

# IUCC News & Notes

Irvine United Congregational Church  
An Open and Affirming – Just Peace Congregation  
*A Progressive Christian Voice for Irvine and Southern California*

February 6, 2013

<http://www.iucc.org>

<b>INSIDE:</b>	
Associate Pastor's Report	- 4
Youth News	- 6
Moderator's Report	- 7
Comparative Religions Class	- 8
Global Mission	- 9
Global Mission - Japan	-11
Food – Farming & Faith	- 13
Immigration Reform	- 13
Fellowship	- 17
February Birthdays	- 17
January / February Pictures	- 18
Financial Snapshot	- 19
<i>Powerful Parenting</i>	- 20

## From the Pastor's Desk ...



Lent is fast approaching. Our Ash Wednesday service will be on February 13 at 7:00 p.m.

There are 40 days in Lent (minus Sundays) and these days are set aside for inner reflection.

tion.

Some mark these days with fasting, others by "giving up" something, either a vice or something one otherwise enjoys in order to be reminded of what the sacrifice of something important in one's life feels like.

There are three practices that receive extra emphases during Lent:

- Prayer (justice towards God)
- Fasting (justice towards self)
- and Almsgiving (justice towards neighbor).

Our Ash Wednesday service will begin the Lenten season, and it will start with a reflection on the Christian understanding of the service and the season.

## The Newsletter For February '13 !

**Important:** If you, or someone you know, wishes to receive this *News & Notes* but cannot access the Internet, please do *either* of the following: [a] let the church office know at (949) 733-0220, and we can mail a printed copy; or [b] just pick up a printed copy in the narthex on a Sunday morning.

This year the Adult Education Ministry will have a program every Wednesday evening at 7:30 that will highlight important aspects of other religions in recognition of the fact that we have neighbors across the globe (and here in Irvine) who have a different approach to the kind of inner reflection that brings them closer to their own understanding of the spiritual.

I hope to see you on these Wednesday evenings in Plumer Hall as we welcome representatives from the Hindu, Native American, Sikh, Islamic and Buddhist traditions before we bring the full focus back on our Christian faith during Holy Week.



For some time, you have been hearing about *Global Mission*. There is a big Global Mission wall in Plumer Hall, materials that have been made freely available on Sunday mornings and during the week, as well as talks from the pulpit. At our spring congregational meeting, we will be voting on becoming a *Global Mission Church*.

Of course, in many ways we already are a "GMC", minus the official designation. Our trips to Guatemala, Mexico and the border immersion experience signal the interest our church has in how we become a part of the mission of the church in the world. IUCC member Ken Matsuyama has spent a good deal of time in Japan working on tsunami relief, and his partner, Randy Romine has also been involved.



It has become clear to me that there is a real interest at IUCC to become more involved at both the local and the global levels in the work of the church in the world. Over a year ago, Bil Aulenbach asked me what I thought would be an area that was ripe for growth in the church, and we both quickly agreed that this was it. In the meantime, George Johnson began a class that ignited real interest in mission, and that interest did not go unnoticed. Bil began to put together a strategy for highlighting this important area, while George moved us to take action, and with Pastor Elizabeth's direct involvement, there has been much forward motion. Our trips have sparked a lot of energy, and the feedback I have received is, "More!"

While I am on the February schedule, my apologies for missing an upcoming Sunday when my preaching duties are already light this month. The dear lady who would have been my stepmother had she and my father married, is moving into my father's assisted living facility on the Cape. It is clear to me that Carl and I are her best advocates, being very familiar with the ins and outs of her new home.

Looking ahead, I will return to more of a "solo pastor" status for a while as Pastor Elizabeth moves towards her maternity leave. I am excited for Seth and Elizabeth as they prepare for this wonderful event, and she is going to need to take some very important time as a new parent to be with her child. We are working to make sure that the program aspects of Elizabeth's work are covered, so that you may continue to expect the same level of care and commitment to all aspects of the Ministry for Young People.

You will be hearing more about Global Mission this month in Sunday services and forums. On February 10, Jeffrey Mensendiek, our missionary in Japan, will be speaking in worship and in a forum after church. Come and hear about our involvement in the mission of our church and learn about our own direct work in Tsunami relief.



