

Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response
UPDATE #3, March 30, 2020



To Illinois South Conference pastors, church leaders and congregations:

Based on the rapidly growing number of infected people in our area, and following updated national guidelines, the Executive Committee is extending the recommendation to suspend in-person worship until April 30, 2020. This date is subject to revision, pending changes by the state and federal government. This recommendation protects both our congregants and our neighbors. Sheltering-in-place is one thing we all can do to reduce the spread of COVID-19. There are confirmed cases in 8 of 12 counties where ISC churches are located.

While none of us expected an extended, pensive Lenten period like this, Easter morning will come again in that moment when we celebrate the resurrection in person once more.

The Highland and DuBois offices will remain closed until April 30, 2020. There will continue to be no in-person ISC team or committee meetings during this time.

Regarding DuBois Center, paid staff will be performing essential tasks at camp during this time, which includes: animal care, mowing, building maintenance and repair. It does not include recreational use of the grounds.

Conference Council will make a decision on summer camp season at a meeting on April 15.

ISC Spirit

With this update, we will begin sharing good news happening in our churches, and across our region. If you know of a story that shows people actively being the church, please send it to Jill Baker (ISC moderator) at jabaker5@aol.com or Rev. Shana Johnson (ISC Conference Minister) at sjohnson@iscucc.org. We need to see the hands and feet of Jesus in action right now, so share the stories that are warming your heart. #ISCspirit

“At St. John UCC in Trenton, IL, we've have found reasons for gratitude and joy even in the midst of our global Covid-19 crisis. One of our members is a local chiropractor, and he was in need of masks in order to keep himself and his patients healthy. On the evening of Saturday, March 21st, we received a request from him for 9 hand-sewn masks, and within 24 hours, we had all nine made and delivered (using proper social distancing, of course).

Six of them even had fancy, lingerie elastic for the ear straps, because that was what our member had on hand. Desperate times call for desperate measures - and plenty of belly laughs. I'm so glad we were able to help our member and his staff stay safe and healthy. Although we can't meet in person right now for worship, using our resources and talents to help others is just one way that we can truly #BeTheChurch and share #ISCspirit in this time and place. Thanks be to God for simple joys!”

--By Rev. Christy Eckert

Helpful Information

With this update, there are two files with revised information on the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, particularly regarding Emergency Paid Sick Leave and the expansion of Emergency Family and Medical Leave that come from the UCC legal counsel. In a nutshell, if a church employee has a sick child under age 18 that needs care, churches can continue to pay that person and have the pay reimbursed to the church. See the attachment for precise rules.

The Federal stimulus package passed last weekend appears to have provisions for non-profit organizations, and specifically churches, to take out loans to cover expenses such as payroll, insurance and utilities, for a set period. If the church does not lay anyone off, and keeps all employees at 75% pay or more of what they were making before the COVID-19 crisis, the loans will become grants. We are actively seeking more information on rules, how to apply, deadlines and other details. We will send out an update as soon as we have more information.

If you previously had AA or other 12 Step groups meeting in your building, or if you have congregants who regularly attend meetings, share this link with them for online support: <https://www.12step.org/social/online-meetings/>

Rev. Shana Johnson will be offering a Zoom session for pastors and church leaders tomorrow, Tuesday, March 31 from 10 am to noon to discuss worship, stewardship, and mission during this time of social distancing as well as to hear the needs of our churches and how the Conference might respond and be of greatest support.

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/7088890946>

Meeting ID: 708 889 0946

Worship Resource

A gift of music from The Oikos Ensemble for you and your church

These 9 original compositions, plus a jazz arrangement of an Easter hymn, were recorded by The Oikos Ensemble and have been performed at more than 300 worship services and sacred jazz concerts around the country. Each one has a story to tell.

You are invited to freely use the music in your worship streaming or for personal and group meditation.

Included are the links to my blog. Each entry contains:

- Link to the musical selection on You Tube
- Reflection about the music
- Prayer for personal use or in worship
- Lyrics where applicable

My best wishes and prayers to you as we all seek to navigate through these uncertain times.

Abundant Blessings,
Rev. Cliff Aerie with the Oikos Ensemble

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The Music

Click on each song title to be linked to the Worship Jazz Blog. There you will find a link to the music on YouTube, a reflective thought and personal prayer.

1. [Forest Muse](#) by Cliff Aerie (7:47)
2. [Dreams and Visions](#) by Chris Bakriges & Cliff Aerie(5:46)
3. [Earth Walk](#) by Cliff Aerie (8:58)
4. [Jiangjing](#) [Live the Way] by Cliff Aerie (6:38)
5. [Up the Downspout](#) by Cliff Aerie (11:15)
6. [Salaam Q'ahira](#) by Chris Bakriges & Cliff Aerie (10:05)
7. [Dance of the Aegean](#) by Chris Bakriges (7:00)
8. [Singing All My Blues Away](#) by Chris Bakriges & Cliff Aerie (7:42)
9. [Joy Dawned Again](#) by Chris Bakriges [arrangement on hymn tune] (5:45)
10. [As One](#) by Chris Bakriges & Cliff Aerie (4:15)

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Together in Christ's ministry with you,

Dr. Jill Baker, Conference Moderator
Rev. Christy Eckert, Conference Vice-Moderator
Mr. Dwight Asselmeier, Conference Treasurer
Rev. Ivan Horn, Conference Secretary
Rev. Shana Johnson, IL South Conference Minister

Rev. Rosemary Captain
Ms. Virginia Ilch
Rev. R.J. Morgan
Rev. Mike Southcombe
Ms. Barbara VanAusdall