Strengthen the Church Offering

May 23, 2021

Sunday, May 23 is Strengthen the Church Sunday in the United Church of Christ. Strengthen the Church is one of the special United Church of Christ offerings we encourage our local churches to support. However, this particular offering is a bit different for us at the Conference level. This offering is split between the National setting and the Conferences of the United Church of Christ which means here in Illinois South Conference we retain 50% of the funds which are collected in the churches of our Conference.

In 2020, at the National level of the United Church of Christ, Strengthen the Church money was used to create programs and services which directly helped churches and local churches’ pastors adapt and thrive under times of great uncertainty brought on by the pandemic. One program which was supported in part by Strengthen the Church Funds was “Reset for Renewal.” “Reset for Renewal” was designed especially for people working with youth and young adults. Rev. Lisa Hart, one of ISC’s own, has been quoted on the promotional literature about this event in saying, “This was what so many in our churches and other ministry settings were desperately in need of during this extraordinary time.”

In 2020, at the Conference level, Strengthen the

Prayer list for
May 16 - 22, 2021

Churches & Pastors
- Edwardsville St. Paul UCC, Rev. Diane Grohmann
- Evansville St. John UCC, Pastor Kevin Hirsch, Lay Supply Pastor

Retired Pastor
- Rev. Russell and Doris Miller, Metropolis, IL

People with Life Concerns
- Keep Rev. Karla (Rev. Charles Preston) Frost in your prayers as she recuperates from surgery. Rev. Frost is the Pastor for St. John UCC in Granite City. Cards may be sent to her at 2901 A Nameoki Rd, Granite City, IL 62040.
- 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.
- Pray for our Elected Officials of Congress, our Hunger Action Partners.
- Pray for those who are hungry.
- 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.
Church money enabled Illinois South Conference to offer countless Conference-wide seminars, gatherings, workshops, trainings, worship services, and even support groups, as we were able to expand and fund our technology, using these funds. We also used the funds to offer Marcia McFee’s “Reboot Your Worship” series for FREE to pastors and worship leaders and the “Cultivating Generous Congregations” at a reduced price for pastors and church leaders.

For the last couple of years, Strengthen the Church money has been used to underwrite a majority of the costs of offering a retreat for our pastors in Illinois South Conference and to fund the remaining costs not covered by a joint grant we applied for alongside the IKC and Heartland Conferences to employ a part-time communication staff person, Nikki Shaw.

All of these programs and services would not be possible without you giving generously when a Strengthen the Church offering is taken in your church.

Dear Friends as you consider what you will give on Sunday, May 23 to this special offering, please know your donations, no matter what the size, make a BIG difference in the United Church of Christ and here in the Illinois South Conference. Your offerings expand the possibilities of what we can offer to renew and revitalize our mutual ministries for the rest of this year and in years to come. Thank you for supporting all the ways we seek to strengthen our churches in the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ.

In gratitude, Rev. Shana Johnson, ISC Conference Minister

The Amazing People of Illinois South Conference...
Immediately following the 2020 Day of Discipleship in Waterloo where Rev. Sarah Lund spoke about “Healthy & Whole Congregations”, Irvington Friedens UCC’s delegates, James & Andrea Barrett, brought an idea to the church to become an official WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged) congregation. On Sunday, May 16th during worship, that effort/movement will become reality and Irvington Friedens UCC will become a WISE congregation. Congratulations to the delegates who initiated the effort and to the entire congregation for your determination to make it real.

Columbia St. Paul UCC’s Board of Missions and Stewardship, chaired by Tiffany Riley, hosted a fundraiser to raise money for Back Bay Missions. They raised $1,071.20 from sales of Butter Braids. Well done, St. Paul UCC!

The honor of your virtual presence is requested for the Ordination of Tarrah Suzanne Vaupel
Sunday, May 23 at 4:00 pm CDT
Livestreamed via Zoom from O’Fallon United Church of Christ
O’Fallon, Illinois
Zoom Meeting ID 854 3563 9560  Password 840260  Click here to RSVP

Boundary Awareness Training
For those pastors who are due for Boundary Training this year, ISC has scheduled one for Monday, July 19, 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.
Access UCC - Web-accessible Yearbook Information
This web-accessible resource provides instant access to UCC data at your fingertips! For $19.99, you receive a 12-month subscription to immediate, unlimited access and real-time data updates. You'll be able to search:

- 10,000+ UCC clergy’s current contact information
- 5,000+ UCC churches’ contact information, including pastor and reported Yearbook data since 1992
- UCC Conference directory included

Only one purchase per order. Click here to order.