Ms. Aerie

Jan Aerie will visit us from our national church setting in Cleveland on February 23 and 24. Jan has a rather long title: Executive for Mission Education and Interpretation, Church Relations and Mission Interpretation. Simply, Jan is the consummate professional who makes our UCC Global Mission program run. This will be a big Sunday for us! If you want to know more, take a look at <http://globalministries.org/>



Last minute: I received a call at home from our United Church of Christ leader, Mike Schuenemeyer. He is asking our churches to thank the Boy Scouts for considering changing their policy on LGBT scouts and leaders, as they move to make this change at their meeting on Wednesday, February 6. Scouting Sunday is February 3. You will see some materials in church as well. [Here's](#) where you can go to mark the day!



So here is a question that could bring us full circle in healing and reconciliation: *Should IUCC consider sponsoring a Boy Scout troop?*

Yours,  
Pastor Paul

## From the Associate Pastor



I grew up in a UCC church that didn't do much to observe Lent. There was a Maundy Thursday service during Holy Week, right at Lent's close, but I don't remember an Ash Wednesday service nor much emphasis on Lenten spiritual practices throughout the season. I understood the basic concept of Lent being the preparatory time before Easter, but other than hearing about Catholic friends giving up hot dogs or chocolate, it wasn't something that really made much of a connection inside of me.

When I went away to college, I began regularly attending a UCC church there. And that church was very much into the idea of embodying Lent and encouraging congregants to take on practices throughout the season that would deepen its meaning for them. That first year, I went whole hog (so to speak). I gave up meat, orange juice, and all sweets. I attended the church's weekly Thursday evening soup and study program. I gathered with the others to read and discuss C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*. I worked my way through a Lenten devotional, poring over the accompanying biblical passages each day. It all brought the season into full effect, and its effect on me was powerful.

In subsequent years, I gathered early with a Catholic roommate to attend morning Ash Wednesday services and receive the imposition of ashes before going to class. One year a classmate and acquaintance (actually it was the actress Mayim Bialik) asked another roommate why I had an ashen cross on my forehead. She had assumed I was Jewish since I also attended Shabbat service at the Hillel Jewish Student Center with her nearly every week. In the spirit of interfaith spiritual practice that pervaded our home, by our senior year, one of my Jewish roommates even began her practice of veganism (which she continues to this day) in solidarity with me during Lent.



Once I had joined the Catholic Worker movement by moving in with the community in East LA after college, Lent took on even greater spiritual depth of meaning for me. I fasted one day per week and took part in extra prayers with the community. But the spiritual practices did not end with mere individual piety. Our Ash Wednesday service (and every Wednesday in our weekly Lenten vigil) that first year took place in El Segundo, often in the pouring rain—marching from the offices of Lockheed Martin to Boeing to Raytheon, praying for peace and an end to the production of weapons for war and the missile defense system.

Good Friday found us again marching publicly—recreating the Stations of the Cross on the streets of downtown LA. We visited and prayed at the federal building, the police station, the criminal courthouse, the county jail, the immigration detention center...places that can be sites of crucifixion in our modern context.

My Lenten practices in years since have not always been so dramatic. I still do “give something up” each year and also try to “take something on.” I do try to make it to the marches with the Catholic Worker when I can too. It always helps me to go deeper when my own practice affects not just me but connects to issues in our wider world and makes those connections between the biblical context and our own as well.

So what are your plans for Lent this year? If you would like to give something up or take something on, you will find support for these practices at your church. Please join in for the Ash Wednesday service on February 13, the Maundy Thursday service on March 28, and the wonderful weekly Wednesday evening class on world religions that Rev. Bil Aulenbach has organized. Young adults are invited to gather for our weekly Tuesday evening Bread for the Journey discussion group as we explore the UCC Lenten devotional *Spring Cleaning*. Anyone can see me if you’d like an extra copy. And if you want to hit the streets, I can give you information for the Good Friday march in LA too!

And finally, one extra practice I’m personally taking on this year in this season of spiritual preparation for welcoming New Life at Easter is my own spiritual (and physical) preparation to welcome new life from within me as well. My first child will be born this year in the midst of Lent, and I couldn’t be more grateful for this coinciding. When the baby does come, I will be going on Maternity Leave for 12 weeks from approximately mid-March through mid-June. I truly appreciate this opportunity from the church to take the time to bond with my new family member. And I also have every confidence that the plans we on the staff and the Ministry for Young People have been making for appropriate coverage of my duties will result in very successful continuance of all programming in my absence.

