

Weekly Connection

For the Week of March 29, 2020 - April 5, 2020
Diverse Minds, Covenant Hearts, Made One in the Body of Christ

For the past few weeks, I have been in deep thought and prayer about the emotional and spiritual process we have all been going through during the COVID-19 crisis. It is a process of deep grief. What we have come to know, what we have come to expect, what we have come to take for granted shifts every day. Things we were certain about a few weeks ago are not certainties today nor might they be tomorrow. Things that we did not think or worry about a few weeks ago are not on the forefront of our minds, hearts, and spirits.

This moment in our families, our schools, our communities, our congregations, our country and our world is something we have never experienced before. It feels like the very foundation upon which we have built the structure of our lives and our way of being and moving in the world is shifting and crumbling around us. We are experiencing tremendous change and loss.

In light of this change and loss, we are grieving. Yet, we do not all grieve the same way and on the same timetable. Some are in denial, trying to convince themselves and others this is not really happening, or it is not as bad as others are making it out to be. Some are angry, frustrated, and mad that there is so much, which is out of their control. Some might silently be bargaining with God--making promises of what they will do if God protects them and their families from all that is happening around them.

Some are experiencing depression, unable to experience anything but fear and unable to see hope beyond the darkness and despair. Some are seeking to accept the reality that nothing will be the same on the other side of this crisis. The truth is all of us are experiencing waves of emotions and reactions in this moment of uncertainty. Some are experiencing the stages of grief not just in incremental steps, but also sometimes in the span of one day.

The realities we have come to expect and rely upon are shifting. In this moment, it feels as if we all are standing on shifting sand. As we try each day to find our footing, we might wonder as the Psalmist did, where does our help come? It comes from the Creator and Author of all life. In this moment of uncertainty, there is only one certainty--"Our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth...who watches over all and will never slumber or sleep (based on Psalm 121)."

As we walk this journey together, may we be gentle, patient and kind with one another, and may we never forget our help comes from the Lord.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

THIS IS YOUR OCWM MONIES AT WORK

During the shelter in place order, all Conference staff will be working remotely. However, this does not mean we are unavailable to you. If you need to reach someone in the Conference office here is some important information to keep handy. Concerning the work of Conference teams and committees or search and call inquires please reach out to Christy Pursell at cpursell@iscucc.org.

Concerning financial matters (in terms of your church's giving to the Conference or OCWM), please reach out to Debbie Kesner at dkesner@iscucc.org.

Concerning getting something communicated within the Conference or where something is posted on the Conference website, Facebook page or Weekly Connection, please reach out to Lynnette Schuepbach at lschuepbach@iscucc.org. Concerning registration for upcoming events, please reach out to Julie Riechmann at jriechmann@iscucc.org.

For all things DuBois Center, please reach out to Shirley Asmussen at DuBois Center or email dcinfo@duboiscenter.org.

To speak with the Conference Minister, please reach out to Rev. Shana Johnson at via email at sjohnson@iscucc.org or by phone at 618-882-8247.

Important Links

iscucc.org/

duboiscenter.org

ucc.org

[Back Bay Mission](#)

[CHHSM](#)

[Ecuador Partnership](#)

[Eden Theological Seminary](#)

[Deaconess Foundation](#)

[Deaconess Nurse Ministry](#)

[Emmaus Homes](#)

[Hitz Memorial Home](#)

[Hoyleton](#)

[Insurance Board](#)

[LIFE Program](#)

[Neighborhood Houses](#)

[New Athens Home](#)

[St. John's Community Care](#)

[St. Paul's Sr. Community](#)

[Uplands Village](#)

[UCC Campus Ministry](#)

[Uni-Pres Kindercottage](#)

Pray for...

**Prayer list for
March 29-April 5, 2020
Churches & Pastors**

- Pana United in Faith
- Pinckneyville St. Paul UCC,
Rev. Cynthia (Rev. Kerry) Bean

Retired Pastors

- Rev. Elmer and Linda
Bowman, Jr., Trenton, IL



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.

