

August 2016
www.iucc.org
Editor: Tricia Aynes

IUCC sponsored a Candlelight Vigil for Peace on July 10

Photos by Tricia Aynes



From the Pastor's Desk

the Rev. Dr. Paul Tellström



Although I don't make up "good camper material," I love being at Pilgrim Pines up at Oak Glen, just above Yucaipa. At the end of the day, I head about 40 miles "up the hill," as they say, to our cabin at the east end of Big Bear, and return when it is time.

Pilgrim Pines is our UCC Conference Camp, and it is available to us for calendared events such as the weekly summer camp that is just finishing up, and "Family Camp" in the fall. Our Women's Retreat (usually some thirty women strong) heads up there every year in May. There are pastors' retreats as well, and you can make up your own retreat if you like, as long as the calendar is free.

IUCC is very good at giving scholarships so that none of our kids are left behind. We can have anywhere from a small handful to a dozen or so of us up there with kids from other UCC churches. I am noticing more and more that slots are available for kids from other traditions also.

Adults and kids with developmental disabilities (known as "Pinesters" and "Seedlings") are also at camp. Through our Conference, we support group homes, which are known collectively as "Peppermint Ridge." These folks join in fully at camp and in a very short while, under some incredible leadership from the staff and volunteers at Pilgrim Pines, the kids from various churches and the Pinesters and Seedlings become fully socially integrated.

My favorite night at camp is the Pinesters' Dance on Wednesday. I usually leave the office in Irvine in the early afternoon in order to get there for dinner with our own kids. Last year, I brought enough bubble wands for just our young people, so this year, I left early to hit up Target stores along the way to find as many bubble-wands as I could get for the whole camp.

After dinner, the camp adjourned to Vespers Point for a worship service followed by Communion, led by these beautiful souls, the Pinesters and Seedlings. Some of them were a little nervous, but they took the serving of the bread and the cup seriously, as I have watched them do for many years now.

Then it was down the hill and to the dance in their name and in their honor. It was an emotional experience watching all of these kids and people with developmental disabilities dancing together to the Monkees' "I'm a Believer."

I watched the dance floor open up, remembering being 11 or 12 when the song came out. This time, however, girls grabbed boys by the hand to dance, never thinking about race. A straight teen grabbed a gay teen's hand and pulled him to the floor to dance. Adults and youth with developmental disabilities were the chosen ones by all of the teens as partners in the dance, and joy rose with innumerable soap bubbles in the lightness of movement devoid of the daily issues in our country that weigh us back to earth. Once again this year, I watched and found myself silently tearing up as I saw what could be in the dance before me. They have no idea how impossible this scene would have been 50 years ago.

I'm a Believer - it is what our music provided a frame for in 1966, but our culture could not catch up with until now, here, in this small pocket of children and special adults - a glimmer of hope in a world hell bent on killing each other through terror and fear. Tonight was a snapshot of what the Kin-dom of God might look like through the eyes of those who will someday lead us. And so I will continue to show up with the silly extravagance of soap bubbles for their dance.





Adult Education News

by the Rev. Steve Swope

Adult Sunday School

The Adult Sunday School discussion on Islam will conclude on August 7; discussion has been informed by “The Jesus Fatwah: Love Your (Muslim) Neighbor as Yourself” (a *Living the Questions* resource). The remaining Sundays in August will focus on free speech (August 14) and race (August 21 & 28).



Comma Groups for 2016-17

74 people have already signed up for the next session of Comma Groups, but there’s plenty of time, and room, for YOU! Comma Groups are a way to connect more genuinely with other IUCC members, and talk about issues that are important to you and our church.

Comma Groups meet once a month from October through April, at a time and place that’s convenient for those involved. An experienced leader helps you stay in touch with each other’s lives and talk about the month’s topic.

This year IUCC is looking into what it means to be a Creation Justice Church, and our Comma Groups will help us figure that out – by considering the many topics involved in “creation justice” including race and poverty, world crises, agriculture and food production, and consumerism.

Join a Comma Group, get to know your fellow IUCC members, and help your church explore a new stage in living faithfully in the world! www.iucc.org/register.



Midweek Salon returns on September 14

The next Midweek Salon will feature IUCC member and UCI professor Scott Bollens.



Scott recently spent several months in the troubled cities of Jerusalem and Belfast, interviewing residents and photo-documenting the conflicts there. Scott will share his experiences and pictures and talk about how reality and politics intersect. You won’t want to miss it – join us at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 14!



