

April 2015
www.iucc.org
Editor: Tricia Aynes

Jesus Seminar On the Road at IUCC!



Shirley Lorenz & Jean Stewart at the book table.
Shirley sold a lot of books!

On March 27-28, IUCC was honored to welcome two well-known Jesus Seminar on the Road scholars, who spoke before 73 attendees about *The Other Bible: Early Christianity Beyond the Canon*.

Photos by Tricia Aynes



Pat Sauter & Nancy Dreckman worked very hard to provide coffee, snacks, and delicious lunches for our guests.



Milton Moreland, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Rhodes College in Tennessee



L to R: Pastor Paul & Matthew Redrich show speakers Ruben Dupertuis & Milton Moreland the plaque of distinguished IUCC guests on which their names have been engraved.



Ruben Dupertuis, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Religion at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas



Chris Redrich & Carol Ballesty staffed the registration table.

Our heartfelt thanks to the planning committee and volunteers for all their efforts on this event:

Matthew & Chris Redrich, Pastor Paul, Carol Ballesty, Pat Sauter, Shirley Lorenz, Nancy Dreckman, Jim Martin, and Jim & Tricia Aynes



Jim Aynes, Jim Martin, and Shirley Lorenz packed up books.

From the Pastor's Desk

the Rev. Dr. Paul Tellström



Easter! The Gospel of Matthew tells the story by bookending the phrase, “Do not be afraid,” with two rather ominous uses of the word “suddenly.” “Suddenly” is a word that comes up all too often—in the news, in our lives—in the significant and in the day-to-day.

Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan wrote an excellent book on the last week of Jesus (titled, appropriately, *The Last Week*) which I know more than a few of you have read. It culminates in the Easter experience and its two-fold significance, both personal and communal.

To hear, along with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, that “Jesus lives,” is to say that he “is a figure of the present, not simply of the past....The spirit, the presence, his followers knew in him before his death continues to be known....” In this theology, it holds a call for us, personally and in community. “The Way” Christians follow is the path of transformation, as well as “the path of personal transformation.”

You come on Easter morning hoping to hear a good word—to be uplifted by glorious music and something that touches your heart despite all of the “suddenlys” that hit you, and you know what those are, and reminds us not to be afraid, but to continue on this path we are on as a community and as the human race. It is the path of transformation.

We cannot be afraid. We cannot have a fear of living, wholly, wildly, “loving wastefully” as Bishop Spong once said at IUCC. What is a fear of living? It’s being preeminently afraid of dying. Maya Angelou says that, “It is not doing what you came here to do, out of timidity and weakness.” She says, “The antidote is to take full responsibility for yourself—for the time you take up and the space you occupy. If you don’t know what you’re here to do, then just do some good.”

A philosopher once said, “We are to use things and love people, but in our world we love things and use people.” For when we feel like objects we treat others as objects; we see commitment to God’s love and commandments as entrapments, as death to our freedom. And so we give our loyalties and affections to the very things that rob us of our love and destroy us.

Jesus lives. He is a figure of the present, not simply of the past, and his spirit continues to be known in how we choose to follow him between and in spite of all of the “suddenlys” that surround us, and to do so fully released from the fear to live wholly and wildly, and to love wastefully this earth and its inhabitants of all kinds until we build together a realm of God on earth worthy of the way that we follow.

“Jesus lives” is the message of Easter. He lives now in you and in me. What do we do with that spirit and the message therein that now awakens again inside us? What about IUCC?

I have been listening with an ear to the ground for a while, and I have been sensing that there is a desire on the part of the congregation to become more involved in some of the issues that affect our world and our community through the grounding of our progressive faith tradition. I’m not quite sure what that will look like yet, but my initial outline goes something like this: I would love to think together about what a “forum” might look like—a calendared after-worship experience featuring speakers with expertise in such topics as: climate change, hunger and homelessness, our incarceration system, the future of our education system, Israel/Palestine relations, immigration reform...what else? Your thoughts?