Save the Date for the ISC Annual Meeting 2021 - Weekend of October 15.
- Friday, October 15 – Celebration of anniversaries in the life of ISC
- Saturday, October 16 – Business meeting of the ISC

Depending on CDC guidelines, The Conference Gatherings Team plans to hold an in-person/livestreamed evening of celebration and a virtual business meeting. Watch your inbox and the Weekly Connection for more details this summer.

MENTAL HEALTH SUNDAY, MAY 16
The arrival of May brings Mental Health Awareness Month and, for many congregations, preparations for Mental Health Sunday on May 16. The UCC Mental Health Network, has partnered with The United Church of Canada to offer a new resource: Radical Belonging: Mental Health Sunday Liturgies and Resources for All. This downloadable resource, available in both a PDF and a large print Word document, is for any congregation of any size that wishes to become a place of radical belonging. Within it, you will find liturgy that challenges the systemic sins that create “otherness” and ableism, resources that share the stories of people living with mental illness and disabilities, and words of grace and celebration for the opportunities we have as the Body of Christ to love, care for and accept one another.

We hope you will find this resource helpful as you might be preparing worship services and liturgies for this month and especially, Mental Health Sunday on Sunday, May 16. See resources and download here.

Another Resource for Mental Health Awareness Month
This video was produced by Sherona Lucas, the IKC Mental Health Educator, in collaboration with author and illustrator, Jeffery Bates. The video includes the author’s narration of the book, as well as a series of questions at the end of the video to help children and adults engage thoughtfully about feelings, especially difficult feelings like sadness, loneliness, and fear, all in the context of Bates’ story of hope. Book on Amazon. Author’s website.

Rainbow Illinois 2021 Survey Recruitment Email
The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign invites you to participate in a study that explores the experiences of LGBTQ individuals in Illinois. In this study, you will be asked to take a survey about a wide range of topics, including self-identity, family, health, work, and community issues that will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

If you identify as LGBTQ, are 18 years or older, and if you currently live in Illinois, you are eligible to participate in the study. Your participation in the study will be kept completely confidential. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be entered into a lottery drawing for a gift certificate worth $25.00. Based on the anticipated number of participants your odds of winning are 1 in 20.

Please visit the following website to take part in the survey.
Reconnecting, Rebuilding Relationships, and Centering Ourselves

I am, thankfully, lucky enough to have a sister who lives close to the beach in Florida. This last weekend, after more than a year of not being able to see each other due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, my whole family was able to be together to witness my sister’s graduation, celebrate my dad’s birthday and Mother’s Day, and my and my wife’s anniversary. This was made possible, of course, by all of our measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, vaccines, and commitment to ongoing prevention methods. As my family and I sat on the beach, soaking up the sun and each other’s presence, I no longer had to dwell on the absence we have felt in the last year. It was great to be reconnected in person and be able to enjoy one of God’s most magnificent creations together.

It dawned on me that this summer will be a lot like these precious moments – a time of reconnecting, rebuilding relationships, and centering ourselves in God’s love. I hope you can find a way to be a part of what is cooking up for this summer at DuBois Center! We are still hiring a number of positions, especially counselors/activity coordinators, without whom we cannot provide the programming we desperately want to provide this summer! Please consider if there is a way you can join us, and email the office at dcinfo@duboiscenter.org for more information on volunteering and/or applying!

I hope you and your family experience God’s abundant love this week!
Hayley Elliott, Acting Director of Outdoor Ministry

DuBois Center needs YOU.

It’s no secret that the challenges of this last year have hit the outdoor recreation industry especially hard. This has made staffing across ALL camps difficult for the summer 2021 season, but DuBois Center STILL HAS JOB OPENINGS in a variety of areas, so if you or someone you know would be a good fit, please reach out to us! Specifically, we are in need of DuBois counselors/activity coordinators, without whom we will not be able to open this summer. All counselor/activity coordinator jobs come with lodging and meals while you are on site, a competitive salary, and paid staff training so you can learn the ropes! We can provide First Aid/CPR training to those who need it before camp begins and can help connect interested candidates to a lifeguarding course. Visit our website or email dcinfo@duboiscenter.org for more information! Consider joining us to change the world during a summer unlike any other!

