A Donkey or a Horse?
This Sunday as we celebrate Palm Sunday, if preachers and worship leaders have designed the worship service around the liturgy of the palms, they will be using either the Gospel of Mark (Mark 11:1-11) or the Gospel of John (John 12:12-16) to invite worshipers to hear the retelling of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. I remember sermons of my youth in which preachers focused a great deal of attention on the fact that Jesus did not choose to ride into the holy city on a horse fit for a King. Therefore, over the years in my own preaching life and in reflecting on the texts for Palm Sunday, I have pretty much ignored the significance of the animal Jesus chose.

Last night, I was asked to fill in at a church for Palm Sunday. So, this morning I awoke with Palm Sunday preaching preparation on my mind, and I immediately thought of the “not a horse fit for a King” sermons. As I read the texts for this year’s cycle in the lectionary for the first time, I began to do my own wondering about the significance of a “colt” versus a “donkey.”

The only time I had been in the presence of donkeys was when my children rode on a donkey at a town festival. But other than seeing pictures of donkeys illustrated in children’s bibles, this was about all I knew. Since I do not have the life experience and deep wisdom of farmers and those who work the land or take care of animals, I began to read. Here are some things I discovered in my reading:

- Donkeys can carry heavy loads, often up to 150 pounds on their backs.
- Donkeys can be good guard animals. As such they are often used to guard sheep.
- Donkeys can have a calming effect on nervous animals.
- Donkeys are considered by veterinarians and owners to be a lower maintenance animal with gentle dispositions.

Prayer list for March 28-April 3, 2021
Churches & Pastors
- Carbondale Church of the Good Shepherd, Rev. Kim (Dr. Aaron Newcomb) Magwire
- Carlinville St. Paul UCC, Rev. Katrina Palan
  Retired Pastor
- Rev. Gary and Joyce Kniepkamp, St. Jacob, IL

People with Life Concerns
- With saddened hearts, we report that Rev. Douglas Anders died last night. Rev. Anders served several churches in the Missouri Mid-South Conference, then served as the Conference Minister for the South Central Conference of the UCC and as the Acting Conference Minister for Illinois South Conference in 2015-2016, as well as Interim Pastor for Concordia UCC in Belleville. Arrangements are pending. We will send information by email as soon as it is available.
- 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.
Donkeys can be excellent protectors as they have large ears which can pick up more distant sounds, and they can use their loud call (or bray), which can last up to twenty seconds, to signal danger to other animals up to 2 miles away.

Donkeys can also be excellent defenders on behalf of other animals and themselves as they will use biting, striking, or kicking to ward off danger.

In my estimation, why wouldn’t Jesus have chosen an animal such as this to carry him across the threshold of his active ministry to his impending death and ultimately to the resurrection of life and hope for all of God’s people. We may never know what went through Jesus’ mind in choosing this animal, but I am drawn to the beautiful symbolism and metaphors which can emerge in our hearts, minds, and imaginations.

To imagine that Jesus chose an animal which could signal to his believers of all ages, places, and generations that he himself, as a religious leader, was different than all who had come before, all who are in this moment, and all who will arise here on after is quite profound.

Unlike others...

- Jesus will always be the One who would carry the burdens and heaviness of the world.
- Jesus will always be the One to guard and protect the most vulnerable.
- Jesus will always be the One whose voice and message could be heard by those who choose to hear it.
- Jesus will always be the One who will defend those in danger.

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey was not about show but about servanthood. It was the humble act of naming and claiming that he was willing to accept the cost of loving, protecting, and defending the humanity of all of God’s people even if it meant (and it would) the giving of his own life.

As we sing our Hosannas this Sunday and as we proclaim Jesus is our King of all Kings, may we remember not only his divinity, but his humanity as a leader who embodied the humbleness much like the animal upon which he rode into Jerusalem. And may we seek to embody and live out these same characteristics.

For blessed is the name of the One who lives, leads, and comes in the name of the Lord. Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

Join the Facebook Live Tri-Conference Conversations between Rev. Shana Johnson, Rev. David Long-Higgins, and Rev. Chad Abbott. The theme for our Thursday conversations in March will be "Taking a Holy Pause."

At 2 pm CST on Thursday, March 25 we will have a Holy Pause with Sacred Film, Cinema Divina with the Conference Ministers of the Illinois South, Heartland, and Indiana Kentucky Conferences. Join us here at 2 pm for this live exploration of Sacred Film.
At Eden Seminary next month, they celebrate the inauguration of Deborah Krause as the seminary’s 14th president on April 6 at 5:30 pm CDT. They invite all churches and congregations to participate in this Zoom webinar. Register here. The Worship Service with the Inauguration will be part of a week-long series of online events that is this year’s Eden Spring Convocation, April 5 - 9. “This is What Theology Looks Like – Public Ministries of Resilience and Solidarity. A Celebration of Eden Seminary in the Progressive Christian Movement.” Find details at www.eden.edu.

The Board of Directors and the Faculty of Eden Theological Seminary
Request the honor of your presence at the Inauguration of Deborah Krause as the Fourteenth President of the Seminary on Tuesday, the Sixth of April Two Thousand Twenty-One Online

To make a gift in honor of President Deborah Krause, click the GIVE option at www.eden.edu or mail to 475 E Lockwood Ave., St. Louis, MO 63119

Liabilities from Church Use by a Third Party
Th Insurance Board receives numerous inquiries from churches concerning liability exposures that exist when opening the church property to third party organizations. Here are two documents for your review which address these concerns and proper techniques in order to reduce liability exposures when opening church doors to others. Liability Exposure from Third Parties Handout Tenants Users Liability Insurance Program (TULIP) Handout

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.