This might be paired with bringing in voices different from my own, with more expertise than I have in some of these areas as occasional Sunday preachers or “mission moment” speakers on the day of a forum.

I will be asking some of you from different ministries for your input and leadership, while I pledge to keep our Sunday services worshipful over the six-eight Sundays I envision this might occur over the course of a year.

I was licensed as a minister on Christmas Eve morning, 1995 during services at the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. (Different from ordination, licensing was granted after a year of seminary, and the privilege was granted to serve that local church only, until I received my M.Div.) Twenty years! I have seen my calling shift and change from time to time, and the trick is to recognize when you have to break habits and move with the changes. I see one coming—this congregation needs and deserves to have the opportunity to become more involved in, as William Sloane Coffin named it, “a passion for the possible.” Let me help facilitate by bringing some strong voices of wisdom to speak in areas where they have expertise.

We are the hands of Jesus now—the light is within us to shine into the places that need it most. I’ll see you for what promises to be another glorious Easter this Sunday!

In the Life of IUCC



IUCC Youth prepare to process in with their palm branches on Palm Sunday



Ken & Randy on Palm Sunday



IUCC garden volunteers Steve Goetz & Lyle Norton
Photo by Nancy Dreckman



Our amazing choir is hard at work practicing for Easter Sunday and the Spring Concert in June. Don't miss it!



Proof positive that singing in the IUCC choir gives you a gorgeous smile!
Choir photos by Jeff Oleson

Adult Education



JESUS SEMINAR ON THE ROAD

For those lucky enough to attend, the seminar was eye-opening and enlightening. It turns out that early Christians wrestled with the big issues as much as we do. The speakers answered such questions as: How did we get the canon? What books were left out? Why? What was Paul's influence? Are all of the letters attributed to Paul actually written by him? What was the Q gospel? What's in the gospel of Thomas? Of Mary? Of Peter? To quote Milton Moreland, "Their struggles can lead us to insightful thoughts and ideas that provide us with new knowledge."



Bible Study Regulars

BIBLE STUDY TUESDAYS AT 4 p.m.

Join our resident Bible scholar, the Rev. Ken Wyant, as he leads us through Marcus Borg's *Evolution of the Word: The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written*. Always well prepared, Ken is a skilled and engaging facilitator who knows how to get everyone involved in spirited discussion. His classes are always lively, funny and educational. His depth and breadth of knowledge, delivered with charm and humor, expand our horizons and open our minds to new ways of thinking. The class has grown as his fame has spread, so come early to get a good seat!



RACHEL HELD EVANS COMING IN SEPTEMBER

Christian writer Rachel Held Evans will be our featured guest in September. She made waves recently by distancing herself from her evangelical roots and joining the Episcopal Church. The best-selling author is reputed to be a great speaker, and we are fortunate to have her join us!

From www.rachelheldevans.com: "Rachel Held Evans is a New York Times best-selling author whose books include *Faith Unraveled* (2010), *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* (2012), and *Searching for Sunday* (2015). Hailing from Dayton, Tennessee—home of the famous Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925— she writes about faith, doubt and life in the Bible Belt."

Moderator's Column

Anne Rosse



A few weeks ago, my husband Edward and I attended the funeral of one of his beloved aunts. She was known within the family affectionately as “Fourth Aunt,” since she was the youngest of four sisters, with Edward’s mother being the eldest. From a small village in Canton, China, Edward’s parents were the first to immigrate to this

country, with his father serving in WWII before starting a successful laundry business in Los Angeles. His parents and their four children lived in a modest home that would, throughout his childhood, typically house at least one other family as his parents sponsored each of their siblings and their families.

