

Gingerbread Houses!



Sarah Fiske-Phillips honored a tradition of a much-loved lady from her home church by baking all the fixings for gingerbread houses for the youth to decorate. The houses were a huge hit!



Photos by Sarah Fiske-Phillips



From the Pastor's Desk

the Rev. Dr. Paul Tellström



Advent and Christmas are always a time for re-orienting myself and thinking about a chance to start over with new promise for the New Year. It is no accident that the period of watching, waiting and reflecting leading up to Jesus' birth is taken from its historical time-frame (probably sometime in the late spring) and placed up against the Winter Solstice and a New Year.

By Christmas Eve, the light indeed is just coming back into the world. All of the reflecting on themes of hope, peace, joy and love in anticipation of new birth leads naturally into the fresh start of a New Year.

From our weekly Witness for Justice UCC Commentary, Executive for Administration and Communications, Bentley de Bardelaben talks about how this has also been a very challenging season for many of us as we watched the news unfold at the same time we were preparing for Christmas.

He writes, "I have received phone calls, emails, even a few letters from people who are experiencing feelings ranging from anger to apathy over what they have named as an unjust and broken justice system. While the subject matter varies, the pain expressed is similar. Many feel that just verdicts for marginalized groups have been noticeably absent in their communities. Whether the perceived bias is institutional or personal — its direct aim at one's race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, earnings, religious conviction, immigration status, or position on climate change — the sense of hurt and injustice has left so many struggling to locate hope in a season where it ought to be plentiful."

While preparing for a joyful season, the news around us was anything but. The tensions between law enforcement and the African American community have taken a giant step backwards, played out in example after example this year. When we should be hoping for a progression of humanity's ability to gain understanding and feel empathy on our way to grasping justice, the evidence around us went lacking.

That is why it is so important for me to maintain a spiritual life that, while not projecting a false rosiness, is nonetheless committed to maintaining the belief in a positive outcome

for humanity, despite the evidence against it. Bardelaben writes, "My spiritual life helps to root me in the knowledge that there have been others across the ages who had similar struggles and endured. If they could, in time, I can, too."

Theologian and scholar Walter Brueggemann writes in his bestselling book, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit*, that in addition to our own experience, and the testimony we see reflected in the daily newspaper and throughout literature, the Psalms of the Old Testament offer an important third way of gaining perspective on life's struggles. Scripture reminds us, Brueggemann says, that "our life of faith consists of moving with God in terms of: (a) being securely oriented; (b) being painfully disoriented; and (c) being surprisingly reoriented. This general way of speaking can apply to our self-acceptance, our relations to significant others, our participation in public issues."

The story of Christmas now turns again from the glow of the light and character-filled story of the birth of a baby, to the disciplined, dangerous and powerfully brave life of the most authentic figure we can imagine. It pulls us to engage in teachings, parables, examples, and a life that turned the world on its head. What part of this story will strike you as real, as genuine, as a compelling example to follow? What is the lens through which you will be able to let this story reach you?

We enter now into a new year as a congregation rooted in our own spiritual journey while engaged in a world that at best challenges the concept of "the spiritual life." We will be, as Brueggemann says, at times "oriented, disoriented and re-oriented once again" as we face the problems that will be before us again this year.

But...our particular spiritual path involves a commitment to being followers of the most authentic figure we can name, and this is the way that has invites shalom—peace.

The great mystic Meister Eckhart said, "To Grasp God in all things—this is the sign of your new birth."

The story of new birth brings us to the portal of this New Year. May yours bring you happiness and wholeness.

Pastor Paul



Ministry for Young People

by Sarah Fiske-Phillips

What a beautiful Advent! I feel so blessed to work at this church where we value our young people. One of the biggest joys I had this year was seeing the video that youth group produced. While it was funny and well made, the biggest reason I enjoyed the video was because of the work the youth put in to it. Unlike some of their peers, these young people know the Christmas story in and out. After reading it, discussing it with their youth leaders, and talking about what the story would look like today, they came up with the idea for the video. The best part about this for me is that they took a story written 2000+ years ago and made it relevant to their lives. Isn't that what church is all about? I am so proud of them, and thankful for Annie and Tricia's guidance in helping them to develop their own faith and finding their places as young Christians in today's world. If you missed the video and would like to see it please let me know and I can send you the information.

