T’was just weeks before Christmas, when all through the town, not a person was stirring, morale was quite down.  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, but with shopping a challenge, we feared they’d stay bare.    
Children are adjusting to new daily grinds, with so much technology occupying their minds.  
While sitting, relaxing in flannel and fleece, we ponder the question, When will this all cease?  
When suddenly outside we heard a strange noise, we’ve missed having visitors, one of our joys.  
Away to the window we opened the blind, but weren’t quite sure just who we might find.  
The moon put its glow on the leaves on the ground, which made us amazed by what we just found.  
Squinting our eyes with all of our forces, what we began to see was DuBois Center’s horses.  
With Sharon, Bre, Scott, Sandy, and Larry, showing that horses are friendly and not at all scary.  
With saddles & bridles, and walking so tame, they whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;  
“Now Thunder, now, Zephyr, now Cocoa and Apache! On, Clover, on Phoenix, on Sunny, and Classy!  
Around the arena, and past all the bales, they trotted and trotted through all of the trails.  
But that wasn’t all we spied with our eyes, there were other camp things adding to our surprise!  
There are counselors leading campers on fun nature walks, and chaplains on hand for devotions and talks.  
The lifeguards are ready to make swimming safe, and plenty of opportunities to grow in one’s faith.  
Kids making new friends, while enjoying the sun, and yummy s’mores ‘round a campfire when the day is done.  
There’s archery with bows and targets to hit, and exercise a plenty in the lively gaga pit.  
No Chromebook, or cell phone for children to pack, but they sure enjoy GORP, a famous camp snack.  
New songs, a cute skit, or learning meal graces, puts plenty of smiles on all the kid’s faces.
So, no need to worry, and no need to fret, no shopping mall necessary, the perfect gift we can get.

What does all this mean - perhaps a sign from above? We can give a camp experience to those that we love!

So that’s what was meant by this evening’s surprise sight, So, Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

© Nancy Wagner

Looking for a unique gift for someone special in your life? Not sure you want to shop in a crowded mall or store this year?

Consider giving a gift certificate for a future DuBois Center camp experience.

For the past 10 years, Don and I began the tradition of giving an annual DuBois Center camp experience to each of our grandchildren. The excitement in their eyes as they make their personal camp choice, their anticipation of going to camp, and finally hearing about their camp experience from their perspective is priceless!

Pastor Don & Nancy Wagner

DuBois Center Gift Certificates are available in any amount. Adding an item from the camp

Prayer list for Nov 29-Dec 5, 2020

Churches & Pastors
-Nashville St. Paul UCC, Rev. Beverly Kahle
-New Athens St. John UCC, Rev. Dr. Robert (Cathy) Koch

Retired Pastors
- Revs. Janis Dashner and Robert Goddard, O'Fallon, IL

Clergy Prayer and Lectionary Study. A small group of colleagues gather each week, as we are able, to pray for each other, and to share some ideas for that week’s preaching. Mostly, we have some time to be together, to share our struggles, and find that laughter gives healing and courage to continue. Wednesdays at 12:30. Join Zoom Meeting - Meeting ID: 874 0898 7191 https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87408987191 The next meeting will be on Wednesday, December 2, to avoid conflicts with Thanksgiving plans. Rev. Dr. Don Wagner will facilitate the next meeting.

People with Life Concerns
Pray for Rev. Nancy (Kevin Lee) Spier-Lee as she deals with some health issues and rehabilitation. Rev. Spier-Lee was the Pastor for Zion UCC St. Joe in Waterloo and served on several ISC teams. Cards may be sent to her at 309 Kroeger Ave, Dupo, IL 62239.

-Pray for peace during the post-election.
- Keep all pastors in your prayers as they continue to provide spiritual support and creative services during this unprecedented time.
store, such as a hat, plush toy, or water bottle, along with your special personal message, would make an attractive package which can be available for pick up or mailed to the address of your choice. For more information and details, please call: (618) 787-2202 or visit our website at www.duboiscenter.org.

- Pray for the people of the United States as we work towards equality and civility for us all.
- 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.

Advent – A Season of Preparation: Faith-based Organizing Training for Justice
Advent is the season Christians are called to prepare for the coming of Jesus in the world and, with Jesus, the in-breaking of justice. What distinguishes faith-based organizing from other trainings is our reason why. The United Church of Christ and the National Council of Churches have joined forces to offer trainings built on a foundation of discipleship.

- What will the world look like when justice comes?
- And how do we prepare for its arrival?

Join them for four-session series of faith-based organizing training for justice that explore four theological framings of resistance as discipleship. Each session also includes space for interaction, questions, and downloadable resources.

- Sunday, November 29 – 3 pm – 5 pm CST
- Sunday, December 6 – 3 pm – 5 pm CST
- Sunday, December 13 – 3 pm – 5 pm CST
- Sunday, December 20 – 3 pm – 5 pm CST

Individual registration $90. Congregation/Group registration $199. Find out more and register.

We are thankful for...
Our Neighbors
Our Children
God’s Creation

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, please visit 3greatloves.org. Be sure to include pictures and videos, too! Share your story.

