

April 2017
 www.iucc.org
 Editor: Tricia Aynes

IUCC was well represented at Women For: OC's Great American Write-In on March 18

The event encouraged attendees to write letters and postcards to legislators. More than 50 local organizations (including IUCC's Advocates for Peace & Justice) provided information on some of today's most vital issues. Photos from top left: Felicity Figueroa chaired the event; Brian Pearcy-Schofield staffed the OCEC table; Judy Curry is President of Women For: OC; Marleen Gillespie represented several organizations; Dean Inada networked; Peggy Goetz signed students in; Jim Aynes was there to support; Susan Sayre signed letters; Dave Smith staffed the Advocates table; and the Aynes daughters represented the 45th District Alliance.



Photos by Tricia Aynes

From the Pastor's Desk

the Rev. Dr. Paul Tellström



The culmination of the Lenten season is right around the corner. Palm Sunday will bring a procession led by children waving palms while the church sings, "All Glory, Laud and Honor."

The Rev. Loren McGrail will be with us representing our UCC/DOC Global Ministries. She will take part in worship at both services,

and she will be speaking about our work in Palestine and Israel at a special forum following our second service.

Maundy Thursday will see our church family together in what has slowly grown into a much-loved service. It is entirely different from any other IUCC worship offering. Its tone is intimate, as the choir and congregation gather together in a large rectangle on the sanctuary floor with our long altar table in the center. The music is ethereal.

The Rev. Frank Lyman is both choir member and Methodist Minister, and he will be preaching. Pastor Sarah and I will share in offering Communion and anointing of Oil with Frank. Special readings and congregational singing will round out the 7:00 p.m. service.

If you need a ride, please let us know. This is one of my favorite services. In the creation of an alternative worship space, we are able to bring a more intimate worship experience into our community.

Easter! With more people attending our first service, the availability of parking at Woodbridge Village Association as well as out on Alton Parkway, we should be amply covered.

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..." "The Way" Christians follow is the path of transformation, as well as "the path of personal transformation."

We 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 (you know what those are) and reminds us not to be afraid, but to continue on this path we are walking as a community and as the human race. It is the path of transformation.

These are trying times and they may become even more trying the world over. But, we cannot be afraid. We cannot have a fear of living, wholly, wildly, "loving wastefully" as Bishop Spong said when he visited us.

And what is fear? 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."

Easter reminds us that Jesus lives. As Borg and Crossan tell us, 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.

Blessings,
Pastor Paul



Moderator's Column

by Renae Boyum



Spring is here! After a few months full of glorious rain, the plants are growing and the trees are blooming. Soon Easter will be here and once again as a community of faith we will come together to celebrate new life and rebirth.

April is also the month when the Nominating Committee of IUCC comes together to identify

new leaders for our church. It's a process that involves reaffirming those leaders who want to continue, saying goodbye and thank you to those leaving their positions, searching for leaders to fill the vacant positions, and encouraging and cajoling members to step forward to become leaders of this vibrant, caring church.

The Nominating Committee is made up of the moderator, the chairs of the Administration and Ministry Boards, the chair(s) of the New Member Development Ministry, and Pastor Paul. Thirteen years ago or so, I was approached by Diane Rust, who was then the moderator. She said that the Nominating Committee had identified me as the right person to be the new moderator. Needless to say, I was surprised as I hadn't served on the Administration or Ministries Board, nor had I been a committee chair. I *had* served on the Stewardship Committee and also worked on an IUCC capital campaign, *Free to Soar*, but that was the extent of my involvement at IUCC. Diane told me that they thought I would be the right person for the job -- a very nice compliment -- but this was a job I was not sure I wanted or could adequately fulfill. So I thought about it and talked the idea over with Keith and eventually said "yes." I'm glad I did!

Now many years later I am again the moderator and I'm glad I said yes again! In both times of being moderator there have been a few ideas that I believe in and try to adhere to. First, **beginnings are powerful times**. That idea was true when I was a classroom teacher and it is true as moderator of IUCC. The beginning of a new term, the beginning of a new endeavor, even the beginning of a meeting or gathering allow us to focus on the possibilities and be excited about what lies ahead. At the May 21 Congregational meeting we will hopefully embark on our latest new **beginning** -- breaking ground on buildings

that will enhance our efforts to be a beacon of progressive Christianity.