Another great joy this season was having the kids perform their pageant on Christmas Eve. Once again, the congregation's love and support showed them that they are not just the future of the church, but they are part of the church today.

The young adult group has been picking up speed lately. We seem to have a solid group of people now, and Paul has been teaching a monthly Bible study. Additionally, the group goes out for lunch twice a month.

Another highlight of the season was hiring Amanda Tatlock for our childcare position. She is a senior at Chapman, is well qualified, and is so good with our young children. We are lucky to have her. Over the next few months our confirmation class will continue and the confirmands will have the option to confirm and join the church on May 24th. It will be an exciting time for all eleven of them! I wish you all a very happy new year and a happy epiphany!



Congratulations to Chili Cook-Off winners Marie & Dylan Trout



Annie decorates a cupcake at the Advent Workshop

Photos courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips

Moderator's Column

Anne Rosse



I tend to do a lot of thinking at the kitchen sink, practicing mindfulness (a la Thich Nhat Hanh) when I am elbow-deep in soapsuds. On Christmas Day, I was washing a plate that had been filled with my mom's yummy baked treats. I've washed this same plate countless times – cheap to begin with, it is now battered and worn. But, I know better than to suggest that it's time to replace it. Growing up, I waged many epic (and always unsuccessful) battles against my mom's thrifty ways.

You see, her values and priorities were formed, in large part, by being a post-Depression child. When she was a young girl in Nebraska, struggling men would frequently stop by the family farm looking for work. There was none to offer, but each man was given a sandwich and a warm place to spend the night. I often think about my grandmother, a diminutive woman with five young children, and her quiet and unwavering commitment to Christian hospitality.

My mom raised us with those same values and I, in turn, tried to raise my daughter that same way - doing good, not to garner accolades, but simply because it was the right thing to do. Never have I felt so deeply the continuity of generations when my daughter spoke about sharing her modest meals with parentless street children when she lived in India for six months.

At this time of year, I am usually busy compiling my list of resolutions. I am typically a big fan of making resolutions, establishing goals and working toward them. But, the problem with resolutions – it is so easy to get off track, to fail, to abandon our good intentions.

So, this year, I'm trying a different approach. My 2015 resolution list has just two words on it: "Follow Jesus." The way I see it, those two words capture all of my intentions – to do good in the world, to be more accepting of both myself and others, to serve the voiceless and powerless, to give and love generously, and so on. I want to follow Jesus -- both the

radical activist and the compassionate teacher. The one who opposes war, materialism and empire. And, the one who teaches that being religious results in more questions than answers, that there are many ways to be a Christian.

I am a better follower of Jesus when I am part of a community – that is why IUCC is so important to me, knowing that this community supports me fully in my desire to serve, to question, and to explore. In "Fearless: Imagine Your Life Without Fear," Max Lucado talks about the importance of community: "Questions can make hermits out of us, driving us into hiding. Yet the cave has no answers. Christ distributes courage through community; he dissipates doubts through fellowship. He never deposits all knowledge in one person but distributes pieces of the jigsaw puzzle to many. When you interlock your understanding with mine, and we share our discoveries, when we mix, mingle, confess and pray, Christ speaks."



IUCC is such a wondrous community, blessed by jigsaw puzzle pieces of every size and shape. Here, we learn acceptance, celebrate, grieve together over the loss of loved ones, resolve conflicts, encourage each other during challenging times, pass on important lessons to the next generation, and grow old in grace. And, each of us has been given unique abilities and skills – being part of a community helps us discern those gifts and how we can best use them in service to others. As Michael Maywood states: "We

rejoice that Jesus led people to discover the sacred in the ordinary: in the crowd, in the lowly, in the everyday life, in human yearnings to be better people, and in being neighbor to one another."

Thank you for all you do to make IUCC the caring, vibrant and faithful community it is. I look forward to continuing to share this journey with you in 2015 – as followers of Jesus Christ, doing all we can to offer our neighborly welcome and hospitality. May your 2015 be filled with joy, good health and peace.

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



Stewardship

Just a note of gratitude--

In January, we will come together to vote on a new budget.

This was a special year for us--our needs were high, our pre-school has not been functioning at full capacity, and our growth leveled off because some of our “angels” are no longer with us.

And yet--our Stewardship Committee stepped up, our Budget Committee was extremely devoted to watching over us, and you all came through - including some new “angels” who made sure that IUCC moved into 2015 as the healthy and whole congregation we need to be.

