For the week of April 26 - May 2, 2020

Being Church = Essential

One of the many things we have learned in these days is a new vocabulary. Phrases such as "social distancing," "flattening the curve," or "shelter in place" have become a part of our everyday conversations. Yet, there is one particular phrase with which many, especially the Church, is struggling to make sense of and that is "essential and non-essential."

Public health officials have instructed we can dramatically reduce the spread of COVID-19 by ceasing to gather with persons who do not live in our own household and by limiting our "non-essential activities." Because in-person worship services, meetings and activities of the local church would gather people together who do not live in the same household, such things have been suspended for the sake of public safety.

For many communities of believers, for many religious leaders, the idea of their work being classified as "non-essential" has felt not only strange, but also a bit insulting. How could they be a community, how could they carry out their purpose and mission without meeting in person? Yet, knowing how vital worship is to a faith community, immediately churches, synagogues, temples, and houses of worship throughout the world sought to adjust and develop new ways of inviting people to worship, devotion, prayer, and connection. They had to think and act differently as communities of faith.

As a result, some very beautiful and authentic practices have emerged. Recorded worship services, which have had a wider reach. Videos of pastors and leaders in their homes offering words of comfort, songs, and prayers and shared on social media platforms. Phone calls and hand-written notes to connect with and engage members of the community. Online fellowship times through which people are given entry into a slice of each person’s lives and homes (often with beloved pets making cameo appearances). There have also been real, unfiltered offerings of worship and devotion being offered by religious leaders to the people they have been called to serve. What religious communities and their leaders realized is that it is not essential to be in the same room, sitting right next to one another to be connected by the presence of the Divine.

For our churches, gathering "in-person" for any activity at the moment is "non-essential" as it can and has increased the spread and exposure to the virus. However, that does not mean we give up connecting with one another and seeking to spread the Good News and hope of the Christ. Now, more than ever, it is vital; no, it is "essential" that we continue to worship, study, pray, reach out to others and give to support the mission and purpose of the Church. In this moment, we are being called, challenged and stretched to learn new ways of continuing to be the Church together. I believe as we seek new ways of being the Church, we will become stronger, and we will build something beautiful for ourselves, our children and generations to come.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

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

Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response - UPDATE #6, April 20, 2020
To Illinois South Conference pastors, church leaders, and congregations:
Recommendation to Extend the Suspension of In-Person Worship until May 11, 2020
The Executive Committee voted today to recommend extending the suspension of in-person worship two more weeks, through May 11, 2020. In the absence of any talk about slowly reopening Illinois, we expect state guidelines to be extended beyond the current April 30 date. If the Governor extends shelter-in-place beyond May 11, we will too.
This window of time includes Mother's Day, a Sunday that traditionally has meant many generations gathering in filled pews with happy faces. The May 11 date was purposefully chosen to include Mother's Day, because it would be exactly the wrong time to try to gather a large group of people. We are not out of the woods, and shouldn't risk creating a dramatic number of new COVID-19 cases. And, it might be a disappointing, lightly-attended service, given so many are deeply worried about leaving their homes, which it not what anyone needs right now. Instead of distributing flowers this year, consider making a donation to your church or any other organization in honor of the women in your life.
ISC Spirit
If you know of stories that show people being the church, please send it to ISCspirit@iscucc.org. Share the stories that are warming your heart. #ISCspirit.
A mother and her four-year-old daughter from the Marine congregation have been spreading some joy each week while in quarantine. They mail letters to great grandparents, mail paintings to local nursing homes and send coffee gift cards to nurses who are working so hard right now. They're looking for more ways to offer a "pick me up" to folks within their community that might need a wave through a window, or even some doughnuts left on a doorstep. Their goal is to stay positive and spread joy, while sharing how important it is to be kind to others. Shared by Rev. Phil Kershner, Marine UCC
Thank you to these churches for their OCWM donations received last week.
These donations continue to support all the work of the Conference.
Addieville- Zion UCC
Belleville- Concordia UCC
Carlinville- St. Paul UCC
Columbia- St. Paul UCC
Godfrey- Evangelical UCC
And anonymous gifts from individuals

Helpful Information
Our churches are finding creative and wonderful ways to gather in virtual community in these strange times. Some are recording their worship services for congregants, then meeting live on Zoom for a coffee hour after their regular

Pray for...

