The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar, offered jointly by Illinois South, Heartland and Indiana Kentucky Conferences, presents an opportunity to explore faithful, practical, and tested ways to promoting generosity in our congregations. We will draw on current research, seek guidance from the wisdom of scripture, and discuss the best practices in church-based fundraising.

The seminar will improve the “bottom line” of your congregation. But please know this bottom line is about more than money. Mission and ministry remain the real bottom line of our work. This seminar will help pastors and leaders engage generosity as a spiritual practice.

The program will be taught by the Rev. Andy DeBraber and Rev. Andrew Warner, Generosity Outreach Officers of the UCC, and is based on materials for the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving. We’ll meet for six online sessions over the course of the spring:
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm CST on Thursdays

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 seminar, pastors and leaders will be equipped to lead effective fundraising and you will have a strategy to guide your success moving forward.

Be sure to recruit at least a team of two for this program. Changing the culture of your congregation requires more than one dedicated leader. Success depends on engaging a team of leaders from your congregation.

The registration fee is $50 for all participants and due at the time of your online registration.

Prayer list for
Jan 10 - 16, 2021

Churches & Pastors
- Staunton St. Paul UCC, Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
- Stone Church St. Peter’s UCC
- Rev. P. Jerry Bennett, Highland, IL

Retired Pastor
- Rev. Smith-Pupillo in your prayers as she recovers from surgery. 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.

People with Life Concerns
- Keep Rev. Donna Smith-Pupillo in your prayers as she recovers from surgery.
- 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.

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
The course will be hosted on the Damascus Project Network, an online educational platform. Information on accessing the online course site and zoom connection information will be provided after your registration.

Please sign up now for the Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar. The deadline is January 15, 2021. Click here to register. Scholarships will be available on request. If you would like to know more, please reach out to Rev. Shana Johnson directly at sjohnson@iscucc.org.

Dear Illinois South Conference family,

It is with great joy that we introduce you to the newest member of our Conference family, Leela Rebecca Palmer. Leela is a New Year’s Eve baby as she arrived on December 30, 2020 at 9:11 pm. Leela is the newborn daughter of Pastor Brett Palmer (pastor of Friedens UCC in Marissa) and Carolyn Palmer, and sister of big brother Micah. Congratulations to Pastor Brett, Carolyn, and Micah! And welcome to the family Leela. We look forward to seeing lots of pictures of you.

Finding Your "Star Word"

Years ago, my family started a tradition of “star words” on Epiphany. The idea is simple, but its meaning and impact can be profound. As part of our Epiphany celebration, we remember the star the magi saw and followed. The magi trusted the star would guide them on a Spirit-filled journey to the Christ child. In this Epiphany season and throughout this next year, we would like to invite you on a Spirit-filled journey to draw you closer to the Divine guided by your star word. You could think of your star word as an intention, an invitation or even a challenge.

This year in the Epiphany worship service that the Illinois South, Indiana Kentucky, and Heartland Conferences created together, we incorporated the ritual of drawing “star words.” Just yesterday at the beginning of the Conference Council meeting of the year, Council members drew “star words” which will challenge, inspire, and nudge them in the ways they lead and work on your behalf in our Conference. It was fascinating and inspiring how they used these words to direct their attention to the matters about which we discussed, deliberated on, and made decisions.

If you have not yet drawn your own word for the year, I encourage you to do so tomorrow (Wednesday, January 6) as a way to observe and celebrate Epiphany. There are several ways to “find” your word. You could print out words and choose which word draws your attention or write numbers on the back of the words and choose your
favorite number. Or maybe pray about a word and see what comes to mind first. Now there are even word generators online which randomly select the word for you. There really is no wrong way to do it.

Once you have chosen Your star word. Place it somewhere you will see it every day. Pray about the word. Think about what it might mean for you. Look for the ways Your word expands in meaning for you throughout the new year.

And may your word lead you, like the star led the Magi, to a closer understanding and experience of the presence of the Divine in your life. In the year ahead, may your thoughts, actions, and decisions be led by faith, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

Here’s a list of start words to help you choose.

ALL UCC authorized pastors and delegates from each ISC congregation, please mark your calendars and plan to attend THE ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL of Tarrah Vaupel on Sunday, January 24 at 3 pm on Zoom

The Illinois South Conference Committee on Ministry invites you to the Ecclesiastical Council of Tarrah Vaupel at 3 pm CST on Sunday, January 24. Ecclesiastical Councils are special called meetings of a Conference and the last step in the process for Members in Discernment towards ordination. As part of the Ecclesiastical Council, you, voting delegates of the Illinois South Conference will have the opportunity to listen to the work of the Spirit, and vote to ordain Tarrah Vaupel. YOU are an important part of this process as it is the Conference (which in our case also acts as an Association) which discerns and decides if an ordination candidate is worthy to ordain on behalf of the United Church of Christ. We will need a quorum to officially conduct our business of the day, so we hope you will make this a priority and plan to attend.

