There will be no Weekly Connection for the next 2 weeks. Below are the prayer lists for the upcoming weeks for your bulletins and private prayers.

**Prayer list for Dec 20 - 26, 2020**
**Churches & Pastors**
- Okawville St. Paul UCC
- Okawville St. Peter's UCC, Rev. Jeffrey (Sara) Schwab
**Retired Pastor**
- Rev. Bill and Patti Causer, Mt. Vernon, IL

**Prayer list for Dec 27, 2020 - Jan 2, 2021**
**Churches & Pastors**
- Pana United in Faith Church
- Pinckneyville St. Paul UCC
**Retired Pastor**
- Rev. Jean Carmean, O'Fallon, IL

**Prayer list for Jan 3 - 9, 2021**
**Churches & Pastors**
- Plum Hill St. John's UCC, Rev. Don Jones
- Red Bud St. Peter UCC, Pastor Cory (Geraldine) Hartz
**Retired Pastor**
- Rev. Elmer and Linda Bowman, Jr, Trenton, IL

**GOD’S CHRISTMAS GIFT**
Away in a manger,
Our Christmas gift is here.
A baby wrapped in swaddling clothes
Was given without a tear.

The Angels sing,
This tiny child lighted up a star,
Which brought the wandering shepherds
To worship from afar.

Joy to the world!
The star has brought the kings
To praise this baby, Jesus,
Who makes the heavens sing.

Come all you faithful!
Life isn’t easy for a babe born without.
But material wealth didn't stop this child
From preaching "Cut it out!"

Silent night!
Stop judging one and all.
The Lord loves and gave his Son
So, we can all stand tall.

Halleluiah!
God still loves us, no matter what we do.
Just trust it all to Jesus.
It's a Christmas gift to you.
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**People with Life Concerns**
- Pray for the family of LaVerne Klosterman, widow of Rev. Keith C. Klosterman, as they mourn her death on Dec 11. She was an active member of St. Paul UCC in Pinckneyville where her husband had served for 27 years. Private services will be held. Click here for the full obituary.
- Keep Rev. Donna Smith-Pupillo in your prayers as she undergoes surgery. Prayers for a speedy recovery. Rev. Smith-Pupillo is the Interim Pastor for Fieldon UCC and the Executive Director for Deaconess Nurse Ministry. Cards may be sent to 1275 Swan Dr, Florissant, MO 63031.
- Pray for the family of Rita (Rev. Allan) Mason as they mourn her death on Dec 6.
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 available in the near future by email, FaceBook and the website.

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**Companion Devotional - The Twelve Days of Christmas**

Rev. Dr. Don Wagner has added a companion devotional, The Twelve Days of Christmas, to the Advent Devotional he shared previously. 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 and companion piece 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 original devotional. If you need a printed copy of either devotional, contact Becky Harris at St. Paul UCC in Lebanon by email. She will make sure you get a copy.

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Rev. Mason served several churches in ISC. A memorial service will be held at a future date. Click here for Rita's obituary. Cards of condolence may be sent to Rev. Mason at 632 Brink Rd, Sandoval, IL 62882.

- 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.

- 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**.
**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.

**Prayer of the Pine Needle Basket**
Show us our paths
Encircling the core of your truth,
Joining needles of knowledge,
Needles of people,
Needles of experience,
And needles of understanding,
Lashed together by the thread of you.
As our paths coil upward toward Heaven
Help us to create vessels
We will fill with growing Souls.
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**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.

**10 Digital Hymns as Music Videos** Download here.
**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.
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.

*If you stream on YouTube or any other online format, please report the music use for copyright in the same way you normally would.*

**Solar and Net Metering**
Flip a switch, turn a dial. We expect electricity to flow. We may not care what source produces the power. But, we should care. The source of electricity may contribute more or less to the degradation of our Earth.
In recent years, the cost of producing solar declined. It is as cheap as natural gas or coal for electricity production. Some of us installed solar on our roofs or in our yards. Industry dubs our systems “distributed solar”. One incentive to invest in distributed solar is “net metering” by the utility company, e.g. Ameren.
Ameren acts as our “solar” battery. When our solar panels generate more than we use, the excess is pushed back to Ameren’s grid; when we use more electricity than we produce we pull energy from Ameren’s grid. A “smart meter” measures the net electricity we use. We pay our utility (Ameren) only for the electricity we get from them in excess of what we produce.
More and more distributed solar systems are being installed. In April, Ameren Illinois told the Illinois Commerce Commission, (ICC), that by October 2020, it would have allowed enough distributed solar in its area to cease net metering for future solar customers. The solar industry, environmental groups, and rate payers intervened and asked the Commission to audit Ameren’s figures. On December 6, 2020, the ICC audit report concluded Ameren had not achieved its net metering requirement to stop net metering for new solar installations. Ameren has returned to offering net metering to new solar customers. This paves the way for solar contracts already underway to be grandfathered in the net metering pool. Alas, at some point Ameren’s required percentage of distributed solar customers will be attained and net metering for new solar customers may cease. The Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) would enable more solar installations and with them good jobs. Write your state Senator and Representative in support of CEJA. If you’d like to know who they are, you may contact me at kayahaus@yahoo.com Churches interested in installing solar may contact info@windsolarusa.com. I wish you a joyous holiday, and may 2021 bless you with good health. Kay Ahaus, Convener, with assistance from Richard Ellerbrake