Another important idea for me is the **"rule" of no surprises**. That sounds pretty basic, but I think it's critical that as leaders we be transparent in what's going to happen and what the expectations are. That means having clear agendas (given out ahead of time), opportunities for input, and explicit statements of hoped for outcomes. This is not always easy to do, but if the rule is adhered to I think everyone feels more committed to the outcome.

The last idea is one I've embraced for a long time -- as a teacher, as president of a teachers' union, as a members of countless committees -- in order to achieve a goal, one has to be **professionally persistent and respectfully relentless**. That's hard to do, but most goals worth achieving take time, patience, persistence, and relentlessness. And if one can be professional and respectful while being persistent and relentless, the process is better for everyone. Good words to live by and lead by!

None of these are original ideas. Nor do I claim that I live and lead by them all of the time. However, if I keep these ideas in the forefront I can be a better leader of this incredible faith community I am so proud to call my church home and family.

I look forward to sharing in the joy of Easter with all of you and I hope that I will have the opportunity to work with you as leaders and members of the multitude of boards, ministries, committees, and task forces here at IUCC!

In faith and community,

Renae



Adult Education

by the Rev. Steve Swope



Adult Education and Programs continue – through April and May, and into the summer! Be sure to take advantage of these opportunities to explore and reinforce your faith.



Adult Sunday School will feature conversations about recent Faith & Works speakers and ideas they might offer for enhancing and sharing a progressive Christian faith. We'll start on April 2 with Rachel Held Evans from September 2015, and on April 9 we'll consider Justin Lee from the Gay Christian Network. Please note: there will be NO Adult Sunday School on Easter, April 16.



on
Palestine/Israel

Advocates for Peace & Justice are hosting a Forum on Palestine/Israel at 12:15 on Sunday, April 9, featuring Rev. Loren McGrail, a UCC/DOC Global Ministries missionary working with the YWCA in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Learn more about her and her work at http://www.globalministries.org/loren_mcgrail.



This is the final month for our Comma Groups for this season, and we'll hold our Wrap-Up Luncheon at 12:15 on Sunday, April 30. Make sure your Comma Group Leader knows if you'll be there, so we can prepare!

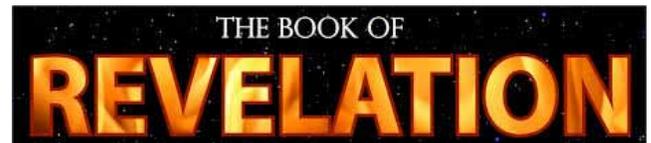
And speaking of Comma Groups, join ours on Earth Day for a Clean-Up at Crystal Cove State Beach! 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 22 – there are lots of tasks for folks of any ability and interest, including painting, weeding, beach clean-up, and sign refurbishment. Sign up – just so we know how many to prepare for – online at www.iucc.org/register.

While you're there, sign up for the annual Women's Retreat at Pilgrim Pines – "Women on the Way: Walking with the Women of Jesus' Journey," led by Rev. Mary Scifres. It happens May 5-7!

Also in May – important for early registration – is a special **Jesus Seminar On the Road**, exploring "The Legacy of the Reformation." This year is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, and Jesus Seminar scholars will

discuss its past and future, as well as sharing new insights into the Apostle Paul. May 19-20 at our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Long Beach. Register online at <https://www.westarinstitute.org/upcoming-events-calendar/longbeach-2017/>.

Here's some info from Ken Wyant about the new topic at Bible Study:



Bible Study on Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m. in Plumer Hall

Tuesday Bible Study is for learning from one another; the fun and fellowship just sort of happen by themselves. We sure don't agree with each other on what the Bible means, so you can add some new perspective--maybe contribute an idea that will pull it all together, or hear an idea that pulls yourself together. Ken Wyant leads the discussion.

We continue under the guidance of Marcus Borg's book, "The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written." On April 4 we will take up Revelation.

We don't use Revelation often at IUCC, but it is right there in the Bible waiting for us to consider its value. Tuesday Bible Study is a good opportunity to learn about what is actually written in Revelation. Many Christians use it for negative purposes, so it's a challenge to see the beauty and grandeur within the story. Revelation may be threatening, but the Bible Study group is good at welcoming.

We usually have from 12 to 20 people around the table, some like to jump right in with their point of view, others like to listen and just put in a question or word of wisdom once in awhile. Many of us go out for a slice and a sip after class.

Join us, drop in once or twice when you can, or make it a regular part of your week. We meet in Plumer Hall, every Tuesday afternoon from 4 to 5:30, then go to Square 1 Pizza. If you can't make the discussion time, we can still save you a seat at Square 1.