So...may you have a Happy Lent! Or a Contemplative Lent...or an Activist Lent ... or an Educational Lent! Just don’t let the season pass you by without acknowledging this prime opportunity for deep spiritual development and practice. We could all use a little time to prepare ourselves once again for new life.

Yours in God’s peace,  
Pastor Elizabeth

Youth Group Report  
By Erika Sanders



Happy February Everyone!

I am very excited to be back at IUCC after an educational and adventurous six weeks in India. Thank you for your flexibility with youth programming while I was away. I'd like to say a huge "Thank You!" to Brian Percy for his willingness to fill in. Now that I am back, youth programming will resume its usual schedule of Sunday school during the 11 o'clock service with youth group following immediately afterwards from about

12:30pm-2:30pm. The only exception to this will be during President's Day weekend when our high school youth have the opportunity to go to Feb Camp.

Feb Camp is a three night camp style retreat in the San Bernardino mountains for UCC and Disciples of Christ (DOC) high schoolers throughout southern California. This year's theme is "Don't Wait. Create!" There will be a keynote speaker, engaging workshops, small groups, and many opportunities for fun! I am planning to attend Feb Camp as a counselor, so I am happy to drive youth who would like to go. It is really important that everyone who wants to go registers as soon as possible. I will bring registration forms with me to church and am happy to answer any questions parents and youth may have about the retreat.



*Pilgrim Pines*

Some important youth dates for February: February 10th: Beach Clean-up and Picnic following second service

February 15th-18th: Feb Camp!

February 24th: Global Mission Luncheon following second service

Peace,  
Erika

## From the Moderator



Some of my earliest and most annoyance-filled memories of church as a child revolve around pastors asking for money. Maybe it was because then, as now, the plate was passed every Sunday, although I have distinct memories of sermons about money happening every Sunday (my parents say otherwise). So it's with some amusement that I find myself constantly thinking about church and money these days.

Cindy O'Dell The good news is that thanks to a strong end-of-year effort, responsible spending and a resetting of the church's outstanding Cornerstone loan to a much lower interest rate, IUCC ended 2012 with a small surplus.

On January 28th, the Administrative Board voted to use half that surplus, about \$3,000, toward an additional payment on the existing loan and sent the rest to our reserves.

That decision was made after considerable discussion. Some admin board members wanted all of it to go to the loan, some wanted all of it to go to staff as a bonus or raise and some wanted it all to go toward reserves where it could be tapped for this year's programs. Those pushing for a Cornerstone loan payment pointed out that during discussions about the building plans, there was concern voiced about just how much debt IUCC could afford to take on since it already has an outstanding loan, even though our asset-to-debt ratio is very healthy. We hope the half/half compromise will answer those concerns.

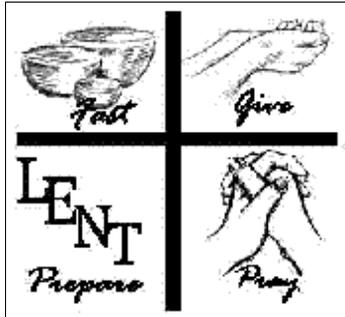
What else is ahead in 2013 for IUCC?

- Admin board chair Martha Selby has begun putting together a committee to develop a request for proposals (RFP) so we can move ahead on a new conditional use permit and determine exactly what we'll be able to change on our campus, according to city restrictions.
- Nick Sanders and Lester Ricks will be taking a look at how we can again make podcasts available and then tackle the thorny question of a manageable, mobile audio-visual system that can be used by various church groups in Plumer Hall and elsewhere.

- I'll be trying to get a better handle on balancing out attendance between our first and second services without breaking the budget, and we've asked Paul to take a look at the various responsibilities spread among pastors and staff to see if some reorganizing is in order as we anticipate Elizabeth's temporary family leave and Ken Wyant's completing his interim role as Adult Programs director.

And one of these days, I really hope to think about IUCC again without thinking about money, money, money.

