Hope for Holidays

Although we are only in the second week of Advent, in my house (maybe in yours too), we broke our “not until after Thanksgiving” rule when it came to Christmas preparations. Weeks ago, we began to put up the lights, decorate the Christmas tree, address Christmas cards, and even did some gift shopping. Our urge to begin preparations early had nothing to do with commercialism or efficiency, but more to do with an aching need for the days of Advent and Christmas to allow us to feel different than any other day. The past nine months have been a weird blend of monotony and mayhem, in which days have blended into weeks and weeks into months without clear markers of time. The things which might have marked this season in years past will most likely and probably should not be a part of this year’s celebrations. And so, I believe there is in all of us a deep need to make sure this season does not pass without us noticing it and without us experiencing a reprieve from the ordinary, as well as the unordinary of our lives. We may feel a deep need to experience a glimmer of what some may name as “magic” or “sparkle” of the season, but what is for us, as people of faith, what we simply name as hope.

It is a hope that we will discover a peace despite discord and strife.

It is a hope that we will discover a joy despite tribulation and despair.

It is a hope that we will discover a love despite indifference and hatred.

It is a hope that we will discover there really is, as we proclaim---a reason to hope in something better, something more beautiful, something more promising, something Divine.

So, go ahead. Ready yourselves. Prepare the way.

Prayer list for Dec 14 - 20, 2020

Churches & Pastors
- New Baden Zion UCC, Rev. Stephen (Molly) Stark
- O’Fallon UCC, Rev. Dr. Martha Thierheimer
- Ohlman St. Paul’s UCC, Rev. Dr. Steve (Debbi) Nance

Retired Pastors
- Rev. Linda and Bob Coulson, Palm Coast, FL

People with Life Concerns
- Pray for the family of Rita (Rev. Allan) Mason as they mourn her death on December 6. Services are pending at the time of this publication.
- Send prayers for Rev. Allen (Cheryl) Ladage as he deals with health issues. Rev. Ladage has been the facilitator for ISC Boundary Awareness Training for retired clergy. Cards may be sent to 10811 Atterbury Dr., St. Louis, MO 63123.
- 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.
Dare to hope.
And Believe.
Through the Christ child…
Hope endures.
Peace prevails.
Joy abounds.
And ultimately Love conquers all.
Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson
ISC Conference Minister

- 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 and families who are dealing with loved ones who have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Join the Insurance Board of the United Church of Christ in celebrating everyday superheros in their Fall/Winter issue of The Steward! The topics covered in this issue include: Everyday Superheroes, Deferred Maintenance, Lessons from Claims, Water Sensor Technology, Tenants, Vendors and Contractors. Click here to read the newsletter.

Start Your Week with Taizé Morning Prayer
Morning Prayer, presented by Open & Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ, is an opportunity to begin your day with a centering experience of silence, a brief reading from scripture, intercessory prayer and Taizé chant. Anyone is welcome to join us. Each service lasts just 20 minutes at 8 am and 10:30 am CST. The address for our services is always the same: zoom.us/j/5556624822.

Kindercottage seeking new board members…
The Board of Kindercottage is looking to fill two more positions for the next term (2021-2023). Board meetings are usually once every other month and have currently been happening via Zoom. The time commitment is about an hour or two a month. Anyone interested should contact board president, Phil Wilhelm for more information or to apply at 618-791-6440 or drphil@drphilwilhelm.com.

UCC Resources Offers Many Cool Christmas Gifts
The Mama Jeanne Center is a place of consolation, solidarity, support, and training, for women seeking to become self-sufficient. These woven baskets were bought from the Mama Jeanne Center. Formed out of recycled plastic packaging strips, the baskets are environmentally-friendly, and create something beautiful from materials that might otherwise be placed in the trash. Attached to each basket, a card reads, “By touching this basket, you are symbolically touching the hand of a sister who has proven to not be a victim, but a resilient survivor!”. Click here to order.

Many EPES grassroots health promoters are important and sometimes sole economic support for their families, and some have formed small microcredit businesses to generate income. One such health promoter produces these beautiful handmade cards to support her household. These particular cards feature a small arpilleria, a traditional Chilean art form that depicts both the positive and negative of daily life of poor communities. Proceeds from the sale of these cards will go to other Global Ministries partners who support microcredit and income-generation initiatives. Click here to order.