“Fourth Aunt” was in her mid-forties when she immigrated with her husband and three children. She learned English by watching TV and quickly got a job working in a See’s Candy factory. She loved to grow flowers and refused to be a bother, always turning down our offers to drive her home, instead taking a lengthy bus ride. By all accounts, a modest life. As I sat at her funeral, I thought about what “Fourth Aunt” had meant to us. She was one of the first members of Edward’s family that I ever met. I still clearly remember that first interaction – nervously standing with Edward at the doorway of a Chinese restaurant in Los Angeles. Breaking away from the other family members, she ran up to me, began speaking excitedly in English and then quickly switched to Cantonese because she had so much she wanted to say as she hugged me tight. Her gift of abundant and unreserved welcome was unbelievably precious to me – a kindness that I have tried to pass on to other newcomers to this big but close-knit family that I was lucky enough to marry into.

One of the reasons I love Easter so much is that it represents so many important things – rebirth, life, abundance, joy, color, hope, love, not to mention chocolate bunnies! For me, the resurrection story is about love and subverting the power of death, taking away some of the fear of dying, allowing death to have a more appropriate (and less powerful) place.

Lent is a time for clearing away, making sure we are focusing on the right things, making room for a new start with Easter. As The Rev. Kaji Douša, Senior Minister, The Table: United Church of Christ of La Mesa, states, “It’s about cleaning house so that we leave more room for God to do what God

does. To make things new. To bridge the gaps. To close the doors that, for God’s sake, need to close once and for all. Because if there’s no room in our lives, there isn’t any room for God.”

Once we do that, she says, we can more clearly see the signs of God in our lives. We become even more active participants in God’s love.

Yes, we are mourning “Fourth Aunt’s” passing. Through her, I experienced God’s love. And, she continues to live on in us. Every time I see a nervous outsider, I am reminded of her abundant welcome and it leads me to offer my hand in friendship. She lives on in her children, grandchildren, and extended family who sat in community together and celebrated a life well lived.

I have the privilege of belonging to several different communities that are so precious to me, including the large, boisterous and ever growing family I married into as well as my IUCC church family. I am so incredibly grateful to see God’s love at work in both of these communities. At IUCC, I see it in how we care for each other, in how we create space for our young people to explore and travel down their faith journeys, in how we seek justice on such topics as immigration, in the joined hands of my Comma Group as we pray for others, on Sunday mornings with worship that it thoughtfully prepared and prayerfully led to speak to our intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs, and especially when our glorious choral voices are raised in praise.

With wishes for a Happy Easter and a prayer that we all continue to both experience and share God’s love on a daily basis, I want to close with a quote from Shannon Adler. She states, “I am convinced that the jealous, the angry, the bitter and the egotistical are the first to race to the top of mountains. A confident person enjoys the journey, the people they meet along the way and sees life not as a competition. They reach the summit last because they know God isn’t at the top waiting for them. He is down below helping his followers to understand that the view is glorious where ever you stand.”

As always, I invite you to share your thoughts. You can catch me on the patio, pull me aside at one of our terrific events, send me an email or give me a call. I look forward to hearing from you.

Big Sunday Donation Opportunities!



Please bring the following items to church on either of the following two Sundays:
April 26 or May 3



Books & Magazines for Isaiah House

Isaiah House is a home for women who are experiencing challenging times. They love to read! For Big Sunday, we are gathering and donating books and magazines for these incredible women. All categories of reading material can be donated--novels, biographies, and science books, fashion and news magazines. So, clean out your bookshelves, buy a magazine or two, and bring them to church on either April 26 or the official Big Sunday on May 3. New and gently used books and magazines are welcome.

Food for the ASF Pantry

The AIDS Services Foundation offers a nutritional support program for people and families affected by HIV/AIDS. Volunteers pack boxes for clients with nutritional foods that are available for pick-up and for delivery. A nutritional selection is emphasized so clients can maintain a healthy weight. Clients appreciate canned goods (fruit, vegetables,

tuna, etc.), cereals, and packaged goods (jams, peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, etc.) Food should be non-perishable and non-expired. Please bring your donated items to church on either April 26 or May 3.

The Friendship Shelter

The Friendship Shelter in Laguna Beach recently added a new program that welcomes chronically homeless people into permanent homes with support services. Our new neighbors are in need of household items that you or I might purchase on a "Target or CVS run." Especially needed goods are paper towels, toilet paper, kleenex, house-cleaning supplies, kitchen garbage bags -- just about any items used on a daily basis in your home are needed in their new homes! All house-warming gifts are welcome! Please bring items to church on either April 26 or May 3.

