



Illinois Campers On Mission

February 2026

- President's letter **1**
- Birthdays & Anniversaries **2**
- 2026 Calendar **3**
- Faith Focus **4**
- Member Obits **5**
- Trivia **6**
- Meeting agenda **7**
- Photos **8**

President's letter————

Hello everyone,

I hope you are surviving the winter and spending time in the Word on those days you can't get outside. God has a plan for the snow and ice and sometimes I think it is to make us take physical, mental, emotional and spiritual rest from our busy lives and just spend more time with him.

As you can see by our calendar on page 3, IL COM has a lot going on this year. I can't wait to see you all at the February Fling in a few weeks. We have been missing seeing each other since December.

There are several things to discuss on Saturday morning so please plan to attend that meeting if you can. Please review the calendar and give us your thoughts about all of the projects we have planned. We also will deal with the motion that was tabled in September about monetary gifts to the camps. Please pray about your response to these items.

We want to welcome the new Camp Manager at Streator, Anthony Heathcoat. He has moved in and will officially start on February 1. He did get an introduction to the camp with a frozen pipe in the kitchen if you saw that on Facebook. Welcome, Anthony. We look forward getting to know you and work with you.

I am glad to see Jacob, Katie, Lila, Aeris, David and Tonya have settled in at Lake Sallateeska. We will see you several times this year for IL COM meetings. IL COM wants to help both camps as we can with projects and camp needs.

I want to thank you all for the prayers and support that has been shown to George and Penny after their devastating fire, for the work of Jim and Marilyn in setting up the Messenger page for IL COM prayer requests and answers and for all of you who faithfully care for each other in other ways. We are a family. Fred



COM Officers

President—Fred Riley, 618-508-3917, fred.riley1261@gmail.com
 Vice-President (Project Manager) - Richard Evans, 618-218-4546, akrlevans1@gmail.com
 Secretary—Karen Mowers, 309-945-3971, kcc61254@gmail.com
 Treasurer—Dick Mowers, 309-945-1477, 728 Cardinal Ct., Geneseo, IL 61254
 Chaplain—Jim & Marilyn Diercks, 618-965-9748 or 618-317-2353
 Food Supervisor— Francie Lindeman, 618-713-2402
 Historian - Irma Burnett, 309-253-8557
 National Coordinators—Don & Jan Kragness, campersonmission72@gmail.com
 National website: campersonmission.org



- 3 Susan Mills
- 10 Andy & Marilyn Thomson
- 11 Judy Barnes
- 12 Sara Hunley
- 13 Denise Golden
- 14 Marilyn Diercks
- 29 Dick Mowers



Scan for Online Registration



2026 National Rally

Registration is open for the 2026 National Rally. It will be held in Amana, Iowa so very close for Illinois COM to travel. Please do this soon.

Forms are on the National Website at Iowacampersonmission.com Please make your plans now to attend. For more information see the website or call Rick Mott (319-291-6805).

INFORMATION FOR FEB 20—21

1. You are welcome to come anytime after lunch on Friday.
2. Supper will be at 5:30 in the hotel conference room.
Menu for Friday night: White Chili (Chicken) and regular chili (provided)
Bring: chili toppings, a side dish if you want
Snacks for fellowship time if you want
Menu for Saturday breakfast: breakfast casseroles (provided)
Bring: muffins or breakfast rolls if you want
3. **Make room reservations with Karen Mowers (kcc61254@gmail.com or 309-945-3971) . Rooms will be \$38 per room and make it out to IBSA.**

Tentative 2026 schedule

- Feb. 20—21, 2026** February Fling, Lake Sallateeska
- March 15—April 4, 2026** Passion Play work project, Eureka Spring, AR
- April 26 – May 1** – Lake Sallateeska & Spring Rally
- May 3 – 8** – Sulphur Springs Baptist Church, Golconda, IL
- May 17 – 22** – Streator Baptist Camp
- June 2 - 4** - National Rally at Amana, Iowa
- June 22 – 26** – Hamilton – finish siding and other repairs, bathroom remodel,
power wash gym
- July 19 – 24** – MorningStar Mission – Joliet
- August 16 – 21**- Baptist Children’s Home, Carmi
- September 20 – 25** - SICC, Makanda, IL
- September 18—19** - Carmi Fall Fest
- October 18 – 23** – Lake Sallateeska & Fall Rally
- November 9 – 21**- Passion Play, Eureka Spring, AR
- Dec. 5** – COM Christmas luncheon, Farina
- Jan. 18 – 30, 2027** – Piney Woods, TX

