You Tell Me Your Stories...
I'll Tell You Mine
The truth is I am not much of a football fan. However, my husband is. He has spent years trying to convert me. While I have done my research to make sense of the game, and even participated in a fantasy football league at one point, I still have to confess, unless it is a close game, football doesn't hold my attention. But…I love the Super Bowl, not the game itself, not even for the commercials, but rather for the stories. The stories are what hold my attention. I find the backstories of all the people who make the game possible intriguing. This year’s NFL pregame programming featured stories of the groundskeeper (George, age 92) who has worked the last 52 Super Bowls and took great pride in getting the fields ready for the big game; stories of the players’ relationships with their moms and their families and their sacrifices and support; stories of the coaches and their coaching styles; and stories of many essential workers whose courage and resilience during this pandemic are especially noteworthy.
Moved by these incredible backstories, at one point I looked at my husband and said, "Why can't they just do this the whole time?" The look on his face told me I was missing the point of the main event, the game itself.
But honestly, why CAN'T we hear these feel-good stories more often? Why CAN'T we hear and listen to each other's stories more often? Not only does it give us all good feelings, but also it reminds us there

Prayer list for
Feb 14 - 20, 2021
Churches & Pastors
- Waterloo Zion UCC St. Joe, Rev. Patrick (Kathy) Poole
- Wood River St. John UCC, Rev. Dwayne (Donna) Dollgener, Supply Pastor
Retired Pastor
- Rev. Fred and Shirley Wehrenberg, Columbia, IL

People with Life Concerns
- Please keep the family of Maurice (Marietta) Dahncke in your prayers as they mourn his death. Maurice is the father of Julie (Kevin) Riechmann, who serves as DuBois Center and Illinois South Conference Registrar. There will be a private Mass of Christian Burial at St Ann’s Catholic Church in Nashville on Sat, Feb 13. Cards of condolence may be sent to Julie at 7651 Walwin Dr, Okawville, IL 62271. Click here for the full obituary.
- Keep Rev. Diane Grohmann in your prayers as she deals with some health issues. Rev. Grohmann is the pastor for Edwardsville St. Paul UCC. Cards may be sent to 5438 Brick School Rd, New Athens, IL 62264.
- Please pray for Rev. P. Jerry Bennett as he deals with some health issues. Rev. Bennett serves as the pastor for 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
is such beauty and transformation when we "see" each other in new ways. One of the most painful realities of this moment in time which we find ourselves in as a global community, as a world, and as the Church are divisions and divides among us. All of us at one time or another, or too many times to count, have quickly divided the world around us into two succinct categories US and THEM. We have created stereotypes, labels, categories, descriptions, and assumptions which allow us to quickly arrange people into monolithic segments.

This type of compartmentalizing is a dangerously flat world approach to humanity, and I believe it is the ANTITHESIS of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe what Jesus modeled and what we are called to practice is a love rooted in wonder about our neighbors. When Jesus posed the rhetorical question of “Who is your neighbor?” I believe he wanted us to see clearly that there are no strangers in our world - only people we have not yet met. As Valarie Kaur writes in her book, See No Stranger, a “radical vision of Christianity” would be to say (and live out) to all people, “You are not a stranger to me. You are only a part of me I do not yet know.” Imagine if this was our response to all people? WHAT IF…we believed this and practiced this kind of radical vision and love? WHAT IF…we took it a step further to an active engagement? A living out of the bold, transformative, engaging love which says, “I want to know you, please share your story with me and I will entrust my story with you as well.”

I think we need to realize seeing each person as our neighbor and no strangers among us is a radical act of Christ like love. How do we do this? By wondering. Wondering about ourselves and wondering about others. For example, when we are tempted to compartmentalize people into stereotypes, labels, categories and quick descriptions, assuming those we are judging are one dimensional… WHAT IF instead we WONDERED about the things we do not yet know. Like wondering how others experience them or wondering about their life story up to this point. WHAT IF…we did not assume, we knew the other, but instead put aside what we think we know and understand about others and invite them to share their stories. WHAT IF…when others shared their stories with us, in turn we listened deeply, being willing to be transformed in the process by letting go of the stories which no longer serve us and inviting others to do the same.