UCC Matching Grants for CWS Buckets, Kits available in 2021
It's confirmed! For the seventh year in a row, United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries is offering Matching Grants to UCC groups assembling CWS Emergency Cleanup Buckets and other Kits. Buckets are especially needed. Here’s how it works: UCC churches and other groups assembling CWS Kits are invited to stretch their resources by applying for $250 matching grants from UCC Disaster Ministries. To qualify, congregations must show that they have raised at least $250 in cash and in kind for Buckets and/or Kits. The 2021 CWS Kit Booklet explains all of the details of the Kit ministry. Apply for your UCC Matching Grant here. Read the CWS 2020 Buckets and Kits shipping report here. Below are the closest CWS Kit Drop Off sites with the dates available and contact information.
• **May 16-29, 2021**
  Christ UCC, 3601 Ash Ave, Evansville IN 47714. Contact for appt: Susan DeHaven at 812-306-7048 or **srd5591@yahoo.com**

• **Oct 1-16, 2021**
  Bethlehem UCC, 6400 Oak Hill Rd, Evansville IN 47725. Contact for appt: Andrea Gander at 812-499-8755 or **agoose123@aol.com**

• **May 17-20 & Oct 11-23, 2021** (M-Th 11 am-3 pm, F 1 pm-4 pm)
  Marion-Indianapolis 2nd Presbyterian, 7700 N. Meriden St., Indianapolis IN 46260. Contact for appt: Rev David Berry at 317-417-3686 or **dberry@secondchurch.org**

• **Oct 9, 2021 9:30 – 11:30 am**
  LifeWise St. Louis, 1321 So. 11th St, St. Louis MO 63104. Contact for appt: Pam Jean at 573-474-3332 or **pamjean@gmail.com**

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**Welcome Back!!** The Executive Committee has voted to officially reopen the DuBois Center grounds on April 19, 2021. 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.

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**Surviving Caregiving Conference – Online Series via ZOOM**

This free conference via Zoom is open to the public and all family members who serve as a caregiver for an aging loved one. It will encourage family caregivers to be proactive, prevent or delay the need for costly institutional care, keep families together in their communities, and maximize independence. Beginning at 10 am, sessions will range from 60 – 90 minutes with the opportunity to ask questions.

Session Titles & Presenters:

- **April 10 - Legal and Financial Issues** – Heidi Dodd from Harter, Larson and Dodd.
- **April 17 - Take Care to Care: Improving Safety & Function for Loved-ones & Caregivers in the Home** – Cindy and Christina Hardin-Weiss from Adaptive Equipment & Caregiving Corner.
- **April 24 - Practical Strategies Family Caregivers Can Use In and Out of the Home** – Amy Sobrino from Memory Care Home Solutions.
- **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. Register online [here](#).
St. John’s Community Care offers Coffee Talk with Caregivers, an informational group created for caregivers. This group will cover a variety of topics to help support and educate those who care for people living with dementia. It will meet on the last Monday of each month from 1 pm – 2 pm on Zoom. It is their hope that participants of this group will see a decrease in the feelings associated with caregiver burden, improvement in family relationships and caregiver confidence, and an increase in caregiver knowledge and problem-solving abilities. The first session will be on Monday, March 29. If you are interested in participating, email Stacey Rhodes at srhodes@stjohnscc.org.

The nomination and application period for the position of President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Deaconess Foundation is now open. This position calls for a dynamic organizational and philanthropic leader who is a passionate advocate for justice, equity, and child well-being. The ideal candidate will be an inspirational public and organizational leader with a strong track record of experience in grassroots community engagement, organizational capacity building, and leadership development as well as an unwavering commitment to racial justice and economic equity with a focus on children and youth. Deaconess Foundation is a grantmaking organization building power for child well-being and racial equity through philanthropy, advocacy, and public policy change. A ministry of the United Church of Christ, Deaconess has invested more than $85 million to improve the health of the St. Louis community since 1998. The Foundation’s advocacy and grantmaking footprint includes St. Louis City, and St. Louis, Jefferson, St. Charles, and Franklin Counties in Missouri; and Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe Counties in Illinois. This is a prime opportunity for the next President and CEO to build on Deaconess’ rich heritage and record of impact in the St. Louis region as well as its burgeoning reputation as an innovator and national leader in responsive philanthropy that is community-rooted and focused on justice and equity.

Deaconess has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with the search process. To view the position profile, apply for the position, submit nominations of others or inquire about the search in confidence, please visit: www.imsearch.com/7799. Applications and nominations submitted by April 23, 2021 will receive priority consideration. Screening of applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process.

What’s Happening in Illinois South Conference

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 kayahaus@yahoo.com.
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 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.

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.

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 9
Spring Food Collection for the Interfaith Food Pantry in Belleville and sponsored by Belleville churches is scheduled for Fri, March 26 from 6 pm – 9 pm and Sat, March 27 from 10 am – 5 pm. The drive through will have an open-air touchless food drop off at Belleville Christ UCC parking lot at 26 N 14th Street in Belleville. Items suggested are personal hygiene items, canned foods, microwaveable soups and meals, box meals, pancake mix and syrup or cereals, peanut butter, condiments, spices, and baking ingredients or other staples. Churches participating are Christ United Church of Christ, First United Presbyterian, Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic, St. Luke Catholic Parish, St. Matthew United Methodist, St. Paul United Church of Christ, St. Teresa Catholic Church, Trinity United Church of Christ, Westview Baptist Church, and Zion Lutheran.
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.

**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

[Facebook] [Weekly Connection] [Twitter]