Building Project Update

by Anne Rosse, Chair of Building Task Force



In February, we submitted our permit application to the City of Irvine for the first phase of IUCC's Master Plan. With the goal of breaking ground this year, the Building Task Force (BTF) has been hard at work on Phase Ia preconstruction planning.

The City has recently started to provide feedback on our permit application. Since we hope to be ready with permits and bids at the Spring Meeting (on May 21), the BTF is reviewing the City's comments so we can promptly prepare our response.

We're focused on getting this project ready for congregational review and approval, with all preconstruction planning pieces in place, along with the relevant financial information, so this congregation can make an informed decision about breaking ground on this exciting project.

Along with our very skilled architects, domusstudio architecture, we've brought Wieland Corporation onto our preconstruction team as our contractor. They are currently preparing the project's construction budget using the plans that were submitted with our permit application.

We've just completed a comprehensive plan review, discussing everything from the placement of furniture to fixture choices to outlet count to signage. The Administration Board approved several signage recommendations, including having all signs be uniform across the new building and Sanctuary. And, the board also approved several room namings, which we look forward to announcing soon.

In Phase Ia, we will add a single-story structure to our current Sanctuary, bringing much-needed new space to our aging campus. We'll offer an exuberant welcome to the community with a beautiful frontage along Alton Parkway, featuring our voice and mission through Micah 6:8 represented in multiple world languages. A widened

driveway entrance, accessible walkway and new low-water-use landscaping will be inviting to visitors and neighbors alike.

Along with administrative space and staff offices, we'll add three configurable meeting rooms, each with a capacity of 25 people. Moveable sound-proof partitions will allow us to combine two meeting rooms for larger groups or all three meeting rooms into one large space for approximately 80 people. Adjoining the new back patio, one of the meeting rooms may serve as a lovely option for smaller, more intimate worship services. The new coffee corner, outdoor seating and patio will offer gathering places for conversation and fellowship. Once the new building is completed, the

current church office will be remodeled into a new classroom for use by our preschool and Sunday School.

These new indoor and outdoor spaces will reflect our commitment to green faith as well as seamlessly integrate with our

current building, with complementary colors and finishes. A "Samples Board" is currently on display in the Narthex – please stop by and see our proposed color palette and materials.

BTF members represent the congregation and are your eyes/ears/voices for this project. They are: Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Cindy O'Dell, Jim Raver, Anne Rosse (chair), Pat Sauter, Michael Spindle and Pastor Paul. These hardworking folks are doing a fantastic job on behalf of the IUCC congregation and their efforts are deeply appreciated!

For more information, please contact any BTF member or email btfchair@iucc.org.



Youth Photos

Courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips



Capital Campaign Update

by Anne Rosse

At the Spring Meeting (on May 21), we anticipate presenting Phase Ia construction for congregational review, asking for your approval to move forward with ground breaking.

Because of your generous capital campaign support, this first phase can begin to transform our aging church campus in important ways, bringing us another step closer to a campus that supports our commitment to nurture tomorrow's leaders and follow Christ's teachings to love and care for our neighbors, be good stewards of our environment and live in peace. Thank you!

Between now and the Spring Meeting, here's what you can do to help:

- If you haven't joined your church family in supporting this project, we invite you to do so. We welcome new pledges at any time. We are still actively fundraising and would love to have your support!
- If you have pledged, please continue to make your pledge payments. The more construction funds on hand, the better options we will have.
- If you've completed your pledge and find yourself able to give us just a little more, we would be grateful.

The Administration Board recently approved several room namings in the new building and we look forward to announcing those soon. We also plan to honor and thank everyone who pledged to the campaign. We'll be listing names and dedications (for those who included a dedication with their pledge) but absolutely no giving levels will be listed. We will only publish your name(s) if you have given us permission to do so.

Campaign pledges are payable over three years (through July 31, 2019). For those who can, we would deeply appreciate pledge completion as quickly as possible. Being able to collect most campaign pledges by the time construction of the new building is done (projected to be in Summer 2018) will help IUCC stay financially strong.

When submitting a paper or electronic check, please note "building" on the memo line. When submitting a check that includes both your annual offering ("stewardship") and campaign pledge ("building"), please also indicate the split on the memo line. These actions will make sure we are applying your gift correctly. For pledge payments that involve the transfer of stocks or securities, or if you are doing an IRA distribution, please contact the Church Office.