Cindy



LENT

IUCC

2013

*The Adult Programs Ministry*  
Invites YOU to Join Us in a  
5 Week Series

**“COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS”**

February 20

*Hinduism*

Debashish Banerji

February 27

*Native American*

Adelia Sandervol

March 6

*Sikh*

Orange County Sikh Temple

March 13

*Islam*

Alia Aboul-Nasr

March 20

*Buddhism*

Rev. Ken Nagata

All programs are on Wednesdays, 7: 30pm to 9pm  
Plumer Hall

*Everyone is Welcomed*

We are making plans, for those who wish, to visit the places of  
worship for each of the above religions. TBA

-----Registration(simply for planning purposes)-----

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Best way to contact you: (Ph/Email) \_\_\_\_\_

## February is a BIG month for Global Ministry at IUCC

February 10 we shall have Jeff Mensendiek at both services and then there will be a luncheon (free, thanks to the generosity of Ken Matsyama and Randy Romaine's Comma group) and then Jeff will specifically address what the church is doing in the recovery work after the tsunami. Ken will have just returned from Japan working in that area.

Ken and Randy have both been over there helping with the recovery and know Jeff well. Jeff's father was a missionary so Jeff was raised (since the age of 3) in the culture and speaks Japanese fluently. Jeffery began his own work there in 1989 with a new church start. He married Kazuko Ikawa in 1998 and they have 2 girls and a boy, 14, 12 and 7.

Please come and join us as we hear the very exciting story of the church in action.

February 24, IUCC will have the great pleasure and honor of having Jan Aerie, Executive Director of the UCC Global Ministry throughout the world come from Cleveland to share with us the fantastic work of Global Ministry throughout the world. Jan (she and her pastor husband are good friends of Pastor Paul and Carl) will preach at both services and then after another free luncheon she will have an interactive dialogue with us about Global Ministry.

Our last BIG GM event will be THE GLOBAL MINISTRY FAIRE to be held on Sunday, April 14 after the 11am service, in Plumer Hall. We hope that all our present ministries here at IUCC will have a display and people to answer your questions. Our first event will be a free international food tasting, followed by a very short introduction of the afternoon events. We shall then break into small groups (for 45 minutes) of our choice as missionaries from India, Swaziland, Japan, perhaps Mexico, the US or Guatemala will share with us their work, their reason for being involved and this life changing event.

The event will end with the Rev. Mike Holland of Foothill Church, Tustin, representative of GM in this area, share his fascinating stories of GM in his life.

*The final event for Global Ministry THIS Spring will be on Sunday May 19 (Pentecost) when the congregation will vote on IUCC accepting the challenge to be a GLOBAL MISSION CHURCH*



Jeff Mensendiek

# Becoming a Global Mission Church

## Global Mission Japan

### *Update on Tsunami/ Fukushima Disaster*



By Ken Matsuyama

This is a note from Japan to all my IUCC friends. I am looking forward to returning this month to report on my activities here in Japan. During this time, I have been able to reconnect with many afflicted by the tsunami who received support last year through the UCC and UCCJ. I have grown to appreciate the great gift I was given by being able to participate in global ministry in even a small way. The work here is now is focused more on the rebuilding process, especially for elderly without families and for small family farm and fishing businesses. There is also a great focus on activities for those relocated to temporary housing and in assisting them in reconnecting with their communities. This will be a long process for many.

I am particularly excited to be present for the February 10 IUCC visit of our UCC Global Youth Minister for Japan, Jeffrey Mensendiek. I got to know Jeffrey through my work last year at the Emmaus Centers in Sendai and Ishinomaki Japan. Jeffrey has been a tireless advocate for UCC Global Mission all his life. We are blessed to have him visit IUCC during this time of consideration of being

a global mission church. In addition his expertise on global mission, Jeffrey has closely followed the developments in the Fukushima Nuclear Crisis and will share some insights at our February 10 luncheon honoring his visit.

The February 10 luncheon will also be a great time to tell you more about our UCC Mission work at the Emmaus Center. The Emmaus Center is a UCC Japan (different from the UCC USA) headquarters for ecumenical work in northern Japan. The center is particularly focused on youth ministry and is the center for tsunami disaster relief for the UCCJ Christian churches. The beautiful modern building housing the center was built on land and with funds donated to the UCCJ Christian churches by the UCC USA. It will always be a special place for our UCC Japan ministry and I look forward to telling you more about it and the work there. I hope it will be a place many of you can come to know through future mission trips. We will be discussing mission at the luncheon and further develop our interest list for participation in global mission. I will also be joining Randy Romine, Irene Thornton, and Shirley Lorenz in preparing a bento box lunch which will be offered for a \$5 suggested donation to the UCC Global Ministry. I want to give special thanks to my Sunday comma group who will be assisting in setup and cleanup for the luncheon.