People with Life Concerns

- Pray for the healthcare workers and first responders who have put their lives on the line to protect us.
- **Postponed:** Memorial Service scheduled for Rev. Dr. David Beebe on March 29 has been postponed. No future date has been established. Please keep his family in your prayers.
- Pray for Rev. E. John Schaller as he deals with health issues. Rev. Schaller is the father of Rev. Mary Schaller Blaufuss. Cards may be sent to 623 Hamacher St, Waterloo, IL 62298.
- Pray for Rev. Bob Coffey as he deals with some health issues. Rev. Coffey is serving as Pastor for St. Peter's UCC in Lenzburg. Cards may be sent to 6213 Jo Ann Dr, Belleville, IL 62223.



Congregations face financial challenges related to the pandemic. Over 84% of individual donations to a congregation come in through the offering plate. Now that most congregations ceased in-person gatherings, we need to equip congregations with new ways to receive gifts.

We begin by remembering the central importance of

generosity. The practice of generosity - like all our spiritual practices - deepens the sense of hope, purpose, and meaning in people. Several studies demonstrate the connection between generosity and a sense of wellbeing and happiness.

During this pandemic, we need to be prudent and engage in social distancing. At the same time, we face increased anxiety and weariness. David Brooks recently spoke to the way pandemics can cause social distrust. We already see how pandemic fears can reinforce isolation and xenophobia.

The call to generosity can be part of the response:

- addressing the needs caused by the pandemic
- witnessing to the fact that social distancing doesn't mean social distrust
- providing a meaningful way for people to make a difference in the lives of others

As leaders in local congregations, we encourage you to think through practical ways to engage your community in generosity during this unusual season.

There is a spectrum of options for your church to consider. No one solution will work for every congregation, so we want to lift up a range of four ideas that may be useful for your congregation to implement.

- Encouraging people to **mail in donations** they would have placed in the offering plate
- Promoting **auto-bill pay**
- Setting up **online giving** for those congregations who don't currently have this option
- Inviting **annual givers** to make their donation in April

Most giving still happens through the Sunday morning offering plate. This presents a problem when many congregations ceased in-person worship. Congregations across the United Church of Christ responded by creating online worship experiences. Pastors and leaders demonstrated tremendous ingenuity and creativity. We need to bring that same inventiveness to the offerings we make as faithful people. To learn more about these options, click [here](#).

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 COVID-19 Response - UPDATE #2, March 21, 2020

To Illinois South Conference pastors, church leaders and congregations:

As of 5 pm on Saturday, March 21, 2020, the state of Illinois moved to a statewide shelter-in-place. This means people may leave their homes to get gas or food, seek medical care or medicine, and go to work. It also means that in-person worship must be suspended for the duration of the Governor's executive order, which is currently expected to last through April 8. Churches are not exempt from this order.

This has been done to protect us and our neighbors and lower the number of people who could get sick. As death tolls rise around the world, this is truly an act of love that your congregation can participate in by adhering to shelter-in-place as much as possible. As of Friday, March 20, there were confirmed cases in six of twelve counties where ISC churches are located.

What you can do

Neither pastors nor staff should spend time in the church building. The governing board of your church needs decide who will be handling minimum basic operations, as per the executive order, for your congregation.

- Do you need someone to bring in the mail, or go to the church office to retrieve voice mail? This would be an essential function, but that person should not linger in the building.
- Do you need to pay bills? Can you scan and email bills to your treasurer? Can your treasurer pay bills from home during this health crisis? If you require two signatures, can one person leave them on another's porch, and still practice social distancing?
- Continue paying your hourly workers. Churches are not exempt from family leave of medical leave requirements, and during a public health emergency, your hourly employees qualify.

If you have not yet tried online worship before, there are many easy and inexpensive venues to do this. Two simple ways are:

- Facebook through Facebook live, or by filming and uploading a video from your phone or tablet.
- Zoom, where you can create an online worship space. This live session can be joined by any congregant with a phone, and is accessible by audio or video.
- The sessions can also be recorded and shared on social media. Please contact Rev. Shana Johnson if you would like to learn more about Zoom.

This may be messy, and that's ok. Give yourself grace.

