Blessing in the Chaos
This month my thoughts have often turned to all the ways our lives have been changed in the past year. Life turned upside down, inside out. Life in the uncertainty, unknowing. Life in chaos. Life in a liminal period of chaos. But just as is true in the Biblical stories, it is true in our own lives. It is in the liminal spaces that transformation happens as we learn so much about ourselves, about others, and about God. Below is one of my favorite writings of Jan Richardson, liturgical writer and poet. While she wrote it for the 4th Sunday of Epiphany Year B as a way to pull out the theme of the story in which Jesus silences the unclean spirit of a man he meets at the synagogue (Mark 1:21-28), the message seems so fitting for this moment. As you read Jan’s prayer “Blessing in the Chaos,” I invite you to reflect on this past year. How did you experience chaos? Where were the places you have felt powerless? What lessons did you learn (even the one you did not want to learn)? Where were the blessings in all that was chaotic? Where did God show up? How can you offer gratitude for the continuing presence of the Divine in your life and in the world? May there be for you today an opening to see what shimmers within the storm.

Blessings,
Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister
To all that is chaotic in you, let there come silence.

Let there be a calming of the clamoring a stilling of the voices that have laid their claim on you, that have made their home in you, that go with you

Prayer list for March 21-27, 2021

Churches & Pastors
- Brighton St. John's UCC, Rev. Laurie (Amy Brooks) Crelly
- Cahokia Bethel UCC, Pastor Karen Pepmeier

Retired Pastor
- Rev. Jack Spratte and Barbara VanAusdall, Mascoutah, IL

People with Life Concerns
- 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.
- Pray for the United States as we work towards equality and civility for all.
- Pray for the healthcare workers and families dealing with COVID-19.


Our theme for our Thursday conversations in March will be "Taking a Holy Pause."
At 2 pm CST on Thursday, March 18 we will have a Holy Pause with Sacred Visual Art, Visio Divina with the Conference Ministers of the Illinois South, Heartland, and Indiana Kentucky Conferences.
even to the holy places but will not let you rest, will not let you hear your life with wholeness or feel the grace that fashioned you.

Let what distracts you cease.
Let what divides you cease.
Let there come an end to what diminishes and demeans, and let depart all that keeps you in its cage.

Let there be an opening into the quiet that lies beneath the chaos, where you find the peace you did not think possible and see what shimmers within the storm.

~ Jan Richardson, paintedprayerbook.com

Join us here at 2 pm for this live exploration of Sacred Visual Art.

**March 25**
Holy Pause with Sacred Film
Cinema Divina

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**CCLI Announces Loop Community**
Loop Community provides worship leaders with quality and affordable multitracks, hardware, software & training. Loop makes running tracks easy so you can focus on leading worship. Save 10% off your first order at Loop Community using code CCLI10. Expires March 31st. Visit Loop Community here.

**Save the Date for the 3rd Annual Pastors’ Retreat**
**sponsored by the ISC Local Church Ministry Team**
**on Wednesday, May 12 and on Thursday, May 13 from 10 am – 2 pm on both days at the Mercy Center in St. Louis, Missouri.**
The retreat will be based on the book, *Pursuing Pastoral Excellence* by Paul Hopkins. We are planning on a mixture of free time activities, such as walking the labyrinth or the beautiful grounds as well as indoor and outdoor safe (based on current CDC guidelines) socially distanced group activities.

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**Volunteer Communications Coordinator Needed for ISC Justice & Mission Team**
The ISC Justice and Mission Team is looking for a volunteer to join our focused and hard-working group. If you have a passion for justice, you can be of great help to us by:
- Attending monthly Team meetings (the second Tuesday of the month on ZOOM until we can meet in person)
- Receiving progress reports on Team projects and distilling that data into effective communications to create content for email blasts, Facebook posts, Weekly Connection articles, etc.