For questions, assistance with your pledge or to learn more about this exciting project, please contact capitalcampaign@iucc.org.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES



Palm Sunday
9:30 and 11 a.m.
April 9



Maundy Thursday
7 p.m. on April 13



Easter Sunday
9:30 and 11 a.m.
on April 16



We love to share our IUCC family story with others, and so you'll see a lot of photos and videos being taken and shared in many ways. If you don't want your image used in our story telling, please turn in a Media Opt Out form, which is available through our church office by calling us at 949-733-0220 or by e-mailing us at iucc@iucc.org.
Thank you!



GreenFaith Team
Committed to Environmental Justice



What does love have to do with it?

Forbes magazine published an article suggesting that churches have a unique and powerful contribution to make in the struggle to address climate change. Author Jeff McMahan wrote that marriage equality seemed almost impossible until it began to be adopted state after state, building momentum, and finally becoming the law of the land. (“How Gay Marriage Suggests a Strategy for Climate Change”) What can we learn from this?

David Hochschild, the environmental commissioner for the California Energy Commission, contends, “I think there’s actually some lessons for the climate movement in what happened with marriage equality, because they framed the movement in terms of love: government has no place to get between two people who love each other.” He adds, “I actually think climate change is the same thing. It’s about loving the next generation.”

Our UCC Minister for Environmental Justice, Brooks Berndt, agrees, adding that as Christians we frequently root our sense of calling in love. Our love of children is a strong motivator in addressing the damage done to our climate. “We care about the environment they inhabit, and we care about the future they will inherit from our actions today. Churches know how to speak of love. It is the grounds of our theology, purpose, and passion....We should be at the forefront of the climate movement.”

Here at IUCC, we want input from all members and friends who feel a commitment to the climate movement. Therefore, your GREENfaith team is providing a questionnaire in the form of a bulletin insert on two Sundays, April 23 and 30. Please respond to the two questions and hand the form to a GREENfaith member on the patio following the service. Comma Groups will also have these forms for the April meetings.

To stimulate your thinking, the questions are the following:

1. What can IUCC do about climate change? (education, worship services, administration, congregational events, transportation, buildings, grounds, etc.)
2. What can you do about climate change? (your home, landscape, transportation, volunteer services, work for public policies that lead to creation justice, etc.)

This information will be of value to us as we apply for the designation of a Creation Justice congregation. Such a designation means we dedicate our church and ourselves to the ongoing commitment and work of addressing climate change.



At the IUCC Annual Meeting, May 21, the congregation will be asked to consider and vote on a Creation Justice Covenant which will be submitted to the UCC. For your information, the following draft is provided. It may be modified before the meeting but gives you the general tone:

“In affirming the divine gifts of creation and in affirming our connection to God, each other, and the world around us, we unconditionally commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to the intertwined responsibilities of caring for creation and seeking justice for the oppressed. With purposeful resolve, we commit ourselves with an awareness of how the abuses of creation inevitably cause human suffering and of how factors such as race, class, and global inequality inevitably cause some to suffer more than others. Furthermore, as humanity confronts the current and future crisis of damage to our climate, we commit ourselves with an urgent sense of calling. We desire that these deeply felt commitments be reflected in all the dimensions of our congregation’s life. We desire that we launch ourselves beyond the walls of this church to make good on our promises to God our Creator, to Jesus the Redeemer of Creation, and to the Holy Spirit the Sustainer of Creation.”



Two dates to remember: Orange County’s People’s Climate March begins at IUCC on Saturday, April 29, at 2 p.m. Earth Sunday at IUCC is April 30th.

Every Day is Earth Day,
Vivian Johnson

(GREENfaith team: Judy Curry, Tony Dover, Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, Eileen Vincent, and Vivian Johnson, chair)



Miss Lily's Green Tips



Dear Readers,

April showers bring May flowers, or so my niece, Iris, believes. She cherishes water and coaxes our creek to become a stream.

After the winter rains, we feel confident that we have enough water. That is not true. Water is finite. We need to use it wisely.

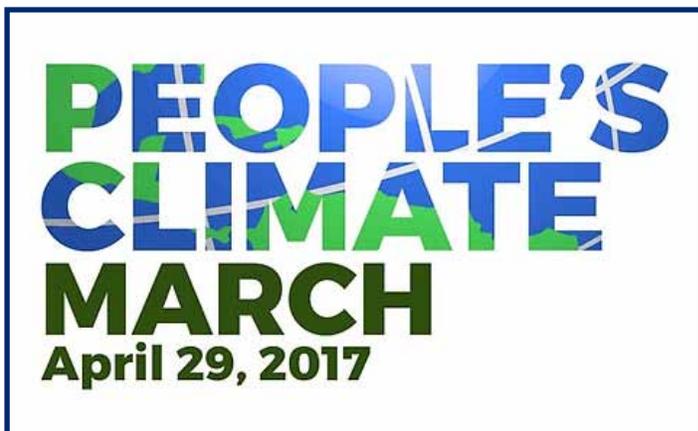
My niece waters her petunias, pansies, and bell peppers with a bucket she keeps in the shower. It is purposeful recycling.

