



Illinois Campers On Mission

January 2026

President's letter	1
Birthdays & Anniversaries	2
2026 Calendar	3
Faith Focus	4
Christmas Party	5 & 6
The Great Passion Play & Hamilton project notes	7

President's Letter—

Hi COM family.

Another year has come and gone and 2026 is fast approaching!!! With God's help and provision, it will be a good year and one of great blessings!! We know COM is a praying group and we have seen things happen with prayer!

We had great a time at the Christmas Dinner! Sorry that some of you had other commitments and could not attend. God provided us with a great weekend and great fellowship. Some of the other COM groups have had to cancel their Christmas gatherings for bad weather.

I am looking forward to next year with COM. On page 3 you will find the schedule that was presented at the Christmas luncheon. As always, there may be some changes as we go through the year but for now, this is what we anticipate the dates to be. Please add them to your calendars so you can plan to attend.

This is also a reminder that with the end of 2025, Praise Reports are due to me by January 15 so I can have them turned in by February 1.

Paula and I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy 2026 and pray your will start your year with grateful hearts for what God has done for you.

Fred Riley, President

Isaiah 9:6

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*



COM Officers

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National Coordinators—Don & Jan Kragness, campersonmission72@gmail.com

National website: campersonmission.org



2	Oakley	Bonnell
6	Jim & Judy Barnes	
8	Logan	Diercks
20	Jerry	McDowell
27	Karen	Watson
29	Sky	Diercks
29	Ella	Diercks



Praise Reports Are Due by Jan. 15

Praise reports are due to Fred Riley by January 15, 2026 so that they can be compiled and turned in by February 1 to the National Coordinator. These are critical reports to encourage others, proclaim the work God is doing in winning souls to Him and possible getting new members when they see how effective COM is at spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Please be as accurate as you can be on your hours worked, miles traveled, etc. Please see your email for an email from Karen Mowers on the new form for Praise Reports that hopefully will make it easier to fill out and understand what information is needed. We know you are all working hard at many different places.

2026 National Rally



Scan for Online Registration



Registration is now 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).

Tentative 2026 schedule

Jan. 11—Feb. 7, 2026 Piney Woods Texas work project, Contact Jan & Don.

Feb. 20—21, 2026 Lake Sallateeska

March 15—April 4, 2026 Passion Play work project

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

September 18—19 - Carmi Fall Fest

October 18 – 23 – Lake Sallateeska & Fall Rally

November 9 – 21- Passion Play

Dec. 5 – COM Christmas luncheon

Jan. 18 – 30, 2027 – Piney Woods



Faith Focus - The Christmas Story

Luke 2:8-14 And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not, for I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly, there was with the angel, a multitude of heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth, peace, goodwill toward men.

Advent is a beautiful invitation. A time to slow down, quiet our hearts, and prepare for the coming of Jesus. Yet, somehow, this season that's meant to center us often ends up rushing right past us--filled with to-do lists, family plans, and all the noise that makes it hard to find stillness.

Maybe this year your heart feels a little cluttered or heavy. You want to make space for Jesus, but life keeps crowding in. You're not alone in that.

From a friend: I'll never forget the Christmas when our whole family had the stomach flu. This wasn't the sniffly kind of sick you treat with hot tea. This virus flattened us on the couch, groaning with every movement. Instead of perfectly decorated cookies and a table filled with Christmas delicacies, we had cups of Gatorade lined up on the counter and Saltine crackers on paper plates. There were no visions of sugar plums dancing in our heads, no Christmas lights twinkled. We didn't have the energy to flip the switch.

This was not the Christmas I had planned. As we all lay on the couches in our pitiful state I flipped through TV channels. I landed on "A Charlie Brown Christmas". Instead of just cheering me up, this movie provided me with the shift in perspective I desperately needed. It showed us all the true meaning of Christmas. God knew we needed this time to slow down and remember what Christmas is really all about.

The good news is that Jesus still comes--right into our mess, our weariness, and our no-quite-ready hearts--with the same message the angels announced so long ago: I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people.

Dear Lord, Thank you for all that we have in our lives.
Thank you for your love and guidance. Help us to simplify our activities so that we can focus our celebration on your birth.
Thank you for being the Prince of Peace.