Prayer list for
April 26-May 2, 2020
Churches & Pastors
- Summerfield St. John UCC, Rev. Nancy (Stephen) Gamache
- Tower Hill St. Paul UCC, Rev. Dr. Steve (Debbie) Nance

Retired Pastors
- Rev. Kevin and Shellie Strope, Carlinville, IL

People with Life Concerns
- Pray for the healthcare workers and first responders who have put their lives on the line to protect us.
- Special prayers for the families who are dealing with loved ones who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are not able to visit them in person for support. Give strength to the sick and to those who are struggling with separation.
- Pray for Rev. Ivan (Vivian) Horn who is dealing with some health issues and tests. Rev. Horn is the Pastor for Hecker Friedens UCC, ISC Secretary, and a member of the Conference Council. Cards may be sent to him at 727 Gall Rd, Waterloo, IL 62298.
- 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...
Sunday worship time. Others are having Bible study lunch over Zoom, sharing both a meal and scripture. You might think about ways you can virtually socialize with your congregation that would sustain relationships through this time of isolation. If you need help with Zoom, contact Shana for more information.

Together in Christ's ministry with you,

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

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

Together, We Are Better!
The generosity of several pastors in Illinois South Conference has encouraged us to share worship materials that all may use, free of charge - proving that "together, we are better!" If you have liturgy, prayers, songs, videos, that you feel would be beneficial to all and are willing to share them, send them to Lynnette at ischuepbach@iscucc.org. She will add them to the Shared Worship Materials page on the ISC website. There is also a link on the home page under Worship Resources. Thank you to those who have suggested we create a page to help each other through this unprecedented experience.

Global Ministries Involved in the UCC’s Three Great Loves Tree Planting Campaign!
The United Church of Christ's Three Great Loves initiative is hosting a Tree Planting Campaign in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, April 22, happening now until April 26, 2020. As part of this celebration, the campaign hopes to support the planting of 50,000 trees both in North America and across the world.

Global Ministries invites you to participate in this exciting campaign. There are three global partners you can support as part of this campaign. The Organization of African Instituted Churches in Kenya, Theological Education by Extension in Zambia, and YMCA/YWCA of Palestine.

Consider participating in this campaign this week for Earth Day! To get started click here.

Book Review: Cathedral on Fire
Pastor Brooks Berndt's book, Cathedral on Fire (published by United Church of Christ), opens with the burning of Notre Dame. In a few short days, millions of dollars flowed in to restore the Cathedral to its former glory. Ironically, tree species which comprised original beams can no longer be found because man has consumed them.

Berndt wonders, "What if we looked at climate change as tho' God's Cathedral were on fire? What if we humans decided to live as a part of the natural world, rather than consuming it?" His handbook examines the climate crisis. He suggests ways congregations can mobilize our Christian faith into action. Each chapter contains ideas with discussion questions and suggested actions at the end. For those who recognize the climate crisis and see the need for social justice in the process, Cathedral of Fire is a valuable tool.

His chapter, "Theology in a Time of Crisis", was written before COVID-19 virus came into our lives. Yet, it speaks clearly to today's problem. To quote part of the Highland Evangelical UCC's Easter Service, Pastor Eric Quinney-Bernard, Interim Pastor, said, "Open your hearts to the need of this world. Live as if your life matters, for indeed, it does." Pastor Berndt shows us how in Cathedral on Fire.

ISC's Justice and Mission Team focused on the Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Act. It married our concern for stewardship of Earth with community justice. COVID-19 closed the Legislature and put our work on hold. As COVID-19 consumes our attention, the fight for protective justice for ALL and preservation of Earth must continue. Fifty years ago, we celebrated the first Earth Day. Yet, God's Cathedral is on Fire!