This volunteer position requires a self-starter who is anxious to seek new opportunities for spreading the word about issues of justice, mission, and peace. The benefits are the same as for any volunteer position—camaraderie with a great group of folks and the satisfaction of contributing to God’s mission of justice for all Creation.
If you are interested or have questions, contact Jerry Bennett at 618-560-9282 or pjerrybennett@hotmail.com or Kay Ahaus at 618-520-1790 or kayhaus@yahoo.com.

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**UCC Upcoming Webinars - Celtic Worship**
A blessing from the 19th century compendium of Gaelic prayer, the Carmina Gadelica:
The guarding of the God of life be upon me,
The guarding of loving Christ be upon me,
The guarding of the Holy Spirit be upon me,
Each step of the way,
To aid me and enfold me,
Each day and night of my life.

In this ongoing season of Lent and as we gather ourselves in for all to follow; pour yerself a cup of tea, wouldja, and join in on the day after St. Patrick’s Day, Thursday, March 18 at 2:30 pm CST, for some traditional Celtic music by Laureano Sanchez and worship led by Rev. Dr. Chris Davies, Rev. Brendan Curran, and Chaplain Lynn Cooper. Register [here](#).

**Building Supportive Networks in Faith Formation**

In April 2020, the Wisconsin Conference UCC began offering a weekly drop-in support Zoom for faith formation leaders, both lay and clergy, to provide a safe space for faith formation leaders to talk about how they were navigating the extraordinary and sudden changes to how they engaged in this ministry. Within a short time, the group expanded to include faith formation leaders from other conferences and other denominations. This has become a community that not only shares ideas and resources, but also shares its challenges and frustrations as well as celebrates its joys and successes. Join us on **Tuesday, March 23** at 2:30 pm CST for a conversation about the value of building supportive networks in faith formation. Register [here](#). View the complete list [here](#).

Hunger has reached new heights during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many children are attending school virtually. Adults have lost jobs or must discontinue work to stay home to care for children. Food distribution systems have been stretched, and at times, broken. Food pantries are seeing record numbers of families visiting pantries, sometimes for the very first time. Come and learn how Bread for the World is addressing these issues facing people throughout our country. Zach Schmidt, Bread for the World Organizer for the state of Illinois, will be hosting a Zoom Coffee event on Thurs, March 25 at 10 am. This is a great opportunity for pastors and members of your Mission Committee to learn more about how we can address hunger in our state, country and world. Send an email to [zschmidt@bread.org](mailto:zschmidt@bread.org) and ask for a link to this upcoming one-hour Zoom Coffee gathering. Your Illinois South Conference Hunger Action Committee hopes to see you there!

The UCC Yearbook is an excellent reference book to have at your church. You can pre-order now and shipping begins in Summer 2021. The Yearbook helps keep you connected to the UCC, with data such as:

- Statistics for each local church
- All local church mailing addresses, phone numbers, and websites
- A directory of national ministries and other UCC national bodies
- A directory of conferences, colleges, universities, seminaries, and institutions related to the UCC

You can click [here](#) to order the paperback version for $37 or click [here](#) to order Access UCC, an online, real-time version of the UCC Yearbook & Directory data for $19.99/yearly subscription.

**UCC General Synod - Save the Date - July 11 - 18, 2021 - Online**

Since 1957, when the first “uniting” General Synod gathered in 1957 in Cleveland, Ohio, to the meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 2019, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ has faithfully convened a meeting every two years in physical locations throughout the United States. 2021 will be different.

We are moving through a pandemic that has taken many lives. This pandemic has disrupted our routines and many of our well-established practices as we adapt to the new demands for safety and social
distancing. The meeting of the General Synod is no different, and the 2021 gathering of the General Synod will take place entirely online.

We will gather virtually under the theme: Rooted in Love, July 11-18, 2021. You can expect the vibrancy of Spirit-led worship with prophetic preaching, music- and art-filled experiences that will anchor us. You can expect the same Spirit-filled energy in an engaging meeting of the General Synod that tends to the business and forward-momentum of the United Church of Christ. And, you can expect to learn more and connect with the UCC by attending workshops and other opportunities being prepared for you. See keynote speakers here. Read proposed bylaws changes here. Learn about the workshops.