~ Nancy Dreckman

AND/OR

Visit our sister congregation, Tapestry Unitarian, on Big Sunday, May 3, to participate in any of the following activities:

- Assemble cleaning buckets of supplies for Families Forward
- Stuff socks with toiletry items for Wise Place in Santa Ana
- Create care packages for kids for Orange County Rescue Mission
- Assemble food boxes for South County Outreach
- Make blankets for the Illumination Foundation

*Tapestry Unitarian Universalist
23436 Madero,
Mission Viejo, CA*

Orphanage Visit

Last weekend, the Bermudez's and I volunteered in Tijuana through the Corazon de Vida Foundation. For over twenty years, this organization has funded orphanages and brought groups to spend the day with the children.

We met at the Irvine pick up location on Saturday morning and drove with the other Corazon volunteers on a charter bus across the border. We brought donated items with us and met the many children living in the Hacienda Orphanage.

As a non-Spanish speaker, I was nervous about the interaction with the children; however, it was a joyful day playing games and making crafts with the children. Smiles and laughter definitely communicate well, and there are many volunteers who can act as interpreters.

We ate lunch together and toured the facility, a place that has been able to expand because of donations. It was a joy to meet a few of the teenagers, who are attending university and have high hopes for higher education in America. It is clear that being raised in these orphanages gives these kids a positive and empowering environment so that they can break the cycle of poverty.

The Hacienda Orphanage, among the others that Corazon supports, is always in need of funds for food, medical care and housing projects for their facilities. If you are interested in donating to Corazon de Vida or attending one of their monthly trips, visit corazondevida.org/donation/general-fund

~ Alaina Haynes

April Birthdays

04/22 Betty Billings	04/21 Dale Lang
04/01 Joanie Burley	04/21 Kyle Lutz
04/01 Jim Carse	04/15 Connor McDonald
04/10 Constance Cassady	04/07 Jennifer Mirmak
04/19 Janice Gately	04/22 Steve O'Dell
04/23 Zachary Haynes	04/18 Jim Raver
04/13 Dick Henderson	04/07 Paul Tellstrom
04/29 Linda Hidy	04/08 Jaime Villacorte
04/15 Janice Johnson	04/30 Mark Willcox
04/07 Lee KeslerWest	04/28 Ellen Woolfson

Comma Group Photos



Keeping up with the Joans Comma Group



Vivian's Thinkers Comma Group

Our Comma Groups have flourished this year as we got acquainted with new people, built friendships, and discussed topics from George Johnson's book *Courage to Think Differently*. Many of the Comma Groups took on service projects as well, including hosting coffee hour.

On April 26, all Comma Group participants will meet as a group to share lunch, thank our Comma Group leaders, and do a little debriefing. We look forward to seeing everyone there!

Building Plan Update

by Anne Rosse



Perhaps our progress in March can be best summed up as “try, try again.” IUCC’s Master Plan continues to make slow but steady progress through its review process. The plan was submitted in late June to the City of Irvine for approval of a Modified Conditional Use Permit (CUP), the next step in planning for IUCC’s future and legacy.

We’ve been hoping for CUP approval but continue to run into minor delays. In response to the City of Irvine’s requirement for a traffic study, our traffic engineers submitted a proposed scope of work in mid-January. Since then, we have gone back and forth with the City trying to finalize the scope of work. On the final day in March, we submitted our fourth revision and now are waiting for the City to review it. Hopefully this revision will be successful! Once it is approved, KOA Corporation will undertake the study and prepare a report, a process that is expected to take approximately four weeks.

Meanwhile, our architects, Domusstudios, submitted a “final” set of plans to the City in electronic form, providing an opportunity for the City of Irvine to preview them before the official submission of printed plans. These “final” plans reflect months of interactions with the City, answering all of their questions and addressing their concerns. So, we are hopeful that they give us the green light to proceed with final submission. Then, getting the traffic study completed and accepted should be the only remaining task before CUP approval.