Loving One Another is Essential Work.
If you agree with this statement, be bold and wear this t-shirt. Based on the verse from Mark 12:31: “The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Black t-shirt with white text on front and UCC logo w/ A Just World for All tagline on right sleeve. Two styles: V-neck (fitted) and crew neck. Sizes: Small - 3XL. Click here to order.
Shared Devotional Materials  The Heartland, Illinois South, and Indiana-Kentucky Conferences of the UCC have collaborated to provide your congregation with a full-length video worship service intended for use on January 3. You can use the video worship service in its entirety or use parts of the worship service to enhance your own offerings. Our hope and prayer are that this service is a gift to pastors, church musicians, church staffs, and worship teams across our three Conferences. We trust it is a gift that helps you to have some relief from the planning of socially distanced worship, and a gift that lets you get to know the people who staff our three Conferences. Access to the videos and links to the worship resources will be announced soon.

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.

Advent Devotional
Rev. Dr. Don Wagner is generously sharing his Advent Devotional with all of you. Rev. Wagner created the devotions and Fr. Gerald Schweitzer shared his photographs. If you feel called to give a gift in order to thank them for these talents, all gifts received in the distribution of this Advent Devotional will be divided equally and distributed to:

DuBois Retreat Center, the camping and retreat center of the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ. These funds will be used to assist with scholarships for children and families in need at DuBois Center, and Sojourner Truth House, in Gary, Indiana, which provides much needed assistance to women and children who find themselves homeless or in need of specialized care and assistance. Here is your free copy of the devotional. If you need a printed copy, contact Becky Harris at St. Paul UCC in Lebanon by email. She will make sure you get a copy.

A Very UCC Christmas: 2020
Brought to you by the United Church of Christ National Setting
The staff of the national setting is working on a Christmas Pageant and full worship service for Local Churches to use as worship on or around December 27, or use portions of it in your own services.

Each piece will be downloadable as a video file from the national setting, with more details released before November 20.

In the meantime, as congregations are planning for Advent and Christmas, please know that the following components are coming for your use in worship through Advent and beyond:

10 Digital Hymns as Music Videos Download here:
- O Come, O Come Emmanuel (with John 1: 1-5)
- In the Bleak Midwinter (with Luke 2: 1-5)
- Star of Country Down (with Luke 1: 46-56)
- Away In a Manger / Santo Santo Santo
- Each Winter as the Year Grows Older - v 1 & 3
- Jesus, Jesus, What a Wonderful Child
- O Come All Ye Faithful
- Angels We Have Heard on High
- O Little Town of Bethlehem
- Silent Night
- Go Tell it on the Mountain

A “Lessons and Carols” Pageant service (including some of the above.)
A fully produced UCC Movie: “A Very UCC Christmas: 2020” with four scenes and music tracks as above.

Scene 1: The Board Room Brainstorming
Scene 2: Finance Committee Transformation
Scene 3: Faith Formation Finds Volunteers
Scene 4: Lessons and Carols
The lessons and carols will be streamed for all on Christmas Eve on Facebook and YouTube as part of the weekly “Thursdays for the Soul” series at 2:30 pm CT. The full movie, “A Very UCC Christmas: 2020,” will be streamed on two UCC platforms (YouTube and Facebook) on Sun, Dec 27, at 9 am CT.

Resources from the United Church of Canada - The United Church of Canada, our full communion partner, has done Advent Unwrapped, with many ideas to inspire your Advent, including worship, music and prayers.

Creative ways to share Advent this year
WorshipTimes.org offers 20 ways to celebrate Advent this year, from community service to safe social activities.

For Those Looking to Bring Art to Advent
Visit Sanctified Art for some really creative ideas on visual arts, banners, graphic design, childrens ministry and more.

Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar in Spring
The program will be taught by the Rev. Andy DeBraber, Generosity Officer of the national setting, and Andrew Warner, Generosity Outreach Officer. Sessions will meet for six online sessions on Thursdays from 5:30pm to 7:00pm CST - Feb 11, Feb 25, Mar 11, Mar 25, Apr 15, and Apr 29, 2021. Between class sessions, Andy and Andrew will provide materials to help you analyze the culture of your own congregation and learn how to create change. By the end of the seminars, pastors and leaders will be equipped to lead effective fundraising and you will have a strategy to guide your success moving forward. This event is hosted by the Heartland, Illinois South, and Indiana-Kentucky Conferences of the UCC in collaboration with the national setting. The CGC Seminar is $50 per participant. Register here by January 15, 2021.