Flooring Replacement

The DuBois Center office needs your help to replace the DuBois Center office flooring.

An office update, started in late 2017, needs to be finished. 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. The cost, just under $9,000, for the new flooring materials and installation has been approved by the Conference Council Executive Committee. Now, we need to raise a big portion of the funds to start the floor replacement. Your donations, your intent to donate, or your skill in laying flooring is needed to complete the job.
Donations of money, time or installation skills 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 jriechmann@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 pji48@hotmail.com or Dave Hoffmann at 618-791-7002 or davehoff95@gmail.com. Thank you very much for your support.

A HUGE THANK-YOU to this week’s donor:
Waterloo St. Paul UCC

Greetings from Eden Theological Seminary,
On May 14, 2021, at 7:30 PM CDT, Eden Seminary will be celebrating the class of 2021 in the 171st Commencement Ceremony. You and your congregation are invited to take part in this celebration of the students’ achievements. We are continuing to find ways to bring the community together though we are still in the midst of a pandemic. Commencement is a time-honored tradition within the Eden community, and we are delighted to be able to share that even if it is virtually. Come join in the joy and celebration as students embark on the next part of their journeys in their ministry. Register online to receive the link and password by email. You can also participate through Facebook Live at Eden Seminary Chapel.

Spring Cleaning Day at Uni-Pres Kindercottage
A SPRING CLEANING DAY is scheduled for May 15 beginning at 9 am. If you can help, please bring your buckets, rags, gloves, mowers, rakes and tools for possible repairs. They will have bagels, donuts and coffee for your breakfast, but ask you to bring a sack lunch if you can stay past noon. Mark your calendar for May 15 Spring Cleaning Day. Your help is appreciated!

May Is Older Americans Month
Older American’s Month is celebrated each year in May. It has been an opportunity to celebrate the gifts that our Older Americans bring to us in our families, communities, and churches. It is especially important, during this unusual year, to celebrate this population and the challenges they may have faced through isolation and anxiety as well as the joys they have experienced in learning new ways of communicating with loved ones.

We will provide you, the churches of ISC, with a down loadable worship service/sermon to use to celebrate Older Americans Month in May. Rev. Jennifer Sowell-Glover, Pastor of Collinsville St. John UCC, and St. John’s Community Care, an outreach of Collinsville St. John UCC, will produce the service. Plans are to have this ready for possible use in your May 30 worship service or anytime that you would have a need or opportunity throughout the Summer months. Read more about Older Americans Month 2021 – May. If you have any questions or would like to be notified when the service video is available, please contact Missy at mathmer@stjohnscc.org.

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, May 31. If you are interested in participating, email Stacey Rhodes at srhodes@stjohnscc.org.

What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

Your Hunger Action Task Force seeks to keep the issue of hunger and food insecurity on our minds and in our hearts. Thank you to the many congregations who support Hunger Action as well as your local food pantry. Your gifts are important. Your prayers are also important. We ask you to lift up in prayer each week those who are hungry and our Hunger Action Partners. The Hunger Action Partners will be included in the Weekly Connection prayer list. Your mission committee, hunger group, Sunday School classes, women’s group, VBS participants, those who are home bound may also wish to send a special note of thanks to Hunger Action partners they know. Feeding the hungry is part of our discipleship. The work of addressing hunger is critical, and it can be exhausting. Let us give thanks to our Hunger Action partners.