Please pray for water. Please respect it. Please use it tenderly.

Much love,
Miss Lily



GreenFaith Events



Come join us for the Orange County march in support of the PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH taking place in DC and other US cities on April 29.

PLEASE RSVP here: <http://bit.ly/2mrtNUZ>

PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH - ORANGE COUNTY
Saturday April 29, 2017, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Irvine United Congregational Church
4915 Alton Pkwy, Irvine, CA 92604

The march will begin at IUCC and proceed up Alton to the intersection with Culver.

An additional morning program will also take place at IUCC and is FREE (includes lunch) and open to the public.

“Crises in the Ocean: How Compassionate Action Benefits Us All” featuring Gene Baur, Jonathan Balcombe and Kate Mackey (and a vegan cooking demo by Joni Marie Newman): Register to attend “Crises in the Ocean” here:

9 <http://bit.ly/2mp259F>

News & Events



Women's Fellowship

Wednesday * April 5, 2017

6:30 p.m. * Plumer Hall

Women's Fellowship will meet in Plumer Hall on April 5th at 6:30 p.m. Bring a salad bar ingredient-greens and dessert will be provided. Sign up on the patio. Questions can be sent to Pat Sauter at p.sauter@flash.nety.



Advocates Forum

Sunday * April 9, 2017

12:15 p.m.* Plumer Hall

The advocates for Peace & Justice will host Loren McGrail as their guest speaker. Loren has been appointed jointly by the Common Global Ministries Board of the Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ to serve a four-year term with the YWCA of Palestine. Loren will serve under the supervision of the National General Secretary of the YWCA of Palestine. Some of her duties will include identifying international partners, trust funds, and other relevant sources of funding and support, expanding church relations, especially with churches in the U.S., and with the young people in the church, help with the preparation of a multi-year fundraising strategy, as well as annual fundraising plan.



A New Approach to Coffee Hour

Groups of volunteers may still sign up for doing it all (as done up until now) dividing food, set up and clean up among the group. Now, for those who can't do it all, the choice can be made between "doing it" or donating. The donations can be in the form of \$\$\$ (dollars) or "doughnuts." There will be appropriate sign up lists, so people can choose the Sundays for which they are volunteering and we can know if enough refreshments will be donated or need to be purchased. Sign up sheets are on the patio for the next quarter, including Palm Sunday, April 9, and Easter, April 16. We need everyone's help to make this important part of our Sundays happen.



IUCC Annual Women's Retreat at Pilgrim Pines

Friday afternoon May 5 - Sunday morning May 7, 2017

Women on the Way

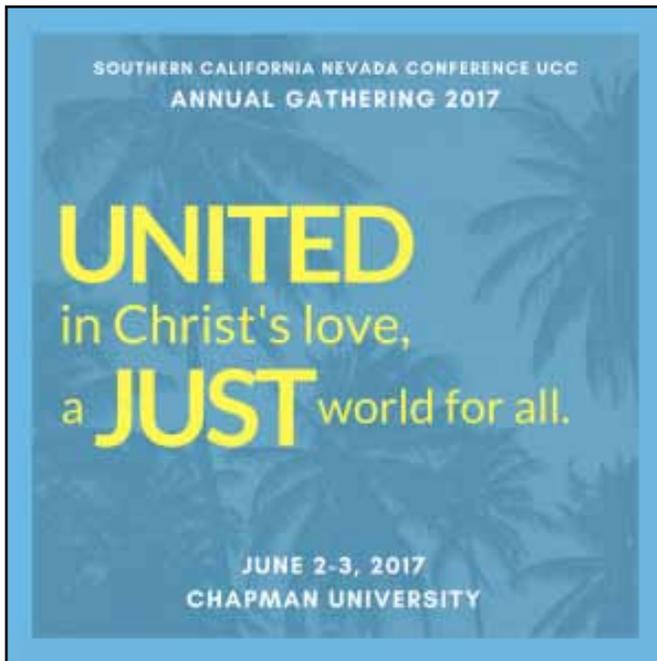
Walking with the Women of Jesus' Journey

Our facilitator, the Rev. Mary Scifres, will incorporate music, art, drama and conversation to encourage a creative journey into the stories of Jesus and the women scripture places in the Jesus story. We will explore the women who traveled with Jesus (Mary the listener, Martha the worker, Mary the disciple, Mary the mother, unnamed mothers-in-law, unnamed sister and other disciples) and use them to give us bread for the journey, food for the soul, and strength for the body. If you want to request a specific woman's story to be included let Mary know at maryscifres@gmail.com, and she will integrate that story into the retreat plan.

