

Irvine United Congregational Church

Task Force on Children, Youth, Young Adults and Young Families

REPORT APPENDIX

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Vision Statement

Irvine United Congregational Church seeks to grow its ministry to children, youth, young adults and young families. We are committed to providing programs that help build community throughout our congregation and finding ways forward on shared progressive Christian paths while embracing cultural diversity and the many manifestations of “family.” Offering inspiring liturgical forms and practices that are particularly attractive to these communities, this ministry seeks to increase Christian engagement through worship, education, community outreach/service, activism, social interactions and fun.

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SUMMARY OF CURRENT IUCC YOUTH AND ADULT PROGRAMS

Below is a summary of current program for children and youth, along with any recent changes implemented.

Sunday School

Class	Taught By	# of Students
Preschoolers (ages 0-4)	Childcare Attendant	4
Kindergarten to Grade 2	Volunteers from Congregation	6
Grades 3-5	Volunteers from Congregation	6
Grades 6-7	Volunteers from Congregation	6
Grades 8-12	Youth Leader	7

On February 21, IUCC's Sunday School switched over to a collaborative team-teaching model that provides consistency for children and youth and for teachers. We created more age-appropriate classroom groups, while still serving ages 0-18. We now have five classes, based upon grade levels – see above. Each class is taught by a team of two to three teachers on a rotating basis. Our faithful teachers commit to a quarter at a time and receive training and check-in workshops.

With this sense of more commitment and empowerment, teachers have been able to use their own creativity to expand upon set lessons and to infuse more of IUCC's values of progressive Christianity and social justice into what our children and youth are learning. Examples have included special offerings to be contributed to the "Pennies for Peace" education campaign in Afghanistan, encouragement of journaling inspired by Anne Frank, and environmental awareness tied into baking Earth cookies.

As for curriculum, Pastor Elizabeth researched several options and consulted with others in the field. The ecumenical, UCC-recommended "Seasons of the Spirit" curriculum was chosen. It is interactive, multicultural and fairly progressive, and also follows the biblical lectionary. Since this change, our teachers are giving lessons that are cohesively linked to the messages the adults receive in worship each Sunday, a model that encourages families to continue the conversation at home during the week.

Youth Groups

The junior youth (grades 4-6) join with the older youth once per month. We have four youth participating in this group. The older youth in junior and senior high meet every week after church. This group typically has between three and ten participants.

Mission Projects

Mission projects have included: AIDS Walk, the Souper Bowl of Sharing, Crop Walk, Big Sunday, a Frozen Lemonade Blowout, and volunteering at local food banks. Last year, the youth added seating to the peace garden that they had planted previously.

Social Activities

Social activities have included: bowling, rock climbing, going out to lunch, museums and movies as well as playing games on campus.

Youth Sunday

Held annually, Youth Sunday is conceptualized, organized and led entirely by the youth.

Other Activities

Every year there is an Advent Workshop, which includes Christmas crafts and learning more about the season, and a chili cook-off and potluck dinner. As well, there is a Christmas pageant with children recreating the nativity scene, accompanied by readings and music, during the early Christmas Eve service.

Confirmation

Classes include instruction, discussion, dialogue, and field trips to sites such as the Museum of Tolerance, a synagogue, a mosque, and a Buddhist temple. The Confirmation Class uses the workbook from the UCC Pilgrim Press and several other resources, including the Bible. The confirmands complete and discuss the exercises in the workbook. They also have an extensive introduction to UCC history. This program was developed to take advantage of several things: the congregation's progressive theology in both adult and youth education, the confirmands' existing familiarity with other faiths, particularly Judaism and with service projects, and a desire to provide a "rite of passage" experience through which the confirmands move from being primarily learners to doers of faith.

Class	# of Students
2007-08	10
2009-10	4

Below is a list of IUCC programs offered to adults.

Adult Sunday School

The program takes place every Sunday between worship services, with a strong and consistent participation of approximately 24 people. This class has been using curriculum from “Living the Questions.” Each month is focused on a theme and some of the topics have included: “The Prophetic Jesus,” “Creative Transformation,” and “A Kingdom Without Walls.”

Bible Study

A “Look at the Book” takes place weekly on Tuesday evenings and is working through the 3-year lectionary.

Wednesday’s Journey

Held the second Wednesday of every month, this program offers opportunities for growth learning and experience in Spiritual Practices, Progressive Christianity, Bible Study and special forums with a different monthly topic. The evening’s program concludes with an informal worship service.

Speakers Series

Past speakers have included Mike Farrell, Sister Helen Prejean, Bishop Spong, Al Staggs and workshops on evolution and the Jesus Seminar.

Women's Fellowship

This group meets monthly and engages in spiritual, social and service activities. An annual women's retreat is held at Pilgrim Pines.

Seekers

This women's group is currently working through the Living the Questions curriculum of Introduction to Theology.