Best-case scenario, we will have cause for celebration at the May 17 Spring Congregational Meeting. But, given recent timelines, we are planning for CUP approval by the one-year anniversary of our submission (late June) but certainly hoping for sooner.

In late April, the Capital Campaign Pre-Planning Committee, chaired by Renae Boyum, will meet to reflect on where we are with the project and discuss possible timeframes for moving forward with asking the congregation if it wants to undertake a capital campaign.

We’re keeping good thoughts for a productive April and look forward to being able to share good news sooner rather than later!

Women’s Retreat May 1-3 “You are Here: A Place of Grace in the Grand Design”



Don’t wait: Register before April 15 for the annual Women’s Retreat set for May 1–3 at Pilgrim Pines. Space is limited, and this year’s program—You Are Here: A Place of Grace in the Grand Design—led by the Rev. Karen “Bear” Ride is sure to be popular. Registration is a flat fee of \$130, and some financial assistance is available. (Speak to a planning committee member for details.)

For those who would like to maximize their time away, the retreat will begin with registration at 3 p.m. and dinner at 6 p.m. Friday at Pilgrim Pines camp, followed by informal conversations and camp stories.

Beginning at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Rev. Ride will launch the group in free-flowing and grateful conversations about our place in the cosmos and the space between us, as we explore where we find grace in our lives—and beyond.

Choose from a variety of afternoon sessions, including guided meditation, yoga, crafts, informal structured conversation, journal writing, birding, hiking, walking the labyrinth, or the ever-popular napping! Plus, two massage therapists will be on hand throughout the retreat to offer both traditional and chair massages for an additional fee of \$30, plus tip. Then, prepare for plenty of laughs at the Saturday night party, which this year will include bunko for all, and a silly hat contest.

The retreat will close with Sunday morning worship and communion service led by the Rev. Ride.

To sign up, visit the registration table on the patio after Sunday morning services through April 12. Questions? Speak to any of the committee members: Barb Carse, Janet Emery, Lorraine Fox, Laura Long, JoAnne Mansell, or Pat Sauter.

Grief & Loss Seminar 12:30 p.m. on April 19



Grief and loss are parts of life we all experience. Some obvious losses, like the death of a loved one or a serious physical illness, may bring caring responses from our circle of friends and family members.

Yet some of those dear people may sadly, without meaning to, cause pain with naïve or simplistic comments. And many will return to their regular daily routines long before the person living in grief has barely begun to define a 'new normal' for himself or herself.

Some losses are unseen, leaving many of us to live alone in our grief. There is the shame factor when loss and grief are related to uncomfortable issues like divorce, bankruptcy, foreclosure, a loved one's arrest, or going into rehab to deal with substance abuse. Abortions, betrayals of the heart and estranged relationships occur in our midst, all too often never shared with others, or only a few. Privacy is important to respect. Isolation and silent suffering and the huge fear of being judged, criticized or misunderstood needs to be challenged and changed.

For life brings change, some of which is very normal. Children grow up and move away and people retire, sometimes feeling a loss of identity without their 'job'. Even older persons with decent health eventually die, not to mention the myriad of losses that are part of the elder aging process. Depression comes like a cloud.

Let's open up our dialogue about grief in this church community. We are caring and accepting of many losses and try to offer comfort and support. There is so much more to talk about together. Come to this introduction to Grief & Loss Seminar on April 19, 2015 at 12:30 p.m. in Plumer Hall if you would like to listen and learn or explore and express ideas about this topic. The Stephen Ministry, Congregational Care Ministry, Adult Education Committee and Outreach Ministry will provide a lite lunch. There will be an opportunity to sign up for smaller, 3-week long small groups in the spring for more in-depth processing of personal grief issues.

