Extended Deadline!!!
January 31, 2021

The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar offered jointly by Illinois South, Heartland, and Indiana-Kentucky Conferences is for pastors and lay leaders. It will explore faithful, practical, and tested ways to promote generosity in your congregation. The seminar will improve the “bottom line” of your congregation, which is about more than money, such as mission and ministry. The program features Rev. Andy DeBraber and Rev. Andrew Warner, Generosity Outreach Officers of the UCC, and is based on materials from the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving. Participants will meet for six online sessions on Thursdays - Feb 11 and 25, Mar 11 and 25, Apr 15 and 29 from 5:30 pm to 7 pm CST. Between class sessions, Andy and Andrew will provide materials to help you analyze the culture of your own congregation and learn how to lead effective fundraising and have a strategy to guide your success moving forward.

It’s best to have at least a team of two attend the program. The registration fee is $50 for all participants and due at the time of your online registration. Scholarships will be available on request by contacting Rev. Shana Johnson at sjohnson@iscucc.org. Click here to register. Information on accessing the online course site and zoom connection information will be provided after you register.

Prayer list for
Jan 24 - 30, 2021

Churches & Pastors
- Summerfield St. John UCC, Rev. Nancy (Stephen) Gamache
- Tower Hill St. Paul UCC, Rev. Dr. Steve (Debbi) Nance

Retired Pastor
- Revs. Pamela Smith and Earl Menchhofer

People with Life Concerns
- Please pray for Rev. P. Jerry Bennett as he deals with some health issues. Rev. Bennett serves as the pastor for Jamestown St. Paul UCC and Hookdale St. Peter UCC and previously was the ISC Associate Conference Minister. Cards may be sent to him at PO Box 39, Highland, IL 62249.
- 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.
ALL UCC authorized pastors and delegates from each ISC congregation, please mark your calendars and plan to attend THE ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL on Zoom of Tarrah Vaupel on Sunday, January 24 at 3 pm

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 on their way 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 seminary, 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, was emailed to all UCC authorized pastors and voting delegates of the Conference. If you need this information sent to you again, please contact Christy at cpursell@iscucc.org. All the information you need to know to attend the Ecclesiastical Council is 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 presentation to the gathered body (the “council”), you will have the opportunity to ask her questions about her paper, and her call to ministry.

Clergy Communities of Practice

It is with great joy that we are able to offer facilitated clergy communities of practice for all active ISC pastors in 2021. This wonderful opportunity is made possible by a generous grant we were awarded through the Brown Endowment Fund of the United Church Funds.

**What is a Community of Practice?**

The term comes from the work of Etienne Wenger-Trayner who defines a community of practice as a group of peers who share a concern or a passion for something they do and who learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Group members support one another, learn together, and share resources – experiences, stories, practices, ways of addressing recurring issues and problems. Building this community takes time and sustained interaction.

**What is the purpose of a Clergy Community of Practice?**

The purpose of a community of practice such as this is to enable clergy to have an opportunity to:

- Create peer groups which encourage care and reflection that can develop into life-sustaining and trusting friendships.
- Create group experiences which nurture and support the practice of spiritual disciplines.
- Create intentional spaces to process, learn, and be inspired through a mutual covenant and conversation, guided by an outside facilitator.

**What are the benefits of participating in a Clergy Community of Practice?**

- Renewed enthusiasm about ministry.
- Offers a place where problems can be dealt with before they reach a crisis level.
- Clergy come together to share best practices, to resource one another, not to compete with one another.
Pastors who attend peer-learning groups with trained facilitators and curriculums, and who participate for several years, have more impressive records of growth at their churches.

**How will Clergy Community of Practice groups function?**
We will offer each group the opportunity to have 10 sessions with their facilitator. The dates and times of the sessions will be determined by each clergy community of practice group. Typically, a group meets every month, for approximately an hour and half. For the safety and ease of all participants we encourage groups to meet on Zoom. The facilitator will set up the sessions and send out needed information.

