**The Choice is Ours**

For several weekends, my husband and I have seen our next-door neighbor work tirelessly to put up a fence in her backyard. She shared with us that she had been buying sections of the fence each month for the last year in order to space out the cost. She had also watched dozens of YouTube videos to learn how to do the correct measuring, dig the fence post holes, mix the concrete, put the fence sections together and install it all properly.

Last weekend she finally finished the project. We saw her, drenched in sweat, standing back with a smile on her face, admiring her work. However, the next morning she was standing outside the fence line with several people. She looked defeated. By the next morning, one side of the fence was completely down and in pieces in the yard. The deconstructed pile sat there for several days. Apparently, one of the neighbors called city hall complaining the fence line extended into the common ground by a few inches. (Yes, a few inches.)

Because of the complaint, she received a fine from the city and would have to redo that side of the fence. I wondered how long it would take her to redo the project. I wondered how long she would stew in the disappointment, frustration, and even anger towards a nosy neighbor and unforgiving city ordinances.

This morning as I was out for a morning run, I saw her in her yard digging new fence-post holes. She said she was determined to finish the fence once again. Even though at this moment she did not have control over what had happened, she had control over how she responded to it. Despite the setback, she could rebuild what had to be torn down.

Sometimes life is like that. What we think is done, now needs to be revisited. What was built is torn down. What we thought is the end, might just be another step in the process. Sometimes we do not have control over how things have unfolded, but we do have control over how we respond. The choice is ours.

May we continue to build even when things are torn down. May we continue to move forward even when plans change. And may we never give up despite the things which disappoint, frustrate, and even anger us. May we never give up hope.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

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**Illinois South Conference shares the inspiring stories that show the faith-filled lives within our Conference. We hope this gives you comfort during this time of sheltering in place. 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.**

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**Ruthann Redmond has started a business that makes handmade masks. She also donates masks to healthcare workers. You can read about her efforts here. Ruthann is a member of Evangelical UCC in Highland, and she's served on Conference Council.**

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**A few of Alhambra Salem UCC’s children found a practical way of "being the church". The Luitjohan children (Emma, Nolan and Maddy) decided to have a lemonade stand and donate half of their earnings to Lunch Bunch sponsored by Salem UCC.**

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**Pray for...**

**Prayer list for June 21 - June 27, 2020**

**Churches & Pastors**
- Cahokia Bethel UCC, Rev. Carol (David) Shanks
- Carbondale Church of the Good Shepherd, Rev. Kim (Dr. Aaron Newcomb) Magwire
St. Paul in Nashville is teaming up with Prairie Farms to provide free milk. Every Friday in June, Prairie Farms is providing St. Paul with half gallons of 2% milk that can be distributed free to people in the community as well as shared with our Region 7 food pantry. People can come to the church to pick it up themselves, or if unable to come, volunteers deliver to their doorsteps. In April, St. Paul joined with Maschhoff Farms to provide local families with free 15-pound boneless hams. All this is part of St. Paul's mission to change the world one life at a time. *Submitted by Rev. Bev Kahle*

Stock the Pantry Drive-thru Food Collection
On Saturday June 6, St. John UCC in Fairview Heights helped their community's Food Pantry open by collecting food. The event was spearheaded by Nancy Eisenhauer and Jan Miller, members of the church. With help from the entire community, 510 items and $480 were collected in 2 hours. Pictured are the "crew" in their new church masks. *Submitted by Rev. Rosemary Captain*

Evangelical UCC in Highland sent a $5,000 Hallelujah Grant to DuBois Center. The church started the Hallelujah Grants to help people or organizations with projects they wanted to do. Folks there knew DuBois could use some financial assistance right now, and their IMT team approved the grant. Several grants have been approved during the COVID-19 pandemic, including some to members in need. Thank you so much, Evangelical UCC, for the gift to DuBois! *Submitted by Rodney Knackstedt*

**Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response**

**UPDATE #13, June 15, 2020**

**ISC Spirit**
If you know of stories that show people being the church, please send it to [ISCspirit@iscucc.org](mailto:ISCspirit@iscucc.org). Share the stories that are warming your heart. #ISCspirit.

Check out the ISC Spirit above in this newsletter or online [here](#). Thank you to these churches for their OCWM donations received last week. These donations continue to support all the work of the Conference.

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<th>Darmstadt</th>
<th>East St. Louis</th>
<th>Fairview Heights</th>
<th>Godfrey</th>
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<td>St. Peter UCC</td>
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And anonymous gifts from individuals

**Helpful Information**
- Take time to read this [poignant essay](#) by Rev. Starsky Wilson, President and CEO of the Deaconess Foundation, titled How do you handle Black Death? Rev. Wilson is also the former pastor of St. John's UCC - The Beloved Community in St. Louis.
- Unsure where to start learning about systemic racism? Victoria Alexander, an anti-racism researcher, has created a very helpful Anti-Racism Resource Guide. You can [get it here](#). In includes term definitions, books, movies, TV shows, podcasts, important organizations, and much more.
- Embrace Race has created a list of children's books that support discussing race. You can find the [book list here](#).

