Pastoring in a Pandemic
Pastors often talk about the things they didn't learn in seminary. Even a three- or four-year master-level intense academic program, designed with an “in the church” contextual component cannot fully prepare one for what will be encountered pastoring in the day-to-day setting of the church. In fact, there is an acronym, WIDLIS, to explain it and many online groups dedicated to pastors sharing their stories of what they didn't learn in seminary (WIDLIS). Certainly, pastoring in a pandemic ranks high in the “what I didn't learn in seminary” experience category. No pastor, regardless of when or where they went to seminary was trained for this moment. Even those who pastored through such times as an economic depression or recession, wars, devastating natural disasters, or horrific national or global events cannot say this moment is like anything they have experienced. There are certain aspects which are similar, such as the shared fears, doubts, anxieties, and grief, as well as the deep faith, resolve, resiliency, and hopeful spirit.

Yet, there is one aspect of this moment that is different than any other moment. That is the inability for people to gather in one common physical space to be in literal touch with one another through simple acts such as giving a hug, a pat on the shoulder, wiping a tear or holding each other's hands as we pray together. Pastors were not trained for a moment such as this in which safe physical distancing also means not being able to do what we often do in times of crisis to be present with and comfort one another.

Yet, although they were not trained for it, as I have borne witness to the beautiful acts of authentic ministry and pastoral care by our pastors in the Illinois South Conference, I am moved beyond words at the ways they are fully prepared for this moment. Even though they were not trained for it, our pastors are prepared for this moment. Why? Well, not because they recently took courses such as “Pastoring in a Pandemic 101,” “Video Editing and Worship Production” or “Making use of online platforms for worship, Christian education, administration and pastoral care.” Not because they received state of the art training in using all forms of technology and devices. And not even because they have pastoral mentors, counselors, or spiritual directors who have been here before and can offer specific tips about how to make use of such technology and online platforms. Our pastors are prepared for this unique time of life we all find ourselves in, because they are reminding themselves of their “call.” They are standing tall in the assurance that God has called them for such a time as this. God is calling them to show up with and comfort one another.

This does not however mean it is easy or it even comes naturally to them. It also does not mean those who are not doing the work will understand the time, effort, and courage it takes to minister in this time. For those of us who are viewing online worship services, watching video Facebook posts or participating in Zoom calls, we do not know the stories behind these beautiful offerings of ministry. We don't know how many times the pastor thought the service was recording, only to find out, after the benediction, that they had to do the service all over again. We don't know how much time and practice it took to upload that video. We don't know how many hours the pastor spent learning how to do “Zoom,” or how to get just the right settings on their smartphones for recording. We don't know how much it hurts when people criticize the chosen "background of the video," "production of the video," or the "sound quality," when the pastor was so proud and relieved they were able to offer something to connect and communicate with the people they love and have been called to serve. We also don't know how difficult it was to get in front of the camera and offer a Gospel word of encouragement, hope, and joy, when they were struggling with their own discouragement, despair, and sadness.
Pastoring in a pandemic was not something they learned about in seminary. It is something no pastor ever imagined would be a part of their ministry. It was something they were not trained for, but as our Illinois South Conference pastors are proving every day, it is something for which they are fully prepared. I am deeply grateful and inspired by the pastors who are showing up, figuring it out and faithfully serving to the best of their ability in this moment. I know you are too. This week I encourage you to pray for our pastors and offer them the encouragement, appreciation, and grace they need as they continue to faithfully serve all of us and answer the call of God to minister in such a time as this.

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 inquiries, 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 jriebachmann@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 via email at sjohnson@iscucc.org or by phone at 618-882-8247.

Rev. Donna Pupillo, Deaconess Nurse Ministry, is making a plea for face masks - either construction or painter grade or home-sewn. They are needed by the nurses as they care for people. There are instructions in the video below. Please contact Donna at dpupillo@faithnurses.org for instructions for other patterns and how to mail them to the proper place.

Mary Alice Ryan, President/CEO of St. Andrew's Resources for Seniors System in St. Louis, Missouri suggests that your local nursing homes and senior centers may be looking for masks to give to the residence. Although these masks do not protect them from the COVID-19 virus, they can help to prevent other illnesses which could compromise their immune systems. Please check with your local agencies or Rev. Donna Pupillo for the best ways to distribute your made masks.

Retired Pastors
- Rev. Wesley and Doris Bornemann, Fenton, MO

People with Life Concerns
- Pray for the healthcare workers and first responders who have put their lives on the line to protect us.
- 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.

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.
Easter Video Service
Rev. Shana Johnson and the Illinois South Conference Local Church Ministries Team are in the process of creating a video-recorded Easter worship service, which will be sent out during Holy Week for our local churches in the Illinois South Conference and placed on the ISC website. This simple worship service will include the talents of many in our Conference and is intended to be a gift to all of you. Please stay tuned for more details.

Daily COVID-19 Briefing from UCC - Facts, Not Fear
New COVID-19 Daily Briefing from UCC Disaster Ministries separates facts from falsehoods and fear, supplying valuable information throughout the duration of the pandemic crisis. This resource is prepared Monday through Friday by Barbara T. Baylor, MPH. If you would like to receive the daily update from her, make your request to baylorb@ucc.org.
A letter from Rev. John Dorhauer, General Minister & President of the United Church of Christ, addresses the churches on March 24. Read it here.