Other Activities

- Pilgrim Pines Family Weekend
- Men's and Women's Breakfast Groups

FEEDBACK FROM: YOUTH GROUP MEMBERS, YOUNG ADULTS AND THE CONGREGATION

Youth Group Feedback (Middle and High School)

To gauge how our current youth view IUCC programs, and what they would be interested in for the future, we constructed a questionnaire addressing a variety of issues. A copy of the questionnaire is provided later in this Appendix. Our Youth Leader passed out the questionnaires to ten middle and high school youth on a Sunday in February 2010. The results are summarized below:

- A common thread through all the responses is that our youth, for the most part, enjoy the discussions and camaraderie in Youth Group and confirmation class as well. The open discussions on other religions were mentioned repeatedly as informative and interesting.
- There seemed to be a consensus that getting to church on a weeknight was difficult or impossible (seven out of ten). However, half of the group marked “maybe” when asked if they would like to partake in Wednesday’s Journey if interesting classes were available. Of the topics mentioned that got the best response were: “Human Sexuality,” “Is God Rational?” (why do bad things happen to good people) and “Common Ground” (a study of other religions and what the faiths have in common).
- There was mixed enthusiasm for creating small groups for the youth, although only two checked “never.”
- For new community service/social justice projects: “the environment,” “growing a vegetable garden,” and “international programs” were stressed as the ones that would have the most interest, although all were checked.
- The vast majority of our youth (seven) felt no enthusiasm for having elected representatives, although a few very enthusiastic ones would welcome taking leadership roles.
- Our youth are very willing to serve, and all IUCC-related activities were checked.

Conclusion: the fact that the questionnaire was handed out by and discussed with the then-Youth Leader might have reduced the critique of the *status quo* somewhat. The fact that there seemed to be interest in a wide range of topics might indicate that our youth are interested in, willing and curious about new topics and new ways of doing service projects. However, there seems to be a general nervousness with regard to spending more time at church on weeknights because of other engagements and homework. Nevertheless, there was still willingness to serve and reach out. This willingness could no doubt transform into enthusiasm, given the right support and sensitivity to try to fit activities into a Sunday afternoon time slot, if at all possible.

Young Adults Feedback (Ages 18-30)

The Task Force definitely took notice of the dearth of individuals in the 18-30 age range in our congregation. And we have created a special questionnaire that is being used to elicit feedback from this young adult demographic. A copy of the questionnaire is provided later in this

Appendix. We asked specific questions regarding what types of programming would appeal to them—both in terms of attracting them to church in the first place, and perhaps even more importantly, what would help them stay.

The Sunday morning greeters have these questionnaires available and are handing them out to all attendees in the targeted age range. Pastor Elizabeth also sent them out by mail to more than 100 young adults identified in IUCC's database, with a cover letter inviting former confirmands to come back for a mini-reunion on this year's Confirmation Sunday. As far as responding to the questionnaire, young adults can fill out a hard copy, can e-mail their answers in, or can access and complete it online through SurveyMonkey.

- To summarize the initial set of responses we have received to date, respondents are attracted to IUCC's progressivism, both theological and activist. They are interested in an alternative third worship service, meeting either on a mid-week evening or Sunday late afternoon. They would appreciate social justice and more interactive participation to be part of the service. They are very interested in social justice service projects, in a broad range of categories, especially related to the environment, girls' and women's rights, and anti-war issues.
- They would definitely like to take part in small groups, as well as attend classes, with the most popular topic being finding common ground amongst religions. Mission trips, garden projects, peace demonstrations, and hiking all came up as desirable social activities. Overall, there seems to be a real hunger to have a place to fit in at IUCC, and to have a stronger sense of community, so as not to "get lost in the shuffle."

Congregation Feedback

The Task Force realized the need to include the whole congregation in the brainstorming and critiquing process. We wanted to get a baseline review of what is working, what needs to change, and the vision we as a church family are creating for children, youth, young adults and young families. The Task Force promoted two forums using the IUCC weekly email, our website calendar, worship service announcements and bulletin, and personal invitations. The forums were scheduled to coincide with the end of both services. The First Service forum was promoted as an informal chat on the patio and the Second Service forum was scheduled in Plumer Hall. Both forums yielded questions, concerns, and enthusiasm for the Task Force's mission.

The forums provided lively discussions between Task Force members and attendees -- and helped address our goal of being accessible to the whole congregation. Despite the low attendance (both averaged about eight individuals, not counting Task Force members) the overall consensus expressed was very supportive. The forum's feedback also reflected dominant themes that are being addressed in other sections of this report such as: how we communicate to children, youth, and their parents; overall safety guidelines; and safe space commitments by the church and congregation.

Feedback from both forums (which is also being expressed as an important theme by the Task Force) was the desire by our young families to create community and bridge the gap between nuclear family and congregation family. We can build this sense of community through many of

the church's existing activities. Yet, we also want to create space for parents to have spiritual, educational, and social activities apart from our kids, knowing that the children have an equal experience happening simultaneously.

Interest was expressed in having a variety of options in how to participate in church events such as Bon Vivant Dinners. At any given time, families may want to participate in an adults-only format, a family version, or an adults-only with the kids being provided with childcare or their own activity.

Beyond the abovementioned themes, many individual ideas were collected at the forums that are being implemented or considered. What follows is a list of ideas that may not be covered in any other section of this report:

- Implement “Pennies for Peace” program at every age level; penniesforpeace.org provides age-appropriate curriculum.
- Recommendation for more hands-on activities, including ones in which older children can be involved as role models to teach younger kids.
- Holding a reunion for past IUCC confirmands when we honor new confirmands.
- Parents expressed that having Youth Group activities during the late afternoon on Sunday (how it used to be) was not convenient; thus, the current practice of Youth Group activity directly following Second Service is preferable.
- Parents expressed desire for more physical activity, such as dance. Another member noted that their grandkids preferred going to Mariners Church because of its skate park. Another member commented that middle school age youth find just doing Bible stories boring. To address some of these concerns, we suggest taking into account multiple learning styles (Howard Gardner, 1983):
 - Visual-spatial
 - Verbal-linguistic
 - Logical-mathematical
 - Bodily-kinesthetic
 - Musical-rhythmic
 - Interpersonal
 - Intrapersonal
 - Naturalistic
 - Existential
- Another member advised the Task Force to keep expectations within reason because a young adults ministry is a hard one to crack into, given the transitory nature of this demographic.
- Building on our collaboration with University Synagogue, look into potentially offering a summer program, perhaps Summer 2011, at their facility, which would look at different religions and spiritual practices (a multifaith summer program).