Stories can serve to divide the world into us and them. BUT…stories also have the power to expand our collective experience and vision, unifying us. A radical vision of Christianity practices a belief that we are ALL a collective part of God’s story of love. Why can’t WE just do this the entire time?

This was my wondering as my husband shouted at the tv, and shared players’ stats with me during the Super Bowl.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

Whether you are celebrating romantic love, family love, brotherly love, or God's divine love, celebrate a NEW Story.
The National Setting of the UCC is overjoyed to announce the formation of 4 General Synod Virtual Choirs! The main choir will feature individual volunteers from across the country. As we know there are a number of churches producing amazing virtual choirs already, we are also producing a Church-Choir Choir, featuring entire church choirs singing different sections of hymns! For worship and theological reflections, we are preparing one song featuring a Youth Choir (youth currently in 6th-12 grade) and one song for a Children’s Choir piece, which will rehearse virtually but will be produced and shared audio only (for anyone who has security concerns!). Children ages 5-current fifth graders may volunteer for the children’s choir. The deadline to volunteer is February 19! Click here. Check out the Virtual General Synod info.

Global Ministries presents a Webinar about rebuilding in Nicaragua and Honduras on March 3 at 2 pm CST. Representatives from the Moravian Church in Nicaragua, Christian Mission Church of Nicaragua, Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras, and Christian Commission for Development in Honduras will share about their work responding to the two category-four hurricanes, Eta and Iota. In November of 2020, they caused massive damage and flooding across Nicaragua and Honduras. Since the storms hit, these global partners have responded quickly to assist their communities and walk alongside those impacted by the destruction of the storms. Speakers will share about the work that has been done to date and about the long-term plans for rebuilding affected communities. Register here. To learn more click here.

The Association of United Church Educators will hold its Virtual 50th Anniversary Celebration, "From Roots to Shoots," on Sat, February 13 from 11:00 pm - 2:30 pm CST. For pastors, faith formation leaders and all who are passionate about faith formation and youth ministries in the United Church of Christ (and beyond). Come celebrate with us as we look at the ministry of faith formation over the past 50 years, bringing what we've learned into the vibrant ministries needed for today - from roots to shoots! Guest Speaker: Melvin Bray, Emmy-award winning storyteller and author of Better: Waking Up to Who We Could Be; Worship: Rev. Molly Baskette, Lead Pastor for First Church UCC in Berkeley, California; music by Mark Miller; reading by Kassie Runsabove; and closing song by Walter Runsabove. Cost is $25 for AUCE or APCE members and $35 for non-members. Click here to find out more and to register.

Thank You, Priscilla Self! Not only did Priscilla give DuBois Center over 35 years as a dedicated employee, but she continues to care for it now! Illinois South Conference thanks her for preparing the DuBois office for new staff and, hopefully, a summer of campers! Your dedication is inspiring!
Open and Affirming Convocation will be presented on Zoom from 9 am to 3 pm on Saturday, March 6 with featured speaker, Austen Hartke, the author of *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians*, which is a book on theology and personal narratives published by Westminster John Knox Press in 2018.

Open and Affirming (ONA) is the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ's (UCC) designation for congregations, and other settings of the church which make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. If you are an Open and Affirming congregation, talking about Open and Affirming or thinking about starting the conversation, if you want to explore how to be effective allies, there will be something for you and your church. Come be in conversation with others, learn what it means to be Open and Affirming and how to fully express extravagant welcome to all God's children. For more information and a tentative schedule, click [here](#).