We will share time in a variety of ways: eating together, participating in both large group structured activities under Mary's leadership, and small group interest activities such as hiking, yoga, guided meditation, bird/nature walking, journaling, open, structured small group conversation, puzzles, knitting and needlework, labyrinth walking.

As always, reasonably priced massages will be available throughout the weekend. Register online (IUCC.org/register), or on the patio. \$140 flat fee.





IUCC Music Ministry

by Joni Baker

These last few weeks we have enjoyed having our finalists for the accompanist position play for choir rehearsal and services. An accompanist greatly impacts the quality of the worship experience at IUCC. We have been truly blessed to have so many worthy candidates. It will be a difficult decision, and we thank you for your feedback. We hope to make a final decision and have our new accompanist in place this month.

Please join the Chancel Choir on April 13th at 7:00 for Maundy Thursday service. I love this reverent, reflective, even somber service leading into the joy of the resurrection on Easter morning. This year we have something special for Easter services. Instead of the usual brass, we will have the sweet sonority of a string quartet. We think you will really enjoy the varied music styles, from Handel's Messiah to contemporary.

Before your Easter lilies wilt, we will begin working harder than ever on the music for our Spring Concert in June. Mark your calendars for June 11th and join us. This year we are preparing a concert of all female composers, and poetry readings of female poets. We trust you will enjoy the wide range of styles.

Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. He will be participating in worship where he will be the keynote speaker on Saturday morning. Registration will be available soon.



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|----------------------|----------------------|
| 4/22 Betty Billings | 4/07 Lee KeslerWest |
| 4/01 Joanie Burley | 4/21 Dale Lang |
| 4/01 Jim Carse | 4/15 Connor McDonald |
| 4/29 Natasha Dahline | 4/07 Jennifer Mirmak |
| 4/17 David Deshler | 4/22 Steve O'Dell |
| 4/19 Janice Gately | 4/18 Jim Raver |
| 4/13 Dick Henderson | 4/07 Paul Tellstrom |
| 4/29 Linda Hidy | 4/30 Mark Willcox |
| 4/15 Janice Johnson | 4/28 Ellen Woolfson |



Baby Boomers & the Blues



Dr. Marie Trout

“Baby boomers are the most powerful and wealthy generation in history (particularly white baby boomers),” said Marie Trout. “We are also the most influential generation. So why aren’t we happy? Seven in ten suicides are committed by white middle-aged males. We have the highest use of opioids in history. Although we have a good life, there is a significant amount of emotional pain that is difficult to pinpoint. Why the imbalance?”

As part of our ongoing Midweek Salon series on March 8, longtime IUCC member Dr. Marie Trout spoke about her research into why so many baby boomers love the blues. Her talk was riveting, enlightening and insightful.

She explained that when she looked out at the audience at husband Walter’s blues concerts, she saw mostly white male baby boomers. She asked herself “What is the relevance of this music (the blues) to this audience? Why are so many blues fans today white and middle-aged?” In an effort to answer this question, she sent out an anonymous survey to blues fans and got over 1000 responses. She followed up with individual interviews with random respondents. 96% of respondents were white, and 85% were baby boomers.

“A clear picture emerged quickly,” she said. “They were quick to talk about how lucky they were, but without fail, a lot of dissatisfaction with our culture was also oozing out. They felt disconnected from each other. They felt politicians couldn’t be trusted.” When she asked what the significance of blues music was to them, they said “[listening to it] made their whole mood change and they would be lifted.”

She found that the relevance of the blues was that it satisfied four things that were often missing in our culture – four things that could be summarized by the acronym “FACE”:

Fun: “The kind of fun that happens when you feel restored afterwards – play time for adults. We can forget time and place and think more creatively.”

Authenticity: “Something that’s real, not pretentious, telling it like it is - an emotionally transparent method.”