IUCC YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE

We need your help! The Task Force on Children, Youth, Young Adults and Young Families wants to know what *you* think about current church programs and what you want in the future. Please fill out this questionnaire and return it to Alex or Pastor Elizabeth. Or, you can email it to either of them or directly to the Task Force at iucctaskforce@gmail.com. The deadline for turning it in is **Sunday, February 21. Thanks!**

1. Why do you like attending Sunday School? What would you change about it?
2. What do you like about Youth Group? What would you change about it?
3. What do you like about Confirmation Class? What would you change about it?
4. Do you think there should be elected representatives from the youth that would plan youth group activities (president, vice president, treasurer, secretary)? Please **circle** your answer.

Yes No
5. IUCC is thinking about creating an alternative worship experience that would appeal to those who think regular church services are dull. What would be the best time for this service? Please **circle** your first choice or write it in.

Wednesday or Thursday at 7 p.m.
Saturday at 5 p.m.

Sunday at 4 p.m.
Other (name it): _____

Describe the type of worship service that you would want to attend – what would it offer?
Please **circle** all the things you would want included.

Rock and roll
Folk music
Music from other cultures
Meditation
Multimedia presentations

Different types of spiritual practices
Short sermon/message
People dancing
People participating more
Other: _____

6. What types of community service/social justice projects are most interesting to you? Please put a **checkmark** next to all of the ones that are interesting and **circle** your top **3** choices.

- Homelessness/poverty
- Helping build houses for families in need (Habitat for Humanity)
- Food Pantries, food harvesting, clothing/hygiene kit drives
- Environment/finding ways for IUCC to be more earth-friendly
- Growing a vegetable garden at IUCC
- Marriage equality
- Girls/women's rights around the world
- Migrant Workers
- Elderly
- Youth-in-Need/Kids in Foster Care
- Health-related (Cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer's)
- Anti-war/Just Peace demonstrations
- International Programs (going to another country on a mission project)

7. Would you want to do these IUCC-related activities? Please put a **checkmark** next to all of ones that are interesting.

- Helping teach/work with younger kids?
- Writing articles for the IUCC newsletter?
- Preparing food/hosting Coffee Hour?
- Big Sunday (a day of dedicated volunteerism)?
- Raising money?
- Helping to fix things, paint, etc. at IUCC?
- UCC activities like Youth Roundtable, Pilgrim Pines, conferences?
- Making home visits to members of the congregation (who may be elderly, recovering from surgery, etc.) with Pastor Paul or Pastor Elizabeth?

8. Would you be interested in participating in small groups? For example, a group could be formed for kids dealing with grief, divorce or family issues.

Yes, definitely Maybe No, never

What topics would be interesting? Please **write** your ideas in the space below.

9. IUCC started Wednesday's Journey, which meets once a month on a Wednesday evening for special topics. We are thinking about including programming for youth on that night.

Would you attend Wednesday's Journey if there was interesting youth programming?

Yes, definitely Maybe No, never

Is it hard for you to go to church on a weeknight because of homework or other commitments?

_____ Yes, usually _____ Sometimes _____ No, never

Here is a list of topics that might be offered at Wednesday's Journey or through other classes. Please put a **checkmark** next to all of the topics you would find interesting.

- _____ Human sexuality
- _____ Books like, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret?*
- _____ Is God Rational? Why do bad things happen to good people? A look at how our expectations of God's justice to be like human justice often fall short.
- _____ Mystics, Monks, and Bible Thumpers: a look at Christianity from different angles, from mysticism to fundamentalism.
- _____ How do we find Common Ground? A study in what Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism have in common.
- _____ Are we learning for school or learning for life? A look at Grundtvig's vision of a society of enlightened people who are wise, not just book smart.
- _____ I think/feel/sense/pray therefore I am: a look at how one of the cornerstones of Western Philosophy (I think therefore I am, Descartes) might limit our understanding of ourselves and our world.
- _____ e-tunes: a look at our global community/global village and how knowing all that happens in the far corners of the world within seconds creates spiritual emergencies and maybe also new possibilities for understanding and growth.
- _____ The American Pioneer - a personality of the past? Why is NASA tied up in red tape? Do we live in a system where creative "can-do" spirit is swallowed up in bureaucracy and political correctness is making our world lifeless?
- _____ Crusaders of the Third Paradigm: are we entering a time of enlightenment, or a time of despair, or both?
- _____ Warrior, Hermit, Mentor, or Martyr: what are archetypes and which are prevalent in our lives/in our world?

10. What other types of youth programs should IUCC offer? Have you heard about programs at other churches that sound interesting? Please use this space to share your thoughts.

Name: _____ (optional)
Age: _____ (optional)

IUCC YOUNG ADULTS QUESTIONNAIRE

We need your help! The Task Force on Children, Youth, Young Adults and Young Families wants to know what *you* think about current church programs and what you want for the future. Please fill out this questionnaire and return it by mail, or to any greeter or Pastor Elizabeth. Or you can complete it online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZX2P3PX> or email it to elizabeth@iucc.org or to the Task Force at iucctaskforce@gmail.com. **Thanks!**

1. What do you like/not like about IUCC? What drew you to the church in the first place? Did we live up to your expectations? Why/why not? What ideas do you have that could improve the available opportunities?
2. IUCC is thinking about creating an alternative worship experience that would appeal to those who want something different from regular church services. What would be the best time for this service? Please **circle** your first choice or write it in.

