Restored, Repaired, and Renewed Relationships

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." - Matthew 18: 15-20

The Gospel text for this Sunday may not be an easy one to preach on, but it is a necessary one for faith communities and individual Christians to grasp in terms of good practices. I believe the Gospel of Matthew, the 18th chapter, verses 15 through 20, shows us a good practice for conflict resolution. In every relationship, there will be conflicts that arise.

Perhaps it is something done or said which hurts, offends or harms another. Perhaps it is the opposite, something that was not done or not said which can cause damage. Perhaps it is opposing viewpoints, philosophies, or beliefs which create a divide. Or a deeper moral or ethical injury which has broken the relationship.

Regardless of what it is, if there is brokenness in the relationship, if there is a breakdown in communication, if there is a barrier between two persons, there is something that must be done to restore, repair and renew the relationship. The Gospel of Matthew offers a practical and sensible practice for us to consider and model in our own lives and in the life of the Church at every level.

The first step in this practice is to go directly to the person who has hurt you. (And notice there is even a directive of when to speak to the person—"when the two of you are alone." Actually, I think this is a step we so often get wrong. Too many times, the person who has hurt, offended, or harmed us is the last person we talk about the situation. Instead, we talk to anyone who is in earshot or will listen about what we believe are the ways they have done wrong to us. This can not only damage the reputation of that person, but also it can escalate the situation by getting other people involved and getting ourselves even more worked up. More importantly, it does not give the person a chance to understand and hear from us how their words or actions have affected us. It also does not give them a chance to learn from their mistakes.

In my experience, when someone has come to me directly about how I have hurt them through what I have said or done (or not said or not done), even though it stings at first, it becomes an opportunity to restore the relationship, often leaving it stronger. It also gives me the opportunity to learn and grow. Many times, I had no idea how I was being perceived, how I came across, or how I messed up.

The second and third steps in this practice, which are offered in the Gospel of Matthew, are about others bearing witness. This is important when an injury is severe enough and has done enough damage that the person who has been harmed feels they are not being heard or have not received the needed response for restoration and healing. This is not about garnering more support for the sake of a fight or being right. Rather, it is always about reconciling persons so that relationships are restored, and the community is stronger and bound together which leads us closer to Christ and to one another.
One of the verses I find particularly compelling in this passage is verse 18. "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." For me, it reminds me of the incredible responsibility we have in the Church to be in good and right relationships as we are modeling God’s presence and power to the world. Too often, what we model is not appealing to those seeking to know God more fully.

Consider what it is we bind to. Do we bind to revenge or making sure one who hurt us experiences the hurt we feel? Do we bind to being right instead of being compassionate and loving? Do we bind to making sure no one knows how we have faltered or failed?

Consider what we are willing to loose or free ourselves from. Do we free ourselves from responsibility? Understanding? Kindness? Growth? And forgiveness?

Imagine freeing ourselves from creating more drama and damage to our relationships, and instead binding ourselves to creating spaces for forgiveness to abound and for reconciliation to flourish so that all of God’s beloved might experience a Christ-centered restoration and renewal in their relationships.

As Jesus spoke to the disciples about this good practice of truth telling, perhaps this is what he imagined for the Church and for you and I.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

ISC Annual Meeting Offering
The Conference Council approved the Conference Gatherings Team’s decision that the Annual Meeting offering will be designated for food pantries supported by our ISC churches. We will ask churches to "bring" their offerings to the meeting by sending in their checks to ISC with Annual Meeting offering on the memo line and the amount being donated on the "Hunger Project" line of the monthly contribution form. The ISC Hunger Action team will assist in the distribution of the monies raised for our food pantries. We know that hunger is an ongoing issue and that COVID-19 has put an extra strain on the pantries. So, we pray that the generosity of the churches and delegates will assist the pantries and their patrons during this time.

Check Your Bylaws & Constitution
As you prepare for fall and think about how to handle committee meetings and/or congregational meetings during this continued time of COVID, here are a couple of resources.

The first is a good resource our Conference lawyer, Mike McKee created in terms of what should be in your Constitution and Bylaws. The fall would be a good time to look at your current Constitution and Bylaws. Since it is unlikely previous leadership imagined church governance in the time of a pandemic, it might be a good idea to specifically add something about virtual meetings and voting procedures. Please keep in mind that the State of Illinois does allow for virtual meetings and electronic voting.

