Easter People
I have a good friend and colleague who recently said, “I always find it funny when Christians find something improbable.” Ah, what truth there is in such a profound statement! If our observing and celebrating of Holy Week and the Easter season teaches us anything, it is that we are a people of the improbable.

We are a people who believe in a baby whose very arrival on this earth would cause heavenly angels to come down to earth singing of his arrival, ordinary shepherds to receive prophetic visions in the still of the night, scholarly astronomers from the East to follow a brightly shining star on the expectations they would meet a King, and earthly rulers to speculate, scheme, and conspirer against the anticipated threat his very presence would have in their kingdoms and in the world.

We are a people who believe this baby, while born to a woman, was not born of an earthly father, but rather was conceived and fully formed in the womb of his mother by the Holy Spirit so that he would be fully human and fully Divine.

We are a people who believe that a child, who was born in a stable with work animals such as cows, sheep, and donkeys, would grow to a man who would be willing to ride a work animal, such as a donkey, over the threshold of a holy city where he knew he would face his death.

We are a people who believe that this child, who at twelve years old would receive praise and accolades from temple priests and religious leaders and then lose track of time and worry his parents while on a family visit to Jerusalem, would grow to be a man who would face temple priests and religious leaders in Jerusalem who had been plotting to kill him.

Prayer list for April 4 - 10, 2021
Churches & Pastors
-Carlyle Immanuel UCC, Pastor Ken (Barbara) Schafer
-Central City Zion UCC, Rev. Nancy Peebles
Retired Pastor
- Rev. Robert Schmidt, Sherman, IL

People with Life Concerns
-Please pray for the family of Rev. Douglas Anders as they mourn his passing. 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, served as the Acting Conference Minister for Illinois South Conference of the UCC in 2015-2016, as well as Summer Sabbatical Pastor for New Hanover Zoar UCC and Interim Pastor for Concordia UCC in Belleville in 2017. A memorial service will be held via Zoom hosted by the Kirkwood United Church of Christ in Kirkwood, Missouri, on Sat, April 10 at 10 am CDT. Click here on that day and time if you wish to attend. Cards of condolence can be sent to his mother, Fumiko Anders, 90 Greendale, Normandy MO. 63121. Click here to read the article written by National UCC staff about Rev. Anders and his life in the UCC.

-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
We are a people who believe a man from Nazareth who had been raised by a village woman and her carpenter husband working with their hands, would grow to be a man whose hands would multiply fishes and loaves to feed hungry people on a hillside, still the waters of a storm, give sight to the blind, calm tormenting spirits, heal a multitude of maladies and restore life with just a touch and an unexplainable power.

We are a people who believe this man who spoke truth without apologizing, accepted all without judgment, offered solace without conditions, and lived, led, loved, and moved in this world without self-aggrandizing, seeking only to reflect the true nature of God, was such a powerful, transforming force in the world that some thought the only way they could stop this power was to kill it.

We are a people who believe this baby, this child, this man, this son of God and man rose from the dead to show us that not even death could control, limit, or hold down the power of his love and might.

Yes, all of this seems improbable, but it is what we claim to believe. For, we are an Easter people. We believe there is nothing improbable or impossible through the Risen Christ. This Holy Week and Easter season, may it be not just our lips which confess this truth, but every part of our being believing it and living the truth that NOTHING is improbable or impossible for those who believe and trust in the Risen Christ.

Blessings, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

SAVE THE DATE – Day of Discipleship – May 1, 2021 – 9:00a.m. to 12:00 noon on Zoom (you can log in half hour before the event)
Strengthening the Ties that Bind Us Together - Our ministries, our ways of connecting with our members and our community, and our ways of utilizing technology have changed and evolved during the past year. Let’s gather to learn how we can share resources and ideas which can strengthen the work of the Church. The event will take place on Zoom with the opportunity to attend 3 of 6 different workshops. Details on workshop titles and presenters will be available after Easter.

Sharing Good News!
Thanks to a loan made possible by the Cornerstone Fund, Dupo Christ UCC was able to install solar panels for their church in November 2020, joining other Illinois South Conference churches who have recently done the same. The ISC Justice and Mission Team brought a resolution to the Annual Meeting several years ago challenging the ISC churches to begin solar projects. It is always a joy to see churches rising to the challenges set before them. This sort of forward thinking speaks well of the Cornerstone Fund, its Board of Directors, and the individual churches of Illinois South Conference. Clean energy for the environment, cost savings for the church, and covenantal cooperation between Cornerstone Fund and our churches. Good news all around.
The photo is of Russell Portell, member of Dupo Christ UCC and the person who drove the solar mission for the church.
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.

ALL CLERGY ARE NOW ELIGIBLE FOR VACCINATIONS
In Illinois, all clergy are now eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. To schedule an appointment, please check with your local health department. Keep in mind, you might need to bring verification materials of your profession. Verification materials could be a recent payroll stub, a copy of your W2, or a business card. If you need a clergy card that validates your standing in the Illinois South Conference, please reach out to Christy Pursell at cpursell@iscucc.org.

Space to Put Our Best Foot Forward
The DuBois Center office needs your help to replace the DuBois Center office flooring so that the new Acting Director, Haley Elliott can “put her best foot forward” in her new position at DuBois Center.

An office update, started in late 2017, needs to be finished. The Conference Property Committee has undertaken the lead on this project and identified these necessary updates:

- Prepare and paint all interior walls and ceilings,
- Replace all ceiling light fixtures,
- Remove carpeting in one office,
- Level all floors,
- Install all new baseboard trim and
- Cover all floors with new laminated flooring.

Currently the office has four types of flooring, of which all are not level from room to room. Some small areas might be old asbestos tiles and some areas are down to the sub-floor, as you can see in these photos.