Connection: “A sense of resonance connecting us to others, our common experience, our blues ancestors, and a spiritual

aspect. When we go to a blues concert, the catharsis is not individual, it is shared.”

Escape: “Escape from dreariness to a sort of trance - almost an altered state of awareness - that is very restorative.”

“Lots of influences shaped the [blues] form,” Marie said. “There is some evidence that a rudimentary part of the blues came even before blacks left Africa. It was injected by influences from Muslim traders into the traditions of their tribes, then explored and changed through cultural influences both before, and certainly after, being brought to America. Here it was mixed with many influences: church, folk, classical, military styles of music. In 1903, W.C. Handy heard this expressive sound from a street musician and thought it was extraordinary. He coined the term ‘the blues.’ In 1895, during a stay in the U.S., Czech composer Antonín Leopold Dvořák mentioned that he thought the ‘Plantation Songs’ were the only really *original* American music.

“Today, blues audiences are primarily white and it is clear that we owe a tremendous debt to the African American people who originated the genre. The black community has moved on to many other genres, perhaps because the blues became associated with a time of much pain, danger, and oppression. There are, however, musicians of color who are embracing it today, who find vibrant connection to the survival stories of their people in it.”

“Musical taste is as individual as we are.” she says. “The blues is a repetitive three chord structure – rhythmically simple to play, but it is exceedingly complex to get it right.”

“Growing up, I was used to being in my head, so music that could bring me into a more visceral understanding was great,” she said. Over the years, her interaction with blues masters has taught her to be more real. She realizes that she was often “trying to project a Thomas Kinkade painting while feeling like a Jackson Pollack painting on the inside.”

Marie’s book, *THE BLUES – WHY IT STILL HURTS SO GOOD* is available for purchase on Amazon. All proceeds are donated to HART (Handy Artists Relief Trust), which provides funding for blues musicians and their families in medical need.

~ Photos and article by
Tricia Aynes



Marie signs a copy of her book for
Jim Aynes

Powerful Parenting

Dr. Lorraine Fox

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED - TRY, TRY AGAIN



Our last few columns have been about using “feedback” to help someone become more aware of how they are perceived by others. The less people “know” themselves, the harder it is to understand why people respond to them as they do. Thus, we have been framing feedback as a very important “gift” to give our children, and others we care about. We have reviewed

seven “conditions” to follow that will allow a person to hear and accept feedback more easily. This month we will consider the eighth, and final, “condition.” **Do not continue to give feedback to someone who behaves unreasonably.**

It is very hard for many people to hear information about themselves about which they are either unaware or misguided. Because of this conflict between what they think is true about themselves and what they are hearing, many, if not most, people become “defensive.” A person’s “defenses” arise when their internal system experiences one of four feelings: Anxiety; Fear; Guilt; Shame.

We have all been taught to behave in certain ways. When we are told that we are behaving in a way that isn’t “right,” according to what we “should” be doing, our system tries to come up with a justification for acting like we do. This justification is meant to ease our feelings of anxiety, fear, guilt or shame.

We’ve all heard the names of the many possible defense mechanisms used by people, including ourselves, when confronted with “unacceptable” actions. There are a boatload (17) of possible defenses. Some of the more common defenses are: denial (refusing to accept the feedback as true); minimization (telling ourselves it’s not a big deal); rationalization (telling ourselves there is a good reason for our behavior); and projection (blaming someone else for our behavior).

When we encounter defensive responses to feedback we are giving, we often become very annoyed, and say things like: “You’re being defensive; There’s no need to become

so defensive,” etc. Here is the most important lesson about defensive behavior: **Defensive behavior is never meant for other people.** When we are defensive we are not justifying our behavior to other people; we are justifying our behavior to ourselves.

In defensive mode we often display very strong emotional reactions, which are often very effective in that they keep us from being able to “hear” (accept) what we are being told about ourselves. Some people become furious. Some people break out in tears. Some people become “icy” and impervious. Some people either want to run away, or do run away. Some people try to turn the conversation around and make it about the person who is giving the feedback. **Do not continue giving feedback to a person who can no longer hear you.** (Don’t talk to a person about their drinking when they are drunk.)

We talked last month about why it is so important to give children good information about themselves while they are still young. Children want to be approved of, and when we give them feedback that makes them feel disapproved of, the feelings of anxiety, fear, guilt, etc. come up. So they deny that they did what we are telling them they did (that’s not true). Or they blame someone else (she started it). Or they rationalize (I thought you wanted me to do it this way). But with self-knowledge, we become less defensive and more willing to acknowledge the behavior habits we’ve become familiar with.

