.

Prayer of support for Venezuela and Colombia from the Disciples in Argentina [Read entire article](#)



30th Anniversary Gala

Saturday, November 7, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Get ready for a spectacular evening as we celebrate 30 years of impact and giving! Join us at our **30th Anniversary Gala on November 7, 2026, in Indianapolis**. This milestone event will

bring together friends, partners, and supporters for a night of celebration! More details on the event will be forthcoming — mark your calendars now!

Reservations will open soon! We look forward to celebrating our past, embracing the present, and embracing a future of continued growth and impact.

ISC Hunger Action Team - Facing Hunger in Your Community



The ISC Hunger Action Team would like to recognize CHRIST UCC, DUPO & ST. PAUL, COLUMBIA for their 2026 TWIGS SUMMER LUNCH PROGRAM!

Christ United Church of Christ - Dupo and St. Paul United Church of Christ - Columbia are two churches that worked together in coordinating a 7 site outreach of the TWIGS Summer Lunch Program. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday lunches were distributed to children in the Dupo, East Carondelet and Cahokia communities. Christ Church Dupo and St. Paul Columbia have participated by providing volunteers and funding this project for many years. But this year was different.

In the summer of 2026, they distributed 6,063 lunches - 1,493 MORE than last year. The group anticipated there would be an increased need this year "due to the economy". But they could have never imagined the magnitude of increase. There was no housing influx in those communities to account for the numbers. The only signal was the moral apathy of our members of Congress in cutting SNAP benefits from our neighbors struggling to make ends meet. Hearing the words of gratitude and stories of survival from grandparents, 2 and 3 job families, single parents as well as young children EXICTED to get a simple sack lunch was heart wrenching.

People often wish they could help with such projects through donating (but some are in the same boat- struggling financially) or through volunteering (but some are still employed or enduring ill health). The one way we can all help feed hungry children is to cast our ballots in ways that show the world we are truly following in Jesus footsteps by caring for our youngest neighbors. -submitted by Rev. Carol Shanks

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



Fall Ride Day – September 12, 2026

A day to bring the family out or get a group of friends together for a horseback ride at DuBois Center. Sign up for a ride time that fits your schedule best. Feel free to bring a picnic lunch for your group to enjoy!

*10 riders max per ride

Arena Ride: 4:00pm. Ages 3-7 with an adult walking alongside the horse. \$18 per child.

Trail Rides: 10:30am, 1:00pm, 2:30pm. Ages 8+. \$30 per rider.

Click [here](#) to register. **Hurry! Registration closes August 29.**

Mother-Daughter Retreat is October 9-11 and Mother-Son Day is November 1. Enjoy camp activities, time to relax in nature, and quality time together!

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



Hello,

We hope this email finds you well! Fall Festival at DuBois Center is fast approaching, and we can't do it without LOTS of wonderful volunteers like YOU. Consider joining us on Sunday, October 4 to help with Horses, Soda Stand, Sweet Treats, Kids' Corner, Hayrides, and more. We also need help with set up on Saturday, October 3. Sign up to volunteer by Friday, September 25:



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084DA4AD28A2FCC34-65007262-2026>

Thanks for your consideration - Hope to see you there!

Breanne Beisiegel

Fall Festival Volunteer Coordinator

DuBois Center

2651 Quarry Road

DuBois, Illinois 62831

Office Phone: (618) 787-2202

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



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!





Fall Festival Auction Baskets Drop Off! Come Out & Bid!

Folks, we hope your congregations and church boards will be putting together an auction basket this year! Donations of baskets for the Silent Auction at DuBois's Fall Festival **October 4** which, combined with your imaginative spirits, yield good returns Fall Fest participants cannot resist. Again, we appreciate your support of DuBois in this way and look forward to seeing you in just a couple months! Thank you!!!!