Tarrah received her Master of Divinity at Eden Theological Seminary. While in seminary she did her CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) at Laclede Groves, and was a student pastor at St. John UCC in New Athens, Illinois. Tarrah is a member of O’Fallon UCC and prior to seminar was their office manager. Currently, she serves as a Spiritual Care Coordinator & Chaplain at Heartland Home Health and Hospice and as a licensed associate pastor at Friedens UCC in Irvington.

The link to the Zoom, as well as Tarrah’s ordination paper will be emailed out to all UCC authorized pastors and voting delegates of the Conference. Please make sure to watch your email box. All the information you need to know to attend the Ecclesiastical Council will also be available on the Conference website at iscucc.org.

In order to prep for the Ecclesiastical Council, please make sure to download and read a copy of her paper. After Tarrah’s presents to the gathered body (the “council”), you will have the opportunity to ask her questions about her paper, and her call to ministry.

Illinois South Conference thanks this pastor for serving a ministry within our churches:

Rev. Michael Cassady ended his ministry as Pastor at St. Peter’s UCC in Murphysboro on December 30, 2020.

We thank him for his service and look forward to the next path of his ministry.
Illinois South Conference welcomes two new pastors serving in our Conference:

Pastor Tarrah Vaupel began her ministry as Associate Pastor at Friedens UCC in Irvington on November 15, 2020.

Pastor Jason Eisele began his ministry as the Designated Pastor at St. Paul UCC in Pinckneyville on December 21, 2020.

We welcome them into the Conference and our shared ministry.

The Amazing People of Illinois South Conference....

The Light Still Shines at O’Fallon UCC

While this year has seen difficulty and darkness, the light of faith has steadily shined among the O’Fallon UCC church family. When COVID prevented our Wurstmarkt, the WORSTmarkt (no food, no fellowship, no fun -- but send in a donation) raised almost $19,000, nearly double the annual profit! Participants of all ages recorded videos at home for a virtual Christmas Pageant, the best ever! Though the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet could not perform indoors for our annual holiday worship, the SLSO String Quartet performed in a socially-distanced livestream worship. For our Advent theme “The Light Shines in the Darkness: All Is Calm, All Is Bright”, Rev. Dr. Martha Thierheimer prepared 155 Star Luminaries with names of church families and contacted each so they could choose which Advent message to be written at top: Hope, Peace, Joy or Love. Each week, star luminaries appeared in windowsills, in altar area or in the pews to let the Advent messages and the light of the people shine! All of the names/messages were sent as our congregational Christmas Card to bring cheer. During “Silent Night” in the Candlelight worship, it was especially beautiful to see that even though we are not able to worship in-person, our light still shines! The Star Luminaries and their bright messages affirm that even in this time of darkness, faith lights our way so we can still proclaim “all is calm, all is bright! Check out the luminaries.

Here are some additional Illinois South Conference churches that have shared services over the Christmas season. Enjoy!

- Lebanon St. Paul UCC’s Christmas pageant
- Collinsville St. John UCC’s Cantata (featuring the newly renovated organ)
- Lebanon St. Paul UCC’s Blue Christmas service

Save the date – the UCC’s first virtual General Synod to take place July 11-18, 2021

by Connie Larkman

The dates for the United Church of Christ’s first virtual General Synod have been set. The 33rd biennial gathering will take place online July 11-18, 2021. The Sunday to Sunday schedule is the first in a series of changes planned for this event, themed “Rooted in Love, Special Edition.”

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“We are hoping for a ‘leaner’ General Synod in this virtual environment,” said the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, associate general minister and General Synod administrator. “We will worship, conduct business, provide educational opportunities and make space for experiencing the church gathered.” Read more...
The Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ will begin celebrating its 50th anniversary at General Synod in 2021 and continue over the next two years until 2023. This will be an opportunity for the ONA movement to give thanks for its past history, and plan together for its future. In an era of political crisis and in the midst of a pandemic, the mission of the ONA Coalition continues to be radical and life-giving: to transform churches into communities of compassion and resistance. The Coalition has certified 1,689 ONA congregations. In 2021, they’ll continue to grow as more and more churches in the UCC renew their commitment to the Gospel of God’s boundless love.

As an independent, non-profit movement that receives no regular funding from Our Church’s Wider Mission, they depend on your gifts to build a better future for our churches and our communities. Your generosity will help complete these goals in 2021. In 2021, the Coalition’s expanded webinar programs will reach hundreds of congregations with the Good News that their journey towards an ONA covenant will strengthen their faith and revive their life together as a community. This will be a decisive step towards our ultimate goal; -- a church that is 100% Open and Affirming!

With the Coalition’s support, more and more churches are realizing that their ONA covenant requires not only a strong welcome to their LGBTQ neighbors, but strong advocacy for all whose lives are diminished by racism, bigotry, hatred, and fear. ONA’s commitment to intersectional justice will continue to be a top priority in 2021. In 2021, the Coalition will renew its campaign to reach the 60 percent of ONA churches that acknowledge they cannot offer "a confident and well-informed welcome" to their transgender and non-binary neighbors.