Some things to keep in mind right now

- Physical distancing is not the same as mental distancing, and people need contact in many ways. Phone calls may be more important than emails or texts in this moment.
- Many pastors and chaplains are being turned away from hospitals and long-term care facilities right now, simply because scarce personal protective equipment has to go to medical staff. If you are struggling with how to minister in this situation, remember you can support doctors and nurses in this moment. They are at the beginning of a marathon, and could use your comforting words and prayers.
- If you have healthy congregants who are looking for something to do, ask them to be helpers for a family or two in your congregation who must stay in self-quarantine due to health issues. They can be the ones who bring food, medicine, and mail to those who can't leave their homes.
- Illinois is working on a small business loans package to help people get through the pandemic. Non-profits and churches will also be eligible for these loans, so watch the news for more information as this relief effort develops.
- Take time now to look up the number(s) of your local health department, or local major medical provider. Many are setting up COVID-19 testing hotlines to help potentially sick people know what to do and where to go. When someone calls you asking for assistance, you'll have the numbers ready.

Also, your Conference Minister, Rev. Shana Johnson, will be holding **online open office hours** this coming week for anyone who wants to pop in and ask questions, share information, or needs support. Please see attached tip sheet about how to enter a Zoom meeting.

Thursday, March 26, 2020 at 10 am to noon

To join by video:

<https://zoom.us/j/7088890946> Meeting ID: 708 889 0946

To join by phone:

Dial 1 (312) 626- 6799

Worship Resource

Prayer for opening worship in stressful times, written by Rev. Ivan Horn

Time for reflection: As Christians, we must take responsibility for the well-being of others. We can be united in the spirit even as we are apart in the body. In fact, protecting the health of those around us is a powerful witness to our faith. As Jesus Christ always placed himself for the good of others above his own, so we too this morning, as we worship and as we live our daily lives cautiously, in our homes, any of us self-quarantining are placing the welfare of our human family in Christian order. With our faith in God, we can overcome these present difficulties, using the rational, scientific knowledge that we possess through our God-given intelligence. May God's comfort, guidance keep us all in the best of health and safety during these challenging times.

O God, our help in all times of need, we give you thanks that you are present, just, merciful, loving and caring. We know and feel the strength of your presence as we humbly pray during these uncertain troubled times. Come to us with your divine helping grace helping us to have patience and strength to endure our tribulations of doubts, anxieties and especially the mammoth uncertainties of this crisis. You are our ultimate hope and refuge, "our mighty fortress, always ready to help in times of trouble." Our most urgent prayers are for those who have suffered from this virus and that you will comfort the many families where death has overcome them. We pray your infinite love and compassion will help turn all of these worries into comfort and bring to everyone your peace that passes all human understandings, praying in the name of Jesus, the risen Christ of our faith.

Amen.

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, Illinois South Conference Minister

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Ms. Virginia Ilch

Rev. R.J. Morgan

Rev. Mike Southcombe

Ms. Barbara VanAusdall

Click [here](#) for a copy of the letter to share with your congregations and friends.



DuBois Center News

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

A Note from DuBois Center

Dear Friends,

As many of you already know, we have curtailed operations through Monday, April 13 in support of state declarations related to COVID-19 and our sincere desire to be part of the solution. At this time, events in March and early April have been canceled. The need to cancel future events is being monitored and updated weekly by the Executive Committee of the ISC Conference Council. As we all are becoming increasingly aware, we do not know what tomorrow might bring. We are hoping and planning for a full season of summer camp. Registration is open and some sessions are nearly full. (Please see related articles on cancellations.) Summer staff can't wait to be back outdoors with campers - laughing, singing playing and praying together. Volunteers are being recruited and planning is in full swing. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Shirley at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202. Thank you for your understanding and support. Our staff and volunteers are keeping you, your families and your churches in our thoughts and prayers.

God's peace be with you! Shirley Asmussen and DuBois Center Staff & Volunteers



Summer Camp EARLY BIRD DEADLINE - EXTENDED Wednesday, May 6

In light of current circumstances, the Early Bird discount deadline has been extended to May 6. However, be aware that some sessions will be FULL by that time. Horsin' Around, June 7-12, is nearly full and the Just You & Me and other half-week sessions are getting close. For your first choice of sessions, register soon!

