Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response

UPDATE #1, March 16, 2020

To Illinois South Conference pastors, church leaders and congregations:

This will be the first regular update from your Conference Council and Conference Minister.

Together with you, we face uncharted waters with the COVID-19 pandemic. We know these stressful times call us to support and care for each other to the best of our abilities, and with the best knowledge we have at a given moment.

Even since last week, what seemed far away is now in our backyard. St. Clair and Clinton Counties reported confirmed COVID-19 cases over the weekend. As one doctor said, "It's going to get a lot worse before it gets better." We know that those over age 60 or with underlying health conditions are most at risk, and that describes a good portion of our congregations.

We are being told self-isolation and social distancing are currently the only ways to slow down the spread of this disease. This means more people stay healthy, and those who get sick can get treatment from a healthcare system that is not over capacity. While some of us might not be particularly susceptible, we all know someone who is. These are uncertain times for all of us.

With this in mind, the Conference Council passed this motion today:

To address the COVID-19 pandemic and given the new recommendations that were issued over the weekend:

1. The Conference Council recommends all ISC congregations suspend in-person worship and meetings for a minimum of four weeks, until April 13, 2020, with date subject to revision as we receive more information. Individual congregations may prefer a longer period, such as six weeks (April 27), or eight weeks (May 11, recommended by the Center for Disease Control.) We suggest that congregations consider this action regardless of attendance size.

We realize this window of time includes Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. However, the reason for this is that staying inside and apart for a few weeks will be not be as effective if suddenly large groups of people gather on Easter. It risks a wave of new infections right when infection rates might be spiking, if the US continues to follow the COVID-19 patterns of other countries. Decisions such as these are not easy and we imagine more difficult decisions are to come.

Please read below for options to continue worship in other ways, along with best practice suggestions if your congregation decides to continue in-person worship.

2. The Conference Council will direct the staff at the Conference office in Highland and DuBois Center offices to close to the public beginning today, March 16, and to remain closed until April 13, 2020, with date subject to revision. Staff in both locations will continue working and receive full pay. Emails and phone calls will be answered, and mail will be received.

All events at DuBois Center will be cancelled through April 13. At this time, we do not have a full picture of the summer camp situation. We encourage campers to continue to register. If we need to cancel future events, we will fully refund all camp or event fees.

3. The Conference Council directs all Conference committees, teams, and task forces to suspend in-person meetings until April 13, 2020, with date subject to revision. If your committee/team members have the ability, you can use video (ZOOM) or teleconferencing to hold meetings. Other options are meetings by email and the good old telephone.

For churches who are suspending in-person worship:

If you do not currently stream worship services, do not worry. A ZOOM account for a church is $15 a month, and it works on a smartphone, tablet, or computer. You simply create a meeting, or worship space in this case, that congregants can connect to with audio, video, or both. No computer or social
media account required. Our Conference Minister, Rev. Shana Johnson, will be holding an online basic training session on this if you are new to ZOOM. https://zoom.us

Pastors, you can preach, lead prayer and still connect with your congregations during this time. You do not have to be perfect to share the Good News from your phone.

Pastors will be working overtime during this health crisis, but congregations can help by calling or texting one another. Social distancing does not have to mean mental isolation, so check in on people frequently.

Ask congregants to continue to support the congregation financially, through online giving if you use that, or by mailing checks to the church. So many people will need financial help through this crisis, and our churches must be strong to fill that need.

For churches continuing in-person worship:
Practice social distancing- no passing of the peace, handshakes, hugging, or sitting within six feet of another person.
Door handles and pews should be wiped down with disinfectant before and after services. Refrain from using hymnals, or disinfect them before and after services as well.
Prop exterior and bathroom doors open, so no one has to touch handles.
Encourage anyone who is sick, or in a vulnerable risk group to stay home.
Ask congregants to continue to support the congregation financially, through online giving if you use that, or by mailing checks to the church. Even if you have in-person services, you should expect dramatically reduced attendance.
Care for your hourly workers including secretarial staff, musicians, and other staff affected by suspending in person worship, meetings, and events.