I hope to see many of you at the February 10 luncheon. Look for the luncheon signup on the patio after church or contact me at [Kmatsuyama@hotmail.com](mailto:Kmatsuyama@hotmail.com) or Randy Romine at [Rwromine@aol.com](mailto:Rwromine@aol.com) to let us know if you can join us.





## Food – Farming and Faith

### *Important Issues at the End of Your Fork*

This adult class continues through February 13th. Led by the Rev. George S. Johnson, the several foci include the ethics and politics of eating; why our food choices matter; farming, farm workers and the earth we care about -- all connected; organic, local, fair trade, humanely raised; GMOs and eating out; and what we can do about the current crisis around food and farming.

Meeting three times / week: Wednesdays at 7 PM; Thursdays at 10 AM; and Sundays at 10:15 AM.

Further information: [georgesjohson@gmail.com](mailto:georgesjohson@gmail.com)  
Open to the public - Drop-ins are welcome!



Thinking About . . .

### *Immigration Reform*

By Keith Boyum

Immigration reform is much in discussion. Are there Christian views?

Yes.

Here is what the United Church of Christ has to say, in a [release dated January 29, 2013](#):

The Collegium of Officers released a statement in support of immigration reform efforts led by President Obama and four democrats and four republicans who drafted the framework during five meetings since the November election. They

urge government representatives to act now, and stress the importance of the faith community's voice in this national debate.

*"We applaud the renewed efforts by President Obama and a bipartisan committee of senators to bring proposals for comprehensive immigration reform legislation to the Congress that will move our country beyond the strategy of simply securing our borders. The United Church of Christ has long supported compassionate reform in our country's approach to immigration and we will look to see that the recommendations being proposed will protect the human rights and dignity of our brothers and sisters. We are encouraged by proposals to establish a pathway to citizenship for those who qualify, for students and children brought into this country, for family reunification, and for equal rights for bi-national same-sex couples.*

*The issue of immigration reform has been stalled for too long. Now is the time to insure a humane, sound and workable immigration policy, one that is realistic, just and fair. The voice of the religious community is essential in this national debate. We call upon members of our churches to connect with local, state and national coalitions and initiatives engaged in supporting comprehensive immigration reform consistent with the measures advocated by the UCC and our interfaith and ecumenical partners. Advocacy opportunities will be forthcoming from the public policy office of the UCC as comprehensive immigration reform moves along."*

*The Rev. Geoffrey A. Black, the Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo, the Rev J. Bennett Guess, the Rev. James Moos, W. Mark Clark - The UCC Collegium of Officers*

Interestingly, there are reports of strong support from evangelical Christians for a generous policy for undocumented persons in the United States. The Orange County Register ran an interesting piece on February 3, 2013, entitled [O.C. churches give fresh fuel to immigration reform](#). Here is an excerpt:



It started with disappointment, but it grew to become a national movement.

Five years ago, a group of local evangelical Christian pastors and other faith leaders quietly gathered over breakfast at a Costa Mesa church to talk about an issue many of them had long avoided: immigration.

It was not an auspicious time for such a conversation. A national effort to reform immigration laws by providing a pathway toward citizenship for those living in the U.S. illegally had recently failed amid intense opposition. Hispanic

faith leaders were dejected. Pastors at mostly white congregations were scared of the issue.

And yet the coalition that emerged from that 2008 breakfast, which now numbers 50 evangelical congregations across Orange County, went on to become a national leader in a renewed and, following last year's presidential election, increasingly successful campaign to overhaul America's immigration policies

...

Other churches joined the effort, including Mariners Church in Irvine, one of Orange County's largest churches. Mariners members had been working for decades with immigrants at three community centers founded by the church in Santa Ana and Orange.

Eventually there were 50 churches involved to varying degrees in the Loving the Stranger Network, including Newsong in Irvine, First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton and RockHarbor in Costa Mesa.

One notable absence from the network: Orange County's largest and most influential congregation, Saddleback Church in Lake Forest.

Tim King, a spokesman for the Evangelical Immigration Table, said Saddleback has been invited to join the coalition, "but we have not yet gotten a response." A Saddleback spokeswoman did not respond to requests for comment by phone and e-mail.

King said the organizing effort in Orange County became a model for the national effort. Participants in the Loving the Stranger Network, including de Leon and Mariners senior pastor Kenton Beshore and his wife, Laurie, were invited to organizing meetings and asked for advice about how to educate and organize local pastors.