Thank you, IUCC! And, when we meet in January, we might want to thank some of our leaders who made sure we got where we needed to be! Our Moderator, Anne Rosse, our Budget Committee and Admin Board Chair, Martha Selby, our Stewardship Committee, led by Ken Wyant and Bill Lawrence, our Ministry Chair, Dawn Price, and especially, our Treasurer, Mark Allen, for his careful oversight of our finances and outlook.

And, if I don't say it enough, “thank you” to an incredible set of volunteer leaders this year!

Pastor Paul

Building Plan Update

by Anne Rosse

IUCC's Master Plan continues to make steady progress through various required review processes. The plan was submitted in late June to the City of Irvine for a Modified Conditional Use Permit (CUP), the next step in planning for IUCC's future and legacy.

In late November, we heard further feedback from the City requesting some corrections/clarifications. Our architects, Domusstudio, are addressing these comments and preparing another submission. The City also asked for a Limited Scope Traffic Study. We solicited proposals from four different traffic engineering firms experienced in working with the City of Irvine. Jim Raver and I reviewed proposals from two firms: KOA Corporation and LLG Engineers. KOA had the better proposal and brings with them the clear advantage of having done a similar study for our neighbor, Woodbridge Village Association. In December, we signed a contract with KOA and they have already begun work.

In the first phase, they are preparing a scope of work to be reviewed/approved by the City. Once that is approved, KOA will undertake the traffic study, which will include: traffic analysis, site access analysis, shared parking re-evaluation, and data collection. They will then prepare and submit a report to the City. If the City then requires a parking study, KOA can provide that for us as well.

We have been told that we might be able to get CUP approval by late February, assuming no unexpected new issues and a smooth process for the traffic study. Of course, timing is difficult to predict and the holidays slowed our progress. We do not expect a vote on moving forward with the IUCC Master Plan (and associated capital campaign) until we: (1) receive approval from the City of Irvine; and (2) have weathered the unexpected financial bump in the road related to low enrollment at our preschool. Instead, we will call a Special Congregational Meeting when we are ready to decide – as a congregation – how we want to move forward with the Master Plan.

We have been monitoring our expenses closely and, at this time, we expect to be within budget for the two phases approved by the congregation: (1) development of the Master Plan and (2) approval from the City.

So, in summary, our project continues to make steady progress that will hopefully result in CUP approval in approximately late February! We'll provide another update at the upcoming January 25 Winter Congregational Meeting. In the meantime, please contact me if you have any questions.

Volunteer Opportunities in Ecuador

by Bil Aulenbach



Anne and I spent 6 weeks in Ecuador this past fall working with the Yanapuma Foundation learning Spanish, volunteering at local projects, and seeing some of Ecuador, one of South America's best kept secrets. It was such a wonderful experience that we wanted to offer the opportunity to members of our church family and friends to do the same.

This would not be a specific project at a specific place. Rather, each participant would have an opportunity to design their own package. For instance,

- Do you want to study Spanish or not? (One can still do many of these projects without knowing Spanish.)
- Would you like to work in Quito, the capital, or in Cuenca, a wonderful historical city further south? Yanapuma has offices in both cities.
- Would you like to volunteer in the jungle, in a city, with an indigenous group, or by the beach? Yanapuma has many projects all over Ecuador.
- How long would you like to stay?
- What sights would you like to see? The Galapagos Islands? A train ride in the Andes? Time in the jungle? Some of the many historical sites?
- How old do you have to be? Teenagers would be most welcome.
- Where would you stay? Want an apartment? Live with a local family? Stay in an inexpensive hotel?
- When would this happen? Any time between August and September, 2015, depending on the interest.

We're going to have an exploratory meeting on Sunday, January 18, after the 11 a.m. service (about 12:15) in the Sanctuary. Can't make that meeting but you're interested? Give us a call at home: (949) 240-2933. We'd love to share with you.

Peace Love Joy Hope
Bil & Anne Aulenbach

Thank You

Dear friends,

Thank you for joining in the Christmas Card Project this year with churches in Japan. I have already heard from some of you that you have received responses from Japan. I hope each of your churches will receive a response.



The leadership in the Tohoku Conference has sent a list of the 32 U.S. churches from the UCC and DOC that have joined the project this year, so they should be aware of your concerted effort to lift them up in prayer.