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 experience. About 13 years ago, Don and I began the tradition of giving an annual DuBois Center camp experience to each of our grandchildren. We love the opportunity to give them the chance to unplug, connect with nature, make new friends, learn new skills, and grow in their faith. The excitement in their eyes as they make their personal camp choice, their anticipation of going to camp, and hearing their enthusiasm about their camp experience is priceless! Pastor Don & Nancy Wagner

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!

Hoyleton Youth and Family Services’ portfolio of programs provide support with comfort, therapeutic services and safety
when no other is available. Your support is appreciated and now, the needs of our society are greater than ever. Your donation will:

- Provide therapeutic and mental health informed CARE to our youth and families impacted by trauma.
- Support the families’ full potential in every way possible.
- Enable all people, young and old alike, to realize the wholeness of life God intends.

They ask for your help during this holiday season to ensure that even the least among us have the resources to deal with everyday pressures during this pandemic. A donation received on-line at www.hoyleton.org or postmarked by 12/31/2020 to their office at 8 Executive Drive, Suite 200, Fairview Heights, IL 62208, will ensure your contribution is credited to the 2020 year and help them reach their goal!

**St. John’s Community Care’s Savvy Caregiver Classes**

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.

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. The next series will begin Thurs, Jan 21 at St. John’s Community Care in Collinsville. To register call 618-344-5008 or email Stacey at srhodes@stjohnscc.org.

It is important to retain your sense of humor as a family caregiver, and St. John’s Community Care’s personnel have seen this in action at every one of their support group or caregiver workshops. The value of humor is seen in the smile that comes across your faces when a silly joke or even a funny caregiving anecdote is shared. They firmly believe that the twin to finding humor is finding joy. And joy comes in all sized packages. Let’s start with the joy to be found in little moments. Such as:

- A flicker of recognition in your loved one’s eyes.
- Whatever time you can spend with the children that you love.
- That perfect piece of music that reminds you of more joyous times.
- Re-reading your favorite passages in your favorite book.
- Calling your best friend from high school, out of the blue, and talking about anything but caregiving.
- Joyfully dancing around the house, a bit.

**Insurance Board Update**

The insurance renewal for your church from the Insurance Board has been processed, and you can expect to receive the renewal and quarterly invoice soon.

The Insurance Board has implemented a new system resulting in a transition with the 2021 renewals. With a data conversion of this magnitude, they anticipate there may be errors and will be examining all renewals carefully. Errors will be corrected, and a renewal amendment will be processed and mailed. You should also take a moment to review the policy for accuracy.

Upon review of your renewal, you'll notice increased premiums. Unfortunately, rising premiums are impacting the insurance industry countrywide. Due to catastrophic losses
around the world, the marketplace has hardened, and property excess/reinsurance rates are up significantly in the U.S. and abroad. They understand 2020 has certainly been one of the most challenging years for churches. As your Insurance Board representatives, they encourage you to discuss and consider various cost-effective options with your insurance representatives. They also welcome the opportunity to meet with your church council to do a thorough overview of your insurance protection and costs.

A reminder regarding the 2021 transition with their new partner, Cincinnati Insurance, for workers compensation and business auto policies. For those of you that have either or both of these policies you should have received communication in the mail which included the proposal(s) and Cancellation Request forms for The Hartford policies effective 01/01/2021. Review, complete and sign all forms and submit to forms@insuranceboard.org at your earliest opportunity. If you have not received this communication contact me immediately.

Should you find changes and/or corrections needed or have questions or concerns, contact Shawn Polzin at 309-660-1818 or smaxson21@gmail.com.

Daily (Monday – Saturday) 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.

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.

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.

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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.

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**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