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

The Outdoor Ministry Team is busy putting plans in place to offer safe in-person camping experiences in 2021. Hope to see YOU there!

In the early 1980’s many AIDS patients were very, very sick. It was before treatments had been developed, so many of the people died
with the disease. Now, while treatments have been developed, there is still a need for awareness and education. Around the world, about 34 million people are living with HIV. In the United States, about 50,000 people get infected with HIV each year. It is important that everyone ages 15 to 65 gets tested for HIV at least once. Some people need to get tested more often. During this month, we raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, encourage people to get tested, and take action to support people living with HIV.

Here are some ideas that people of faith can do during this month:

- Have the congregation partner with a local health center to offer free HIV testing for the community.
- Host a learning forum with the local public health official to discuss HIV prevention and stigma about HIV/AIDS through zoom.
- Host a fundraising event for an organization that supports HIV/AIDS clients.
- Include an article in the newsletter to increase awareness about HIV/AIDS and organizations that work with clients.
- Wear a red ribbon, the symbol of HIV awareness and support. Tell people why you are wearing it.

Faith community nurses can serve as a resource to help coordinate and educate the congregation or faith-based agency about HIV/AIDS. There are a variety of resources that can be used. For more information and materials, contact World Aids Day Campaign.

Safety During the Holidays

People with Alzheimer’s disease may not see, smell, hear, and/or remember things as they used to. You can identify and remove potential home hazards to make life safer and easier for them. Consider the following tips to help prevent accidents during the holiday season:

- Secure holiday decorations, such as Christmas trees, lights, or menorahs, so that they do not fall or catch on fire.
- Monitor anything flammable or lit, like candles, and put them away when not in use.
- Make sure lights, cords, and breakable items are fixed firmly, correctly, and out of the way.
- Try to avoid clutter, especially in walkways.

You can also find more holiday hints for dementia and Alzheimer’s caregivers on St. John's Community Care website. Click here.

St. John’s Community Care’s Savvy Caregiver Classes in January.

Taking care of a person living with Alzheimer’s or related dementia at home is specialized work. To do this work successfully, caregivers need special skills, knowledge, and a positive attitude that helps them to care for themselves.

St. John’s Community Care offers Savvy Caregiver training sessions several times a year to aid family caregivers in this role. The Savvy Caregiver Program is a free, six-session training for family and friends who are actively caring for those living with Alzheimer’s or related dementias. St. John’s trainers use curriculum developed by the University of Minnesota for interactive classes. Each session participants in the class learn relevant techniques and coping skills to manage daily living situations. It teaches the basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to handle the challenges of caring for someone with dementia. With this new knowledge and understanding, family caregivers are able to reduce stress and increase their sense of competence in dementia caregiving. Savvy Caregiver will help you:

- Understand the impact of dementia on both you and the person in your care.
- Learn the skills you need to manage daily life
- Take control and set goals
- Feel better about your caregiving
- Strengthen family resources
- Communicate more effectively
- Take care of you!

Each session is comprised of six two-hour classes. The next series will begin in January 2021 at St. John’s Community Care in Collinsville. To register call 618-344-5008 or email Stacey at srhodes@stjohnscc.org
Thank You!
Global Ministries is thankful for the many donor households and churches who gave about $200,000 in designated gifts toward the placement of mission co-workers with global partners around the world this year.
These gifts helped to support the placement of 50 mission personnel placed in countries like Ghana, Mexico, Egypt, East Timor, and Japan. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the presence of mission co-workers around the world continues to play a critical role in Global Ministries accompaniment of partner churches and programs. The pandemic has made physical presence more challenging but, at the same time, has created new opportunities for the multiplication of presence virtually.
To learn more about how you can support the placement of mission personnel, click here.

What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

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 while donating to ISC. Thanks for your generosity.

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

Important Links

Illinois South Conference  Back Bay Mission  CHHSM  Deaconess Foundation  Deaconess Nurse Ministry  DuBois Center
Ecuador Partnership  Eden Theological Seminary  Emmaus Homes  Hitz Memorial Home  Hoyleton Youth & Family
LIFE Program  Unleashing Potential  New Athens Home  Pension Board-UCC  St. John's Community Care
St. Paul's Sr. Community  UCC Insurance Board  Uplands Village  UCC Campus Ministry  Uni-Pres Kindercottage