Second, Rev. Shana Johnson strongly recommends taking the time to watch the webinar Heather Kimmel, our legal counsel of the UCC, created with Rev. Dr. Chris Davies, team member of Faith Education INovation and FORmation (INFO) of the UCC, in which Heather address these specifics. Click here to watch.

If Rev. Johnson can help you with questions or concerns that your church might have about these new realities, reach out to her at sjohnson@iscucc.org or 618-882-8247.

Singing During the Pandemic
Here are two websites with information about the effects of singing in church during this pandemic. Thanks to Lisa Neal, Music Director for Evangelical UCC in Highland for sharing this information.

Sing! The Center For Congregational Song

Retired Pastor
- Rev. Michael and Elizabeth Marx, Sr., Owensboro, KY 42301

People with LifeConcerns
- Please pray for the family of Daniel Bonilla, the youngest child of Plutaro and Esperanza Bonilla. Many in Illinois South Conference will remember Plutaro and Esperanza Bonilla and their four children who were UCC Board of World Mission missionaries. In the 1980s, Plutaro and his family came to the United States from Costa Rica to spend a missionary year in the Illinois South Conference. Plutaro was a university professor, theologian, and Latin American Secretary for the American Bible Society. While living in the Conference, Plutaro worked closely with the ISC Mission Committee to create opportunities for Plutaro to lead Bible studies, and for Plutaro, Esperanza and their children (Pricilla, Jonatán, Palo and Daniel) to visit churches in Illinois South Conference to promote the work of the UCC Board of World Ministries. Daniel died at age 54 after a long illness. We hope those who remember the Bonillas “con cariño” (with appreciation) will reach out to the family with your sympathies. The family lives in San José, Costa Rica and can be reached through their son Jonatán at bonillaf@gmail.com.

- Please pray for Rev. Bill (Patti) Causer as he continues to recover from surgery. Cards may be sent to 11315 N Presley Ln, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864.

- Keep all pastors in your prayers as they continue to provide spiritual support and creative services during this unprecedented time.

- Pray for the people of the United States as we work towards equality and civility for us all.
American Choral Directors Association
The Broadway Relief Project has developed a mask that makes singing safer and more comfortable. Order it here.

**Zoom Prayer and Lectionary Lunch Hour for Pastors**
Starting Wednesday, September 9, the Local Church Ministries team will be hosting a weekly Zoom Prayer and Lectionary Lunch Hour on Wednesday at 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm for all Illinois South Conference pastors. This is an opportunity for clergy in the Conference to get together for weekly prayer, support, and the sharing of preaching and worship ideas for the coming Sunday. We hope to see you in Zoom for our Wednesday lunch hours. An email with the Zoom link was sent to all pastors.

**Liberty - In Pursuit of Peace**
by Chilang Lawless, member of the ISC Conference Gatherings Team and Murphysboro St. Peter's UCC.
This year is anything but what we consider normal, to say the least. I almost can't remember life before COVID-19, the quarantine, the stay-at-home order, social distancing, face masks, for now that's the new norm. I think about the thousands of lives lost (and counting) in just a short period of time. The many affected by COVID-19 and what their families have or had to endure, some still enduring. Now so much of the COVID news is overshadowed by the protests and police brutality. It's hard to find peace or freedom from strife in all that is happening now. As I was growing up (even now), we considered the month of July a big celebration month because we celebrate 2 major events. The first, starting with July 4, the American Independence Day. The birth of a new nation, freed from the British rule, and many finding some peace after the hard struggle to become free. Thus, the celebration of 4th of July, it is patriotically celebrated every year with grand parades, flag waving, majestic bands, fireworks, picnics, family reunions ... however not so much for this year. The Declaration of Independence is our passport to liberty and freedom, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." How are we doing on that? The second event is much more significant to a group of people, including myself. After the attack at Pearl Harbor, Japan attacked the US territory of the island of Guam early morning on December 10, 1941, that was the first battle for the island. Japan took control of the US territory and occupied it for 31 months. The second battle came on July 21, 1944 when the US came back to reclaim the territory. The native Chamorro people were liberated from the cruelty and slavery of the Japanese regime. Peace and freedom had finally arrived from the atrocities of war. Guam’s Liberation Day. To this day, every July 21 is celebrated religiously not only on the island of Guam, but around the world where native Chamorros live. Those of us Chamorros that reside here in southern Illinois celebrate Liberation Day with a picnic every year at Carlyle Lake, except for this year. Liberation! What does it mean—freedom from imprisonment, slavery, or oppression; deliverance, liberty. It can be physically, mentally or spiritually. To read the entire devotional, click here.