Health and Human Service (CHHSM) Sunday is scheduled for Jan 31, 2021. CHHSM, in partnership with the United Church of Christ, is pleased to provide worship resources to use for your congregation’s celebration of Health and Human Service Sunday. At this [link], you will find suggested scriptures, a prepared liturgy, and a logo for your bulletin, including a Litany of Gratitude for Essential Workers and a Prayer of Remembrance for those lost in the coronavirus pandemic. Special thanks to the Rev. Dr. Elyse Berry, a member of the CHHSM staff, for writing the very moving elements of this service, designed to speak to our experiences with COVID-19 this year. Read [more]…

DuBois Center News

MEET THE SEARCH COMMITTEE FOR THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF OUTDOOR MINISTRIES

Pictured left to right:
Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister and chairperson of the Search Committee
Dr. Jill Baker, Conference Moderator and ex-officio member
Craig Bielke, Member at large
Hank Henderson, Member representing the Conference Personnel Committee  
Rachel Kinzinger, Member representing the Conference OMT (Outdoor Ministry Team)  
Nancy Wagner, Member representing the Conference OMT (Outdoor Ministry Team) and current OMT chairperson

DuBois Center Updates  
The next few months at DuBois Center will be spent anticipating the arrival of a new Acting Director of Outdoor Ministry and preparing for what our summer season will look like at the camp.  

The Search Begins…  
The Search Committee for the Acting Director has been named, has met and will soon be conducting interviews for the position. We are working hard to get the word out about this wonderful opportunity, and we welcome your help. If you know someone who might be interested in applying please reach out directly to our Conference Minister, Rev. Shana Johnson at sjohnson@iscucc.org.

Renovation Projects…  
The Property Committee and the maintenance staff have been hard at work updating the Director’s house at DuBois Center. The three-bedroom, two bath home is in good shape, but we want it to have a fresh, new look which says to the incoming Acting Director “welcome home.” Already new doors throughout the house, as well as stairs and a landing in the garage have been installed. Other projects will include grading in the backyard to help reduce water retention, new flooring, updates to the bathrooms and kitchen, some new appliances, as well as overall deep cleaning and a fresh coat of paint throughout the home.

Programming…  
Although we will likely not have programming in the winter months, Outdoor Ministry Team along with Executive Committee, and Conference Council will be working together to determine the programming for late Spring and Summer months of this year. Although much will depend upon when we find the right person for the Acting Director’s position, we are committing to creating a Plan A, B, C and a variety of contingency plans. We know much like what we have all experienced together in the past year, there are many unknowns, and so we covet your patience, prayers, and support. But please know, we will also do our best to keep you up to date and informed about what is happening at YOUR camp. And if you have questions, please ask. You can connect with the chair of our Outdoor Ministry Team, Nancy Wagner at nancywagner1958@gmail.com, the chair of Property Committee, Priscilla Self at pij48@hotmail.com, our Conference Moderator, Dr. Jill Baker at jabaker5@aol.com, or our Conference Minister, Rev. Shana Johnson at sjohnson@iscucc.org.

DuBois Property Policy during this transition time…  
Please note: The Conference Council has closed the DuBois Center grounds to everyone except maintenance and animal care staff until such time as a new Acting Director is hired. While we have people on the grounds, they cannot supervise visitors or do the COVID-level of cleaning required to host guests of any kind right now. This reduces liability and safety issues for both people and property. We all know and enjoy the beautiful campgrounds, and we expect to open them again very soon.
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. Click here for a flyer.

The Online Zoom Memory Cafe concept provides a social experience for those who are living with mild cognitive impairment, early stage Alzheimer’s or other dementia, and their care partner. Attendees are able to socialize with others who are sharing a similar journey. The Memory Cafe provides a safe, understanding and compassionate setting in a relaxed atmosphere. Those with dementia must be accompanied by a family member or friend. There are no membership fees or charges to participate. Click here for a flyer.

Upcoming schedule is:
- Thurs, Jan 7
- Fri, Jan 22
- Thurs, Feb 4
- Fri, Feb 26 from 11:00 am – 12:00 pm; and
- Wed, Jan 13; and Wed, Feb 10 from 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm. To attend, contact Gail at gshaw@stjohnscc.org or call 618-344-5008.

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.

What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

Job Opportunity: O'Fallon United Church of Christ is seeking applicants for a part-time custodian. The normal workweek will be 15-20 hours doing typical cleaning, maintenance and grounds duties along with preparing for scheduled activities and meetings. The work schedule is negotiable for daytime and evening hours. Applicants can contact the committee through the Church office 618-632-3496 or by contacting Allen Garner 618-910-2913 or Ted Lewis 618-977-8184.

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