In Jesus' name, Amen

From Jim & Marilyn Diercks, Chaplains





Some photos from the Christmas lunch. Here are 2 of the 3 tables. Leroy & Irma, Randy & Sandy, George & Penny, Richard & Anita, Fred & Paula, Andy & Marilyn, James & Catherine and Jerry & Margaret. Harold & Susan, Terry & Debbie, John & Francie, Sonny & Sondra, Bryan & Terri. Also attending: Jim & Marilyn & family, Randy & Kay, Dick & Karen, Don & Jan.





Thank you to James and Catherine Rentfrow for organizing the Christmas party especially with the last minute change of caterers. We had a great time of fellowship and singing Christmas carols and praying for each other. Thanks Terri Keller for playing and Richard Evans for leading music. We had a memorable time acting out the 12 Days of Christmas and I wish I had a video!!! We had devotions lead by Jim Diercks and looked at our 2026 schedule. Please see page 3 for the schedule. We missed those that could not attend and hope you all can plan to attend next year.

Hamilton Joint Project with Iowa COM**June 22—26, 2026**

1. Finish siding on west side, that was not finished when we were there in 2023
2. Repair siding along gym that is coming off, all four sides have siding loose
3. Power wash exterior of building
4. New curtains in sanctuary
5. Paint the wood trim white in sanctuary
6. General clean up
7. Plumbing clean up
8. Mud texture and paint drywall where windows removed in 2023
9. Add lighting in fellowship hall eliminating wall lights
10. Bathroom Update: High rise toilet, new vanity, new mirror, new floor vinyl plank
11. Add 100 amp RV receptacle for Hitching post
12. New flooring outside of fellowship hall bathroom
13. Flooring outside of offices, inside gym entrance
14. Painting and modernizing of office
15. General clean up around gym and storage areas
16. Attic access holes need repair, remove fan from one and add lid
17. Repair toilet off of nursery (upstairs).

The Great Passion Play Project List**March 15—April 4, 2026**

1. Build a storage shed near the Statue of Christ that is the same pattern as chapel
2. Build a pole type building for the new wood saw
3. Clean out current metal shop and wood shop
4. Create a new metal shop and wood shop that will be administered by COM
5. Clean up of the set—rake leaves, repair or make new set pieces
6. Decorate the set with flowers, fabric and other items as needed
7. Work on the Marketplace to refresh awnings and decorations
8. Refurbish the photo booth by the dining hall with new backdrop and decorations
9. Possibly built a second photo booth in a different location

**SEE DON AND JAN ABOUT THESE PROJECTS IF YOU HAVE
QUESTIONS! LOTS OF PEOPLE NEEDED!**

New Year's Goals for Christians

1. Be a peacemaker
2. Go to church regularly
3. Read the Bible daily
4. Find ways to serve others
5. Be an encourager
6. Start a gratefulness journal
7. Post only positive things on social media
8. Pray every day
9. Be hospitable
10. Be humble
11. Meditate
12. Be transformed
13. Seek wisdom
14. Pursue holiness
15. Forgive

PRAISE REPORTS

Taken from the National Campers On Mission Manual 2025

How to Praise the Lord through individual “Praise” Reports:

- When a dozen campers with an average age in the mid-seventies move onto an empty site and leave a new church building three months later, it is God, not man.
- When campers work at a fair for two weeks and experience a hundred new salvations, it is God, not man.
- In church services, individuals give praise reports by sharing what God has done in their lives. As campers, we do the same thing. We give God the praise for the things He accomplishes through us, just as He desires.
- When others hear what He has done through us, it strengthens them and brings others into the kingdom of God. Can we do any less?

We share praise reports in our newsletters, on our websites and Facebook page, with local and state associations, and with our local chapter. The more we share God's accomplishments, the more others will be strengthened. As they are strengthened, they will be encouraged to get more involved in doing God's work.

Hearing praise reports may plant seeds so that others may plant some seeds and others may accept the Lord or even join Campers on Mission. If we do our best, God will use it for His benefit. Each chapter should have its own praise report forms designed to meet their specific needs and desires for reporting God's accomplishments.

Watch your email for the new, easier to fill out form and get them submitted by Jan. 30.