**UCC DISASTER MINISTRIES UPDATE - HOW TO HELP**
**IOWA DERECHO AND HURRICANE LAURA NOW:**
**Finances**
Right now, we can make donations to UCC Disaster Ministry through your local UCC Congregation and the Illinois South Conference. Our prayers and financial donations are most needed now. Please make a donation by check or online.

**Check Donations:**
You may send through your local UCC church or send directly to the Illinois South Conference office at 1312 Broadway, Highland Il. 622249. The Conference office
will then forward donations received to the UCC Disaster Ministry for direct dispersal. Write "Iowa Derecho Response" on your check or in an attached note.

**Online donations:**
You may make donations through the Conference's website at [www.iscucc.org](http://www.iscucc.org). Click on the donations link for Disaster Ministries link at the bottom right of the Changing Lives section and indicate the "Iowa Derecho Response" in the "special instructions to ISC" section below the donation amount field. Please leave your address as well so that your donation can be credited to you.

Thank you for helping to make the UCC response a reality.

**Make Church World Disaster Buckets and Kits**
See [https://cwskits.org/](https://cwskits.org/) for complete details. To save on shipping fees - buckets and kits may be dropped off at the Lifewise facility at 1321 So 11th St. St. Louis, Mo. 63104 on October 2-3, Friday and Saturday from 9:30 to 11:30 am. Another drop-off point is Bethlehem UCC, Evansville, IL between Sept. 26 and Oct. 16. Call 812-449-8852 for an appointment.

**CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES**
Wildfires burning in Northern California are keeping almost all of the 116 churches in the Conference on alert. According to Rev. Diane Weible, the Conference Minister, "Every faith community in the Conference is affected in some way. Several communities were evacuated for a period of time. Some communities have been cleared to return home, while others are waiting to learn when they might be evacuated. In addition, the Conference is in danger of losing its camp. UCC Disaster Ministries will continue to be in conversation with the leadership of the Conference, to monitor the situation, and be part of the response at the appropriate time.

All of our prayers and concern for those impacted by these disasters are welcome and appreciated.

- **Illinois South Conference thanks Rev. Earl (Johanna) Crecelius, Jr.** for serving St. Paul's UCC in Freeburg and for his service on various teams within Illinois South Conference. His final day as pastor was Sunday, August 30, 2020. We wish Earl and Johanna the best for retirement and the next ministry in their lives. Thank you both for a job well done. Photo of Rev. Crecelius preaching his final sermon at St. Paul's UCC, Freeburg.

- **Another ISC Pastor makes the news.** Welcome, again, to Rev. Steve Boorsma, Pastor of St. John UCC in Valmeyer. Read his story in Republic Times [here](#).

**CONTACT US - 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](mailto: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](mailto:dkesner@iscucc.org).

For communicating within the Conference, the Conference website, Facebook page or Weekly Connection, contact Lynnette Schuepbach at [lschuepbach@iscucc.org](mailto: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](mailto:jriechmann@iscucc.org). For DuBois Center, contact Shirley Asmussen at [618-787-2202 or dcinfo@duboiscenter.org](mailto:dcinfo@duboiscenter.org).

To speak with the Conference Minister, contact Rev. Shana Johnson at [sjohnson@iscucc.org](mailto:sjohnson@iscucc.org) or [618-882-8247](tel:618-882-8247).