Vacation Bible School Schedules

**June 1 - 4; In-Person; 9 am - 12 pm; St. John UCC; Maeststown; Theme: Knights of the North Castle**

**June 1 - 4; In-Person; 9:30 am - 12 pm; St. Paul UCC; Waterloo; Theme: Knights of the North Castle**

**June 7 - 11; In-Person; 9 am - 12 pm; St. Paul UCC, Columbia; Theme: Knights of the North Castle**

**June 7 - 11; In-Person; 8:30 am - 11:30 am; St. John UCC, Valmeyer; Theme: Rocky Railway**

**June 7 - 11; In-Person; Evangelical UCC, Highland; Theme: Roar**

**June 7 - 11; In-Person; 8:30 am - 11 am; St. Peter UCC, Okawville; Theme: Adventure Island**

**June 21 - 23; In-Person; 6:00 pm; St. Paul UCC, Belleville; Theme: Adventure Island**

**June 21 - 25; In-Person; (tentatively) 8:45 am - 12 pm; St. John UCC; Mascoutah; Theme: Rocky Railway**

**July 19 - 21; Virtual; 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm; Salem UCC, Alhambra; Theme: Knights of North Castle**

**July 19 - 23; In-Person, 6 pm - 8 pm; St. Peter UCC Red Bud; Theme: Knights of North Castle**

**July 19 - 23; St. John UCC Collinsville; Theme: Wilderness Escape**

**No Vacation Bible School for These Churches**

Addieville Zion United Church of Christ

Job Opportunity: Part-Time Secretary for Pinckneyville St Paul UCC
This position requires excellent people skills in working with the Council, Pastor, Music Leader, committees, and Sunday school teachers. Strong computer skills using Microsoft Office and worship software is important. Must be an independent worker. This position is essentially the church office manager for keeping the calendar, publishing newsletters and setting up for worship services. Typical office hours are 8:00-12:00 noon, Monday Through Friday. However, we may be shifting those hours to accommodate the church reopening. To apply, send resume with references to: St. Paul UCC, 205 Jackson St., Pinckneyville, IL 62274 or stpauluccpinckneyville@gmail.com.

Job Opportunity: Part-Time Music Leader for Pinckneyville St Paul UCC
This position requires excellent people skills in working with the Council, Pastor, secretary, committees and Sunday school teachers. Music skills include the ability to play a piano and a
Wick's two-manual pipe organ with pedals. Good vocal skills are a plus but not required. The church does not have a choir but occasionally has special instrumentalists and vocalists. Sunday school children will often perform a song which may or may not require support from the Music Leader. Church services are currently 10 am – 11 am on Sundays with two services on Easter and special services for Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday. Advent and Lenten services are typically rotated with two or three other churches. To apply, send resume with references to: St. Paul UCC, 205 Jackson St., Pinckneyville, IL 62274 or stpauluccpinckneyville@gmail.com.

**Job Opportunity: Director of Faith Formation and Care**
St. Paul United Church of Christ, Belleville, Illinois, seeks a Director of Faith Formation and Care (30 hours per week). Job responsibilities include:

- Planning and executing the church's education program for all ages in collaboration with the Senior Pastor and Christian Education Team
- Sustain and expand the youth group
- Assist in worship elements
- Assist with and lead funerals as needed
- Visit congregants who are hospitalized, in long-term care facilities, and homebound

Please send a resume and three references to FaithFormationDirector@stpaulucc.org.

**Job Opportunity: Office Coordinator**
St. Paul United Church of Christ (Belleville) is looking for an Office Coordinator, an individual who will manage daily operations and maintain office supplies and records; coordinate, plan, and execute church events; create publications and worship bulletins; understand office equipment; greet members and visitors; assist volunteers; navigate various forms of technology. Proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, Google Drive/Docs required. Some knowledge of video editing as well as using the Zoom, Constant Contact, and Onrealm platforms is preferred. Please send resume with references to officecoordinatorsearch@stpaulucc.org.

**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.

**Region 5**
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**
Belleville Concordia UCC will hold its Carry-Out Chicken Dinner on Sun, June 6 from 11 am until they are sold out. Menu includes 1/2 fried chicken with all the "fixins," Carry-out only. Quilt raffle tickets sold for $5 each with a limit of 200 being sold.
CONTACT US - YOUR OCWM MONIES AT WORK
So we can better serve you, here is a list of your Conference staff and who you should contact, given your church’s needs:
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, contact Hayley Elliott at 618-787-2202 or director@DuBoisCenter.org.
For DuBois Center registration for upcoming events and camp sessions, contact Julie Riechmann at 618-357-1809 or jriebmann@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-UC
St. John's Community Care St. Paul's Sr. Community
UCC Insurance Board Uplands Village UCC Campus Ministry Uni-Pres Kindercottage