2nd Annual Faith & Works Conference

Faith & Works will take place September 23-24 (Friday & Saturday). This year’s speaker will help wrap up our 25th anniversary celebration of being Open And Affirming, as we consider how to live that identity into the future.

Keynote speaker Justin Lee founded the Gay Christian Network (www.gaychristian.net) and has spoken nationally. He wrote *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate* to tell his own story of growing up Southern Baptist, coming out, and working with others who are gay and Christian. He will speak on Friday evening and Saturday morning.

This year we have the privilege of screening a new documentary film, *Take Me Away*, the story of country singer Chely Wright’s coming out and its aftermath. We are also planning an AIDS Quilt exhibit for Saturday.

We will begin taking Conference registrations this month – make sure you reserve your place early!

Other Events

Join University Synagogue at 12:15 p.m. on Monday, August 22 to hear Prof. Eric H. Cline present “Raiders of the Faux Ark: From Noah’s Ark to the Ark of the Covenant and Beyond.”

Renowned Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann will deliver the 2016 Stern Lecture at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church in Pacific Palisades on August 26 & 27. More information can be obtained at www.stmatthews.com.

The Jesus Seminar on the Road comes to Redlands UCC on September 16-17, with “The Secular Gospel of Jesus.” You can find more information, and register, at www.westarinstitute.org/upcoming-events-calendar/redlands-2016/. We consider how to live that identity into the future.

Moderator's Column

by Renae Boyum



One of the great joys of being moderator is the opportunity to plan, lead, and participate in the IUCC Leadership retreat. It is a weekend of fun, food, fellowship, faith, and dreaming and planning about the future of this vibrant community I proudly call my church home and family.

Pastor Paul, Ken Wyant (chair of the Ministries Board), Dave Schofield (chair of the Admin-

istration Board), and I began planning with the Reverend Mary Scifres (our retreat facilitator) in June, and had several conversations about a theme based around our goal of community building. After much discussion, we hit on the idea of “groundbreaking,” not just in the physical sense but in a spiritual and figurative way. IUCC has been a *groundbreaker* as we strive to be a *Just Peace* congregation, a *Global Mission* church, an *Open and Affirming* faith community, and perhaps soon, a *Creation Justice* church here in our corner of the world - and also beyond. We wanted our leaders to discuss, dream, and plan around who we say we are. So, *groundbreaking* became the theme.

As usual, we began the weekend with an evening potluck in the back yard of our home. On perhaps the warmest night of the year, outgoing and incoming leaders and their guests gathered to “do community.” Food was shared, drinks were poured, and conversation flowed.

On Saturday morning, our newly elected leaders gathered in Plumer Hall to begin thinking about the *groundbreaking* theme. Pastor Sarah lead us in a centering exercise with these words by singer, Carrie Newcomer, playing in the background.

*So today I'll drop stones into the river
And the current takes them out into forever
And the truth is most of us will never know
Where our best intentions go
And still I'll drop another stone*

With this powerful image, Mary Scifres began by asking us to think about and share strengths and successes of our Ministry Focal Points: *Open and Affirming*, *Just Peace*, *Global Mission*, and a future *Creation Justice* emphasis. Vigils, letter writing, mission trips, educational seminars, and speakers were just a few things mentioned. We literally filled pages of paper with our lists!

Next, it was time to think about our future Groundbreaking ideas and programs. We dreamed big - what will be our impact by 2021 - what will our successes be and how will they impact the world beyond us. But after dreaming, we spent some serious time and energy in small groups working on specific plans for the next year or so for our *Open*

and Affirming, *Just Peace*, *Global Mission*, and future *Creation Justice* emphases. In small groups we worked on responses to this prompt:

What additional ministries and programs would you plan if you had no limits? *For each program, real or imagined, answers these questions about resources:* How many people are needed to organize and /or

lead? How much money? How much time? How many people could participate and/or be served and impacted? What are the challenges or obstacles and how can we address them to succeed?

Mary reminded us that in order to do all of these things we have to recognize that this *groundbreaking* will not be easy because it involves changes. She also reminded us that change only happens through having three keys in place: We must **RELATE** - lead change through relationships; **REFRAME** - learn and master new skills which lead to new attitudes; and **REPEAT** - focus on our new vision constantly.