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**DuBois Center News**

**EMBRACE A SPACE**
Join us to Embrace a Space! Is there a special spot at DuBois Center that you really enjoy or that brings back great memories? Are there specific work tasks that you especially enjoy? Individuals, families and groups are invited to make a commitment to a space at camp and return throughout the length of the commitment to work on that plot of earth, building or area. The possibilities are nearly...
endless. Consider weeding and pruning the Rustic Chapel, painting the little hidden deck near Oak Lodge, or cleaning the Craft Grotto. Thinking bigger? Take on a building (a cottage) or a series of them (the cabins in Fish Ridge). All our buildings would appreciate some extra TLC! Over the decades, volunteers have been a significant piece of the ministry of DuBois Center. With limited maintenance hours in general, and especially during the COVID-19 shut-down, there is a significant need for willing and able workers. Currently we have projects for individuals, family groups and small teams who agree to follow camp rules related to wearing masks and practicing good physical distancing. For more information, contact us at dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org or 618-787-2202.

FALL PROGRAMMING
The Decision
Last week, with a heavy heart, we announced the postponement of our fall programming to 2021. On Monday August 17, the ISC Conference Council, with full support of the Outdoor Ministries Team, voted unanimously to postpone all in-person retreats and events sponsored by DuBois Center and/or the Illinois South Conference through the end of 2020. This includes the ISC Confirmation Retreats, Nature’s Classroom, Mother-Daughter Retreat and Wrangle & Ride. Our first priority is the health and safety of our campers, guests and staff. As COVID-19 cases rise steadily throughout our region and a number of schools are reacting and adapting to cases among students and teachers, it is clear that to proceed would not be the cautious or sensible approach. We will continue to welcome small groups and families to camp for overnights, select activities and work projects, as long as they are willing to follow strict safety protocols related to the COVID virus. For more information contact us at 618-787-2202 or dcinfo@DuBoisCenter.org.

RUSTIC PLAYING
FIELD: Volunteers Making a Difference
You may recall that in November, a strange sink hole was discovered in the Rustic Village. That sink hole was actually the old septic tank caving in on itself. In early July, a new septic tank, connecting pipes and drain field were installed. The work left a large portion of the playing field unusable... at least for playing. Last week property committee member and volunteer Mark Beckmeyer loaded up his tiller, some seed and fertilizer and spent a steamy day at DuBois Center. Knowing the critical need for a good, flat playing surface, he did most of the work in twos. First, he fertilized the ground in one direction and then in the other. Next, he tilled the area; then harrowed it - again going in one direction and then the other. Two passes with the push seeder came next and then another two full rounds of harrowing. The field looks amazing. Now we wait for gentle rains. THANKS to Mark and all our volunteers and donors! We couldn't do it without you!

THE GREAT ESCAPE
The horses at DuBois Center are the most memorable part of camp for many. Some past campers, who are now in their 40s and 50s, can remember the names of their favorites and even which ones they rode each year. We love them, but just like children, they can be mischievous. This Sunday morning, a neighbor called to alert us off “The Great Escape.” The herd was found enjoying a leisurely Sunday morning brunch in our north fields. The fields, which had been freshly cut and baled, presented a smorgasbord too tempting to resist. Calls were made to semi-local camp staff and volunteers, and the horses were soon back inside the safety of our fences. THANKS to Josh, Ryan and Tom for their extra effort!

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!
Global Ministries invites you to participate in the third annual Festival of Stories. Share your story about supporting God’s global mission through special giving in fun and innovative ways. Your story may inspire others to join with you in providing resources for Global Ministries. Please submit your story this week to gifts@dom.disciples.org along with any photos and videos to help illustrate your story. Below are a few examples of creative, above-and-beyond ways that local churches are supporting the work of Global Ministries and global partners. Here are some stories to give you some ideas. Emmanuel UCC and Tropical Sands Christian Church.

Good Samaritan Fund through Deaconess Nurse Ministry
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 or the Illinois South Conference.

Eligible Applicant Criteria:
1. Active or retired UCC clergy with good standing and residing in the Missouri Mid-South or Illinois South Conference of the UCC.
2. 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.

Type of Assistance:
1. One time, Emergency Assistance Grants are for unforeseen circumstances that create financial demands. 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.
2. 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. Talk to your conference minister if you need assistance.

Give a Flu Shot to Someone in Need
This year, Deaconess Nurse Ministry’s goal is giving out 700 flu shots to people who need it during the flu season, which is soon approaching. The vaccines were generously donated by Mercy, but funds are still needed to purchase medical supplies and PPE to keep our nurses and community safe when administering those shots. Because of the pandemic, the prices of basic medical supplies, such as needles, gloves, band aids, alcohol wipes, and hand sanitizer, have jumped double or more. Deaconess Nurse Ministry will need a minimum of $4,000 this year to cover the cost. Your help will make it possible for low-income adults to stay healthy this flu season. Click here to donate.

