Record Giving to the Christmas Fund

Despite the drastic changes to congregational life over the past year, UCC members and churches contributed $1.8 million to the 2020 Christmas Fund offering—the highest total giving in the more than 100-year history of the Fund. The United Church Board for Ministerial Support is grateful to all who heard and responded to the call for support of our active and retired pastors, lay church workers, and their families—especially in this year of urgent need. Thank you!

The Insurance Board Gives Suggestions for Weathering the Storm

With southern states experiencing winter conditions like never before, churches may find themselves in unfamiliar situations. There are steps you can take today that can protect your church now and in the future.

• As safely as you can, keep your building and equipment warm. Heating systems are a lifeline during cold conditions; if they fail, major damage and property losses could occur.
• Unplug or disconnect all electronic equipment. Anticipate that voltage surges will occur. The best protection is equipment isolation. If critical equipment must remain energized, make sure it is protected by surge protection devices.
• Voltage surge protection is necessary at all times - especially during cold, freezing

Prayer list for Feb 28-March 6, 2021

Churches & Pastors
- Belleville Christ UCC, Pastor Jon (Lisa) Tinge, Supply Pastor
- Belleville Concordia UCC, Rev. Joan Mier

Retired Pastor
- Rev. Donald and Anne Sabbert, Crestwood, MO

People with Life Concerns
- Send prayers of joy for the birth of Wilhelmina "Willa" Lynn Bielke, daughter of Rev. Katie Jo and Craig Bielke and sister to Bryan, who will welcome her home. Rev. Bielke is the Associate Pastor at Collinsville St. John UCC and Craig is the Director of Faith Formation & Care & Christian Education at St Paul UCC in Belleville.
- 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 and served on several ISC teams. Cards may be sent to her at 309 Kroeger Ave, Dupo, IL 62239.
- Keep all pastors in your prayers as they continue to provide spiritual support.
- Pray for the United States as we work towards equality and civility for all.
conditions. Severe weather can cause power loss. When electricity is restored, the sudden surge of power can damage critical electronic equipment. Read more.

- Pray for the healthcare workers and families who are dealing with loved ones who have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Though hit hard, Texas churches meet community needs in rare winter storm
by Connie Larkman | published on Feb 19, 2021

No power for 32 hours.
Rolling blackouts with no warning amid record-low temperatures.
Snow and ice making roads impassable.
An exploding sprinkler system that flooded the church sanctuary, kitchen, classrooms and narthex.
Despite all that, the Rev. Dan DeLeon feels he is “one of the lucky ones” living through this week’s deadly winter storm in Texas.
“We have water,” said the pastor of Friends Congregational Church in College Station, 80 miles from Houston. “Our water is fine. Water is not going to be potable for who knows how long in many places.”

A member of Friends Congregational UCC tends to the aftermath of ceiling damage in the church’s kitchen in College Station, Tex.
Fourteen million people — nearly half of all Texans — still face water issues. Seven million people living around Houston, Arlington, Austin and Fort Worth are under boiling alerts after power outages took out the water treatment plants. Read more.

What You Can Do
The United Church of Christ is issuing an appeal to assist people affected by this year’s Winter Storms.
The impact of massive and intense storms is being felt across a wide swath of the United States. So far Texas has been particularly hard hit, and the situation there is serious. Here’s how you can help:
- Pray for those in need.
- Collect through your church and send a check payable to the Illinois South Conference with a designation to help the Texas Snowstorm. Your donation will go to the United Church of Christ to help local churches help those in need.

UPCOMING STEWARDSHIP WEBINARS
From the UCC Generosity Outreach Officer, Rev. Andrew Warner
Mar 2 at 2 pm: Overturning the Taboos of Money: Preaching about Generosity
A Conversation with Pastors about Preaching on Generosity During Lent and Easter
Jesus’ overturning the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple stands out as an iconic moment. But does it mean that all money talk in church must be taboo? “Overturning the Taboos of Money” provides a way for pastors to preach on generosity and discuss our relationship with money in ways rooted in our sacred stories. Join Andrew Warner, Generosity Outreach Officer, to learn ways to faithfully and meaningfully talk about money and fundraising. Click here to join the meeting at that date and time.