Wednesday or Thursday at 7 p.m.
Saturday at 5 p.m.

Sunday at 4 p.m.
Other (name it): _____

Describe the type of worship service that you would want to attend – what would it offer?
Please **circle** all the things you would want included.

Rock, Folk, or World Music
Social Justice
Political Activism
Meditation
Multimedia presentations
Different types of spiritual practices
Short sermon/message
People dancing
People participating more
Other: _____

3. What types of community service/social justice projects are most interesting to you? Please put a **checkmark** next to all of the ones that are interesting and **circle** your top **3** choices.

- _____ Homelessness/poverty
- _____ Helping build houses for families in need (Habitat for Humanity)
- _____ Food pantries, food harvesting, clothing/hygiene kit drives
- _____ Environment/finding ways for IUCC to be more earth-friendly
- _____ Growing a vegetable garden at IUCC
- _____ Marriage equality and other LGBT concerns
- _____ Girls'/women's rights around the world
- _____ Migrant workers and immigrants
- _____ Elderly
- _____ Youth in need/Kids in foster care
- _____ Health-related issues (Cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer's)
- _____ Anti-war/Just Peace demonstrations
- _____ International mission partnerships

4. Would you be interested in participating in small groups? For example, groups could be formed for dealing with stress, relationships, or learning about progressive Christianity.

_____ Yes, definitely _____ Maybe _____ No, never

What other topics would be interesting? Would you like to meet at your college campus?

5. Here is a list of topics that might be offered as young adult classes. Please put a **checkmark** next to all of the topics you would find interesting.

- _____ Human sexuality
- _____ Is God Rational? Why do bad things happen to good people? A look at how our expectations of God's justice to be like human justice often fall short.
- _____ Mystics, Monks, and Bible Thumpers: a look at Christianity from different angles, from mysticism to fundamentalism.
- _____ How do we find Common Ground? A study in what Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism have in common.
- _____ Are we learning for school or learning for life? A look at Grundtvig's vision of a society of enlightened people who are wise, not just book smart.
- _____ I think/feel/sense/pray therefore I am: a look at how one of the cornerstones of Western Philosophy (from Descartes) might limit our understandings.
- _____ e-tunes: a look at our global community/village and how knowing instantaneously about world events creates spiritual emergencies and new possibilities.
- _____ The American Pioneer - a personality of the past? Why is NASA tied up in red tape? Do we live in a system where creative "can-do" spirit is swallowed up in bureaucracy, and political correctness is making our world lifeless?
- _____ Crusaders of the Third Paradigm: are we entering a time of enlightenment, or a time of despair, or both?
- _____ Warrior, Hermit, Mentor, or Martyr: what are archetypes and which are prevalent in our lives/in our world?
- _____ (your ideas...) _____

6. What would you like to do for **fun**/social activities with other young adults at church?

7. What other young adult programs should IUCC offer? Have you heard about programs at other churches that sound interesting? Please use this space to share your thoughts.

Name: _____ Age: _____ Email: _____

College affiliation or career: _____

The Hope: The Voice of the Fire
by Andrew Harvey

I knew this addiction very well in myself and saw its dissociation in all those around me. I saw it in Buddhists who, when I spoke of the need for action in the burning world, told me to calm down because "everything is emptiness"; in Hindus who wrote to me and said: "You are becoming much too excited about nothing, the world is nothing but an illusion"; in New Age fundamentalists who smiled serenely at me and spoke in soft voices about how "only the light is real and all is always in divine order so there is nothing to worry about."

The activists I knew were separated in crucial ways from the ecstasy and power that sacred vision could offer them. Many of them had rejected the notion of the Divine altogether. This meant that they were tragically cut off from the inspiring energies of divine awareness and love, mired instead in a denunciatory, divisive consciousness that created as many problems as it intended to solve and alienated many of those it longed to enthuse.

Mystics, I saw, were mostly addicted to being, activists to doing. Both had profound narcissistic shadows that I recognized in myself. The mystic's shadow was a surreal dissociation from the body, the world, and the grueling tasks of implementing justice. The activist's shadow lay in the messiah and martyr complexes that accompany the addiction to *doing*, with its vulnerability to burnout, rage, and despair.

One night I dreamed I saw two rivers of flame meet in a sea of boiling fire and heard these words: "When the two fires meet, a third fire is created, more powerful than either." When I awoke and meditated on my dream, I understood that these two fires were the fire of the mystic's passion for God and the fire of the activist's passion for justice, and that in the fire I had experienced in Coimbatore, these two fires were fused. In the greatest of human beings--Jesus, Rumi, Buddha--and in beings of our own time such as Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, and Martin Luther King, Jr., these two fires were fused in a "third fire"--the fire of wisdom and love in action.

This third fire was, I realized, the key to preparing and transforming the human race. If the fire of the mystic's passion for God could be married to the activist's passion to enact change, then a new kind of human being would be born. This human being would be grounded in universal, all-embracing, mystical truth and would be acting for justice in a local context with a global consciousness, beyond national or tribal or religious boundaries. The mystic's shadow of addiction to being would be healed by the activist's focus on doing. The activist's shadow of addiction to doing would be balanced and transformed by the mystic's surrender to divine wisdom and joy. The fusion of the mystic's passion for God with the activist's passion for justice in one Divine fire would heal the tragic split in our modern consciousness between masculine and feminine, body and soul, light and matter, passion and peace, inner contemplation and outer action,

EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Here are some examples of spiritual practices for children taken from Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat (spiritualityandpractice.com).