The national group's organizing efforts in Florida, Texas and Colorado aim to emulate churches' success in Orange County, King said.

[ABC News had a January story](#) on the evangelical position, but from a national point of view, saying in part:

Evangelical leaders representing more than 100,000 churches across the U.S. are backing immigration reform, and they're asking their congregants to do the same.

Calling reform a religious imperative, the Evangelical Immigration Table is asking Christians across the country to engage in 40 days of praying and reading scriptures related to immigrants and immigration, what the groups dub the "[I Was a Stranger](#)" challenge.

"Through this challenge we're connecting with the grassroots Christians," said Noel Castellanos, the CEO of the Christian Community Development Association. "It's the men and women that sit in the pews, and helping them to take The coalition of evangelicals seems determined to make its voice heard in the 2013 immigration reform debate. After President Obama won reelection in November, the group called on him to introduce an immigration bill [within 92 days](#) of taking office. The timeline stems from the number of times the Hebrew word for immigrant, "ger," appears in the Bible.

While the "I Was a Stranger" challenge draws on an old message, the campaign will use social media to help inform congregants. The coalition said its reach extends to more than 850,000 Facebook and Twitter users, and a campaign website features a [downloadable toolkit](#) for churches interested in participating.

The goal is to have Christians -- including politicians involved in the immigration debate -- reflect on what the Bible teaches about immigrants. Bill Hamel, the president of the Evangelical Free Church of America, and one of the leaders involved in the campaign, spoke of immigration as a rights issue.

"I missed the civil rights movement, I watched and did nothing and for decades I have regretted those days," Hamel said. "I'm committed not to sit this one out."

### Ø Food for thought.



# Fellowship

**Second Thursday Potluck.** This informal gathering meets in Plumer hall, starting at 5:45. Participants are asked to bring some light supper item to share.

- Ø No sign-up is necessary: but please bring something to share.
- Ø It's Feb. 14 this month: Valentine's Day!

It's an ideal time for mixing with the choir, many of whom join the potluck for something to eat prior to the choir rehearsal in the sanctuary.

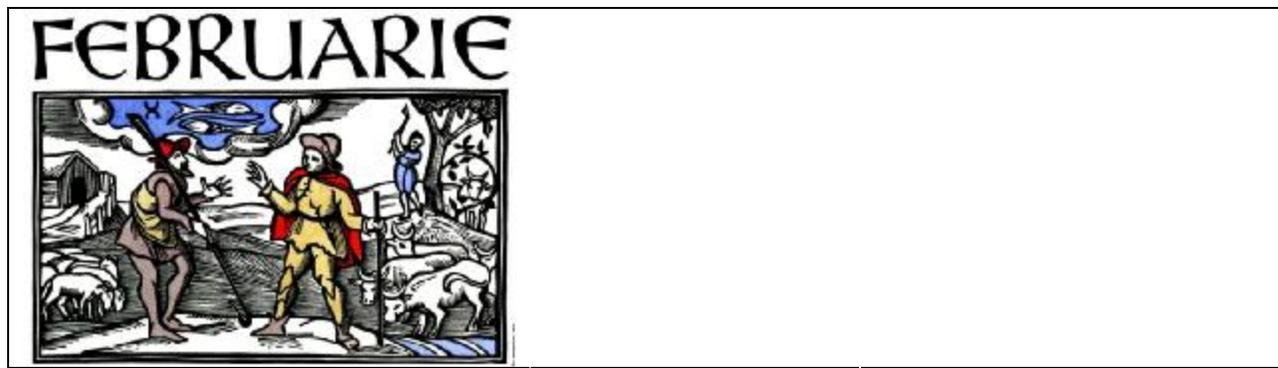
Questions? Lindy Garber: [LMLindy@Cox.net](mailto:LMLindy@Cox.net) (949) 495-1931

## February Birthdays!



Iris Bjorklund  
Carol Cavalier  
Pam Chernoff  
John Emerson  
Annika Evensen  
Vernon Field  
Jim Hamilton  
Brian McComb  
Kris Miaco  
Donna Picard  
Elizabeth  
Rodriguez  
Rachel Sellke  
Lynn Terry





## January / February Photos!



Bill and Paul – Famous Clergy!



Singers!



Baptism!