Marilyn Smith will lead both the intro discussion and the small groups. She has experienced a variety of losses in her life, like many of you. Please look for sign ups on the patio after both services. Should you have any questions, see Marilyn Smith, Dave Schofield, Janet Emery, Kathi Smith, Matthew Redrich, Chris Redrich, Jim Aynes or Pastor Paul.

Coming Soon! Mark Your Calendar

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Maundy Thursday Service
7 p.m. on April 2



Easter Sunday Services
9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. on April 5



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

***WEDNESDAY * APR. 8 * 6:30 p.m.**

We will continue our discussion series "Ages & Stages," with light supper and fellowship. Sign up on the patio. See Pat Sauter with any questions.



ISAIAH HOUSE SHELTER

WEDNESDAY * APR. 8 * 3:30 p.m.

Meet and carpool from Steve Goetz's house (4112 Belvedere Street, Irvine) at 3:30 p.m. If you have questions, please feel free to call Steve Goetz at 949-436-1946 or write to sgoetz53@gmail.com.



SEEKERS FOR WOMEN

TUESDAY * APR. 21 * 9:30 a.m.

We meet on the 3rd Tuesday for friendship and spiritual growth and to share our experiences. Discussion is sparked by a video.



COMMA GROUP LUNCHEON SUNDAY * APR. 26 * 12:30 a.m.

Everyone who participated in a Comma Group this year is invited to attend the closing luncheon. Your Comma Group leader will provide details!



AIDS WALK SAT. * MAY 9 *

To sign up and/or donate, go to www.oaidswalk.org or contact Team Captain Felicity Figueroa for details.

Knitters Visit Huntington Library & Gardens with Pastor Paul



On Thursday, March 12, our IUCC knitting group was invited to the Pasadena home of Pastor Paul and Carl for a light lunch and conversation. What a treat to visit their warm and cozy 1920's era house and see their beautiful Arts & Crafts furnishings!

Afterwards, we went to the incomparable Huntington Library & Gardens for a guided tour of this oasis of peace and tranquility. Pastor Paul led us through the Chinese and Japanese Gardens, then through the rose garden. We got to meet Terry Eagan, a master craftsman/sculptor, who creates and restores the library's concrete "trees." We had a wonderful time taking in the gorgeous scenery and exploring the grounds.

~ Tricia Aynes



Friends of OC Detainees Volunteer Orientation on April 9



Friends of Orange County Detainees visit immigrants at the James Musick Facility in Irvine and the Santa Ana Jail. Our purpose is humanitarian. We offer listening ears and compassionate hearts in an act of friendship to end isolation and affirm each person's human dignity and worth. Many detainees have no other visitors and are THRILLED to have a visit. We welcome you to come and learn more!

7 p.m. on Thursday, April 9

Tapestry Unitarian Universalist
23436 Madero, Mission Viejo, CA

Please RSVP to friendsofocdetainees@gmail.com

IUCC is an affiliate of Friends of OC Detainees, and this program is part of our Mission & Service Ministry.



Fair Trade Coffee at IUCC



In the spirit of Karl Schiller, who donated coffee to IUCC, the Seekers group has committed to purchasing Equal Exchange Fair Trade Coffee for Sunday coffee service for a year. The coffee is being ordered through the UCC to support farmers' cooperatives and the UCC missions (17 cents of every pound we buy will go to support these groups).

Pat Sauter will start sales to individuals during coffee hour on April 19, with details to be worked out at the Ministries Board meeting on the 13th. Chocolate for cooking or snacking and tea will be offered in bulk or individual sizes. We won't price to make money, just to break even and pay for shipping. Brochures are available at the coffee table!

~ Nancy Dreckman & Pat Sauter

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed



Ah, coffee hour snacks!

They're yummy, they're colorful, and they provide a wonderful backdrop of warmth and welcome to our patio after services. Happy IUCC

people gather around the snack tables to visit, catch up with friends, and meet interesting new people. It's our guilty pleasure, and we love it! Besides, snacks eaten at church have no calories, right??

