Illinois South Conference
COVID-19 Response UPDATE #20, May 17, 2021

New CDC Guidelines on Masks
A sharp decline in Covid-19 cases across the country has allowed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to lift the mask requirement for anyone who’s vaccinated. The new policy as of May 13, 2021, is that fully vaccinated individuals (two or more weeks after the last vaccine) don’t need to wear a mask outside or inside, except in certain settings. While those who have not yet been vaccinated do still need to wear masks. Exactly which settings are not fully delineated, but the guidance indicates fully vaccinated people should continue to wear a mask when visiting health care facilities, when flying or taking public transit, and when in close group settings. If a business or organization requires a mask, that rule still applies, too. Churches are close group settings at certain times of the week, too. Here’s what we do know: Illinois will update mask guidelines to match the new CDC guidelines. Illinois has entered the bridge phase of the recovery plan. If all the Covid-19 metrics continue to fall, Illinois will enter Phase 5 on June 11, and return to being fully open with no restrictions.

In these next few weeks, it’s going to be a bit tricky. Governing boards will need to make decisions based on what is good and right for all members of their congregations. Here are some things to consider:

- While many members are fully vaccinated, others are not. Vaccinations for ages 12 to 15 have just begun. Children under 12 are not currently eligible for vaccination, and some adults are medically unable to receive the vaccine. Consider how your Sunday School and youth programming will reflect the particular safety needs of our children and youth who are still vulnerable.

- You can ask congregants if they are vaccinated; you cannot ask for visual or physical proof (that would break healthcare privacy laws). But even if you can ask, this doesn’t mean you should. Since none of us want to be in the position of policing who should or should not wear a mask, it might be better to simply say your church still strongly encourages masks, especially those who are not vaccinated.

Prayer list for May 23 - 29, 2021
Churches & Pastors
- Fairview Heights St. John UCC, Rev. Rosemary Captain
- Farina Friedens UCC
Retired Pastor
- Revs. Earl Menchhofer and Pamela Smith, Conyers, GA

People with Life Concerns
- Pray for our Local Food Pantry employees and volunteers, 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.
• Just as there are persons who are excited about the idea of no masks, singing, and sitting more closely, there might be just as many persons who feel more comfortable being masked, refraining from singing, and being socially distanced. Consider how you can accommodate both wishes and needs in your sanctuaries and your buildings for worship services, meetings, and church-sponsored activities.

• Regardless of the decisions and changes you make in the next few weeks, please remember people will make choices that are good and right for themselves and their families. There will be many people who are not ready to fully return to in-person worship, meetings, and activities. Please continue to offer virtual options to include these members as well.

• As we prepare for the expected return to full-occupancy, in-person worship in mid-June, we encourage you to make space for all people to gather and worship in a way in which they feel most comfortably able to do so.

Hang in there-- we’re almost on the other side of a global pandemic!
You have met so many challenges during the past year. We know you can meet these new realities with the grace and patience this moment requires. Continue to rely on the wisdom of God to make the best decisions that reflect the love, kindness, care, and compassion of the One we serve. Let us continue to be the Church Christ is calling us to be.

Together in Christ’s ministry with you,
Dr. Jill Baker, Conference Moderator
Mr. Dwight Asselmeier, Conference Treasurer
Rev. Christy Eckert, Conference Vice-Moderator
Rev. Ivan Horn, Conference Secretary
Rev. Shana Johnson, IL South Conference Minister

Join in the Summer Hunger Action Challenge! Congregations, youth groups, book study groups, Bible study groups, choirs… ALL are invited to join in the challenge to help raise awareness regarding hunger! There are 3 challenges --- You can choose one, two, or all three challenges. Challenge #1 – FOOD is NOT a Game. Challenge #2 - Set up a vegetable garden swap table at church. Challenge #3 – Take an offering for hunger.

To find out all the details, go to the Conference website; then go to the Resource tab; and then the Hunger/Food Action tab. There is a video from the youth at St. Paul UCC in Waterloo you can use for a mission moment in worship or VBS. Don’t forget to let us know how your church will be participating in the Summer Hunger Action Challenge. Send an email to Carol Shanks shanks@htc.net to report your action or with any questions you may have.

The Amazing People of Illinois South Conference...
On Wednesday, May 12, Stone Church St. Peter's UCC’s Mission in Action visited with the residents at New Athens Home for the Aged to help them celebrate National Nursing Home Week. The Stone Church ladies presented 14 quilts and 2 lap quilts to the residents. The Mission in Action group has been sewing quilts for New Athens Home for 11 years, and has gifted the home over 110 quilts. Pictured left to right Carol Shubert; Marilyn Shubert; Karen Holtgrewe; Diane Kunkelman, NAHFTA Activity staff; and Betty Brammeier. Carol, Marilyn, Karen, and Betty are members of the Mission in Action for Stone Church St. Peter's UCC. That shows wonderful spirit! Congrats!