- Give thanks before you eat, not just for the food, but also for everything that contributed to your having this meal--the earth, the rain, the sun, the farmer, the store, the cook, even the cooking equipment. **Gratitude** is an essential spiritual practice.
- When watching television or a video, choose a favorite or interesting character and “step into the story” to see how you would act in his or her place. This exercise uses **imagination** and supports **compassion** for others and **hospitality** toward the media.
- When doing chores, such as picking up toys or putting away the dishes, imagine that you are returning these things to their homes where they will be more comfortable. Reframing chores in this way teaches **reverence** for your surroundings, **kindness**, and **nurturing**.
- Experiment with **silence** by lying on the ground for 15 minutes without saying anything. Pay **attention** to what you are thinking about. Then notice the reports of your senses of sight and smell. This is the practice of **wonder**.
- At bedtime, identify one good thing and one bad thing that has happened during the day. For children, these are times to practice **enthusiasm** and **forgiveness**. For parents, these are opportunities to practice **openness** and **listening**.
- Have a moon-viewing party, complete with special food and costumes appropriate to the season of the year. Talk about the **beauty** of the natural world. Then imagine how the moon sees the world, an exercise that teaches **connections** and the **unity** of all Creation.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Local Community

Mercy House

<http://www.mercyhouse.net>

Located in Santa Ana

Provides: Transitional housing/temporary homeless shelters (Santa Ana/Fullerton Armory)

Needs: Servers, cleaners, and groups to prepare food for 200

Orange County Rescue Mission

<http://www.rescuemission.org>

Located in Tustin and Buena Park

Provides: Transitional housing, family support, and disaster relief

Needs: Office help, childcare, fixing, feeding

Volunteer Center of Orange County

<http://www.volunteercenter.org/>

Provides: Connects volunteers and organizations

Complete list of youth and teen volunteer opportunities at

http://www.volunteercenter.org/AboutUs/index.php/documents/icanvolunteer_2009.pdf

Some candidates are:

- Somebody Care Soup Kitchen, Costa Mesa
- SPIN (Servicing People in Need), Costa Mesa
- The Path of Hope Foundation, Fountain Valley
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, Irvine
- Kids Who Care Foundation, Irvine

Global Community

UCC Mission Trip Opportunities

Volunteer trips within the US

Curriculum provided for use before, during, and after trip

<http://www.ucc.org/volunteer/mission-trip-opportunities.html>

Candidates include:

- New Orleans and nearby parishes, LA
- The Daniel F. Romero Center for Border Ministries, Centro Romero, CA
- Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection (DOOR), Hollywood, CA
- Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM, Inc.), Fresno, CA
- Koinonia Partners, GA
- Yakama Christian Mission (White Swan), WA

UCC Companion Communities

For volunteers aged 21-30, September 2010 - July 2011

<http://www.ucc.org/volunteer/companion-communities-2.html>

UCC Global Ministries Missionary Visits and Relations
<http://globalministries.org/get-involved/missionary-visits/>

UCC Global Ministries People-to-People Pilgrimages
<http://globalministries.org/mission/group-trips/>

UCC Global Ministries Volunteer Opportunities
<http://globalministries.org/get-involved/mission-opportunities/volunteer-opportunities.html>

RESEARCH ON PROGRAMS OFFERED AT OTHER RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS/ OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

As part of the process of preparing our report and recommendations, the Task Force researched programs offered for children, youth and adult adults at other religious institutions and opportunities for collaboration at local colleges and universities – this information is summarized below. While we recognize that large churches like Saddleback and Mariners have significantly more resources to allocate to these types of programs, we were curious about what kinds of activities seemed to be “universally” offered. Through this research, we discovered several recurrent programmatic themes:

- Importance of small groups
- Extensive use of Social Media
- Broad range of social activities for every age group
- A variety of "coming of age" types of programs/activities

Saddleback Church

Lake Forest, CA (with additional satellite campuses)

<http://www.saddleback.com>

Children's Ministry: Our purpose is to offer your children a place of wonder and discovery as they learn Bible truths. Our goal for each weekend service is to create an environment that is both educational and entertaining. We want to capture your child's imagination, intrigue them, and set them on a course of discovery. Our Children's Ministry seeks to bring children into age-appropriate worship where they can belong to the family of God, grow in their relationship with Christ, learn to serve, and then go share Christ in the world! We strive to do this through our weekend programs, our various activities and events for children, kids' small groups, summer camp, and vacation Bible school. Our Children's Ministry, called All STARS, is a place where your children can feel safe, have fun and learn valuable life lessons at our weekend services. We offer trained childcare for infants through 6th grade at all of our services. They'll learn Bible stories, make new friends, and build a foundation for what it means to follow Jesus. Children are a priority at Saddleback. Our church is here to allow you the comfort and peace of mind to attend the adult services while knowing your kids are not only safe and comfortable, but also learning and growing in their faith.

Kids' Small Groups: Our hope is that children in Kids' Small Groups can dig deeper into God's Word and learn about the limitless love that God has to offer them. We also hope the relationships that the children build in their groups will last a lifetime and that they'll look forward to spending time each week with kids their own age.

Junior/Senior High: Come join us for exciting services that shatter the stereotype that church is boring. Games, music, videos, stories, relevant teaching from God's Word... this is a powerful and engaging church experience you will not want to miss! We have designed our services with you in mind, and whether you know God personally or are just interested in checking God out, this service is for you. Come build relationships, laugh, and be challenged to follow God's way. During the school year, our students will have a chance to connect with others in a small group that meets in a home. Come to the weekend service to find out more about plugging into a group.