**Retired Pastor**
- Rev. Jack Spratte and Barbara Van Ausdall, Mascoutah, IL

**People with Life Concerns**
- Pray for the family of Rev. E. John Schaller as they mourn his death on Friday, June 11. Visitation and funeral were yesterday at St. Paul UCC in Waterloo. Read the entire obituary [here](#). Rev. Schaller served churches in Caseyville, Metropolis, Hecker, Carondelet (St. Louis), and Waterloo, and he served as a social worker for DCFS. He graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in 1958. Memorials may be made to Hecker Friedens UCC or Eden Theological Seminary.
- Keep the family of Rev. Dr. John (Shirley) Trnka in your prayers as they mourn his passing on June 13 in Newburgh, IN. Rev. Trnka served as Pastor at St. Paul UCC in Belleville as well as Interim Pastor at 14 churches in Indiana. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Retirement Housing Foundation (RHF). Visitation is from 10 am until a Celebration of Life service at 6 pm on Saturday, June 20 at Boone Funeral Home East Chapel - A Family Tradition Funeral Home, 5330 Washington Avenue with Reverend Mike Thompson officiating. A Live Stream will be available on the Boone Funeral Home's Facebook page beginning twenty minutes prior to the service time. Click on the link provided there. Burial will be at 1:00 pm, Monday, June 22 in St. John Cemetery in Collinsville, IL. Click [here](#) to read the entire obituary. Cards of condolence may be sent to Shirley at 6244 Lyndhurst Dr, Newburgh, IN 47630.
- Pray for the people of the United States as we work towards equality and civility for us all.
The National Museum of African American History and Culture, a part of the Smithsonian Institution, has opened the Talking about Race web portal. The site helps people explore issues of race, racism and racial identity.

For the first time, the United Church of Christ General Synod will gather virtually. The 33rd Synod scheduled for next year will be moving entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Click here for more details.

Please note: Our last edition of the COVID-19 Update will be June 29 unless there is a situation which warrants us updating you with new, pertinent information. However, please keep those ISC Spirit stories coming, as we will continue to feature them in Weekly Connection.

**Worship Resources**

- The Conference Local Church Ministries Team is producing a worship service that will be shared before Sunday, June 28. Pastors in the Conference plan now to use this video and can take a Sunday off from preparing worship.
- We have more worship resources on the Conference website, with a link on the home page.

**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

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**Illinois South Conference thanks this pastor for serving at St. Paul UCC in Columbia:**


We thank him for his service and look forward to hearing about his new path in retirement. He has served well. Cards may be sent to him at 284 Keystone Ct, O'Fallon, IL 62269.

**Illinois South Conference welcomes these new pastors serving in our Conference:**

Rev. Dr. Sheldon Culver will begin as Bridge Pastor at St. Paul UCC in Columbia on July 5, 2020 through August 2, 2020.


**We welcome them into active ministry as part of Illinois South Conference.**

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AmazonSmile customers can now support Illinois South Conference of The United Church of Christ in the Amazon shopping app on iOS and Android mobile phones! Simply follow these instructions to turn on AmazonSmile and start generating donations.

1. Open the Amazon Shopping app on your device
2. Go into the main menu of the Amazon Shopping app and tap into ‘Settings’
3. Tap ‘AmazonSmile’ and follow the on-screen instructions to complete the process

If you do not have the latest version of the Amazon Shopping app, update your app. Click here for instructions.

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**UCC Juneteenth 2020...And Still We Rise**


In this moment we are witnessing public lynchings and state sanctioned violence against black bodies. Together we must stop the murders of African descendant people! Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd are the latest victims of state
sanctioned militarism, and white racists invoking the "Stand Your Ground" law in order to justify lethal gun violence against African Americans.

"We Are Not Ok"
These are more than words. We are not ok is a deeply felt response to the ongoing racism and injustices impacting communities of African descent. There is an urgency to dismantle systems and institutions perpetuating and supporting racists and racism.

You Are Invited
The United Church of Christ invites you to register and join the live webinar, Juneteenth 2020: And Still We Rise, Friday, June 19, 2020 at 12 noon until 1:30 pm EDT. Register and download the program.

Become part of the movement to protect black lives, and create long-term sustainable movements towards liberation, equity, and healing, and calls to action for repair and reparations.

We are called to stand in solidarity with protestors, grieving parents, and young people across multiple cultures and ethnicities nationally and globally

There must be a radical shift to reimagine and reinterpret the Bible from the lived experiences of people of color, especially women of color.

Be the Gospel and use our bodies and voices to defend human and civil rights

None of us are free until all of us are free from racism.

Join the Movement
June 19, 2020 will kick off a 4-year campaign within the United Church of Christ racial justice ministries.

For more information contact Rev. Dr. Velda Love, lovev@ucc.org.

Global Ministries Vehicle Donations - You can donate almost any type of vehicle as a tax-deductible gift to Global Ministries through CARS, Inc. They will even tow cars that no longer work. Your vehicle should be picked up within a few days. To start the process, begin here.

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.

The Insurance Board has released its most recent Loss Control Resources focusing on the phases to reopening church buildings and hold services during phase 2.