**COM Sewing Updates**

We have received word from Morningstar Mission that they do not need any additional drawstring bags or sling back bags at this time. Knowing this, we can change our focus to something else for now. I have been thinking about trying our hands at making fidget blankets for local memory care hospitals, making draw string bags for a children’s home or DCFS, veteran homes or other homeless shelters. What other ideas do you have? We will also assist in the bear factory sewing.

Faith Focus -*Bad to Worse**Habukkuk 3:17-18*

Figs might not grow on the fig trees, and grapes might not grow on the vines. Olives might not grow on olive trees, and food might not grow in the field. There might not be any sheep in the pens or cattle in the barns, but I will still be glad in the Lord and rejoice in God my Savior.

This past week, I was talking to a friend who was going through a difficult time with her drug-addicted son. When I asked her how she was holding up, she exclaimed, "It's just one thing after another!" Her washing machine had broken down, her dog had died, and her husband had to be rushed to the hospital with a heart condition. Every time she thought things were looking up, they would take a turn for the worse.

Habakkuk 3 describes a series of problems that hit the nation of Israel. Helplessly, they watched the situation escalate from bad to worse. First, the fig tree didn't blossom. Figs were a delicacy, so this was more of an annoyance than anything else.

Next, they lost the grapes. Grapes provided their daily beverage, so this was a major inconvenience. Losing the produce of olives was worse yet. This meant no oil for cooking or for lighting lamps. Even more critical was the loss of grain. This meant starvation for many. The final blow was loss of livestock. This deprived them of food, and the ability to produce it.

However, no matter how bad it got, Habakkuk was determined to keep his heart from sinking into despair. Even in the most horrible "bad-to-worse" situation, he knew that the God of his salvation would be faithful to see him through.

It's not always easy to be grateful when we face challenging situations. It's even harder to be grateful when things go from bad to worse. And when problems pile up and seem to have no end, that's when it is most difficult to be grateful. It's also when we need gratitude the most.

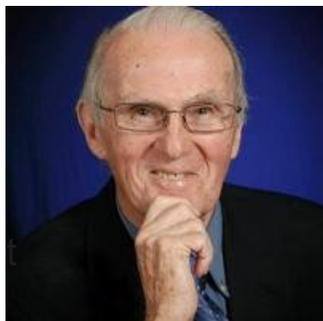
After recounting her list of problems to me, my friend threw her hands in the air and burst into a smile. She said "But guess what? I'm actually doing alright. I'm so grateful that even when the tornado rips everything from my hands, I still have Jesus".

Heavenly Father, please help us to be grateful instead of grumbling when hard things come our way. We want to be overcome by your greatness, not overcome by the size of our problems. Thank you that you are with us and will see us through. Like Habakkuk, we choose to triumph in our Lord, and rejoice in the God of our salvation.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

From Jim & Marilyn Diercks, Chaplains





Gerald Max Walden Obituary

The memory of Gerald Max Walden of Georgetown, Texas, who passed away on January 4, 2026 at the age of 91, will forever remain in the hearts of those touched by this precious presence in their lives. Leave a sympathy message to the family on the memorial page of Gerald Max Walden to pay them a last tribute.

He was predeceased by: his parents, Louis Walden and Clarice Walden (Stephenson); his wife Bonnie Stroud; his brothers, Cloyce, Billy and James Walden; his daughter-in-law Melissa Walden; and his grandchildren, Sherah, Shelah and Jonathan Walden.

He is survived by: his children, Jerry Walden (Darlene) and Tempa Herman (Greg); his sister Fayettea Wikowsky; his grandchildren, Blake Herman (Shana), Megan Herman, Randy Woodworth (Molly) and Jim Woodworth; and his great grandchildren, James Herman, Connor Herman, Dakota Woodworth, Seeka Woodworth, Claire Woodworth and Max Woodworth.