REGISTER without RISK

In light of current circumstances, if DuBois Center is required to cancel any camp program, you will have the ability to:

- Donate any/all of your deposit or the money paid to support the ministry of DuBois Center or
- Apply any/all of the deposit or the money paid to a future DuBois Center camp program or
- Receive a refund for any/all the deposit or the money paid.

Please Note: If the federal government, the CDC, state or local authorities, or the written advice of a physician keeps

EVENT CANCELLATIONS

Lenten Work Day and Wrangle & Ride

Both these events - scheduled for Saturday, April 4 - have been cancelled. If you are sheltering at home and need help staying busy, contact Shirley at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202 for information about projects that can be done at home to support DuBois Center. If you registered for Wrangle & Ride, contact Julie our camp registrar regarding payments made at register@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-357-1809.

SUMMER CAMP

Faith - Friends - Fun

Current studies show that exposure to quality outdoor environments can have significant health benefits. Even more studies show that opportunities for kids to **just be kids** are critical to their development. Active, unplugged, joyful, connected and adventuresome are all words that describe the DuBois experience. It's good old-fashioned fun and a modern classic.



you from coming to a DuBois Center camp or event due to COVID-19, the same options listed above apply to your deposit. These exceptions to our normal cancellation and refund policies only apply to circumstances around COVID-19. For other situations, standard cancellation policies still apply.

All this as well as an opportunity to experience God in new ways, make new friends and have loads of fun. To find out more about summer camp at DuBois Center, check out the camp brochure online. To have a brochure sent by mail, contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202.

HIVE HAPPENINGS - Alive and Buzzing

Last spring two hives, each with 3000-5000 bees, were introduced at DuBois Center. After being blessed by Conference Minister Rev. Shana Johnson, the bees were sent on their way to enjoy the many wildflowers that were in full bloom and... multiply. The hives are located in the Deer Run area of camp, close to a water supply and a variety of flowering plant species. John Pawloski, our ISC volunteer beekeeper, has kept a close eye on these newest campers over the last 12 months.



Update - January 2020

John reports, "...the bees are still alive and buzzing. Thankfully, the mite population that usually raises its ugly head in fall and winter appears to be under control. The bees have been enjoying their own honey, but my protege Julie Kies and I fed them some vitamins and powdered sugar - which also helps with mite control. If you walk by the hives, they are much more subdued and quiet. Their population wanes as the drones are kicked out and the queen holds off laying a new brood until springtime - fewer mouths to feed."

Update - March 2020:

John reports, "In these dark times, we could all use some good news. The bees (both hives) are still alive!" A small number did perish, but that's typical, and the rest are flourishing. Over the winter and early spring, our bees received some extra attention from volunteers. They were sprayed with vitamin water and covered with powdered sugar - a great food source when flowers aren't in bloom. The bees actually lick the sugar off each other. It also traps and knocks off varroa mites.

If you are interested learning more about or getting involved with our bees or other Green DuBois projects, send a note to greendubois@aol.com.



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!



CHHSM News
Council for Health and Human Service Ministries

Planned Giving to Support Mission and Ministry 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](#).

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 revdjatkins@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

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

CANCELLED

Hecker Friedens UCC Good Friday Fish Fry on March 27.

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

CANCELLED

All joint Wednesday night services during Lent.
March 25 - St. Paul UCC, 3277 Bluff Road, Edwardsville
April 1 - Marine UCC, 111 N. Center St., Marine

Regions 4

CANCELLED

Brighton St. John UCC Famous Fish Fries will be rescheduled later this year.

Region 5

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

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, strawberry desserts. Berry Bike Ride sign up [here](#).

Region 5

CANCELLED

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

Region 8

CANCELLED

Lebanon St. Paul UCC Chicken Dinner scheduled for March 29.

Region 9

CANCELLED

Belleville Concordia UCC BBQ on Sat, March 28.

Belleville St. Paul UCC's Fine Art Concert Series presents Yearning to Breathe Free performed by the Southern Illinois College Concert Band conducted by Ed Jacobs on Sun, May 3 at 3 pm. No charge to attend. A free-will offering will be taken. Everyone is welcome.