We ended our leadership weekend with a wonderful Sunday morning sermon from Mary about the power of love and hope and what a *groundbreaking* place IUCC is! Mary is pictured above between Pastor Paul and Steve Swope (thanks to Nancy Dreckman for the photo!). I look forward to putting our dreams into actions over the coming weeks and months!

In Faith and Community,

Renae

IUCC-sponsored Boy Scout Troop 602

These photos of Troop 602's week at Lost Valley Scout Reservation (June 26th-July 2nd) were submitted by Matt Mirmak and provided courtesy of Ken and Stacey Steinhart.





Campaign Update

Anne Rosse, Chair

IUCC completed the active phase of our campaign with \$1.25 million in pledges. While we fell short of our \$1.5 million goal, this is the most successful fundraising campaign that IUCC has ever undertaken. So, thank you for your generosity!

While we've "closed" the campaign books for now, we know that there are folks who may still want to submit a new or amended pledge. If so, please contact one of our friendly campaign volunteers or email capitalcampaign@iucc.org.

We are looking ahead to our Special Congregational Meeting on September 11 and hope you are making plans to join us for this important meeting. We will decide – as a congregation – how we want to proceed with this project.

Over the summer, a group of dedicated IUCC members are looking carefully at a number of key topics, including the best options for financing and building this project along with managing any new debt. The group recently met with our architects, domusstudio architecture, to solicit their input and counsel.

This group will present its findings and recommendations to the Admin Board in mid-August and, pending board approval, looks forward to sharing this information with the congregation at the Special Meeting as well as through forums and bulletin/newsletter articles.

Tremendous gratitude and appreciation to Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Cindy O'Dell, Anne Rosse (chair), Ron Steiner and Pastor Paul for the commitment, wisdom and expertise they are bringing to this crucial work.

Until a decision is made on September 11 about how exactly IUCC wants to proceed with this project, we respectfully ask that you do not make any payments toward your pledge. If you have already submitted a check for your campaign gift, we will be holding those checks until after the Special Congregational Meeting. Once a decision is made, we will be sure to share information promptly about next steps.

By using United Church of Christ Capital Campaign Services, not only did we benefit from their extensive resources and the wise counsel of the Rev. Priscilla Bizer, but IUCC was able to participate in their "gifted" fees program. Once our contract fees are paid (we'll soon start making 12 monthly payments), 70% of our fees will be distributed for philanthropic purposes. 35% will be distributed to Our Churches Wider Mission, with 17.5% each going to two IUCC-designated recipients. The Admin Board has designated Family Promise and Pilgrim Pines as our recipients and each organization will receive more than \$8000. What a fabulous way for us to support these treasured entities!

Thank you again, IUCC, for generously embracing our future – for taking a step forward in faith to bring essential new space to our aging church campus. This new space will substantially improve our ability to live out our mission and ministry while beginning to transform this campus in very important ways. Thank you for generously supporting our efforts to become the church that God is calling us to be, one that offers abundant and inclusive welcome, that nurtures tomorrow's peacemakers, and follows the teachings of Jesus Christ to love and care for our neighbors and planet.





Green Faith Team

Committed to Environmental Justice



BECOMING A "CREATION JUSTICE" CHURCH

"We must always keep both eyes open: one eye on the world's suffering so that we can fight against it, and the other on its wondrous beauty so that we can give thanks for it." (Abbe' Pierre, French Catholic Priest)

The above was quoted by Brooks Brendt, the UCC director of Creation Justice, who finds the words helpful when engaging in the work of environmental justice. I agree. By keeping an eye open to the beauty around us, we are **sustained** in this ministry. We must also keep an eye on the earth's suffering to **fight** for its survival. This is a difficult ministry because we are up against those who do not agree that climate change is a legitimate crisis.

Currently, your GREENfaith team is ready for the challenge. We are excited to begin our focus on the steps needed to become a "Creation Justice" church as outlined by the UCC. There are four dimensions to fulfill. (The italics indicate actions in process.)