This year members from three of those US churches (Altadena CA, Irvine CA, and Jerusalem Western Salisbury PA) made visits. And next year we are expecting a group from Montebello UCC (CA) to be visiting with a group of youth to help with the ongoing recovery work.

I send you our family Christmas greeting. May God continue to lead us in new ways to be the church in these changing times.

Jeffrey Mensendiek

Dear friends,

Thank you for writing encouraging Christmas greetings to immigrants in detention at local facilities.

Spending months in detention can be very lonely, and it helps detainees to know that there are people outside who care about them and their welfare.

Your kind words brought some cheer to people who needed a kind word during the holidays. Thank you!

Friends of OC Detainees

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed!



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

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

Please contact Tommie Kozlov at (949) 348-1134 or email her at tommiek@cox.net

Mark Your Calendar



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP Soup & Salad

***Wed. * Jan. 7 * 6:30 p.m.**

Come and enjoy soup & salad with us! Sign up on the patio with Pat Sauter.



MAGGI WIITA MEMORIAL *Sat. * Jan. 10 * 1:00 p.m.

A memorial service for Maggi Wiita will be held at 1 p.m., followed by a reception celebrating her life. She died peacefully at home on Dec. 6, 2014.



2015 PROPOSED BUDGET FORUM Sunday * Jan. 11. * 12:15 p.m.

The proposed 2014 budget will be posted on our website to give congregants the chance to review the budget and ask questions.



IUCC WINTER PARTY

Saturday * Jan. 24 * 6:30 p.m.

Mark your calendar! You won't want to miss this fun-filled event! More info to follow.

January Birthdays

1/09	Jillian Allen	1/20	Marilyn KeslerWest
1/13	Tricia Aynes	1/27	Roseann Landis
1/23	Joni Baker	1/26	Joan McDonald
1/22	Adele Bloom	1/01	Kieran Mitchell
1/01	Emily Cordes	1/18	Joan Mortenson
1/01	Paul Duncan	1/10	Eugene Price
1/18	Felicity Figueroa	1/10	Barbara Ruris
1/23	Nancy Harris	1/13	Bonnie Shaffstall
1/05	Eric Houston	1/18	Bill Sheak
1/01	David Hume	1/01	Coquelicot Shirey
1/10	Laura Kemp		



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING Sunday * Jan. 25 * 12:15

Annual meeting for our corporate members to vote to adopt the budget and to conduct other church business. All voting members are asked to attend.

Irvine UCC's 2014 Japan Mission Trip Opens Eyes and Hearts to the Impact of Global Mission

by Randy Romine, Chair of Irvine UCC Global Mission

A group of 14, including IUCC pastor the Rev. Paul Tellstrom and the Rev. Homer Royer of the Jerusalem Western Salisbury Church (Allentown, Pennsylvania), were blessed to travel to Japan from October 6 - 16 on a relationship-building mission trip. The group was led by IUCC's Kei Matsuyama, who is a native of Gifu, Japan, and who had served for one year as a staff volunteer coordinator for the Emmaus Disaster Relief Center in Sendai, Japan. The Emmaus Center is a UCC donated facility which has served as a UCC Ecumenical center for more than 50 years and was most recently the base of operation for our UCC Japanese missionary, Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek. It now serves as the headquarters for the northern Japan Tohoku District UCCJ (United Christian Churches of Japan) as well as a headquarters for disaster-relief efforts.

HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS of the TRIP!

Aizu Radiation Information Center



This information center is located in the Wakamatsu Sakaemachi Church in Aizu Wakamatsu, Fukushima. It is about 100 kilometers from the nuclear meltdown plant and located in a beautiful ski resort mountain area, which gave it some protection from the worst of the nuclear contamination. The church was selected as a testing facility since it is close enough for many impacted people to visit, but still considered a relatively safe area. We were met at the local train station by the Rev. Makoto Takahashi, who heads the UCCJ Global Ministry Committee, and hosted for lunch by the church's pastor, Rev. Etsuya Kataoka, and his wife Terumi, who is the director of the radiation center.