Worship Resource
A gift of music from The OÎkos Ensemble for you and your church
These 9 original compositions, plus a jazz arrangement of an Easter hymn, were recorded by The OÎkos 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. 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
~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 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.
- Forest Muse by Cliff Aerie (7:47)
- Dreams and Visions by Chris Bakriges & Cliff Aerie(5:46)
- Earth Walk by Cliff Aerie (8:58)
- Jiangjing [Live the Way] by Cliff Aerie (6:38)
- Up the Downspout by Cliff Aerie (11:15)
- Salaam Q'ahira by Chris Bakriges & Cliff Aerie (10:05)
- Dance of the Aegean by Chris Bakriges (7:00)
- Singing All My Blues Away by Chris Bakriges & Cliff Aerie (7:42)
- Joy Drowned Again by Chris Bakriges [arrangement on hymn tune] (5:45)
- As One by Chris Bakriges & Cliff Aerie (4:15)

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

Due to the pandemic, congregations across the United Church of Christ have 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.

**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.

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**Ready for a FULL WEEK at DuBois Center?**
If your child will complete grades 3-5 this spring or summer, then it may be time to step up to Settler camp! New friends and lots of fun are just the beginning. Campers run, play, sing, eat, jump, act, create, splash, pray, hike, explore, build, ride and finally... sleep! Growing and playing together, exploring God's creation, building a Christian community - that's Settler camp at DuBois Center. There are three dates from which to choose: June 7-12, June 14-19 and July 5-10. Some sessions are filling quickly - so don't delay. You can download a brochure from our website. To receive a brochure by mail, contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202. If you are ready to register, click here.

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**FATHER & SON RETREAT - CANCELLED**
We have been hoping and crossing our fingers, but with the number of COVID-19 cases in southern Illinois continuing to grow, it is time to cancel our annual Father-Son Retreat scheduled for April 24-26. Our staff and volunteers look forward to this weekend all year round! We are truly going to miss hanging out with everyone! If you need help staying busy, contact Shirley at 618-787-2202 or dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org for information about father-son projects that can be done at home to support DuBois Center and maybe even help us prepare for F-S 2021. To donate, transfer or receive a refund for fees paid for this event, contact Julie, our camp registrar, at register@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-357-1809. See you in 2021!
Summer Camp EARLY BIRD DEADLINE - EXTENDED Wednesday, May 6
Because 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 our Just You & Me and other half-week sessions are getting close. For your first choice of sessions, register soon!

APRIL is EARTH MONTH
Farmer poet Wendell Berry wrote, “The Earth is what we all have in common.” With most students home for the duration, April is a great time to celebrate and share God’s creation. The internet is packed with creative activities that can be done at home while practicing safe physical distancing. Working on your garden? Consider including native plants and ones that attract pollinators. Trash day? Before putting something in the bin, consider if it could be reused as part of a cool craft. Creative writing time? Use a corner of your backyard or the view from a window for inspiration. As we journey through Earth Month today, please share photos of your efforts in the comment section of our Facebook page.

NEED A BREAK FROM ONLINE CLASSES?
Apply Now for Summer Jobs at DuBois Center!
Tired of connecting via Skype and Zoom? Need more open space than just your yard? Then this might be the year for more than just another summer job - the summer for making positive memories that last a lifetime! DuBois Center is searching for fun-loving and child-focused individuals with hearts for ministry to serve on our summer staff. Great experiences + resume building skills = a summer to remember. Check out the Summer of Service flyer and this one for barn positions. Consider whether serving outdoors with a dynamic team might be the right 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.

REGISTER without RISK
Due to current circumstances, if DuBois Center is required to cancel any camp program, you will have the ability to:
- Donate any/all of your deposit and event fee paid to support the ministry of DuBois Center or
- Transfer any/all of your deposit and event fee paid to a future DuBois Center camp or retreat program, or
- Receive a refund of any/all of your deposit and event fee paid.
In addition, if the federal government, the CDC, state or local authorities, or the written advice of a physician keep you from coming to a DuBois Center camp or event due to COVID-19, the same options listed above apply to your deposit and payments. These exceptions to our normal cancellation and refund policies only apply to circumstances related to COVID-19. For other situations, standard cancellation policies still apply.

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

St. John’s Community Care is focused on continuing to care as they focus on keeping those they serve and their staff as safe as they can. While they cannot currently care for participants in their Adult Day Centers, they are contacting those families regularly to support them emotionally and to determine if there are other ways they can help. They remain available to anyone who needs advice on dementia care or caregiving issues. Because their staff are now working remotely, callers will have to leave a voice mail at 618-344-5008, but those calls will be returned. Likewise, contacting them through their website (www.stjohnssc.org), which now includes a “live chat” function will generate a return call or email. Their staff has many years of working with families living with dementia and will be happy to do what they can to help everyone weather this challenging time.
Deaconess Nurse Ministry

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 available 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 revdjitkins@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.

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| **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. | **CANCELLED**  
Lenten services scheduled for April 1 - Marine UCC, 111 N. Center St., Marine | **CANCELLED**  
Highland EvUCC Good Friday Tenebrae cantata scheduled for April 10. |
| **CANCELLED**  
Hecker Friedens UCC Good Friday Fish Fry scheduled for April 10. | **CANCELLED**  
Exhale Youth Group spreading eggs for families. | **POSTPONED**  
Highland EvUCC Auction scheduled for Sat, April 18. No future date has been set at this time. |
| **Regions 4** | **Regions 5** | **Regions 9** |
| **CANCELLED**  
Brighton St. John UCC Famous Fish Fries will be rescheduled later this year. | **CANCELLED**  
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](#). | **CANCELLED**  
Belleville St. Paul UCC's Fine Art Concert Series scheduled for Sun, May 3 at 3 pm. |