Our coffee hour snacks are provided by volunteers - some as Comma Groups, as Ministry members, as family and friends, or as individuals. Won't you add your name to the list of volunteers? If each of us committed to one Sunday each year, our calendar - and our tummies - would be full.

The amazing Tommie Kozlov will be stepping down as Coffee Hour Host recruiter, and we can't thank her enough for all her hard work and wonderful efforts! She has done an exemplary job this year. Anita Schwab has volunteered to take over just this part of all that Tommie does now. The Hospitality Committee also needs volunteers to oversee the physical presence that Tommie provides every Sunday, making coffee and helping set up and clean up. Please see Tommie or Anita to learn more about how you can help.

The Great American Write-In on March 7 was a Big Success



Great American Write-In on March 7

Every year, Women For: Orange County presents the Great American Write-In, an opportunity to meet representatives of advocacy groups and write to decision-makers to promote excellent causes.

Dr. Howard Emery staffed the IUCC Advocates for Peace & Justice table (above), while Felicity Figuero chaired the event (below).



Powerful Parenting

Dr. Lorraine Fox

SELF-CONCEPT AND THE DILEMMA FOR CHILDREN

We are taking a journey into the self and began with our consideration of the development of one's ideas about oneself, known as self-concept. Last month we talked about babies and about how each person's earliest ideas about themselves are based on factors other than language. Verbal language is just "sound," or babble, to babies and their ideas come more from adult behavior and body language. As children begin to understand spoken language, impressions begin to be formed based on the combination of non-verbal communication and verbal communication. Two dramatic challenges of self-concept development for young children come from their incomplete understanding of what particular words mean, and from their lack of experience of hearing verbal feedback about themselves.

Adults have a very different method of determining "truth" than young children. If I were to tell you that the earth is flat, you would immediately know that what I said wasn't true. How? First you would check what I said against what you've heard. As an adult you heard early in your schooling that the earth is round, and that was never contradicted. Then, you might have had a globe in your classroom or home. When you were told that the globe represented the earth, you saw that it was round: which matched what you had been told. It is therefore quite simple for you to dismiss my statement that the earth is flat as "untrue."

A very unfortunate challenge for young children, who have not had much experience with language, and particularly not with language which tries to convey what is "true," is that they do not have comparative language or exposure to be able to tell whether something they hear is really true. Of course we take massive advantage of this fact by telling children all kinds of things that aren't true and thoroughly enjoying it. At Christmas we tell them that packages for every child in the world can be put into one sled. We then tell them that this sled is going to be hooked up to eight flying reindeer, one of whom has a light bulb for a nose. We then tell them about the jolly man from the north pole – a destination that has absolutely no meaning to them – who will then drive the sled containing presents for everyone and fly through the air around the world in one night. As he stops at every house in the world, he will have a cookie and a glass of milk at every house in the world. It should frighten us all how easily and eagerly children "believe" this. We then fol-

low up with tales of the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, etc. The lesson, of course, is that young children are extremely naïve and extremely gullible! Without other information to match what they are hearing, children tend to take what they are told at face value.

This gullibility is kind of cute and not a problem if children are either hearing the truth or hearing something that isn't true but that will not harm them. But when children are told things about themselves, they are equally vulnerable. You can tell a fairly "homely" little girl that she is extremely beautiful and your little princess, and when she puts on her pretty dress and looks in the mirror she will actually see a beautiful little princess, and will be eager to show everyone how pretty she looks in her dress. Likewise, you can tell a very handsome little boy that he is ugly and disgusting, and he will avoid looking in mirrors, and will keep his head down and his face covered and avoid looking at anyone – convinced that he is not nice to look at. Just as young children believe in Santa, and the Easter Bunny, they believe what people in their family say to them about themselves. Average children can be convinced they are superior to other children. Very intelligent children can be convinced that they are "stupid" if they are called stupid or criticized every time they try to do something.