Council for Health & Human
Services Ministries News



Monarch Butterflies Nurtured at Fairhaven Senior Services' Waystation August 11, 2026 | Barb Powell

What began in Spring 2023 with a 10-gallon fishtank with removable screen top and lots of willpower in **Fairhaven Senior Services'** lobby is now a year-round process, and all to save the monarch butterflies. [Read](#)





WE'RE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Be part of the action and help make this year's Golf Classic a **hole-in-one!**

Hoyleton Golf Classic '26

September 18

Tamarack Golf Course

800 Tamarack Lane, Shiloh

Volunteer Shifts Available:

9 AM – 12 PM

Event Setup

Guest Registration

Tent Support on the Course

12 PM – 4 PM

Tent Support on the Course

Dinner Service Support

Event Clean-Up

We're looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help make this year's Golf Classic a success!

Interested in volunteering? Contact Mario McCart at mmccart@hoyleton.org to sign up or learn more.



Supporting Growth at Every Age, is happening on September 13th 2026 at 10:45am, and we'd love for you to be part of it.

This fun and inclusive .1K event is designed so that everyone can participate, whether you walk, run, roll, cheer from the sidelines, or simply come out to support the community.

We're also thrilled to partner with The Learning Tree for this special event, bringing together two organizations committed to supporting individuals and families across the Metro-East community.

Proceeds from the event will help strengthen programs and services that support students, older adults, individuals with disabilities, caregivers, and families throughout our region.

Whether you've participated in one of our events before or are simply looking for a meaningful and lighthearted way to support the community, we hope you'll mark your calendar now.

Registration details can be found [here](#) and on our website coming soon!

Thank you for helping us continue building a more supportive, connected community for all ages and abilities.

Our ISC Churches News +Events

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

ST. JOHN UCC
2901 Nameoki Rd., Granite City

BBQ



SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

PORK STEAK PLATE WITH 2 SIDES \$14.00

BRAT PLATE WITH 2 SIDES \$14.00

★★★★★

SIDES: BAKED BEANS, POTATO SALAD AND RELLEKE CORN

11:00 A.M. UNTIL 5:00 P.M.

HOT DOGS, DESSERTS AND DRINKS ALSO AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

O'Fallon United Church of Christ Craft & Vendor Fair



206 W. Adams
O'Fallon, IL 62269
**Saturday,
August 29, 2026
9am - 2pm**

For more info contact:

oucc@sbcglobal.net

618-632-3496



GriefShare® SUPPORT GROUP

Consider joining us or passing along the information to someone you know who is grieving a loss.

Mondays - Sept. 14 - Dec. 14

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Evangelical United Church of Christ

2520 Poplar Street, Highland

For more information call 618-654-7459

Are you or someone you know grieving the loss of a loved one? You/they don't have to walk that journey alone. GriefShare is a 13-week program and caring support group that offers hope, understanding, and companionship for those navigating loss. The fall session will be hosted on Mondays, starting on September 14, at Evangelical United Church of Christ in Highland.

GriefShare provides practical tools, encouraging discussion, and support from people who understand what you're going through. To learn more or register, call 618-654-7459. Registration is also available online: [Evangelical United Church of Christ GriefShare - GriefShare](http://EvangelicalUnitedChurchofChrist.org/GriefShare)

RISE: Break of Day Retreat ISC Winter Youth Event

Save the Date!

January 15 - 17th, 2027

All youth in 6th - 12th grades are invited to attend this ISC youth event at our camp, DuBois Center (2651 Quarry Rd., DuBois, IL)

The night is over. The horizon is waiting. There is a universal magic in the sunrise—that specific moment when the darkness finally pulls back, the air clears, and suddenly, everything feels possible again. In January, we'll be heading into the woods to experience that reset for ourselves.

RISE: Break of Day is about stripping away the noise of everyday life to find some much-needed clarity. Whether you're a middle schooler navigating who you are or a high schooler looking at what's next, the sunrise meets you exactly where you are.

If inclement weather causes us to postpone this event, it will be held on February 13th -15th



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

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 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.

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](#)