Welcome Back!! The Executive Committee has voted to officially reopen the DuBois Center grounds on April 19. Visitors, work groups and individual volunteers can call to get on the calendar after this date. Safety measures will still be in place, including masks and social distancing. We’ve come this far through the pandemic, and we’re rounding the last turn toward the finish line. Stay tuned for more summer plans at DuBois Center.

Hitz Home
March is now here and that means warmer days and time outside. Our residents are looking forward to doing activities by our flower garden and underneath the shelter house. Activity staff will also be purchasing the seeds of the plants the residents wish to grow in our large vegetable garden. On March 17, 2021 the residents will be enjoying some corned beef and cabbage during our St. Patrick’s Day Party. The residents will also be making birdhouses soon to add to the landscaping. We are looking forward to Spring and the joy that it brings.

The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar for pastors and lay leaders offers an opportunity to explore faithful, practical, and tested ways to promoting generosity in our congregations. The seminar draws on current research, seeks guidance from the wisdom of scripture, and discusses the best practices in church-based fundraising. Class sessions held May 19, May 26, June 2, June 9, June 16, and June 23 from 6:30 – 8:00 pm CST. Between class sessions, the instructors provide materials to help you analyze the culture of your own congregation and learn how to create change. Register today: The CGC Seminar is $150 per participant. Click here to register by April 30.

Surviving Caregiving Conference – Online Series via ZOOM
This free conference is open to the public and all family members who serve as a caregiver for an aging loved one. It will be hosted online via Zoom, so anyone from anywhere is welcome to register. This conference encourages family caregivers to be proactive, prevent or delay the need for costly institutional care, keep families together in their communities, and maximize independence. Participants will have the opportunity to learn from expert panelists on various caregiving topics over 4 weeks starting on Saturday, April 10. The experts will present ideas and resources that will help you legally protect your aging parents or spouse, motivate family members to help, adapt your...
living space or daily living tasks, and find more balance between family, work, and caregiving. Sessions will range from 60 – 90 minutes with the opportunity to ask questions. Register online [here](#). When registering, you will be asked to enter your address twice; one time it will say billing address, but it **WILL NOT** ask for payment information. This conference is being presented at no cost to you. When you register, you are registering for all four sessions. All sessions will be recorded. During the sessions, everyone but the speaker will be on mute, but you will be able to ask questions through the Q&A button. All sessions will begin at 10:00 am CDT.

**Session Titles & Presenters:**

- **Legal and Financial Issues on Saturday, April 10** – Heidi Dodd from Harter, Larson and Dodd.
- **Take Care to Care: Improving Safety & Function for Loved-ones & Caregivers in the Home, Saturday, April 17** – Cindy and Christina Hardin-Weiss from Adaptive Equipment & Caregiving Corner.
- **Practical Strategies Family Caregivers Can Use In and Out of the Home on Saturday, April 24** – Amy Sobrino from Memory Care Home Solutions.
- **Saturday, May 1 – Dementia Resources – Helping You Age Well, Your Way!** – Experts from AgeSmart Community Resources, Hospice of Southern Illinois, and St. John’s Community Care.

Click [here](#) for a flier. For more information, contact AgeSmart Community Resources at 618-222-2561 or TTY 800-222-2570.

**Job Opportunity:** St. John’s Community Care is seeking an 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 srrhodes@stjohnsc.org.

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**March 19 & 20 – LIFE (Lifelong Learning) – How Can our Spirituality Impact Our Lives? with the Eden Spiritual Directors**

We are spiritual beings living spiritual lives. How aware we are of our spirituality and able to engage it for perspective and practice in everyday life is the focus of this LIFE Course. Because spirituality begins with our experience of God:

- We will explore how to be present and attentive to our experience of the Holy.
- We will consider how our attitudes, relationships, and mental/emotional realities shape and are changed by our experience of the Holy One.
- Using the contexts of personal experience, home life, work life, and social/community life, we will seek to deepen our capacity to consciously choose to live in and out of our spirituality to enrich all aspects of our lives.