For everyone:
We have heard from pastors that some funeral homes are only doing cremation and family-only services. If you have a congregational death during this time, be prepared to comfort those grieving with the knowledge that there will be a memorial service down the road.
Look out for those who do not have an income right now. Help with food and utility bills, as you are able. Many hourly workers are impacted by business closures and they have no safety net.
Connect parents and children to information on how to get breakfast and lunch meals they are missing from not being at school. Every school district seems to be doing something to keep kids fed, but they are all doing it a little differently. If you are on Facebook, connect to the Illinois South Conference page and the DuBois Center page. Also make sure you are checking the Conference website, isucc.org, and that you are receiving the Conference newsletter (Weekly Connection) to keep informed and updated on resources for your local church. Information will be on all of these platforms as soon as it is available.

If ever there was a time show love to neighbor, it is now.

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

A Note from Your Insurance Board
The most common question received is if the loss of income during a shutdown of the church or school operation will be covered by their policies. Your policy does provide a coverage extension for up to $25,000 of loss of Business Income related to "Communicable Disease" and "Food Contamination". Here is the specific coverage form, which
spells out the requirements for this to be considered a covered loss. To make sure there is no misunderstanding, read the Additional Coverage language here:

A. The following is added as an Additional Coverage to the above forms:
We will pay for the actual loss of Business Income you sustain as a result of having your entire “operations” temporarily shut down or suspended by an order from any local, state or federal Department of Health having jurisdiction over your “operations.” Such shutdown must be the direct result of an outbreak at the insured premises of a “communicable disease” such as, but not limited to, Meningitis, Measles, or Legionnaire’s Disease, or to a “food contamination” caused directly by infectious or bacterial organisms such as, but not limited to, infectious Hepatitis, E.Coli bacteria, or Salmonella. An actual business shutdown must occur. Again, based upon the coverage extension form, the entire operations must be shut down by order of a health department having jurisdiction over your operations and must be as a direct result of an outbreak at your premises. It cannot be a voluntary shutdown taken as a precaution.

Feel free to contact Pat Stein at (309) 530-4600 or pastein48@outlook.com or Shawn Polson at (309) 660-1818 or smaxson21@gmail.com to discuss this further and answer any questions you may have about your coverage.

Nature Photography Retreat - May 1-2, 2020
Registration is now open for a Nature Photography Retreat at DuBois Center May 1-2. This overnight retreat will feature two experts, Brady Kesner, professional nature photographer from Highland (left), and Marty Kemper, retired biologist and avid birder from Nashville (right), to guide you through camp during spring bird migration and spring wildflower season. Friday night will include presentations on common wildlife, rare plants and photography skills. Saturday will allow plenty of time for photos anywhere your feet can take you at camp. Get more details, registration info and the full retreat schedule on the flyer here.

This is a great opportunity to explore some flora and fauna at camp, hone your photography skills, or just enjoy a spring weekend outdoors. Bring your friends and a camera- beginners and amateurs of any age with a DSLR camera are welcome. Early bird registration is now open until April 1. Register early online to ensure your spot. (For the best registration experience, use Google Chrome as your choice of browsers.)
Click here for more information or here for poster layout.

EVENTS CANCELLATIONS
Star Party, Wrangle & Ride, Lenten Work Day
The Star Party on March 20, and Wrangle & Ride and the Lenten Work Day both scheduled for Saturday, April 4 have been cancelled. Please contact Julie, our camp registrar, regarding refunds for Wrangle & Ride at register@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-357-1809.

This decision was not made lightly. Leadership of the Illinois South Conference agrees that stopping the spread of Covid-19 is a priority! We have great concern for our communities and especially for those with age or health considerations. WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

HOME FOR SPRING BREAK?
Apply Now for Summer Jobs at DuBois Center!
Is this the year for more than just another summer job? DuBois Center is searching for fun-loving and child-focused individuals with hearts for ministry to serve on our summer staff. Amazing memories + resume building skills = a summer to remember. Check out the Summer of Service flyer and this one for barn positions. Consider whether serving

SUMMER JOBS
DuBois Center Equestrian Program
Looking for a rewarding summer job working with children and horses? How about hands-on experience managing a trail ride program? Spending time with the horses is a highlight for many of our campers and great barn staff make all the difference! In addition to caring for our 20-horse herd, staff utilizes basic riding instruction and time "getting to know the ponies" to help campers build self-
outdoors with a dynamic team might be just the opportunity for you. Open positions include cabin counselors, barn staff and coordinators. Lifeguard certification is a plus. Questions? Contact Shirley at 618-787-2202 or dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org. Application packets are available online.