Reviewed by Kay Ahaus, Member of Justice and Mission Team

Love in Action "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." Desmond Tutu

Hope is LOVE-in-action - 3 Great Loves is Hope-in-action UCC asks you to show how you are spreading the message of hope these days by sharing God's love through your actions! 3 Great Loves is our denomination-wide mission initiative, telling the story of how we live out God's love through the lens of 3 Great Loves: Love of Neighbor, Love of Children, and Love of Creation. For sharing the stories of how we, as a united church, live out God's love in missional, measurable and meaningful ways and find resources, click here. Be sure to include pictures and videos, too!
SUMMER 2020 UPDATE
Dear Friends,

Like many camps across the country, DuBois Center has been adjusting to the uncertainty that the COVID-19 pandemic has created.

As you know, our facilities are closed to the public, but critical tasks are being addressed. Our horses and cats are checked and fed regularly. The grass is being cut; fences are being mended; and other essential work around the grounds is being addressed. Office and management functions also continue, but with reduced hours.

We give thanks that currently our staff and key volunteers are healthy. They are doing their best to be good stewards of DuBois Center and the ministry it provides, as they work together to find the best path forward. Please know that you and your families are at the forefront of our thoughts as we consider the options. As you are likely aware, our Governor has canceled in-person learning for students in Illinois for the balance of this school year. He has not yet, however, spoken definitively about summer school or the summer camping season.

In order to give you, your family and your congregation time to plan, our leadership is committed to making a decision about summer programming at DuBois Center by May 5. We will be carefully reviewing guidance from the Governor and the Illinois Department of Public Health. Whatever decision is made, know that the health and safety of our campers, guests and staff is and will remain the most important factor in our decision-making process. Remember that our Register without Risk policy continues.

A special thanks to those families, individuals and churches whose financial support has continued or has been newly added. These are challenging times for all, and your commitment is greatly appreciated!

We are sending prayers for inner peace and strength from DuBois Center to you and yours.

Sincerely,
Shirley Asmussen, Director

A FEW GOOD MEN - Summer Jobs - Apply Now!
DuBois Center is in search of a few good men to round out our summer staff roster. We have solid applicants for the female cabin counselor positions, but not for their male counterparts. If you or someone you know enjoys working with people, has a heart for ministry and is looking for a resume-building summer job - look no further! Check out the Summer of Service flyer and consider whether serving outdoors with a dynamic team might be just the opportunity. Believe it or not, working at camp is a REAL JOB with tangible benefits. Click here to read further about the benefits of working at camp. Contact Shirley at shirley.director@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202. Application packets are available online or can be sent by mail upon request.

SPRINGTIME
One of my favorite hymns as a child was "All Things Bright and Beautiful." A favorite line speaks of being given eyes to see God's amazing creation and lips "that we might tell." The glory of God surrounds us in great and small ways, from the flower that breaks through a crack in the sidewalk to the great whales of the oceans. As you shelter at home, remember to take time to BREATHE and discover the wonder of God's creation. It's there, it just might not be as obvious as it is at DuBois Center. Peace, Shirley AKA Kayak

METEOR SHOWERS & EARTH DAY 2020
April showers aren't just for flowers! Look up in the sky and you might catch sight of the Lyrid meteor shower. The prime date this year is Earth Day - April 22 in the pre-dawn hours.

EVENT CANCELLATIONS
Spring Thank You Party, April 28: This event will be rescheduled for late summer or fall. Watch for updates.

Nature Photography Retreat, May 1-2: If you are registered for this event, contact Julie our camp registrar regarding payments at register@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-357-1809.

Block Party, May 3: This event will be back next spring!