College-age Ministry (Crave): Be a part of Crave, our college-age ministry here at Saddleback. Join together every Thursday evening with other young adults to explore questions and learn more about God’s purpose for your life. From our weekly worship experiences and annual retreats, to trips that take you halfway around the world, the Crave community is all about doing life together. Whether you grew up in church or aren’t sure you even like church, we invite you to come and see for yourself. Crave is a “come as you are” community! We meet every Thursday night at 7:15 p.m. in Saddleback’s newest building, the Refinery. Imagine a Starbucks, the beach, a skate park, an art gallery, a gym, and a theater all rolled into one amazing building. That’s what the Refinery is all about and it was designed with you in mind! Come enjoy live music, meet some new friends, and seek answers to life’s most compelling questions. We hope you’ll come check out our community!

Small Groups: Crave Small Groups are peer-led groups of five to ten people who meet in homes, apartments, dorms, campuses, and coffee shops all over Orange County. Small groups are the heartbeat of our ministry – it’s where you get to connect and experience life together with other people your age.

Mariners Church

Irvine, CA

marinerschurch.org

marinerschurch.org/portmariners/ (website dedicated to youth/family programs)

highschool@marinerschurch.org/college@marinerschurch.org (dedicated email addresses for each demographic)

- Second largest church in OC (after Saddleback)
- Averages 9000/week in attendance
- Worship space holds 3300
- Children’s ministry building (called Port Mariners) is 63,000 sq ft facility

Youth Programs

Vision: Build spiritually strong Christ-centered families and equip them to become servant leaders in our community. Five key values:

- Safe: provide a physically and emotionally safe environment
- Biblically Relevant: reach today’s kids with real-life applications
- Creative: Bring the Bible to life for children
- Relationships: Guide and shepherd our kids through caring volunteers and staff
- Fun: see kids come back at every opportunity
- Computer check-in for infants and kids/ID and pager system/asset tags (for possessions)
- Age-specific scripture posted on website for kids to memorize each month
- Vacation Bible School
- Tuesday Night Kids Club (runs concurrently with a parents program)
- Anchored in Christ (New Believer Training) – for K-5 graders who have recently “accepted Jesus as their Forever Friend.”
- Baptism Class – for 2-5 graders
- BASIX for Kids – for 2-5 graders (how to use the Bible, why go to church, what communion is, what worship is, what stewardship is, and how to pray)
- KIXS Training – 4-5 graders, part of Kids In extreme Service program)

Teen Programs

- *Youth Groups*: Saturdays at 5pm; Sundays at 9 and 11am. Every weekend jr high/high school students gather (by age group) to “experience fun, friendships, videos, laughter, worship, and relevant teaching from God's word. This is our largest gathering of the week and it is always a good time!”
- *Sample activities*: snowboarding, mission trips, small group meetings, camps
- *The Crew*: Junior high and high school students can be leaders in our Children's Ministry by joining The Crew. Hundreds of student volunteers serve in Port Mariners each weekend and at special events such as the Harvest Carnival and Vacation Bible School. Crew members help out with childcare, small groups, worship, drama, computer check-in, audio/video, foreign language translation, and by being a "special friend" to a child with special needs.
- *Jr. High Winter Camp*: winter camp is a great weekend at Thousand Pines Christian campground to connect with God and with others! Together we will worship God, hear from His word, connect in cabins, eat and play. During free time students can choose to (or not to) play paintball, ride off-road carts, challenge the ropes course, or other activities. (Feb 5-7)
- *747*: meets in various homes throughout Orange County on Wednesday nights during the school year. 747 is the perfect place for the curious-about-Jesus to hang out, eat food, and get a first glimpse of Mariners High School Ministry.

College Age

- Meets Sundays (7-9 p.m.) and Thursdays (7:30 p.m.)
- Thursday meetings are designed to provide a place for college age students to find community. These nights are focused on learning from God's word in discussion groups.
- *Sample activities*: Superbowl party, Laundromat Project (practice acts of kindness by going to a Laundromat and randomly paying for someone's laundry), bowling, conferences

Family Programs

- Offers classes in adoption/fostering
- *Home Builders University (HBU)*: ministry for families that focuses on building a Christ-centered foundation in your family, marriage and parenting. Each series is six to eight weeklong and takes place each fall, winter and spring. Adults are taught on campus by our Mariners pastors and guest speakers. Small groups are formed with other couples in the same life-stage. Tuesday Night Kids Clubs and childcare for a fee run at the same time as HBU.
- *Home Small Groups*: Mariners Children's & Family Ministry Home Small Groups are made up of 4-7 couples who desire to grow spiritually and connect with other parents of similarly aged children. Mariners offers many types of curriculum that focus on marriage, raising kids, apologetics, specific topics or books of the Bible.

Young Couples

- *Premarital Counseling*: topics for this premarital class include Communication, Conflict Resolution, Finances, Sexual Intimacy and Oneness. Come explore your relationship while learning lifelong skills for marriages that last. You will hear pastors from Mariners staff as well as Christian counselors and others that speak on their area of expertise.
- *The Window*: a Bible study for young married couples in "the window" between the wedding and kids. Join anytime. No registration required. (offered two Sundays/month)

Pilgrim Church (UCC)

Carlsbad, CA

An Open and Affirming, and Inclusive Church with a Progressive Theology and a Commitment to Social Justice

Sunday morning worship services: Each Sunday morning we gather at 10:00 a.m. for an hour of communal worship. Our service consists of teaching, readings, music, and the sharing of joys and concerns. Children participate at the beginning of the service before heading for Sunday School after the Children's Sharing Time. Nursery care is available for infants and toddlers. Communion is held on the first Sunday of each month, and all in attendance are welcome to participate.