CALLING ALL QUILTERS!
For over a decade, the quilt drawing has been a significant piece of the annual DuBois Center Fall Festival. In recent years, we have been blessed to have two or more art quality quilts each year which together have raised $1500-$2400 annually. The quilts are donated by local church quilting groups and other friends of DuBois Center. Specifications: new or like-new, queen-size - this size seems to be most popular, appealing to a wide audience, and made with love and prayers. Ideally, the quilts begin traveling to local churches in August, so a July completion date works well. If you or your quilting group might be interested in donating a work-of-art quilt for the 2020 Fall Festival, please contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202. We’d love to talk to you about the possibilities.

DuBois Center is your OCWM (Our Church’s Wider Mission) monies at work. When you or your congregation gives to OCWM, you are directly supporting the work of DuBois, a Camp and Retreat Center of the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ. Thank you for your ongoing support of OCWM!

Planned Giving Webinars

While a significant wealth transfer occurs (and will occur) in our country as our eldest generation passes, many congregations and ministries remain unprepared to promote planned giving options among their members.

Preaching Generosity

It can be hard to talk about money. And yet Jesus spoke about it often, second only to the Kingdom of God. Join Rev. Andrew Warner (a Generosity Outreach of the United Church of Christ) to explore how to preach and teach about generosity and the use of our financial resources. The webinar will focus on a specific liturgical season and a set of readings. We will plan out at least one preaching opportunity for teaching generosity as a spiritual practice.

Monday April 20st - 2 pm Central

The Season of Easter: Beloved Community - The stories of Good Shepherd Sunday (May 3) speak to what it means to live generously in a community (Acts 2: 42-47, Ps. 23, and John 10: 1-10). This Sunday offers a chance to think broadly about the many forms of generosity and how it reinforces connections within a community. Register here. For ISC Estate Planning Record, click here.

Vacation Request Due?
Consider a week (or even a few days) at DuBois Center and join our 2020 Summer Camp team! WANTED: fun, engaging and caring volunteers to serve as nurses, chaplains, photographers, cabin counselors, time-off counselors, activity specialists and barn helpers. Minimum age is 18 for most positions; young adults and older adults are welcome. Give of your time and talent, make a difference and gain a wonderful sense of satisfaction! For more information, check out the volunteer page of our web site or contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202.

Deaconess Nurse Ministry and the Good Samaritan Fund

The Good Samaritan Fund through Deaconess Nurse Ministry provides financial support, subject to available fund, for UCC active and retired clergy and their partners/spouses who reside in the Missouri Mid-South and Illinois South Conference. Deaconess Nurse Ministry assumes no financial liability or fund-raising responsibility for this program and only the Good Samaritan Fund will be utilized.
Eligible Applicant criteria:
Active or retired UCC clergy with good standing and residing in the Missouri Mid-South or Illinois South Conference of the UCC.
Surviving domestic partners or spouses of active or retired UCC Clergy residing in the Missouri Mid-South or Illinois South Conference of the UCC. If a surviving spouse of clergy remarries, they are no longer eligible.

Types of Assistance:
One time, Emergency Assistance Grants are for unforeseen circumstances that create financial demand. Emergency Grants do not subsidize churches or agencies or relieve them of meeting normal compensation responsibilities. Emergency grants are generally considered once per person in a twelve-month period with a maximum of $3,000 for the year. Credit counseling or other no cost financial counseling programs may be recommended for those who have avoidable financial circumstances. The Deaconess Nurse Ministry's Executive Director is authorized to give approval for Emergency Assistance Grants.
Gap Assistant Grants are for a specific financial need for a short-term period which will eventually be resolved by other funding sources. Gap funding is available for up to 12 months rolling for a total amount of $15,000 to an individual. Approval of the Executive Director and a Finance Committee member from Deaconess Nurse Ministry will be required for Gap Assistance Grants. An exception for additional grant amount may be approved by the Deaconess Nurse Ministry's Executive Committee.

Referral Process:
Applicant will need to make contact with their respective conference minister for referral process.

What's Happening at Illinois South Conference...