Memorial contributions in his honor may be made to Lakeland Christian Academy-Walden Endowment Fund, 4720 Waugh Road, Owosso, MI 48867 or to a special charity of your choice.



Janet L. Smith Obituary

Janet L. Smith, 91, of Pekin, Illinois, formerly of Washington, Illinois passed away on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at Hallmark House Nursing Center in Pekin.

She was born on December 10, 1934, in Sikeston, Missouri, the daughter of William and Cathryn Greenley Campbell. She married Donald Smith on April 5, 1953, and he passed away on July 18, 2012. One brother, James Campbell, also preceded her in death.

Surviving are two daughters, Cheryl Flynn and Donna Cornelius; two sons, Jeffery Smith and Steven Smith; and eight grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Cremation rites have been accorded. Janet's family will privately celebrate her life. To share a memory or send a condolence to her family, visit www.masonfuneralhomes.com.



Valentine's Bible Trivia



Each correct answer is worth 1 point

1. Which apostle wrote, "Let all that you do be done in love"?
a. Peter b. James c. Paul
2. In John 21, how many time does Jesus ask Peter if he loves Him?
a. One b. Two c. Three
3. Which Bible verse teaches that love should be shown through actions, not just words?
a. James 1:22 b. I John 3:18 c. Romans 12:10
4. Which married couple worked closely with Paul in Ministry?
a. Lydia and Jason b. Aquila and Priscilla c. Ananias and Sapphira
5. Which type of biblical love refers to friendship or brotherly love?
a. Eros b. Philia c. Agape
6. What is the second greatest commandment according to Jesus?
a. Love your enemies. b. Love your neighbor as yourself c. Love the Lord your God
7. Who worked fourteen years to marry the woman he loved?
a. Jacob b. Moses c. Joseph
8. Who anointed Jesus' feet with perfume as an act of love and devotion?
a. Martha b. Mary of Bethany c. Mary Magdalene
9. Which book of the Bible ends with the words, "the greatest of these is love"?
a. Revelation b. 1 Corinthians c. 3 John
10. Who showed sacrificial love by offering his only son on the altar?
a. Noah b. Abraham c. Jacob
11. Which verse says, "Above all, put on love, which binds everything together."
a. Romans 5:8 b. Matthew 22:37 c. Colossians 3:14

Agenda for Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026 (8:30 breakfast, 9:30 meeting)

Opening Prayer

Devotions - Jim & Marilyn Diercks

Discussions:

1. 2026 Schedule of IL COM Projects
2. End of year 2025 financial report - questions & discussion
3. Praise Reports—send to Fred right away, questions???????
4. Tabled motion for financial support to camps

Motion to be discussed: [excerpt from Fall Rally 2025 official minutes]

*Dick Mowers, as IL COM treasurer, made a motion to give a special one time gift of \$500 to each ISBA camp since we currently have over \$2,000 in our checking account and \$4,000 in CD's that will soon mature. \$1,000 of that money has been budgeted for the 50th Anniversary celebration but has not yet been expended. **[that money has since been dispensed.]** Discussion was called and Jim Diercks made a motion to also add SICC to the list for a \$500 gift. Jan Kragness then amended the motion from Jim to also give \$500 to MorningStar and \$500 to Carmi because God has richly blessed us and we don't want the money to be sitting in a bank account but out where it can be used. Jerry McDowell seconded that motion. There was more discussion and George Meese suggested that the money go to the places with the most need. There was a discussion about this. This was tabled for a vote until Christmas and we were asked to pray about this and do some research. Don Kragness made a motion to table, Cathryn St. Dennis second. These five places are important to us for our work and that is why these five were chosen to be divided evenly. We will pray about this and vote at the Christmas luncheon.*

[Because several could not attend Christmas Lunch, the motion was held until February Fling. This is being brought up at this time instead of waiting for Spring Rally business meeting so the money can be distributed and be available for the 2026 year after the decision is made.]

Time of prayer

Closing songs

Dismiss

Work photos from Piney Woods Camp team—

16 people worked at the project: Don & Jan Kragness, Fred & Paula Riley, James & Catherine Rentfrow, Jim & Marilyn Diercks, James, Logan, Sky, Jo Ann, Ella & Eve, Phil Sutton (Iowa COM) and Don Hoppe (Arkansas COM).