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 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
The moon is in the Waning Crescent phase - great for dark skies and star gazing. Set your alarm for EARLY! Then turn off all the lights inside and outside your home. Dress warmly, bring a blanket and find a dark spot in corner of your back yard or in an isolated spot nearby and enjoy! At its peak, 10-20 meteor per hour are expected. Fun Fact: It's reported that this meteor shower has made an appearance every April for the past 2,700 years! To learn more, check out these two websites: EarthSky and StarDate.

**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!

**Hoyleton Youth and Family Services’ doors are open, and our mission continues.**
We hope this finds each of you coping well with the uncertainty of time and the understanding that we will get through this. Every day, whether staff is with our residential youth or working from home, we continue to find new ways to serve; realize the opportunities among us; and rethink our approach. We are asking for your help. We have created an Amazon Wish List at this link with much needed supplies for the safety of our youth and staff, and just as important, the mental and physical well-being of each and every one of them. We ask that you visit our list and if you so feel inclined, select a wish and help us through these days of social distancing.
We realize some items are in tight supply and not available to us. We are looking for masks for our youth in care and staff in the congregate settings, and like most everyone, are unable to locate them. If you or someone you know is using their God-given talents to make masks, we would gladly accept them.
All of our mission partners are valuable to our continued success. We couldn’t do it without you. With prayers of comfort and safety to all of our mission partners, we will get through this! If you have any questions, please reach out to Alice Drobisch, Director of Philanthropy, Hoyleton Youth and Family Services, 618-541-9049.

Click here for the latest news from Eden!
Thank you for engaging with the Eden community. Our joint efforts to offer opportunities to connect with each other have resulted in new friendships and an expanded shared mission. Please invite others to join our beloved community! It is so very important we stay in touch!

It is our prayer that you will find the seminary wholly committed to forging a joy-filled future for Christianity, a place of extravagant welcome, no matter who you are. Read on to see the many ways you can become involved with the Eden community.

**“NEW” Convocation Re-Imagined!** Alumni, watch your email for details about the special worship service and virtual alumni reunions! Read more.

**“NEW” The Walker Leadership Institute is happy to announce the "Tools For Leadership Webinars."** The webinars are designed to provide pastors and laity with information to assist them in their role as church leaders. Webinar viewers may, if they so choose, obtain a certificate from Eden by choosing the certificate option on the “Tools for Leadership” registration page and completing questions at the end of the webinar. Webinars currently available for viewing are “Church Finance” and “Church Conflict.” For more information and the recent press release, click here.

Eden Seminary’s Theological E-Forum. Register here for Session 6 Thursday, April 23 at 7 pm entitled “Psalms for a Pandemic” presented by Dr. Clint McCann, Evangelical Professor of Biblical Interpretation. Previous sessions are recorded and available online.

**NEW STUDENTS:** This crisis period may be a time that you or someone you know is feeling called to explore meaning, purpose, and ministry. Now more than ever we are called to be a servant leader. If you want to explore how Eden can help you with that discernment process, please contact admissions at EdenAdmissions@eden.edu.

Eden’s campus is blooming! See recent photos here.
Join Eden for Chapel services on the Eden Seminary Chapel Facebook page Mondays and Wednesdays at 11:40 am and on selected Tuesday evenings at 6:15 pm. Actively participate and respond through CHATTING during service. View recordings of chapel here.

Are you new to Eden? Sign up here here to receive this weekly E-Newsletter.

Eden Seminary operates through your generous donations. Give today or contact us at advancement@eden.edu. If you'd like to send a check, please mail to Eden Theological Seminary, 475 E. Lockwood Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63119.

Deaconess Nurse Ministry and the Good Samaritan Fund
The Good Samaritan Fund through Deaconess Nurse Ministry provides financial support, subject to available funds, 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 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: 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 to: search@unipreskindercottage.org. For more information, contact Rev. Don Wagner 618-537-4991 or 618-444-2834.

Region 5
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
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 618-635-2386 or revdjatkins@gmail.com.

Region 9
CANCELLED
Belleville St. Paul UCC's Fine Art Concert Series scheduled for Sun, May 3 at 3 pm.