Job Opportunity: Staunton St. Paul UCC is searching for a new director for Exhale, their youth ministry for grades 6-12. Approximately 15-20 hours weekly. Must be familiar with the UCC and theologically progressive. Responsibilities include weekly Exhale meetings, planning and implementing annual mission trip and fundraisers; devotions; service projects; assist with Vacation Bible School and attend worship at least twice monthly. Send resume or contact Pastor Debbie at revdjhutkins@gmail.com or 618-635-2386.

Job Opportunity: Full-time, salaried Executive Director of Child-Care Center, 6 weeks-6 years of age with after-school program; works with ministry-led board. Bachelor's degree preferred. Director's credential Level 1, experience & understanding of quality rating scales, DCFS licensing, applicable certifications & credentials required. Full job description, click here. Apply with cover letter, resume, three professional references, academic transcripts by 4/10/2020 to: search@unipreskindercottage.org. For more information, contact Rev. Don Wagner 618-537-4991 or 618-444-2834.

Region 2
CANCELLED
Red Bud St. Peter UCC Fish Fry on Fri, March 20 and Fri, April 3.

CANCELLED
Hecker Friedens UCC Homemade Soup/Chili & Pie Supper on Sat, March 28 from 4 pm - 7 pm.

POSTPONED TO MAY 3
Dupo Christ UCC All You Can Eat Chicken & Dumpling Dinner scheduled for Sun, March 29 from 11:30 am - 3 pm has been postponed.

Regions 3 & 5
Joint Wednesday night services during Lent.
Cancelled: March 18 - Grantfork UCC, 206 S. Locust St., Grantfork

Exhale Youth Group will bring candy filled eggs to your yard and spread them around (Alhambra, Hamel, or Staunton areas) for your children to hunt for. 30 eggs for $25; 60 eggs for $50; 100 eggs for $75. To reserve your spot or for more information, contact by text or call to 618-520-0185 or by email to rjbraundmeier@gmail.com

 Region 5

CANCELLED
Highland EvUCC Good Friday Tenebrae cantata at 7 pm on April 10.

Region 8
CANCELLED
New Baden Zion UCC Fish Dinner on Fri, March 20.
The Fri, April 10 Fish Fry is tentatively still scheduled from 4 pm - 6:30 pm.

CANCELLED
Marissa Friedens UCC Wurstmarkt on Sat, March 21 from 3 pm to 7 pm.

St. Jacob UCC will sponsor the Strawberry Festival on Sunday, May 17 from 10 am - 3 pm at Town Park in St. Jacob. Music, crafts, jump houses, entertainment for kids. Hot dogs, brats, pork burgers,
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<tr>
<th>Region 4</th>
<th>Region 9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 25</strong> - St. Paul UCC, 3277</td>
<td><strong>CANCELLED</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bluff Road, Edwardsville</td>
<td>Belleville Concordia UCC BBQ on Sat, March 28.</td>
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<td><strong>April 1</strong> - Marine UCC, 111 N.</td>
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<td>Center St., Marine</td>
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<td><strong>Regions 4</strong></td>
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<td><strong>CANCELLED</strong></td>
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<td>Brighton St. John UCC Famous</td>
<td>Belleville St. Paul UCC’s Fine Art</td>
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<td>Fish Fries will be rescheduled</td>
<td>Concert Series presents Yearning to Breathe Free</td>
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<td>later this year.</td>
<td>performed by the Southern Illinois College Concert</td>
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<td>Band conducted by Ed Jacobs on Sun, May 3 at 3 pm.</td>
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<td>No charge to attend. A free-will offering will be</td>
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<td>taken. Everyone is welcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Jacob UCC will host a Scrap Book</td>
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<td>Day on April 4 from 8 am to 9 pm.</td>
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<td>Vendors wanted. Fee includes</td>
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<td>a 6-foot table, electricity, 3 meals,</td>
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<td>drinks and snacks for $40. All</td>
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<td>proceeds benefit the Youth Group</td>
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<td>Mission Trips. To register, contact</td>
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<td>Dawn at <a href="mailto:smdz@hometel.com">smdz@hometel.com</a> or 618-792-4316.</td>
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<td>strawberry desserts. Berry Bike Ride</td>
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<td>sign up <a href="#">here</a>.</td>
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**Note:** The text above represents the content of the document as accurately as possible. Hyperlinks and email addresses are not active. The document contains event information and details about various UCC (United Church of Christ) locations and their associated events. The text also includes a mention of a Berry Bike Ride sign-up link and a Scrap Book Day event with vendor details and registration information.