Hoyleton Golf Classic
Hoyleton Youth and Family continues moving forward and adapting to the changes they face. Mark your calendars for Friday, October 2, 2020 for the Hoyleton Golf Classic at Tamarack. Info will be coming soon, and you can find out more at www.Hoyleton.org. There are sponsorship opportunities, foursomes and, of course, single golfers! The event is always a good time, and they will follow the state of Illinois and CDC guidelines to stay safe and be well.

Deaconess Foundation has many ways to engage with the community, advocate for change and invest in the lives of children. Deaconess is pleased to have supported the Close the Workhouse Campaign with funding through their Responsive Grants program, space as a Center-Based Initiative and our voice as an institutional advocate. We continue to learn from the campaign's leaders (Action St. Louis, ArchCity Defenders and The Bail Project) and its lessons for our community. The most significant lesson this campaign has illuminated is that sustained public education, followed by mobilization and democratic action can generate, allocate and reallocate public resources for the benefit of children and families. With this success in mind, we are affirmed in our commitment to invest in the power of people in communities to advocate, organize and mobilize for change.
Their newsletter highlights many ways to engage, advocate and invest in the lives of children. If you would like to see the entire monthly e-newsletter to find out more of the ways you can get involved, click [here](#).

Men and women who serve as family caregivers to loved ones struggling with dementia or Alzheimer’s can be challenged by stress which can cause depression or anxiety. A caregiver who is suffering from the added stress may not be at their best to care for themselves or their loved one. With your help, we can spread the word that St. John’s Community Care can support them on their journey that no one should take alone. Here are a few programs you can suggest to friends or neighbors who serve as caregivers.

- **On Line - Stress Busting Program**
- **On Line Support Groups** Offered monthly - Family Caregivers Support Group or Alzheimer’s Support Group
- **On Line - Memory Cafe Group** Offered monthly
- **In Person - BRAIN WAVE Early Memory Loss Program**
- **In Person - Savvy Caregiving**

St. John’s Community Care is currently offering in-person and on-line support and programs for family caregivers at no charge using Zoom. For more information, call Gail Shaw at 618-344-5008.

What’s Happening at Illinois South Conference...

**Job Wanted:**
Retired teacher seeking church (or other business) in need of full/part time receptionist/secretary. Confident people skills, competent in Microsoft and Google apps, familiar with office equipment, experience with bulletin layouts, PowerPoint, and ProPresenter. Please contact Lisa Cleveland at [neal.lisa4@gmail.com](mailto:neal.lisa4@gmail.com) or 618-410-0663.

**Ferguson Buying Blitzes** - Dear Friends in Ministry,
As we did a few years ago, Marine UCC invites you to a series of three “Ferguson Buying Blitzes” to help the businesses of that community recover from recent rioting. We will meet at 10:00 am on three alternating Saturdays, Sept. 12 and Sept. 26. Our meeting place will be at New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church. Their Pastor Emeritus, Alonzo Adams, has agreed to allow us to meet there. The address is 1 N. Dade Street in Ferguson. The idea is to spread out and spend money in the businesses of the area. Hope to see you! Thanks. Rev. Phil Kershner

**3 Great Loves** is the UCC-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 to see ideas from other churches, please visit [3greatloves.org](http://3greatloves.org). If you decide to share your story, be sure to include pictures and videos, too!

**Goodsearch and Goodshop**
GoodSearch is a search engine that donates a portion of its income from advertisements to charities. When you sign up for GoodSearch it will show that you are supporting “Global Ministries - Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ.” Additionally, you can support “Global Ministries - Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ” as you shop online through GoodShop, which donates up to 20% of your online purchases to the work of Global Ministries. Global Ministries is grateful for the more than $4,000 received by taking these simple steps! To learn how to use GoodSearch and GoodShop click [here](#).

**Job Opportunity:** St. Peter UCC in Lenzburg is looking for an organist/pianist starting at the 10 am worship service on the first Sunday in September. Contact the office at 618-475-2557 or [stператорlenzburg@htc.net](mailto:stператорlenzburg@htc.net).