Feb. 19 – LIFE (Lifelong Learning) session – 
UCC History & Polity with Dr. Jill Baker
This intensive class will provide an overview of the predecessor denominations that shaped the United Church of Christ’s style of congregational governance. It will also look at how General Synod functions, explore some theological foundations, discuss how the authorization process works and review educational resources available from the denomination. Read [more](#)… Click [here](#) for flyer.

Predictions that 1 in 3 churches will close because of the COVID pandemic make innovative pastoral and congregation leadership development urgent. Couple this with the ongoing realignment of the church from maintenance to mission and the stakes are even higher. Funding, staffing, and programs are changing as ministry models, disrupted by the prolonged period of closed churches, declining participation, and the move from the familiar to the emergent. In this highly disrupted time, congregational leaders and congregations need to find accelerated ways to pivot; to avoid becoming 1 in 3. Read [more](#)… Click [here](#) for a flyer.

What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

**Job Opportunity: Church Organist/Musician** - Grantfork UCC is looking for a musician to support our inspiring music program and help it continue to thrive. We are looking for someone who is willing to play the pipe organ and/or the piano and/or the electronic keyboard for traditional worship services once or twice a month. (When services are virtual, this needs to be pre-recorded during the week. When services are in-person, this needs to be live on Sunday mornings.) An interest in directing one or more of our adult choirs - Men's Choir (gospel/Gaither), Ladies' Choir (traditional), Women's Ensemble (contemporary), and Chancel Choir (holiday services, cantatas) - would be a plus, but is not required. Musician will work in cooperation with the current music director, Connie Plocher, to determine schedule, and with the pastor. Pay will be determined according to the number of weeks willing to serve. To express interest, please contact Rev. Tim Darmour-Paul at 618-675-2595 or grantforkucc@agtelco.com.
**Job Opportunity: Director of Christian Education** - Evangelical UCC in Highland has an immediate opening for a Director of Christian Education, Youth Ministries and Communications. This position, in coordination with the Pastor, is responsible for all Christian Education and Faith Development of our members from cradle to grave. This is a full-time position requiring 40 hours per week. Competitive salary with health and dental benefits offered. The qualified candidate must have:

- Experience in related fields or equivalent training and/or education. A Bachelor’s Degree is preferred, but not required.
- Must have a minimum 3 years working or volunteering with Children and Youth in a religious setting.
- Must have experience supervising, mentoring and developing team leaders.
- Knowledge of Content Marketing, Social Media, Email/Automation and Website platforms.

For a complete job description, click [here](#). Interested candidates should contact Barb Bray in the church office at 618-654-7459 by February 15.

**Job Opportunity: Custodian** - 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.

**Job Opportunity: Music Director** - St. John’s UCC of Smithton, IL is seeking a part-time Music Director for 20-25 hours per week. The Music Director will select, play and lead music for worship services. They will collaborate with the worship committee and pastor, and also establish opportunities for other music-related activities within the church. See their [website](#) for areas of responsibilities and qualifications.

**Region 2**

Valmeyer St John UCC will hold Carry-Out Fish Fries on Wed, Feb 17 and Fri, Feb 26 from 4 pm - 7:30 pm. Menu includes cod plates, cod sandwiches, or cod by the pound, potato salad, and coleslaw.

**Region 2**

Columbia St. Paul UCC will hold its annual Rummage Sale on Fri, March 26 & Sat, March 27, the same weekend as the Columbia’s annual City-Wide Sale. Masks will be required; hand sanitizer will be provided; and social distancing will be observed for the sale. They cannot accept donations of clothing or electronics but welcome all other donations. Saturday drop-off times begin the first of March.

**Region 5**

Troy Friedens UCC will host its Annual Drive-Thru Sausage & Kraut Dinner on Sun, Mar 14 from 11:30 am to 5:30 pm. The menu includes grilled pork sausage, mashed potatoes with gravy, green beans, sauerkraut, & dessert. All dinners will be $10.00. If you have any questions please contact the office, 618-667-6535 or [email](#). Friedens is located at 207 E Center, Troy, IL 62294.

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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 sjjohnson@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

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