Deaconess Foundation Update
On Tuesday, November 10, during the Joint Annual Meeting of Deaconess Foundation and Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being the boards affirmed the appointment and expansion of the Executive Search Committee to include key voices of the Saint Louis Community and philanthropic sector. The Foundation Board Chair, Rudolph Nickens, Jr., director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity for Missouri’s Department of Transportation will chair the Committee. The following board members and community stakeholders will serve on the Executive Search Committee:

Board Members
- Karissa Anderson - Advocacy Director, The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis
- Patrick Brown - Community Development Executive, Ameren Missouri
The Reverend Wendy Bruner - Pastor, Peace United Church of Christ (Webster Groves)
The Honorable Michael Butler - Record of Deeds, City of St. Louis
Dale Fiedler - Retired, Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation
Vanessa Foster Cooksey – President & CEO, Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis
Elizabeth Noonan, Esq. - Principal, Elizabeth Noonan Consulting, LLC

Community Stakeholders
Susan Taylor Batten, ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities
Cenia Bosman, Community Action Agency of St. Louis County
Bridget McDermott Flood, Incarnate Word Foundation
Rebecca James Hatter, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri
The Reverend Rev. Josh Privitt, St. Peter’s United Church of Christ

The Boards also affirmed the Isaacson, Miller search firm to assist in identifying, screening and selecting a talented pool of candidates. The firm focuses on engaging candidates in the education, advocacy, public policy, philanthropic, direct service arenas and faith-based community.

DuBois Center News

VIRUTAL FAMILY RETREAT REBOOT
In October, the leadership team that has traditionally developed the programming for our annual Mother-Daughter Retreat created a virtual day of activities to help fill the void. Lots of folks checked in and the posts on Facebook were well received. With the holidays taking on a different flavor for many this year, we thought some virtual activities from DuBois Center might be a great addition to the mix. Families celebrating in different locations can share their results online and with us. Despite being designed for mothers and daughters prior to Halloween, many of the activities can be adapted for Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas. Links to videos and PDFs are included on our website. Join camp leaders for crafts, a yoga session, and more. Close out the festivities with songs and stories around the campfire. There are even recipes for two camp favorites. Intrigued? Intrigued by the photos? Check out the fun!

GIVING THANKS!
This week we give thanks for program volunteers! They touch the lives of every summer camper and retreat participant at DuBois Center! They share their special gifts and talents in the cabins and the health center, at the barn and during worship. Serving as chaplains, camp counselors, nurses, activity specialists and on the equestrian team, they tend to our minds, bodies and spirits. They teach us about bees, horses, fishing, science and so much more, as they share their passion for the gospel, Christian community and all of God’s creation. In the words of Mother Teresa, “I
alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." THANKS to all those whose ripples can be felt at DuBois Center and beyond. Featured here are (top left-I to r) Donna Asbridge – volunteer nurse and first aid instructor, Craig & Rev. Katie Jo Bielke – volunteer camp chaplains, (top right) Larry Reeble, long time horse volunteer and (bottom right – center) Luke Volmert – former camper and current volunteer camp counselor.

A Global Ministries Alternative Gift is a meaningful and unique way to express your care for loved ones both near and far. Undesignated gifts enable Global Ministries to work with more than 290 church partners and programs in 90 countries around the world. If you would like to give an undesignated Alternative Gift, click here. To find out more, click here. The purchase of global artisan crafts helps providing skills-training and income-generating opportunities for families around the world! Browse the catalog here.

Remember Hoyleton Youth & Family Services This Christmas
It’s that time of year! Hope you are doing well.
At Hoyleton, we make it our goal that every child in our care has a gift to open at Christmas. In order to comply with COVID 19 restrictions, we have put together an Amazon Wish List to help gather some of the gifts. Click here to see the list and fulfill a wish. Have the item shipped to us and we will wrap and deliver your gift. Please include your name and email/address so we can acknowledge your gift. Contact Hoyleton by email or 618-688-7092. Click here for a flyer to share with your congregations.

Dec 1 – NEXT Steps Prelude: On the Brink of Everything
This event will introduce one of the texts used in the full NEXT Steps course, On the Brink of Everything; Grace, Gravity & Getting Old by Parker Palmer
Join us as we engage in an evening of conversation, challenge, creativity, and fellowship modeled on the larger NEXT Steps program. Click here for a flyer. Click here for more online information and registration.

Dec 4 – LIFE (Lifelong Learning) session – Cultural Competency with Felicia Pulliam, JD
Together, we will explore our national and local history, current socio-cultural dynamics to understand how to navigate complex issues, build cultural capacity and support individuals and the congregations they lead to work together to improve life outcomes for members and the broader community. Click here for a flyer. Click here for more information and registration.

Worship Resource from Emmaus Homes
Emmaus Homes in St. Louis helps people with developmental disabilities live like you and me, as a ministry of the UCC. They invite you to use the digital resource kit in total or as individual elements of your own worship. Gifts may be sent to: Emmaus Homes. Attn: Development, 3731 Mueller Rd., Saint Charles, MO 63301. Contact Ashley Panhorst at email or 636-699-9641 so that we can add you to the list of churches finding the worship material.
What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

Happy Friday
Shop your Black Friday deals at AmazonSmile and Amazon donates

AmazonSmile

Choose Illinois South Conference as your charity with Amazon Smile and Amazon Smile will donate a portion of your purchase to ISC. Enjoy your holiday shopping on Black Friday while donating to ISC. Thanks for your generosity.

Stewardship in Advent?

It may seem “unspiritual” to talk about money during Advent, but every Advent, charities see their members and friends make some of their biggest gifts. Join Andrew Warner, Generosity Outreach Officer, to learn ways to faithfully and meaningfully talk about money and fundraising during Advent. On November 30 at 2 pm CST, you are invited to participate in this FREE webinar which is being sponsored by Illinois South Conference, Heartland Conference, and the Indiana Kentucky Conference. To register, use this link.

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.
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 dcinfo@duboiscenter.org or 618-787-2202.
To speak with the Conference Minister, contact Rev. Shana Johnson 618-882-8247 or sjohnson@iscucc.org.

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.