After the lunch, we gathered in 1911 church's beautiful main sanctuary and heard a moving account of what it was like immediately after the nuclear disaster. Terumi told us of the many families who gathered at the church and frantically made decisions as to whether to stay or leave. The majority, including Terumi, decided it was unsafe and evacuated to stay with family or at churches as far from Fukushima as possible. She told us of the agony of knowing so many were left behind and her desperate need to return to help. She did so two weeks after evacuating, but like most people, left her children with family far away. She was joined in testimony by a young mother who spoke with her beautiful baby daughter on her lap. We soon understood why she clung so tightly to this child. She had been pregnant at the time of the disaster and living in a highly contaminated area. She had made a painful decision to abort that child out of concern for birth defects from the radiation. She had moved to Azui for the safety of her new child and was part of the mothers' group meeting at the center. She and other wives were in crisis as their husbands returned to jobs in contaminated areas, relying on new government standards of what was considered "safe" levels of radiation. Many mothers will not return to these areas with their children, and they are pressured to keep their concerns about the testing quiet so as not to affect the recovering economy. As we proceeded to tour the center, we learned what the center is doing to address the community's concerns. Through generous donations from churches and other organizations, the center has some of the latest testing equipment. Local food products and mothers' milk are tested for radiation. Another center focus is to test mothers and children for radiation-related health issues through doctors who are not connected to the government and who use equipment not controlled and selected by the government. This information is then compared to the government information and internationally accepted standards. The people are then allowed to arrive at their own decision as to what is safe for them. The center provides a sanctuary for open discussion for those questioning government testing and standards and is a gathering place for the few mothers who dare speak out in a conformist society. This center provides an important voice in the ongoing nuclear safety debate and has strong church support internationally and 8 locally.

Emmaus Center, Sendai and Ishinomaki



Our next four days were spent at these ecumenical centers with rich UCC ties. Our group reconnected for dinner and orientation at the new and modern Emmaus Center building. It was built on UCC donated mission property in the center of Sendai. The center is inland and was not affected by the tsunami. Upon arrival, we immediately saw the supplies and equipment that have been so important to relief efforts in the area. The center's disaster relief leader, the Rev. Masashi Sato, gently gave us our three day marching orders at the evening dinner and orientation. The start of each day always included some of the group visiting seniors in temporary housing with staff members who led exercises for the seniors. The center's staff and visitors were friends, and most residents, who have been there for 3 years now, looked forward to the frequent visits. Masashi described the center's slow work policy, where the time spent stopping to listen and comfort seniors had even more importance than the physical work. He let us know there were always staff in our work group who spoke a little English. He then emphasized what we would soon find out - people working in mission can communicate a lot without any language! Since the center's work is still focused on helping the small, low tech family farms and fisherman in the low lying coastal areas, there is lots of bending,

carrying and walking. We dug and chopped, planted and weeded, carried and spread...and then we sat and ate some amazing local foods. We also saw some evidence of and heard some touching stories about life moving on after terrible disasters.



After the work, we visited the Arahama Beach community completely wiped out by the tsunami. 190 people died at that small village, which is now the barren site of a beautiful beach front memorial. We were there on the 11th of the month, and others in our group toured the local renowned Christian Tohoku Gakuine University and church. They rejoined us at this site for the Emmaus Center monthly remembrance prayer gathering. We then returned to the center to give our work and tour reports and to share our thoughts on our experiences on that day. The next day we drove two hours to Ishinomaki to visit the Okawa School and memorial center. The haunting elementary school site is inland on a river - 73 children died here even though teachers thought they were far enough from the sea to be safe. Ishinomaki is located in a low lying coastal area and was the site of some of the greatest loss of life in the tsunami. The UCCJ churches purchased a beach house in

the center of the devastation. The churches rebuilt the house and named it Emmaus Center Ishinomaki. It is small, but still hosts great numbers of volunteers.

The day we visited we were joined for tea and discussion by a group of Korean/Japanese Christian women who had traveled from the Kyoto area. They had been cleaning muddy, leaf-filled drains backed up at the local temporary housing facility. It was the most joyful group of muddy workers I have ever seen! We ended our visit in Sendai the next day with visits and worship at local churches. Pastor Paul Tellstrom delivered his sermon, "Faith: The Search for the Authentic" at a vibrant local progressive church, Izumi Aisen Church. Pastor Homer Royer, accompanied by his wife Susan, delivered his sermon, "Words of Christian Faith are Important in any Language," at the Higashi Ichibancho Church, which has strong historical ties to the Pennsylvania UCC. Other group members visited the Kitanbancho Church. A warm welcome and embrace was received by all and the pastor's messages touched all and were well appreciated.