The Youth Ministry has its own website, with a blog, pictures, schedule, etc.

A Christian Ministry for Youth, with Youth, by Youth

Our mission is to foster Christian community among youth that is attentive to God's presence, discerning of the Spirit, and accompanies youth in the Way of Jesus. Youth Christian Education is from 9-9:50 a.m. every Sunday. Youth Group events occur on different times and different days of the week, so be sure to check out the schedule! Our ministry has four main components, each equally vital to faith among youth:

- **Fellowship** - Seeking to provide youth with a safe, caring and spiritual space to develop Christ-centered relationships with other teens and caring adults.
- **Worship** - Providing youth opportunities to be attentive to God's presence through music, art, prayer, and other contemplative spiritual practices.
- **Christian Education** - Through the stories of the Bible and the stories of our lives, we search for who God is for us today, and how we can participate in what God is doing in the world.
- **Mission** - Offering youth ways to reach out and use their gifts to partner with others in justice-making.

Adult Volunteers

The vitality of our Youth Ministries is dependent on regular volunteers -- parents and adult members of Pilgrim Church. Sign up today; we need you!

November 20 Pilgrim's Got Talent Show, 5:30 - 9 p.m.

November 28 High School Youth - Pilgrim Garden, 3 - 5 p.m.

November 29 Middle School Youth - Helping at Linda's house, 1:30 - 4:15 p.m.

December 6 Indoor Rock-climbing with Escondido UCC youth, 2:30 - 6 p.m.

December 11 Our Whole Lives, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

December 18 Christmas Party, 7 - 9 p.m.

December 20 Holiday Baskets, 12:30 - 3 p.m.

January 8 Our Whole Lives, 6:30 - 9 p.m.

January 15-18 Junior High JanBoree at Loch Leven Camp, TBA

January 22 Youth Steering Committee, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

January 29 Our Whole Lives, 6:30 - 9 p.m.

February 12-15 Senior High FEB Camp at Pilgrim Pines, TBA

February 19 Our Whole Lives, 6:30 - 9 p.m.
 March 5 Middle School Homeless shelter meal, TBA
 March 6 High School Homeless shelter meal, TBA
 March 12 Our Whole Lives, 6:30 - 9 p.m.
 March 19 Youth Steering Committee, 7 - 8:30 p.m.
 March 20 Service Event with UCC La Mesa and Long Beach youth at Pilgrim, TBA
 March 26-27 Our Whole Lives overnight, TBA
 April 17 Youth Uniting in Mission, TBA
 April 23 Youth Sunday planning, TBA
 April 30 Our Whole Lives, 6:30 - 9 p.m.
 May 14 Our Whole Lives, 6:30 - 9 p.m.
 May 21 Youth Sunday planning, TBA
 May 23 Youth Sunday/Confirmation Sunday/Pentecost!
 June 4 Closing Our Whole Lives, 6:30 - 9 p.m.
 June 11-12 Annual Gathering in Santa Anna, TBA
 June 13 End of School Party, TBA
 June 20 Visit Vista Buddhist Temple, 9 - 11:30 a.m.
 June 25 Mission Trip planning, TBA
 July 2 Mission Trip planning, TBA
 July 5-10 Western Regions Youth Event, TBA
 August 1-7 CYMC Pilgrim Pines Camp, TBA

Other Faith Traditions

Deer Park Monastery

Escondido, CA

<http://www.deerparkmonastery.org/>

Deer Park Monastery is a community in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh & the Plum Village Practice Center. At Deer Park, the residential monastic community and lay Sangha practice together year round under the guidance of our teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh (Thây), in the tradition of engaged Buddhism and mindfulness practice in everyday life.

- Young adults retreat ages 21 – 35.
- Teen retreat ages 13 – 19: discover the true rebel-the warrior, the artist & the dreamer.
- Family Retreat - Opening the Family Up.

San Francisco Zen Center

San Francisco, CA

<http://www.sfzc.org/tassajara/>

The purpose of San Francisco Zen Center is to make accessible and embody the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha as expressed in the Soto Zen tradition established by Dogen Zenji in 13th-century Japan and conveyed to us by Suzuki Roshi and other Buddhist teachers.

- Coming-of-Age Program for 7th and 8th grade girls and boys: The Coming of Age Program inspires, guides, and empowers our children for life-long spiritual inquiry and engagement. It provides a supportive environment of peer and mentor relationships in

which young people, in 7th and 8th grade, can meet and discuss their views and perceptions of the world around them. A boys' group and a girls' group meet separately every month for nine months on Sunday mornings from 9:30 am until noon. The meetings culminate in a Coming of Age ceremony in the Zendo in May in which participants are honored and witnessed by their friends and family.

Agape International Spiritual Center

Culver City, CA

<http://www.agapelive.com/index.php?anchor=about>

Since its doors opened in 1986, Agape's active teaching and practice of the New Thought-Ancient Wisdom tradition of spirituality has expanded into a trans-denominational movement and community of 9,000 local members and 1,000,000 friends worldwide.

- Children's Choir - Kids 5 years to age 14.
- Children's Community Support - The Children's Community team offers counseling and prayer to children of divorce or other crisis situations, as well as providing home/hospital visitation and grief support for those moving through personal loss of any kind.
- Youth Assemblies - Monthly theme driven activities, featured guest speakers, live music.
- Healthy Snacks - We serve organic nutritionally dense whole foods. It is our goal to serve food that nourishes the body and sustains the whole child.
- Parent Classes & Workshops - we schedule parent forums and workshops.