Two for a Sermon



Kids' Time



A Plaque



## FINANCIAL INFORMATION SNAPSHOT YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2012

	Actual	Budget	Variance Pos. (Neg.)
Net Income(Loss):			
General Fund	\$7,626	(\$869)	\$8,495
Early Childhood Center	(8,440)	1,423	(9,863)
Combined Net Income (Loss)	<u>(\$814)</u>	<u>\$554</u>	<u>(\$1,368)</u>

The year ended on a very strong positive note. Members responded to appeals by Reverend Tellstrom and Moderator Cindy O'Dell to bring pledges current and to make additional gifts during the Christmas season.

As a result of refinancing our long-term debt last July, our total loan payments for the year were \$2,992 less than the amount budgeted. The Administrative Board voted to make an additional principal payment of \$3,000 on our outstanding mortgage in recognition of this saving.

As shown above, the Early Childhood Center had an operating loss of (\$8,440) for the year. Expenses were approximately \$47,000 less than budgeted amounts but total income was under budget by approximately \$57,000, resulting in the negative variance of (\$9,863).

Respectfully submitted,  
Greg Guth  
Treasurer



Powerful Parenting  
Dr. Lorraine Fox

Bullying Part 13: The Journey Continues

I ended our last discussion asking for a “resolution” to take seriously our role as “protectors” with regard to the safety of our children and young people. When I started writing this column many years ago I decided to call it “powerful” parenting to reinforce our responsibilities to use our “power” – or influence – as adults, while raising or helping to raise children to live safe, happy, successful lives.

If they could do it on their own they’d be born full grown, with fully developed bodies and brains, and there would be no need for parents. The Creator had a different design in mind for most species, and most living creatures require at least some amount of time under the tutelage of their parents. Since life for humans tends to be very complex, nature has given us many years to try to get our young ready for the complexities of human existence.



The tools we have for this sometimes overwhelming task are our words and our actions. We – parents and all adults who have contact with children and teens - must use both wisely and consistently to impart the “lessons of life” as far as we understand them. If we are not thoughtful about using these tools to teach our children how to be safe, it doesn’t really matter what else we teach them.

I started the series in January of last year, and feedback I’ve gotten tells me that we should probably keep it up for this year, as current event stories in the news and in the daily lives of many of our children tell us that we have not been addressing the need for safety very well. I personally don’t believe it is only because we sometimes don’t know what to do, but I think we often do know what to do, but are not doing it. The lessons of safety take time and commitment and personal investment in the necessary tasks, and we don’t seem to be willing to do it. Not in our homes, not in our schools, not in our communities, and often not even in our churches. Here at IUCC we like to talk about “living the questions”, but in this case I’d like to suggest that we talk about “living the answers”! It is not a necessary part of life that some people have to hurt others to get their needs met, and thus some people inevitably have to get hurt. This is true of hurting with words or hurting with hands. There are safe ways to live and it is our job to teach them to our children.

In our considerations since we began this series we've considered the facts of the matter and detailed how bullying problems not only persist but seem to be increasing, especially among girls. We've discussed the need to teach children to be careful with words and to acknowledge the harm they can cause. We've outlined personal and behavioral characteristics that increase the chance that a child will be bullied and our need to build in the strength to stand strong against bullies. We've also pondered how kids who feel "weak" in various ways may be tempted to "bully" their way into feeling strong at the expense of others and their own character. We outlined strategies for empowering children, balancing compliance with assertiveness, and creating "operating rules" that do not compromise safety. We've covered the need for adults to impart the importance of "cognitive and emotional control" and taking charge of our own thoughts and feelings. Consistent with our stance of being affirming of differ-



ence we've talked about teaching a tolerance for difference and the need for proximity in our supervision of children of all ages to be sure we know exactly what's going on between our children and their peers. We've reinforced the truth that all behavior makes sense and is directed toward meeting a legitimate need. Children involved in unsafe behavior do not have different needs; they lack the skills to meet them in safe and effective ways. We ended the year reminding our-

selves that one of the greatest acts of love is to pay attention: to what is said, what is not said, and what is done. We'll continue our journey together this year in a spirit of optimism, believing that we can work cooperatively with others who impact the lives of those we love to keep them, and those around them, safe.





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News & Notes  
Irvine United Congregational Church  
4915 Alton Parkway  
Irvine, CA 92604  
[www.iucc.org](http://www.iucc.org)