A typical session would include gathering in worship and/or prayer, reflection, checking in with one another, and in learning together. Some groups may choose to use case studies for their learning time, others may not. As the gathering ends, participants talk about what they have learned and how they will use that learning in their ministry.

**What costs are involved?**
Ten sessions with your Clergy Community of Practice will be FREE to you. While there are costs associated with Clergy Communities of Practice in order to have a paid facilitator, the Conference will be covering the costs of all individuals in all the groups during 2021 through the grant we received for this purpose.

**How can I register to be a part of a Clergy Community of Practice?**
A survey will be sent out in the next few days via email. Please make sure to look for this survey and fill it out. This will give us an indication of your needs and hopes for a group, which will help us to assign you to a group. After the groups are formed, we will send out information of how to get started with your Clergy Community of Practice group.

If you do not receive the survey, please reach out to Christy Pursell at cpursell@iscucc.org for assistance.

**The Justice and Mission Team supports the Clean Energy Jobs Act** before the Illinois Legislature now. We urge you to call Gov. Pritzker and urge him to support the passage of this act. In doing so, you will support clean energy sources for Illinois as well as jobs in southern Illinois communities that need them most. Contact the Constituent Affairs Help Line: Gov. Pritzker's Office at 217-782-0244.

**Clergy & Vaccinations**
Several pastors have reached out to the Conference wondering if clergy would be considered a high priority for vaccinations. After speaking to the CDC, the Governor's office, and many local counties, it appears there is a "no" and "yes" answer to this question.

"No," there is not a unified state agreement in Illinois that all clergy should be considered among the list of those eligible for vaccinations in the 1A or 1B groups UNLESS they are serving in a health field context.

"Yes," there are some counties, which after a conversation with a clergyperson in which the individual makes a case that their work requires in-person interaction and social distancing is not possible, will give clergy a vaccination along with groups 1A or 1B. As a clergy person, if you want to be considered for early vaccination, our strongest suggestion to you is to advocate for yourself within the county in which you live. In other words, call your local health department.

Please know that to make your case, some counties are requiring verification of your vocational credentials. IF you have standing in the Illinois South Conference and would like the Conference to supply you with a certification card, please reach out to Christy Pursell at cpursell@iscucc.org.

**Save the Date for Virtual Day of Discipleship on Saturday, May 1, 2021.** The theme this year is “Strengthening the Ties That Bind Us Together”. A list of webinars will be coming soon.
**UCC Yearbook Instructions** were sent to the church, pastor, staff, presidents and treasurers of the ISC churches. If you didn't receive it, contact Lynnette at the email below.

**Attention:** The Illinois South Conference recommends that when the report asks for average attendance, you INCLUDE online participation. Whether you have been meeting totally online, totally in person or a combination of in person and online, please INCLUDE any means of participation in your services. If you have not met every week, use the number of services you did hold to compute your average.

**Helpful Information (Or go to www.iscucc.org)**

1. Customized Illinois South Conference Church Instructions
2. Blank Worksheet
3. Who are your officers and leaders?
4. Tip Sheet
5. UCC "Other Giving" Explanation
7. UCC Supplemental Survey
8. If you need your data from last year, contact Lynnette Schuepbach at lschuepbach@iscucc.org
9. Video Tutorials from UCC

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**Jan. 22nd – LIFE (Lifelong Learning) session – How Did We Get Here? The Story of the Church with Travis Ables**

This course looks at the history of Christianity by looking at turning points: moments where the church transformed, for good and for worse. We will examine how Christians understood Christ and God through history, how they worshiped and prayed, and how they lived their lives in the world. Along the way, we’ll find that Christian history is not really about learning the past — it’s about finding a new way to understand where we are right now (and how we got here). Click here for online information or here for a flyer.

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**The UCC Mental Health Network shares these things we can do to build our emotional resilience** for the stresses of today, written by Rev. Dr. Jan Remer-Osborn, Neuropsychologist & UCC Mental Health Network Board Member.

