General Synod 33 to be a virtual experience - United Church of Christ
For the first time ever, the United Church of Christ General Synod will gather virtually. The 2021 biennial gathering is moving entirely online next year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Click here for more details.

On Our Way...Zooming.
This week, we hear from David Schoen, dschoen@ucc.org, a Minister for Church Legacy & Closure, UCC Church Building & Loan Fund. Reprinted from CARD Research Specialists
The old hymn refrain “On our way rejoicing...” could today be sung ‘On our way... Zooming, Facebooking, Skyping and YouTubing....’. One of the Covid-19 Pandemic impacts on the church has been the quick introduction and embrace of digital communication, especially on-line worship services.
I have been impressed by how rapidly pastors and churches made this rapid transition once state and city governments began calling for people to engage in social distancing and shelter-in-place. Here in Washington State that quick transition happened after our Governor called for social distancing on March 5th. On March 8, the first online Sunday happened with much courage and
experimentation into a new mode of worshipping for which many pastors and churches were barely prepared. Since that time, I have worshipped and communed with congregations and pastors across our nation, some services from family homes, farms, backyards, and churches. Some churches have the resources to create highly produced recordings while other services are created by pastors at home often assisted by their families. Worshippers respond through Zoom chat, Facebook comments and emojis, and in some, responding verbally in open mic discussions. Services have choirs with multiple individuals singing separately but digitally together, meditative prayer time, digital giving options, online coffee hours, even bloopers. A congregation this Pentecost held an ecumenical communion in their parking lot with worshippers in cars listening to the service on the radio. Congregations have expanded their online ministries offering youth ministries, Bible Studies, church meetings, prayer groups, and evening music meditations. I have appreciated the ministry and extraordinary effort of all. Read more.

Save the Date - ISC Confirmation Retreat
Dates: Fri-Sat, Sept 25-26 // Fri-Sat Oct 9-10
- Like all ISC events, these will only happen if we think we can offer them safely and meet state guidelines.
- We are going with two events instead of one to more easily allow for COVID safe interactions and stay under the 50 person limit. (We will hopefully be in that phase by then.)
- A team will plan the events together, so the events will be similar.
- Capacity will be 40 youth and the appropriate number of chaperones.

An Important Message from the United Church of Cornerstone Fund When Caring Is Not Enough
We have all been jolted by the fact that it's no longer enough to simply say that we care about all people, regardless of race, creed, color, or orientation. It's no longer enough to say that systemic racism is deplorable. It's no longer enough to say, "I'm just one person...what can I possibly do?" When something is systemic, it's time to change the system. And maybe because we are in the middle of a global pandemic, it actually seems possible to change the system—but not without a lot of hard work. Educate. Act. Love. I don't know about you, but we're up for the challenge. At the United Church of Christ Cornerstone Fund, we have always been about building community—true community. Whether it's tearing down balconies, building food pantries, or caring for children, we engage in projects that are aimed at building Community where all are treated with equal justice. 

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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.

THIS IS YOUR OCWM MONIES AT WORK
During the shelter in place order, all Conference staff will be working remotely, but they are available to help you. Keep these contacts handy. For the work of Conference teams and committees or search and call inquiries, contact Christy Pursell at cpursell@iscucc.org. For financial matters (in terms of your church's giving to the Conference or OCWM), contact Debbie Kesner at dkesner@iscucc.org.
For communicating within the Conference, the Conference website, Facebook page or Weekly Connection, contact Lynnette Schuepbach at lschuepbach@iscucc.org.

For registration for upcoming events or for information about cancelled camp sessions, contact Julie Riechmann at 618-357-1809 or jriechmann@iscucc.org.

For DuBois Center, contact Shirley Asmussen at 618-787-2202 or dcinfo@duboiscenter.org.

To speak with the Conference Minister, contact Rev. Shana Johnson at sjohnson@iscucc.org or 618-882-8247.

Illinois South Conference thanks these pastors for serving ministries within our churches:

Rev. Marvin Morgan ended his ministry as Intentional Interim as Senior Pastor at St. John UCC in Collinsville on April 19.

Rev. Cindy Bean completed her ministry as Pastor at St. Paul UCC in Pinckneyville on May 31.

Rev. Jan Dashner completed her ministry as Bridge Pastor at Zion UCC in New Baden on June 7.

We thank them for their service and look forward to the next path of their ministries.

Illinois South Conference welcomes one new pastor serving in our Conference:

Rev. Stephen Stark began his ministry as the full-time Pastor at Zion UCC in New Baden on June 8.

We welcome him into the Conference and our shared ministry.

HIVE HAPPENINGS

As reported earlier, DuBois Center’s newest residents survived their first winter. Now with all the blooming flowers and solitude, they are thriving! The bees were allowed to keep their honey stores over the winter and their diet was supplemented with nutrients and food to ensure they had ample supplies until spring. This strategy paid off. Even though the bees consumed most of their own honey over the winter, this year they have a head start. Much of the wax foundation has been laid on the frames, which makes it much easier to ramp up honey production. John Pawloski, our head beekeeper, will be especially busy the next couple of weeks. The queens need to be moved and the hives adapted to allow for greater honey production. To learn more about the specifics, click here for John’s full report.