University of California, Irvine

The Interfaith Center was established when the University of California, Irvine, opened in 1965, to provide a ministry which serves the entire campus community -- students faculty, and staff. Interfaith is governed by the University Interfaith Foundation, a group of community and religious leaders, and currently serves over 2,000 people per week. Interfaith is an ecumenical organization that seeks to overcome barriers between faiths and sects, and encourages fellowship among all persons, regardless of creed. It is home to a number of groups representing many faiths including -- Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Muslim. Interfaith's goal is to integrate the religious activities of its members and to promote a sense of fellowship and community. At the same time, each individual is encouraged to rediscover the purpose and history of his or her own religion. Interfaith is supported entirely by donations from businesses, churches, and community members, and is not funded by the University. The Center is located in the UCI Engineering complex (Building 319), adjacent to the Interim Classroom Facility (ICF).

One of the churches with an active outreach program at UCI is Rock Harbor, which describes itself as: a community of people learning together to worship Jesus Christ with our lives. We love God—celebrating Him, serving Him, and reaching out to share His love with others. Our doors are open to all. each person adds something valuable to who we are. We are not a building or a name. we are a community where people can hear God's truth, experience His love and grace, and respond to Him with freedom. *Rock Harbor College-Somethings*: we are passionate about seeing college students and twenty-somethings "college-somethings" encounter Jesus in such powerful ways that the result is set-apart lives given to spreading His message and His fame. through events, discussions, relationships and more. Our aim is to equip this generation to live lives marked by truth, true identity, purpose, worship, and community. We want to see a

movement of college-something Jesus followers spread across every corner of the earth and shout to every people group that Jesus is alive, He is good, and He is Lord.

Chapman University

One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866
www.chapman.edu; www.chapman.edu/chapel

The Fisher Interfaith Center: located at the crossroads of the campus, the Fish Interfaith Center is home to the Wallace All Faiths Chapel and the Wilkinson Founders Chapel. Reflecting the rich spiritual diversity of the Chapman community, fifteen groups representing nine different religious traditions engage in over thirty activities weekly.

Campus Ministry: the Office of Church Relations, in partnership with the Fish Interfaith Center, serves the Chapman community by providing students and staff the opportunity to grow in their faith through spiritual groups and worship opportunities, but also by ministering to students and staff on a one-on-one basis. The Interfaith Center employs two ordained ministers: Ron Farmer, Dean of the Wallace All Faiths Chapel, Nancy Brink, Director of Church Relations and Cisa Payuyo, Associate Director of Church Relations. Ron Farmer is ordained in the Disciples of Christ tradition but can offer ministerial counseling to people of all denominations and faiths.

The Office of Church Relations: the ministry provided by the church relations staff centers around four primary areas:

- Development: raising scholarship and program money for Disciples and UCC students and their ministries.
- Recruitment: Promoting Chapman at Disciple and UCC venues throughout the country.
- Program: Facilitating the Disciple on Campus (DOC) group in the creating and implementing of service, social, and mission opportunities.
- Pastoral Care: Providing settings for spiritual development and worship, along with counseling and other student support services.

It is through the Disciples on Campus (DOC) ministry provided by the office of Church Relations that Chapman's heritage remains strong and dynamic. Our strength also comes from our Partner Church relationships. The Office of Church Relations is located in the Fish Interfaith Center on Campus. Chapman University is in covenant with the following organizations. Please visit their pages for more information about them.

Irvine Valley College

Irvine, CA

- Community 2 year college in Irvine (on Jeffrey near Irvine Center Drive)
- Irvine Valley College (IVC) – 14,000 students, median age of students 24
- Part of South Orange Country Community College District, the other sister school is Saddleback Community College in Mission Viejo. Saddleback Community College – 40,000 students, of which 11,000 are emeriti (senior citizens taking interest/non-degree courses), 33% of the students are ages 18-21
- IVC is #1 for transfers to 4 year colleges for community colleges in Orange Country, and #3 for transfers for community colleges in the state

- IVC clubs (organized by students) include Muslim Students Association, Christians Club. Clubs must have an advisor who is present at all club meetings. Students can petition for recognition of new clubs, must have a constitution.
- Another popular local community college is Orange Coast Community College in Costa Mesa (25,000 students), has a Religious Studies Department (IVC and Saddleback do not). Sarah Halverson teaching a class: Religious Studies A145 Mysticism & Meditation starting Feb. 1, 2010.

Nov. 20,2009

<http://www.au.org/media/press-releases/archives/2009/11/au-challenges-california.html>
 Americans United for Separation of Church and State has filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging official prayers during public ceremonies at a Southern California community college. The lawsuit challenges the South Orange County Community College District's practice of opening its events with prayer. The District oversees two Southern California community colleges – Saddleback College in Mission Viejo and Irvine Valley College in Irvine; the legal action challenges prayers at Saddleback, and recently a plaintiff from Irvine Valley College has joined the lawsuit. School officials, the legal action asserts, routinely sponsor official invocations at events for students and faculty, including scholarship-award ceremonies, commencement ceremonies and training programs for faculty. AU's lawsuit notes that students and faculty members have protested the mandatory prayers many times. The student government of Saddleback College has twice passed resolutions opposing the prayer practice, and similar resolutions have been passed by the faculty's Academic Senate of Saddleback College, the Academic Senate of Irvine Valley College, the statewide Academic Senate for California Community Colleges and the South Orange County Community College District Faculty Association. School officials ignored the complaints and, in response, actually increased the religious content of these public events.