1. Theology and Worship: How can our congregation intentionally reflect upon God in relationship to caring for creation? How can it bring theological understandings of creation care and justice into its services of worship? *Sunday, September 18, is GREENfaith Sunday at IUCC. Following the services, the congregational picnic will afford an opportunity to enjoy God's creation. In April, we will once again have Earth Sunday.*

2. Institutional Life and Practice: How can our congregation integrate care for creation into the life and work of its ministry teams, committees, and governing council? How can our congregation embody care for creation through its building and land use policies and practices? *This autumn, members of the GREENfaith team will meet with the various ministries and committees of IUCC to determine how the above dimensions can be fulfilled. Following that, we will draft a Creation Justice covenant to present to the congregation to be ratified by a congregational vote. Such a procedure ensures a greater ownership and participation on the part of the congregation as a whole. Finally, an application to become a Creation Justice Church will be submitted to the UCC. Once a church receives that recognition, it is the responsibility*

of the church to maintain environmental justice as a core part of its DNA.

3. Circles of Awareness and Advocacy: With particular attention to socioeconomic factors such as race, class, and global inequality, how can our congregation research and inform itself about environmental justice issues at the local, state, national, and/or global levels? How can this awareness correspond to congregational advocacy and action? This dimension requires astute awareness and scholarly research that can result in letter writing and other activities on our campus. *We've barely started on this. Perhaps you have talent in this area. Let us know.*

4. Connections to a Broader Movement: Within the UCC, what are the ways in which our church can connect with others, whether it is through a conference task force, a UCC campground, the UCC's environmental justice newsletter, or other points of contact? Outside of the UCC, what are the ways in which our church can connect with interfaith, ecumenical, or secular partners engaged in environmental justice work?

What is your role in all of this? If you are interested in assisting, please offer your services to our team. If you have ideas, let us know. If you know of, or are a member of an organization dealing with climate care, bring their information to us. Help us in any way you can to make environmental justice a core part of our church's DNA.

Every day is EARTH day!

~ **Vivian Johnson** for the GREENfaith Team (*Judy Curry, Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, Eileen Vincent, and Vivian Johnson*)



100 Years: Let's Celebrate!

100
YEARS

The National Park Service turns 100 on August 25, 2016, and everyone can take part in the celebration! The centennial will kick off a second century of stewardship of America's national parks and engaging communities through recreation, conservation, and historic preservation programs.

We invite you to find your park and discover the national parks and programs in your own backyard! Quotes of Teddy Roosevelt:

- "We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources. But the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soils have still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields and obstructing navigation."
- "I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

Miss Lily's Green Tips



Dear Readers,

My niece and I are growing vegetable in our summer gardens. We have tomatoes, radishes, bell peppers, and zucchini. They taste wonderful and make great gifts, too.

My niece grows them in large pots on her balcony. I have a backyard garden. We love to tend our gardens and often work together.

I encourage IUCC members to plant a seasonal garden. We can work on them together; and, we can use water from our shower buckets. Happy Planting!

Miss Lily

P. S. The Early Childhood Center is creating a wonderful garden for the little ones. Take a look at it on Sunday. It will make you smile.

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed

Ah, coffee hour snacks! They're yummy, they're colorful, and they provide a wonderful backdrop of warmth and welcome to our patio after services. Happy IUCC people gather around the snack tables to visit, catch up with friends, and meet interesting new people. It's our guilty pleasure, and we love it! Besides, snacks eaten at church have no calories, right??



Our coffee hour snacks are provided by volunteers. Won't you add your name to the list of volunteers? Sign up sheets are on the patio on Sunday mornings. If each of us committed to one Sunday each year, our calendar - and our tummies - would be full. Thank you!



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!



Miss Lily spotted this trio of red, white, and blue Priuses in the IUCC parking lot one day and captured the moment in a photo

News & Events



SPECIAL GUEST ON AUGUST 14!

Irvine's new Police Chief, Officer Mike Hamel, will be bringing greetings at both services on August 14. Chief Hamel wants to introduce himself to the Irvine community and let us know how our police force can be of service to our city.

PASTOR'S POTLUCK

Thursday * August 11 * 6:00 p.m. * Childcare Patio

The BBQ will be hot and ready to grill! Bring your BBQ item along with a potluck side dish to share. Everyone is asked to bring their own picnic and tableware. Soft drinks and condiments will be provided. Join us for the first of our three Summer potlucks!



SAVE THE DATE! CROP WALK

Saturday * October 15, 2016

The 28th Annual Newport/Irvine/Mesa CROP Interfaith Hunger Walk will start at Our Lady Queen of Angels School, across from Corona del Mar High School. The Walk goes 7k (4.2 miles) around the beautiful Newport Beach Back Bay. A shorter 4k (2.4 miles) walk will also be available. Last year's CROP Walk team is pictured above.