Other Resources:
COVID-19 Liability FAQ
COVID-19 Resource Guide
Protecting the pastor during civil unrest resource

DuBois Center News
A SALUTE TO WEEK #3 - This week on Facebook, Instagram and during our virtual campfire, we are celebrating DuBois Center 2019 campers and leaders from Week #3.

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, Boy Meets Camp and Settler campers! If you haven't already done so, like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram to see more photos and stay connected. Oops! You caught us. We are saving week #2 for next week because the sessions in weeks 2 & 3 swapped places between 2019 and 2020, so we are doing the same.
CELEBRATING PARTNERSHIPS
One of DuBois Center’s long-standing partnerships is with the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri. The Diocese has been utilizing our facilities and programming for their summer camp since 2005. Both groups take the partnership seriously. We share staff as the need arises - everything from directors assisting with pieces of staff training to last minute fill-in counselors. One of their directors even drove a tractor in the pouring rain at Fall Festival 2019. Our leadership teams meet together periodically throughout the year, virtually and in person, to evaluate and plan for the coming season. During their actual camp, our collaborative efforts kick into high gear. Our teams know each other’s names and share a meal and special treats together. We have worked hard over the years to eliminate any sense of “US and THEM,” and you can feel it in the air. Contacting Camp Phoenix about our summer of fallow ground was almost as difficult as sharing the sad news with camper families and would-be staff members. Their leadership team graciously received the news and expressed their appreciation for the timely decision. In addition, after being approached by Camp Phoenix leadership, the Bishop-Elect chose to donate the majority of their deposit to DuBois Center. The total donation will be close to $4,000. Camp Phoenix has scheduled a retreat in October for their oldest camps. Whatever is not spent on that retreat will be donated to support DuBois Center during these challenging times. Our sincere THANKS are extended to the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri! We are all looking forward to next summer! In fact, Camp Phoenix already has the clock ticking down on their website - only 404 days until their return.

WORSHIP from DuBOIS CENTER
On Sunday June 7, worship for St. Paul UCC in Lebanon was "live" from DuBois Center. Rev. Don and Nancy Wagner packed up their video equipment and communion ware and headed to camp. Their sound stage was the dock by Oak Lodge with the lake as their backdrop. Special music was shared by camp staff members, and Pastor Don utilized the mystery of leaves and their colors for the children's message. Woven throughout the sermon were recollections of Pastor Don's early experiences at DuBois Center and ways in which they affected his faith journey. He lifted up the joys of the diverse community at DuBois Center and lessons learned under the stars, around the campfire, during worship and while sharing meals. You are invited to share in this message of celebration and challenge. Click here to view the worship video. Thanks Pastor Don for sharing DuBois Center with your congregation and our community!

VIRTUAL CAMPFIRE
Thursday, June 18
Our first ever virtual campfire aired last Thursday night at 7 pm and is now available to view online. Join us "live" this Thursday at 7 pm for the second edition - even more staff and volunteers will be joining us. This week’s campfire will be packed with songs, skits, stories and family fun. We are adding a segment with silly jokes and riddles! You can share your favorites by submitting them in video or written form to dbcprogramoffice@gmail.com, our YouTube email. Be sure to keep the jokes clean and positive! No put-downs allowed! Remember to SPEAK LOUDLY! All submissions will be reviewed for appropriateness, and some may be saved for later editions. Your submission implies consent for DuBois Center to use the submission in items produced and shared by DuBois Center. If all goes as planned, we hope to join together around the campfire on these Thursday nights - June 18 and 25, July 2, 9 and 16. Each of these, except the last one, would have been the nights of our closing campfires this summer. We hope you'll join us. Watch for details. The link will be available each Thursday morning or before.
DAYS at DuBOIS CENTER
We are easing into the re-opening process by initially offering just a few options - ones we feel can be provided safely. Phase 3 of the "Restore Illinois" plan allows us to host groups of up to 10 people as long as safety protocols are being followed. In-tact family units are preferred and require fewer adaptations. Beginning next week, small groups of UCC church members and DuBois Center camper families are invited to enjoy days at DuBois Center. Self-Guided Activities: hiking, fishing, campfire cooking, walking the labyrinth, flying a kite and taking on a work project. Staff-Guided Activities: archery, creek walks, pontoon boat rides and shelter building. Once procedures and staff are in place, we hope to be able to offer horseback riding, canoeing, swimming and overnight experiences in tents and the cottages. In celebration of our shared ministry, there will be no charge for self-guided day visits for our UCC and DuBois Center family. Prices vary for staff-guided activities. Reservations are required; contact DuBois Center at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202 to explore the possibilities.

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 sitting near Picnic Point at the site of the "old chapel" in main camp. The cross, the stone table and the view remain as reminders of the campers who have gone before us. This is the cross that can be seen when canoeing or playing on the water mat. It is a symbol of the source of our joy and community at DuBois Center. Watch for our weekly solitude postings on our website and Facebook page. We hope you enjoy this and future mini relaxation reminders.

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.

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

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.
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.

SUMMER 2020
NYE ONLINE
http://www.uccpages.org/nye2020/

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.