Volunteers have offered to provide the labor to do everything except lay the new flooring. Dave Hoffmann, Co-Chair of the Property Committee, has secured a price of just under $9,000 for the new flooring materials and installation. The Conference Council Executive Committee has given approval for this work; however, we lack a big portion of the funds to start with the floor replacement. That’s where you come in – your donations, your intent to donate, or your skill in
laying flooring is needed soon to “put our best foot forward” in welcoming Haley to the Illinois South Conference and DuBois Center. Donations are welcomed from individuals, churches and/or their organizations. Checks can be sent to the ISC office at 1312 Broadway, Highland IL 62249 or click here to donate online. Designate your donations to the DuBois Office Flooring Project. If your group plans to donate or raise money to donate to this, please contact Julie at 618-357-1809 or email jriebmann@iscucc.org.
If you or your group have experience with this type of work and want to volunteer to help, contact one of the ISC Property Co-Chairs: Priscilla Self at 618-318-0083 or pjj48@hotmail.com or Dave Hoffmann at 618-791-7002 or davehoff95@gmail.com. Thank you very much for your support.

DuBois Center Awakens
On Saturday, March 27, DuBois Center sponsored their first events since March of last year. The Girls Scouts of Southern Illinois, under the leadership of Anne Townsend, brought small groups out to the camp for their "My Brownie, My Pony and Me" and "Mommy and Me Paint a Pony" day programs. They have had these programs on their calendar for a year, hoping we might be able to accommodate them this spring. Thanks to the amazing work of the Outdoor Ministry Team in creating good safety protocols and procedures, to the Horse Team who generously volunteered their time and leadership, and to amazing DuBois staff members, the day was a big success. Anne shared with us some of the comments she heard from the event:

- “This was one of the best-organized events I have ever gone to. My girls had a blast!”
- “My girls had so much fun they don’t want to leave. Do you want to keep them here?”
- “My daughter has autism and ADHD. She has a hard time interacting in a group setting and sometimes is disconnected, but not today and while she was around the horse. She and I would love to come back and do more programs like this. Today was one of the few days where I got to see my daughter shine.”

While this past year has been a difficult year for DuBois Center with countless hours the Conference leaders have spent in designing several contingency plans for programming and creating best practices in order that groups might be able to enjoy DuBois Center this spring and summer, it has been completely worth it!! Please continue to hold your camp, DuBois Center, in your thoughts and prayers. With your support, we know we can bounce back from this past year even stronger and ready to give everyone who experiences DuBois Center a sense of the special, sacred space it is.

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

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

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 next session will be on Monday, April 26. 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.

The Spring edition of The Steward, newsletter from the Insurance Board, covers many subjects to help keep your church, congregation, and visitors safe.

Slips, Trips and Falls
In the U.S., there are more than 8.7 million people injured from slip, trip and fall incidents every year, according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Slips, trips, and falls are one of the greatest personal injury hazards facing your members, guests, and employees. In fact, according to the National Floor Safety Institute, falls are the leading cause of emergency room visits. Overall, approximately 80% of liability claims and 45% of workers’ compensation claims reported by Insurance Board participants are the result of slips, trips, or falls. Common culprits for slips, trips and falls can be categorized accordingly:

- Foreign substance - on the surface can adversely affect slip resistance. Most likely culprits are: ice, water, liquids, and grease.
- Surface conditions - raised/recessed/cracked sidewalks or curbing, potholes in parking lots, loose carpeting, loose or broken tiles, holes on the surface.
- Level changes - floor or exterior walking surface height changes.
- Obstructions - items that can contribute to the likelihood of a trip and fall by impeding into a walking path: cords, hoses, and parking lot bumpers.
- Visibility - more than just lighting. Other considerations include glare, shadows, bright lights, and color contrasts.
- Human factors - demographics (i.e., age), shoe types, familiarity with the areas traveled, and physically challenged persons.
- Stairs - more than three steps (a major source of falls).
- Unusual features - anything that might distract a person walking in the area: alarms/buzzers, flashing lights, information boards, displays, and decorative lighting.

The majority of slips, trips and falls are preventable. Walk through and around your church with a keen eye on the above and address any potential issues in order to keep your members and guests safe.

Click here to read more about safely opening camps, security guide against violence in a house of worship, flooding issues, risk management to lower costs and more.

What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

Vacation Bible School Schedules
June 1 - 4; In-Person; 9 am - 12 pm; St. John UCC; Maestown, IL; Theme: Knights of the North Castle
June 21-25, 2021; In-Person; (tentatively) 8:45 am - 12 pm; St. John UCC Mascoutah; Theme: Rocky Railway

No Vacation Bible School for These Churches
Addieville Zion United Church of Christ
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.

Job Opportunity: Director of Mother’s Day Out Program at St. Paul UCC, Belleville
This position requires a bachelor’s degree or 10 years of experience in Early Childhood Development. The program runs from the middle of August to the middle of May with some hours over summer months. The 2021-2022 program will provide 10 hours of educational and social development activities to children ages 3 – 5 years. A detailed job description will be forwarded to those who meet requirements. Anticipated start date upon completion of successful interview and background check is May 1, 2021. Please send resume with three references to: St. Paul UCC, ATTN: MDO Search, 115 West B Street, Belleville, IL 62220 or email: mdodirectorsearch@stpaulucc.org.

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

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
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](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](mailto: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](mailto:jriechmann@iscucc.org).

To speak with the Conference Minister, contact Rev. Shana Johnson 618-882-8247 or [sjohnson@iscucc.org](mailto: sjohnson@iscucc.org).

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**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.

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**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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