SCNC WOMEN'S RETREAT

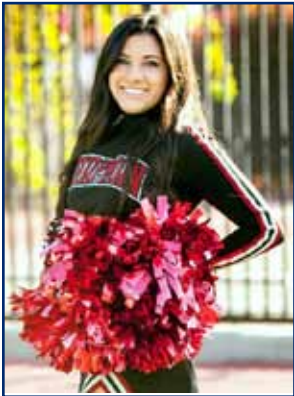
OCTOBER 14TH-16TH, 2016

You are invited to a multi-congregational women's retreat this October! This restful weekend will include workshops to help you center yourself, open time for hiking and relaxation, and fellowship opportunities with your fellow Southern California/ Nevada UCC women.

LOCATION
Loch Leven Camp
8171 Mountain Home Creek Rd
Mentone, CA 92359

REGISTRATION
Before September 1st: \$130
(includes all meals and activities)
After September 1st: \$150

The facility is accessible and food restrictions can be accommodated.
Contact Rev. Hannah Czorny at hamburg@scnc.com for more information or to register.



FAREWELL TO ASHLEY

Our youth leader, Ashley Barba, has been awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship. She will be headed to the Czech Republic in just a few weeks and her last Sunday at IUCC will be August 14th. We are so thankful for her creative and energetic presence on the MYP team and will miss her greatly!

| | | | |
|------|------------------|------|----------------|
| 8/02 | Mark Allen | 8/09 | Jim Martin |
| 8/05 | Janet Bamber | 8/07 | Nitz Martin |
| 8/08 | Chantel Bermudez | 8/23 | Hunter Mirmak |
| 8/20 | Keith Boyum | 8/05 | Tom Moss |
| 8/13 | Jo Cranston | 8/25 | Eric Nelson |
| 8/29 | Keith Dillon | 8/06 | Don Owens |
| 8/02 | Nancy Dreckman | 8/26 | Noel Puga |
| 8/06 | Paul Feick | 8/09 | Glenda Rynn |
| 8/29 | Rogene Field | 8/22 | Jean Stewart |
| 8/27 | Lorraine Fox | 8/12 | Helen Swanson |
| 8/04 | Worth Giller | 8/09 | Dylan Trout |
| 8/13 | Dara Hodges | 8/27 | Jaren Whitsitt |
| 8/10 | Michelle Lin | 8/24 | Dean Whitten |

IUCC Music Ministry

by Joni Baker



August is the one month of the entire year that there is no choir in our services at IUCC. It is a depressing month for me since the highlight of worship for me is being able to sing in the choir. What saves me is the fact that we still sing congregational hymns together. I decided to write an article on congregational singing. Of course, our Director of Music, John St. Marie said that he had some ideas and thoughts about that. So, we met and I recorded him talking about singing in general, but more specifically congregational hymn singing. Below is a transcript of most of his 15 minute “sermon” on the subject. I hope you enjoy it!

“The coolest part is that the words for hymns are the things people write in response to their religious understandings and beliefs. Hymns are really the people’s response to God: their own thoughts and feelings about their relationship with God. I think that’s cool. The Bible is laying out the prescription, the dogma, what is important about the religion, but the personal response comes from the hymns. There’s been a change - hymns at first were very third person, God-centered. As hymnody went along, it started reflecting a more personal relationship with God. I think that is the beauty of hymnody – our heritage of sharing this gift of music spans many, many generations. When we sing hymns, we are connected to the past and the present simultaneously. Think about it, on any given Sunday a familiar tune or hymn text is sung in thousands of churches around the world – and people have, in some cases for hundreds of years, been singing these hymns just as we do today – this gives us connection and commonality in a world where disparity tends to get all the focus.

“People sometimes look at hymns as old fashioned, in terms of melody, but the melodies are actually beautiful. What tends to be old fashioned or stodgy about hymns is how they are interpreted. People don’t always sing them with joy; instead, they focus syllable-to-syllable or word-to-word without comprehending the bigger picture. I always encourage people to look at the whole verse and read it as a meaningful text that encapsulates someone’s heartfelt response to the word of God. THAT kind of attention changes how you approach hymn singing. A congregation that sings with this in mind would find it impossible to sing it note-to-note or syllable-to-syllable. They feel the joy of the hymn rather than that slow, mechanical expression that we often associate with hymns – BORING. Thankfully, IUCC sings with gusto most of the time, but I think if we intentionally take

the hymn and absorb it as a whole, hymn singing can be quite a beautiful and joyful thing! Hymns are really an expression of what we want to believe and what we do believe about God and our relationship with God.”