Click [here](#) for more.

**March 17 & 26 – Eden Seminary Admissions**

**Come and See: A Virtual Event with the Admissions Office**

If you are discerning what it means to be a part of the Progressive Christian Movement, there’s no time like the present to come and see EDEN Theological Seminary! Come join the Admissions and Financial Aid Team, Professors, Degree Program Chairs and others as we present an overview of Degree Programs, Admissions process, Financial Aid and Eden’s Community! Register [here](#).

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**Save the Date! June 13 is Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society (ERHS) Heritage Sunday**

The Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society looks forward to partnering with you in celebrating the continuing legacy of our historic E and R churches throughout the Conference on Sunday, June 13th. Additional details are forthcoming. In the meantime, you can always visit us at our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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The Equality Act is making history for LGBTQ+ Americans: it will establish in law protections against discrimination in employment and housing that were set in place as executive orders during the Obama Administration, and revoked by the Trump Administration. The Open and Affirming Coalition
urges members of Open and Affirming churches to contact their Senators, framing your message based on your faith as a Christian. Learn more here.

### What’s Happening in Illinois South Conference

**Job Opportunity:** Zion United Church of Christ in New Baden is seeking candidates for an office administrator. This is a full-time position, with typical secretarial duties and assisting with our community food pantry. Interested applicants can go to [www.zionuccnb.net](http://www.zionuccnb.net) for an application link, or contact the church office at 618-588-4135 for more information.

**Job Opportunity:** Zion United Church of Christ in New Baden is seeking candidates for an office administrator. This is a full-time position, with typical secretarial duties and assisting with our community food pantry. Interested applicants can go to [www.zionuccnb.net](http://www.zionuccnb.net) for an application link, or contact the church office at 618-588-4135 for more information.

**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:** Church Organist/Musician

Grantfork UCC seeks a musician to support our inspiring music program. Best candidate should be willing to play the pipe organ and/or the piano and/or the electronic keyboard for traditional worship services once or twice a month (Virtual services will be pre-recorded during the week. In-person, will 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](http://www.zionuccnb.net) for areas of responsibilities and qualifications.

**Boundary Awareness Training**

For those pastors who are due for Boundary Training this year, ISC has scheduled one for Monday, April 12, 2021 via zoom from 8:30 a.m. – Noon. This training will be for both active and retired clergy. Contact Christy at cpursell@iscucc.org to register and get the zoom meeting info. Cost: $20 for retired pastors, $25 for active pastors, $25 for non-ISC retired pastors, and $30 for non-ISC active pastors.

**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.

**Region 3**

Brighton St. John’s UCC will hold a Drive Thru Fish Fry on March 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.

Region 5
Hamel Immanuel UCC will host a Drive-Thru Chicken Dinner on Sun, March 21 from 11:30 am - 4 pm. Menu includes 1/2 chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, cole slaw, and applesauce. No dessert. Cost is $10. The church is located 1-1/2 miles south of Hamel with an address of 5838 Staunton Road in Edwardsville, IL 62025 for your GPS.

St. Jacob UCC Youth Group will Egg your yard for Easter. $20 for 20 eggs; $30 for 40 eggs; $40 for 60 eggs; $60 for 100 eggs. Order candy filled eggs in time to be delivered by Easter. Contact Dawn at smdz@hometel.com, 618-792-4316 or Brittany at bfrank17@hometel.com or 618-792-5191.

St. Jacob UCC will present their Drive-Thru Strawberry Festival on May 16 from 11 am - 4 pm. Menu includes Brats, pork burgers, hot dogs, sides, and strawberry desserts

Region 8
Lebanon St. Paul UCC will host a Drive-Thru Chicken Dinner on Sun, March 21, 11 am – 3 pm. Each meal includes ½ chicken, fried, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, corn, coleslaw and a piece of either Chocolate Texas Sheet cake or Gooey Butter cake. Call 618-537-4991 for more information. St. Paul is located at 123 E. Dee Street, just off Rt. 4. There will be multiple drive thru lanes, so follow the signs.

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