Last year, our bees were very aggressive toward the beekeepers. This year, they have been more mellow. This may be due to more purposeful use of the smoker, which lays down smoke that disables the ability of bees to sound the alarm to one another. NOTE: For friendly visitors who stay at least 10’ away from the hives, aggressive behavior has not been an issue.

Beekeeper John is always looking for assistance while checking up on our hives. In addition this summer, he is offering small family groups of four to five the opportunity to learn more about our bees up close and personal. We have some protective suits and will be purchasing more. Proper social distancing and other safety practices will be in place and maintained. “If you have never tasted honey straight from the hive, you are missing what might possibly be the most delicious treat on Earth.” No on-going commitment is required, but once you see bees up close and personal, you will likely be hooked. Check out the video above to see John in action. For more information about helping with the hives, contact John directly at JPawloski@MSN.com. For information about the summer educational sessions for families, contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org. These sessions will be available beginning later this month, and there will be no charge for them, although donations are always gratefully accepted. Priority will be given to UCC church members and DuBois Center campers.
Here's a Thought
Pastors - John is working on a sermon series focusing on what we can learn from bees. As a completely non-patriarchal community with a strong female leader - the Queen - bees work cooperatively and have mutually supportive ways of being community. Bees can teach us what it means to be the church! If you would like copies of these sermons, contact John.

SIXTY SECONDS of SOLITUDE
Today we share another edition of 60 Seconds of Solitude from DuBois Center. It's often difficult to take time to breathe deeply, relax ones' shoulders and back, and remember that God is always with us. We hope these short videos of sacred scenes from around camp will help. Today we are joining the herd for some rest and relaxation. Since there are no rides scheduled at this time, our horses are spending some of their days soaking up the sun and enjoying fresh grass in the Deer Run pasture. Watch for our weekly solitude postings on our website and Facebook page. We hope you enjoy this and future mini relaxation reminders.

VIRTUAL CAMPFIRES
Miss the crackle of the campfire? Singing silly songs with your counselors? Listening to inspiring words from chaplains? Praying together under the stars? SO DO WE!! It won't be the same, but staff and volunteers are working on creative ways to share some of these favorites with campers and their families via virtual campfires. The first release is scheduled for 7pm this Thursday, June 11. That would have been the first closing campfire of Summer 2020. We hope you'll join us. Watch for the link on our website. This campfire will be taped, as opposed to live.

A SALUTE TO WEEK #1
This week on Facebook and Instagram, we are celebrating DuBois Center 2019 campers and leaders from Week #1. Many were registered and excited about returning this summer... before the health crisis struck. We MISS YOU and have a bunk with your name on it for next summer! A big thumbs up to our Just You & Me, Quest, Settler, Horsin' Around and Trekkin' It campers! If you haven't already done so, like us on Facebook and follow up on Instagram to stay connected.

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!
St. John's Community Care is pleased to announce that they resumed their Medical Equipment Loan Program Monday, June 8 with changes necessitated by the pandemic. They will be open to loan and accept equipment returns and donations on Monday and Thursday mornings from 9 am to noon. Please call 618-344-5008 before coming to determine if they have the equipment needed and available. They will hold the equipment in your name until the next scheduled day. When coming to pick up equipment, you MUST wear a mask to enter the building. Please be sure it covers your nose and mouth. Ring the bell to the right of the locked glass doors. Click here for more details and what equipment is available. Contact St. John's Community Care at 618-344-5008 or email info@stjohnscc.org for more information or to reserve equipment. Your voicemail message will be returned within one business day.

The Insurance Board has released its most recent Loss Control Resources containing the COVID-19 Liability FAQ, and the COVID-19 Resource Guide. Another inquiry revolves around guidelines for reopening worship services. The Insurance Board's Loss Control department is currently working on guidelines for in-person worship services which will be shared with you in the next week. Shortly thereafter they will provide information relating to youth and camps. Additionally, stay-tuned for more webcasts and some exciting news offering even more guidance on reopening church offices, worship services, and even training for staff and volunteers.

In light of the recent events of civil unrest, the Insurance Board's Loss Control Team is providing a resource for churches to use as a guide for protecting their ministries.

**What's Happening at Illinois South Conference...**

**ZOOM VBS**
The director of Christian Ed at St. Paul UCC, in Belleville, Craig Bielke, is putting together a Vacation Bible School program using the materials "Wilderness Escape Program". The sessions will be held on June 29, June 30, and July 1. The program will be presented using Zoom. It is for children Pre-K through the 6th grade. There will be NO registration fee. The craft package will be available for pickup at St. Paul UCC in Belleville on dates to be determined. If you have children who would like to participate, please contact Craig Bielke 210-383-0385 or email cbielke@stpaulucc.org.

**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 revdjakins@gmail.com or 618-635-2386.