I then asked him, “What’s the importance of the congregation singing it together instead of just listening to the words and the beautiful music?” He replied, “Because you have a different experience when you are also worshipping, and when you’re participating in that worship experience. Singing is very close to your heart; it’s something that’s an emotionally connected experience. Singing is one of those things that immediately engages people, especially young children. Their eyes light up when we sing to them! Unfortunately, I think we are losing this bonding experience in our culture today. Young people are learning our bad habits of operating in an isolative world. We listen via iPods, phones, and often through ear buds – even as we travel in the same car! Our participation in live music has diminished because of a busy, noisy, isolative culture. We walk around every day thinking we’re in our own little bubble – occasionally we briefly intersect with others, but our corporate sense of relationship is ever-narrowing. Singing together is one way that we can still connect to each other.

“The first oratorios like *Messiah* were sung by hundreds of people who wanted to be part of that experience because when you participate by singing it, it changes your experience wholly. I think one of the reasons people don’t sing as much anymore is the incessant drive to be excellent – if we aren’t, we pull our participation. In almost every congregation I have visited or worshiped in over the past 20 years, I have heard this story – ‘I was told in ____ grade – dear, you should just mouth the words and let other people do the singing – it just isn’t your thing.’ That is a psychologically damaging thing. I’ve seen the pain in people’s eyes when recounting the story 40, 50, and 60 years later – they literally can recall it and feel the same emotions as though the event happened yesterday. I see the disappointment and shame in their eyes as they tell the story though they try to laugh it off. Imagine giving of yourself in utter joy and then being told they ‘you aren’t good enough’ or ‘this isn’t for you’ – excuse my French, but that’s BS! No one has the right to take your joy from you! I think singing is a joy for all people and we should encourage it and do it as often and in any way, shape, or form we can – the more you do something, the better you will get – period! It’s one of those things that really does make us feel closer to God. It dissipates our worries and lessens our burdens. It makes us revel for just a moment in something that is grander, bigger, and more profound than just our daily troubles.

“With hymn singing today, I think it’s really important that

Music Ministry article continued on Page 11

we use our hymnbook because we are losing the art of reading music. How can we sing the notes and learn the rhythms if we only see the words!?! Hymns also have multiple parts that allow our unique voices to fit in to harmony – not everyone can sing high notes well or (as in my case) low notes. Few people can master both ends of the range. That's exactly why we have written parts – so every voice type can participate if they can't sing the range of the melody. I think we should try singing in parts more often. In some churches, music is 'sung at us.' The leaders in the front, in the form of a worship team, which tends to have a solo voice that leads and performs in a way that the average person cannot possibly match. This takes congregation out of the participation in their own worship – it changes the experience from congregational to that of an audience, the regular people have been separated from the making of music intended to help them worship more deeply and fully. To me, that's a dangerous road. Even if the congregation is invited to sing along, the soloist is going to sing it the way they want to and you cannot have unity. The greatest thing about congregational singing and choir singing is that it brings us together to work as a unit. That's something we desperately need in this world – people working together to accomplish something that is bigger than any individual. That's what singing really is - it's an exercise in finding commonality and executing it together and feeling very proud and excited and fulfilled by that act of unity and cohesion between you and your fellow singers. I've talked to people in the congregation who believe they can't sing and I've encouraged them to mouth the words with everyone else. Believe me, if you do this, you'll feel different about the hymns. I've had a few tell me that they've started doing that and they enjoy it, and feel like they're contributing and part of it.

“Singing is a magical, mystical gift that God gives us so that we learn to feel – deeply and wholly. It can help us to escape our everyday problems, and if we really truly absorb ourselves, it can transport us, for the briefest of moments, to a place where possibility and hope are pervasive. I truly believe hymn singing can be part of this vision. When you lift your voice with others, you become part of something that's bigger than you are. The world needs that; individually, we need that. It is too easy to focus internally - to let our problems, misgivings, or shortcomings become all-consuming. Singing, in its basic expression, is about finding unity and togetherness from a collection of unique individuals – something that is bigger than the sum of its parts.”

Well said, John! We look forward to hearing you all sing this coming Sunday!