- Chart out a path of small steps to wellness and healthy living.
- Choose an accountability buddy to keep you on track.
- Focus on one change at a time and make the goal doable.
- Five minutes of daily physical activity builds the habit.
- Set yourself up for nutritional health by only purchasing healthy foods.
- Get routine adequate sleep.
- Celebrate small accomplishments.
- Scripture tells us to be thankful in all circumstances, so focus on your blessings.
- Choose what is good in your life, using prayer or meditation, to focus and visualize a hopeful future.
- Improve your circumstances by reviewing your strengths and how they could be used now.
- Recall what and who have motivated you in the past.
- Seek out people who support and uplift you.
- Stay away from those who pull you down.

It is key to get help, if needed, by using the life preserver that is other people you trust. Be determined to get out of your own head with its unrelenting focus on unhealthy negativity. Open your mind to reconciling with others who hold opposing views. Look for ways to pay your blessings forward. By assisting others in need, you will find new energy and be rewarded beyond what you have given. Do not forget, “All things are possible,” through Jesus Christ.
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 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.

Vander Court is Coming Soon!
Hoyleton Youth and Family Services will have a new therapeutic foster care program at Vander Court in Belleville, Illinois. This site will serve as a step-down placement program as part of our service continuum. Vander Court house will serve 3 youth at a time for an average length of stay of 6 – 9 months. We estimate that six or more youth will call Vander Court home. As we put the finishing touches on our house rehab, we’re beginning to recruit staff, and most importantly, foster parents. We’d appreciate your help and ask that you share the message below with the great people in your networks to help us find the right people to foster our young people.

Foster Parents Needed
Are you and your partner ready for the next chapter in your life? If you’re up for an adventure and are interested in working with Hoyleton Youth and Family Services, consider this: We’re looking for foster parents for our new therapeutic foster home. If you love teens, can care for three at a time and give your full-time attention toward their development and success, and are able to put Hoyleton’s CARE philosophy into practice, in return you’ll receive:

• Competitive, full-time compensation for both partners.
Rent free living in a beautiful, spacious 5 bedroom, rehabbed home with new furnishings.
Additional board payments that cover the costs of our youths' care.
Membership in a team of supportive professionals.

If you think you might be interested and want to learn more, or know folks you'd like to recommend, call Hoyleton's Director of Child Welfare, Sharon Schultz at 618-688-4761. Thank you!

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:
Fri, Jan 22; Thurs, Feb 4; and 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.

Stress-busting Program for Family Caregivers
St. John’s Community care presents a seminar to help caregivers reduce stress. It will provide education and support, teach stress management techniques and help caregivers develop coping strategies. The next ONLINE Session Starts Feb 1 and continues each Monday for 9 weeks. Sessions meet virtually from 10 am - 11:30 am. Call 618-344-5008 to register or for more information. Click here for a flyer.

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…

The UCC Insurance Board presents a webinar, COVID-19 Considerations for Church Employers on Jan 29 at 1 pm CST, featuring Dean Rocco, attorney with Wilson Elser. This webcast will address issues churches face as employers during COVID-19 and provide best practice policies and procedures for managing employees and volunteers. Many states may require that employers have specific COVID-19 policies and procedures in place to protect their employees; learn about best practice considerations for your church. Click here to register. Click here for a flyer.
What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

**Region 5**

**Alhambra Salem** will hold its 73rd Annual Sausage Supper (Drive-thru only) on Sat, Jan 30 from 2:30 pm - 8 pm. Menu includes fresh homemade pork sausage, sauerkraut, potatoes, gravy, green beans, and applesauce. Donations are $10 per meal. Pre-Order Meat Sales are due by January 26. Order forms are available here. Email forms to ooey5@agtelco.com or call 618-488-3733 or 618-488-3215. Pickup on Thurs, Jan 28 from 10 am to 6 pm or Sat, Jan 30 from 9 am to noon.

**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 Ischuepbach@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