A Message From Global Ministries: 2020 and 2021 Giving and your taxes
As you prepare to file for the 2020 tax year, did you know there are new deductions and benefits for those who made gifts to nonprofits, such as Global Ministries through the 2020 CARES Act? These could apply even if you use the standard deduction. Additionally, these new
benefits and deductions were extended for 2021, which you may find helpful as you plan your 2021 giving. Read more.

40th Annual Ecumenical Rural Ministry Conference will be held via Zoom on Mon, March 8 from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm. The theme is “Engaging and Ministry with Cultural Traditionalists” and is co-sponsored by Wartburg Theological Seminary and the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

The keynote Speaker, Rev. Dr. Tex Sample, author of A Christian Justice for the Common Good, and Working Class Rage: A Field Guide to White Anger and Pain, will explore world divisions by looking at a key demographic, cultural traditionalists. Cultural traditionalists are the largest demographic in rural America and one of the largest in the country. This demographic is not limited by age, gender, or denomination. The presentation will provide a description of this important group and offer suggestions for working with cultural traditionalists to provide a greater understanding of this demographic found in many, if not most, congregations. For more information, click here.

One Great Hour of Sharing - March 14, 2021
Here’s a brief update of resources.
1. OGHS packets with sample printed materials were mailed to all congregations, and links to online OGHS resources were also sent via email.
2. Since most of our congregations continue to worship virtually, additional videos were created for use in virtual settings. This video depicts the local and global reality of the pandemic and the need for “masks”.
3. The other OGHS videos will be available here.
4. Recently, we heard from one congregation that plans to receive their OGHS offering over a 6-week period (expanding the opportunity to give beyond the Sunday, March 14 recommended offering date). We are thankful for new insights and ways to take the offering.

St. John’s Community Care will once again be opening its doors to families who are in need of Adult Day services in the Edwardsville and Collinsville locations. They will open on March 1 and be available Monday through Friday. If you have families who would benefit from the Adult Day Program, please contact Stacey at 618-344-5008. Here is the link to program information. If you would like to take a tour, contact Stacey at srhodes@stjohnscc.org.
**Job Opportunity:** St. John's Community Care is seeking a LPN or RN for the Adult Day Center in Edwardsville. The position is full-time Monday - Friday. If you are interested or know someone who might be interested, contact Stacey at 618-344-5008 or email srhodes@stjohnscc.org.

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.

Open and Affirming Convocation will be presented on Zoom from 9 am to 3 pm on Saturday, March 6 featuring speaker, Austen Hartke, the author of *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians*, a book on theology and personal narratives published 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.


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: 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.

**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.

**Region 2**

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

Red Bud St. Peter UCC will hold Carry-out Fish Fries on Feb 26 and March 12 from 4 pm - 7 pm. Menu includes cod, catfish and shrimp, sides of homemade German potato salad, American potato salad and more. Save time by calling ahead to place an order at 618-282-2417. Cash or checks accepted.

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 3**

Brighton St. John’s UCC will hold Drive Thru Fish Fries on March 5, 12, 19. Meal = fish or pulled pork, two sides and a dessert for $10. (bread, condiments and plastic ware included) Or purchase ala cart from white or buffalo fish ($5), pulled pork ($5), brats ($2), hot dogs ($1); sides for $1 – potato salad, cole slaw, green beans, baked beans or mac & cheese; assorted pies and desserts $3 each; soda $1. Call ahead or drive up to place an order. 618-372-3737. Local Delivery of meals to area schools and businesses available from 11 am to 1 pm (allow one hour for large orders) Credit cards and debit cards or cash accepted. All proceeds go to support the ministries of St. John’s UCC.

Brighton St. John’s UCC Offers Grief Support Group Via ZOOM every Wednesday at 7 pm starting March 3. Death and the loss of loved ones can be hard and complicated. Participating in an ongoing peer support group can help you navigate through things over time. We are offering a safe way to do this from the comfort of your own home with people from the area. This is a guided discussion group, led by Rev. Laurie Crelly, covering ten different touchstones or aspects of grief that can help you gain a better perspective regarding your grief and loss. If you or
someone you know is interested, call St. John’s UCC at 618-372-3737 and leave a message or email Rev. Crelly directly at OurPastor@StJohnsinBrightonIL.com. Registration is required and is limited to ten people. You will need to use the ZOOM App on your phone or computer to access the sessions. These will be confidential sessions and will not be recorded.

**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.

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 and 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