ECC Achieves 4-Star Rating!

Congratulations to the entire staff of our Early Childhood Center, which recently was awarded a 4-Star Rating (on a five-point scale) by the QualityStarOC improvement project, administered by Orange County Department of Education.

The rating is the culmination—and reward—for a year's work in which the teachers were observed in their classrooms, the center's environment was evaluated inside and out, and the teachers' and director's qualifications were reviewed. The project provided consultation and coaching to help the staff implement improvements.

Last year, which was the ECC's first year to participate in the quality improvement project, our preschool was awarded a 2-Star Rating. Obviously, to move from 2 to 4 Stars in one year's time represents a laudable achievement!

The staff members deserve most of the praise, but a big shout-out should also be given to the Administrative Board and the IUCC congregation for making necessary financial investments in the preschool. At a time when the ECC was struggling to rebound from a downturn in enrollment, church members and leaders had faith that investments in quality would make a difference. And they did!

Now, we can all share in the pride and joy that our ECC is a very high-quality preschool program indeed! Thank you for your faith in the ECC, and thank you to the ECC staff for their dedication and hard work!

--The Child Care Committee

Powerful Parenting

Dr. Lorraine Fox

SELF AWARENESS AND TRUTH – INTIMACY – POWER



Let's change the lyrics from the old tune from *The King and I* – “Getting to know you, getting to know all about you” – and make it “Getting to know me, getting to know all about me”! How will we get accurate, or “true,” information about ourselves? There is only one way – being open to “feedback” from others about what they think is true about us. And

because people's perceptions often differ, we'll need to get feedback from a number of people so that we can look for the themes and patterns that tell us what is apt to be most true. (You know that old refrain – if one person calls you a donkey, ignore and dismiss them; if two people call you a donkey, listen and check for hoof prints; if three people call you a donkey, get a saddle.)

Feedback from others is designed to give “insight” (the ability to look inside) to the person hearing what others think of them, which in turn will provide a sense of personal power – the ability to decide what kind of person they want to be. Is what I'm hearing from others what I think is true about me?

Insight allows us to decide what characteristics we have that we want to keep, and which characteristics we would like to modify or change. Feedback, in other words, is a great gift. But it is also, unfortunately, a rare gift.

Finding the courage to tell the truth to another person is further complicated by experiences of children where they actually do tell the truth about something, and then get punished. They get confused about whether they are getting punished for what they did or for admitting to it. This can lead to a belief that we're actually better off when we “cross our fingers” and tell a little lie in order to keep the peace with adults. And it can be true that sometimes we risk getting “punished” by the person we are honest with. They may back off, or break off our relationship. Or, they may turn around and say something to us that will hurt. That is why it takes courage to risk the truth with another, and it is usually only done when we deeply care about another person and find the risk worth taking.

And so it often develops that our uneasy relationship with the truth not only causes us to “fudge” the truth, but to believe that others are not necessarily telling us the truth either. They have learned what we have learned: life is easier when we say what people want to hear than when we say what we believe to be true. At Easter we all hear the story of how Jesus' disciples deny even knowing Him, much less loving Him, to avoid being caught up in the punishment He was being subjected to. Did they have their fingers crossed? They took the easy way out.

If we deeply care about our children, we will risk telling them the truth as we see it. This will give them the power to make decisions about who they want to be. It will also provide a great gift for future relationships, in that they will have learned how to tell, and how to hear, the truth, spoken in love.



Your willingness and ability to tell your children what you see and hear from them that is giving you information about who they are will depend in large part to how customary it is for you to be honest with others in your life. Next month we will outline the actual process for providing “feedback” to children and teens (and others

who seem in need of better self-awareness). In preparation, your homework is to reflect honestly about your own pattern of truth telling. Do you tend to avoid being direct about uncomfortable topics in order to “keep the peace” – both between people and for inner peace yourself? How about your relationship with your own parents? What did you learn about truth telling from watching the relationship between your parents? What did you learn from them by listening to them talk about other people? How blunt and direct were they with you? Did you hear the truth, as they believed it, kindly or harshly? How “intimate” are you with your love partner? Sex does not provide intimacy. Intimate sex occurs in a relationship of honesty and openness. Sex can be very un-intimate, and sometimes is a substitute for intimacy. What is “intimate” is the truth in communication. Intimacy takes courage and vulnerability. Are you up for it?