The Local Church Ministries Team offered a Pastors’ Retreat on May 12 – 13. It was both relaxing and informative for those attending. Several churches were instrumental in donating
things to include in a gift bag for each of the pastors attending. We thank them for their generosity and willingness to support the pastors of Illinois South Conference. A special thanks to Karen Gaines, member of the Local Church Ministries Team, for putting the bags together with these generous gifts.

**Addieville, Zion Evangelical and Reformed UCC** – $200; Ornaments; Pens  
**New Baden, Zion UCC** – Tote Bags and Ski Soda  
**Granite City, St. John UCC** – $100  
**Centralia, St. Peter UCC** – Candy in clever Boxes  
**Troy, Friedens UCC** – Cookies  
**Highland, Evangelical UCC** – Water Bottles and Koozies  
**Fieldon UCC** – Cookbooks

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

*With restrictions being lifted, any clergy that chooses to robe and attend the ordination are welcome. Please wear red stoles and arrive by 3:30 pm.*

**May Is Mental Health Awareness Month**  
Is your church a “WISE” (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged) congregation? WISE is a movement of churches who commit to supporting and welcoming individuals and families living with mental health challenges, brain disorders and substance use disorders. WISE is an opportunity for churches to expand their commitment to inclusion and justice. During Mental Health Awareness Month, don't miss this opportunity to explore the WISE program. Learn [more](#).

**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.

**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.
New DuBois Center Resident

Last week while running around DuBois Center making preparations for summer camp, I was stunned to find an eagle sitting above our lake for the third time in about three weeks. Perhaps due to being closed down last summer, our lake seems to have maintained its own healthy ecosystem, which in turn invited this new friend to our property. I am reminded of nature’s resiliency – the beauty of our planet is that it is able to return itself to balance. These have been times for human resiliency, too. As Illinois announced last week that we are in the “Bridge to Phase 5” – with the promise around the corner of life as we remember it provided COVID-19 numbers continue to decline, I am thankful for all the ways we have persevered as the church through this year.

Here's What We Need

DuBois Center, too, is resilient, and part of being resilient is asking for what it is you need. In order to provide the programming we want to provide this summer, DuBois Center needs to hire at least four more summer camp counselors and at least one more camp cook. Our camp counselors run our activities during the day and stay with our campers at night. This is an excellent opportunity for college age people and young adults, with all meals and housing provided from May 26 until July 31, training opportunities, and starting pay at $275–$300 a week. If you or someone you know would be interested in this position, please contact us at dcinfo@duboiscenter.org or view the website. We will also be asking for volunteer counselors to help us achieve safe ratios, so please consider if God might be calling YOU – volunteer of any age, to spend a week at camp and see our website. In order to complete our reopening plans, we need all hands on deck this summer!

Our cooks make our camp meals legendary. We are looking to round out our meal preparation staff with at least one more cook. While hours are more consistent in the summer, there are opportunities for work in the non-summer season as well. As part of the kitchen team you will cook meals, prep cookouts, and be an integral part of an amazing team. Starting pay range is $12–$14 an hour, and up to 40 hours a week are available during our summer season. This is a great opportunity for someone in chef school or interested in the food industry. Email dcinfo@duboiscenter.org or see our website for the application. Please consider if you, someone you know, or someone in your congregation would be a good fit for a position at DuBois Center. This summer at camp is more vital to the youth of our area than ever, and we need YOU to help make it happen!

Blessings, Hayley Elliott, Acting Director of DuBois Center

Flooring Replacement - We're Not Done Yet!!
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 four types of office flooring are uneven; some areas may be old asbestos tiles; and some areas are down to the sub-floor. The cost is just under $9,000. The new flooring materials and installation has been approved by the Conference Council Executive Committee. Donations of money, time or installation skills are
welcomed from individuals, churches and/or their organizations. Checks should be made payable and sent to the ISC office at 1312 Broadway, Highland IL 62249 with a notation that it is for the flooring or click [here](#) to donate online. 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](mailto:jriechmann@iscucc.org). Thank you very much for your support.

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 downloadable 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](mailto: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](mailto:srhodes@stjohnscc.org).

What's Happening in Illinois South Conference

**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. This offering is a bit different because it is split between the National UCC setting and the Conferences of the UCC. This means we retain 50% of the funds which are collected from 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 church 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,” designed especially for people working with youth and young adults.
In 2020, at the Conference level, Strengthen the 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.

Resources you can use include the attached image, this video, or other resources found here at UCC Resources.

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.

Vacation Bible School Schedules
June 1 - 4; In-Person; 9 am - 12 pm; St. John UCC; Maeystown; 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; 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
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 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  Twitter  Instagram  LinkedIn