The development of self-concept is entirely dependent on the specific environment a child is surrounded by. Unhappily, we do not get to choose our families, and thus we do not get to choose whether we hear the truth about ourselves, or come to believe the lies we are told about ourselves. You can guess your two-part homework assignment. Think about what you were told about yourself when you were young, and about how that formed your ideas about who and how you were. Start paying close attention to what your children are hearing about who and how they are: from you, from their siblings, from their playmates, etc. More next month.



Stephen Ministry - New Training Begins in June!

Stephen Minister Job Description

Stephen Ministers are congregation members who are recruited, selected, trained, and commissioned to provide one-to-one lay caring ministry to persons in crisis or with other needs for care. They participate in Supervision Group once a month. They initially commit to serve for two years including training and may renew their commitment.

What Stephen Ministers Do

A defined cluster of activities make up a Stephen Minister's job description.

Pray

Stephen Ministers pray daily for their Stephen Partners (care receivers) and strive to worship God always in word and deed. They reveal the love of God to those who most need to see it.

Care for the Stephen Partner (Care Receiver)

Stephen Ministers are assigned to Stephen Partners-people in crisis who need caring support. Stephen Ministers care for those in moderate difficulties. The Stephen Minister's care helps the Stephen Partner resolve the difficulty and achieve growth.

Most Stephen Ministers meet once a week with their Stephen Partners for about an hour at a time. They may also check in with the Stephen Partner by telephone, particularly when the Stephen Partner is going through a difficult time. Stephen Ministers use special skills to care for their Stephen Partners. Among the most important are the following: Listening. Most Stephen Partners need someone simply to listen - really listen - as they talk through their difficulties. Dealing with feelings. Stephen Ministers reflect the Stephen Partner's feelings, and ideas and ask open-ended questions to help the Stephen Partner recognize, express, and accept his or her feelings.

Sharing distinctively Christian caring resources. Stephen Ministers may share a prayer, a Bible verse or story, or other caring gestures that the Stephen Partner would welcome. Remaining process-oriented. Stephen Ministers do not try to fix the Stephen Partner or his or her problems; they focus on the process of caregiving and rely on God to achieve results.

Relating assertively. Stephen Ministers respect both the needs of the Stephen Partner and their own needs as well. Maintaining boundaries. Stephen Ministers set appropriate boundaries in the caring relationship helping the Stephen Partner remain as independent as possible while being

there for the Stephen Partner as needed.

Recommending professional care when necessary. Stephen Ministers are not trained to care for those who are suicidal, severely depressed, abusive, or homicidal, or who are abusing drugs or alcohol. If Stephen Ministers recognize that their Stephen Partner's needs exceed the care they are able to provide, they see that the Stephen Partner receives professional care.

Maintain Confidentiality

Stephen Ministers understand that confidentiality is crucial in any caring relationship. The Stephen Partner needs to know that what he or she says to the Stephen Minister will remain in confidence. Stephen Ministers maintain confidentiality and encourage other Stephen Ministers to do the same.

Help Identify People in Need of Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministers act as ministers of referral, helping to find people who would benefit from the care of a Stephen Minister.

Participate in Monthly Supervision and Continuing Education Sessions

Stephen Ministers participate faithfully in Small Group Peer Supervision and continuing education, coming prepared to every supervision session unless illness or emergency makes attendance impossible. Supervision provides Stephen Ministers with support, guidance, and accountability for their caring relationships. There are no unsupervised Stephen Ministers.

Help the Congregation Understand and Appreciate Stephen Ministry

Through their service, Stephen Ministers help the congregation appreciate Stephen Ministry and encourage members to become ministers of referral who help those in crisis receive the care they need.

The Stephen Ministry will begin training classes of new Stephen Ministers in June. If you have any questions about Stephen Ministry or becoming a Stephen Minister, please see Pastor Paul or Dave Schofield, Chair of the IUCC Stephen Ministry.



Special Note: This is the same trip that over a dozen IUCC people took in 2008.



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The Newport Mesa Irvine Interfaith Council is sponsoring this trip for the 7th time. Over 800 youth and adults have toured China with our package. The tour is limited to 50 participants –so register early!



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