Bazaar Cafe, Kyoto, and Hiroshima War Memorial & Peace Park



Through the miracle of high speed train travel, our day ended in Kyoto in time for the beginning of a typhoon. We were able to spend most of the next day visiting some of Kyoto's important historical sights, but the trains shut down in the afternoon. Fortunately, the typhoon passed quickly and we were able to make our planned visit to the Hiroshima Memorial Museum and Peace Park the next day. This was not an easy day. The museum's pictorial history of the nuclear devastation and compilation of burned and radiated artifacts are profound reminders of the evil inflicted on mankind by all wars. The serene Peace Park that unfolds before you as you exit the memorial is a beautiful reminder of the human spirit reborn even in the worst of circumstances. It is also a profound reminder of the ongoing need to connect to our fellow man in the love of God and in mission. We were blessed to end that day with a gathering hosted at a UCCJ/UCC-USA outreach cafe located in a UCC mission house just outside the Doshisha University. We were hosted for a dinner and presentation on the cafe's minority outreach programs. The cafe serves as a welcoming

meeting place for many immigrants, LGBT people, substance abusers, handicapped, elderly and domestic/sexual violence victims and others who tend to be under-served in the community.

We were joined by the UCC's Martha Mensendiek, who is a strong supporter of the cafe, and the Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek, who now serves at the Kwansei Gakuin University in Hyogo in addition to his continued UCC mission work. We heard moving testimony from people from the immigrant, LGBT, and substance abuse community and enjoyed amazing food, fellowship, song and prayer. What a great place to visit!



ARI..Asian Rural Institute



ARI was a perfect place to end our mission trip and may end up being a perfect place to begin our next visit as volunteers. It is a great example of a place where people are connecting in mission with love of their fellow man and planet. Since 1973, ARI has been focused on training grassroots rural leaders in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. The center was extensively damaged in the 2011 earthquake, but has been mostly repaired through generous worldwide church support. They were particularly grateful for some high tech oil press equipment donated by the UCC/DOC Global Ministries. It has allowed them to make cooking oil from soybeans grown to remove radiation from the soil. The beans are discarded, but the seed oil has no radiation and has made them self sufficient for their cooking oil needs.

The aim of the center's training is to facilitate the self development of rural people in order to build a more just and peaceful society. ARI was founded out of a Christian tradition, but its programs are administered without regard to race, nationality, age, religion or sex. Our day tour was led by a joyful, able staff leader, Jonathan McCurley. ARI's extensive nine month program has a combination of classroom, lecture, discussion and study tours which are put into practice on site with people managing their own projects. The community is almost 90% self sufficient on the food they produce. We had a chance to share that food at a lunch where we were seated randomly with people from about 30 countries. The meal was preceded by lively prayer and song and ended with heartfelt discussion and sharing. What a great fellowship experience! ARI's amazing programs focus on a teaching/learning model with a goal of using local resources in a traditionally respectful and ecological manner. It is a love of environment and mankind approach that seems to match perfectly with UCC/DOC mission values. We will definitely be back to ARI.



Future Steps

We are in the process of making a trip video that we will be sharing with our church and the UCC/ DOC Global Mission committee. We are already in the initial stages of developing a youth visit to the Emmaus Center in Japan for 2016 and are in discussion to start a cyber buddy youth exchange in connection with that visit. The adult group will be reconvening soon to work on mission ideas in support of the Emmaus Center and ARI. We are already keeping connections to four Japanese churches through continued participation in Jeffrey Mensendiek's Christmas Card Project and will continue to work closely with Jeffrey in forming our ongoing relationship with the UCCJ Tohoku conference, which continues to serve the tsunami/ nuclear disaster impacted areas. Some probable next steps might be supporting programs for seniors still stuck in temporary housing and supporting the church-sponsored fresh air camps for kids exposed to high levels of radiation or other effects from the tsunami devastation. We will keep you informed on these next steps.

Our mission/ tour group included: Pastor Paul Tellstrom (Irvine), Pastor Homer Royer and wife, Susan (Allentown, Pennsylvania) and IUCC congregants: Kei Matsuyama (group leader), Randy Romine, Rob and Irene Thornton, Susan Sherman, Dale Vaughn, Gary Boyer, Judy VanSise, Denise Bermudez, Jim Raver and Michael Gordon.