Giving feedback to adults who have poor self-knowledge can take weeks, months, or years before they can accept what is true about their behavior. Some never do acknowledge what is true. **Defensive behavior is used because it works.** It spares us from looking at parts of ourselves that are embarrassing. Unfortunately, it also keeps us from making the changes that would help us get along better with others.

We put up with defensive behavior from others because we love them, and because we want them to understand how they affect us and others. When someone becomes defensive, we want to do two things: 1. Remind ourselves that it is not about us; and 2. Wait for the behavior to surface again and provide more feedback. We’ve got time. A gift can always be given; it may take a while until it is accepted.

Cramming for the Finals - New Ways of Looking at Old Church Ideas

PC at IUCC: A monthly peek at some Progressive Christian thinking by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

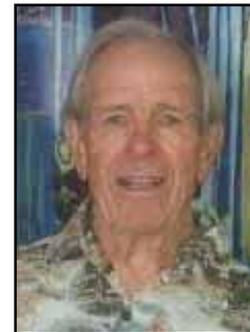
CRAMMING for the FINALS - New Ways of Looking at Old Church Ideas (published by Summit Run Press) is due out in May 2017.

This is my fourth book, all about being a Progressive Christian in the 20th and 21st centuries. This journey started in October 1958 when a fire engine broadsided my close Marine and seminary friend, Brad Allen. He died, but I lived. The theistic god also “died” for me that day. My first book, *“Let Us Pray”* (1980s) tried to explain “godless” prayer.” I didn’t do a very good job with that idea. I hope no one ever finds a copy. In 1998, I gave it another shot with, *“How to Get to Heaven Without Going to Church.”* It did rather well, even though many people were disappointed that I didn’t give an “answer” to the title. Ten years later, I wrote, *“What’s Love Got to Do with It? ... ‘Everything’ Says Jesus.”* I really liked that book but it didn’t market well. I hired the wrong person to help me. My only hope of having it go big was that Tina Turner would sue me for “borrowing” the title of her song without permission, but that didn’t happen. I still like the content. It’s about putting agape into action in our daily lives.

Then a strange thing happened. I found out (it’s quite a story) that a Roman Catholic priest in Carol Stream was using my book for one of his adult education classes. I had to call Fr. Tom and ask him if this was true and remind him that he could be defrocked by the Pope. That began a close friendship with a wonderful human being. We talked every two weeks and I even went to visit him on his turf. Tom had diabetes and on April 2, 2011, he keeled over from a massive heart attack. Annie and I flew back for the celebration of his life and we celebrated it along with over 2,000 other people. On the way home, I said to Annie. “I want to write a book and dedicate it to Tom.” So here we are six years later, my dream had become a reality and in May 2017 *“Cramming...”* will go on the market.

Before I sign off, let me share a fun story. Early last fall, I turned my manuscript over to my editor and she shared the information with one of her staff. When the woman heard the title, she said, “College kids will love this book, right before finals.” My editor then demanded a subtitle, so we came up with **“New Ways of Looking at Old Church Ideas,”** which immediately took the book out of college bookstores. I was sort of sorry. I think I could have sold thousands.

In a nutshell, here is what *“Cramming...”* is about: My whole life, every part of my mind, body, spirit is in constant flux. It changes daily. This also needs to happen to our faith. I spent the first chapter sharing the impact of the motorcycle accident (and there were all sorts of ways that happened), my life in the Marines, seminary, marriage to Annie, being fired from two churches, having a daughter who is multi-challenged, our travels and on-and-on. My theology has grown with my life experiences so that the “Sunday School theology” of my teenage years has become one that has promoted the theistic god of my childhood into becoming the Creation of the universe. At the same time, I have altered my view of Jesus to be the prophet sage that he really was and have found that his agape way of life and living has made my life rich and most fulfilling. I have lived with this approach for the past ten years, and the outdated dogma and doctrine has been brushed aside and my “christ” (guru) is this Jesus man who has given me unbelievable tools to keep moving my life forward.



My book, about 150 packed pages, shares my findings. It also shares how important my being a member of IUCC has been in our growth and development.

We are ever so grateful to Fred Plumer, who, in a phone call about another matter years ago, asked me where we were going to church and I confessed “St. Mattress” and he suggested Annie and I try IUCC. We came the next Sunday and nine years later, we’re still here because we know that this church family is our spiritual (meaning authentic) home. More about the wanderings of a PC in the May issue.

