

IUCC News & Notes

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

June 5, 2012

<http://www.iucc.org>

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The Newsletter For June !

Important:

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

From the Pastor's Desk ...



Pilgrim Pines is our camp in the mountains near Yucaipa and the apple orchard farms of Oak Glen. I was there just recently with our Confirmation class in a downpour of rain that magically turned into a snow

storm just after I left. I heard from our youth how much fun it was to be snowed in, even if just for a few hours until the snowplow could make its way through.

I have been up there with at least five Confirmation classes now, as well as Family Camps and a stint as "Pastor of the Week" some years ago. There is a picture in the narthex of over thirty of our IUCC Women at their recent yearly retreat, which is always a big event.

One of my favorite memories of Pilgrim Pines is the week I spent there watching the kids come into contact with special needs adults (the "Pinesters") and watching fear and uncertainty give way to openness and friendships.

This is a special year for Pilgrim Pines. I think we might call it "the make or break year" for the camp. We are co-owners



of this camp, in that we partner with over 130 churches that make up the Conference, and

this pristine piece of nature in the clean mountain air is perhaps the most important ministry we do together. All of these efforts lead us to building a deeper sense of community and understanding, and I have been so proud of the work that has come from a dedicated staff and leadership.

Next month I will step down from the Executive Committee of our Conference as my term comes to a close. During this time I have come to know just how serious the financial circumstances are that surround the camp. Carl has

stepped in to help them sell off unneeded parcels of land and structures as the Conference's real estate resource. IUCC member Tom Mason continues his selfless dedication to a camp that he once lived in as a child. A dedicated board acted with grace, loving care and pragmatism in looking to the future, and now we are taking a leap of faith together. A seasoned Christian camp outfit known as [UCCR](#) has taken the reins, and will operate the camp with the same business model they use at other camps, including our Northern California-Nevada Conference camp up north. This summer will feature an all-volunteer support staff.

This is where you come in. Send your kids to camp! Become a counselor! They need a nurse, as well as several other specialized positions. Camp runs from July 8-August 4. If you go for the first week, you might find your supervisor to be none other than Pastor Elizabeth, who I believe, will be in charge of the juniors. Can't go? Make sure that a kid who couldn't otherwise afford to go gets the chance to spend a week in the mountains with other kids for a memory they will never forget. In any case, be sure to take a look at the camp and see what is happening. (Click [here](#).)

One of my favorite colleagues is the Rev. Petra Malleis-Sternberg. She is a wonder-woman who pastors our San Bernardino church, raises several young kids, makes time for her husband and family while leading our Conference's outdoor ministry. I don't know how she does it. I just admire her spirit and energy.

Reflecting on the hope that she feels about the camp's future, she tells this story:



Rev. Malleis-Sternberg

Last summer I was a co-pastor at camp with the Rev. Mary Sue Brookshire, and one of our jobs was to check in with the different age and ability groups, to offer a pastoral presence during the activities of the day. One morning we headed down to the ropes course because the Mini campers were going to be climbing the rock wall, and we wanted to see some of the youngest campers try this feat for the first time. I sat down under a tree next to a sweet, cute young Mini camper who I hadn't met before. As we were chatting about camp, I asked about which activities she liked to do back home. And the camper responded that she wasn't able to participate in any activities unless Mrs. "Robinson" (not her real name) was able to take her, and even then she often had to do whatever the other kids in the house wanted to do. And I realized then that she was one of the many campers who come to our Pilgrim Pines summer camp from foster homes. I had momentarily forgotten, even though I knew it well, that many of our campers have a life outside of camp that is completely different from our usual expectations of what a child's life is like, that she lived with strangers and had few choices about her life, and in her simple acknowledgement of this deep brokenness in her life, this camper broke my heart open. I suddenly knew how terribly important it was for her to be at camp, and to have, for just one week of her life, the same story as

everyone else, the same bunks and same counselor and same chance to participate in all of the activities.

But I still wasn't sure I believed that this one week would really make a difference for her until later. I was talking with a couple of the older campers, and one of them shared that she was from a foster home, and she had been coming to Pilgrim Pines for a couple of years now. This was her week, her time, in her special place, up at camp, and she planned to return as a counselor when she aged out of being a camper. It was very clear as she spoke how much hope and joy and life and love was bundled up into this camp experience for her, how this was her place, her stability, away from all the uncertainty of the rest of her life. Sometimes we do get to glimpse the hope that God can bring into even very difficult lives, because I received the deep joy of watching those two campers all week long, as they climbed rock walls and jumped into the pool and danced on the volleyball court, and wove lanyards, and sang silly songs, and gazed at the stars. And those two faces are the ones that still bring me deep joy, as we now work hard to meet the challenges of keeping camp open this summer, so that it can be a place for all campers to once more know God's love in a community where everyone shares the same story, a story that offers real joy."

Keep Pilgrim Pines in your prayers, and take advantage of the opportunity to keep this diamond in the mountains available for our church families for years to come.



Father's Day: Every other year, three moms or three dads speak on their special day. This year is the dads' turn again. Come to church on June 17 to hear three of our IUCC fathers talk about the experience of being a dad. This is always a favorite Sunday, whether the moms or dads are up front.

Recipe for S'mores



Ingredients

- 1 large marshmallow
- 1 graham cracker
- 1 (1.5 ounce) bar chocolate candy bar

Directions

Heat the marshmallow over an open campfire until it begins to brown and melt. Break the graham cracker in half. Sandwich the chocolate between the cracker and the hot marshmallow. Allow the marshmallow to cool a moment before eating.

Nutritional Information

You don't want to know.

From the Associate Pastor



In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth...God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.

--Genesis 1:1 and 1:31

I have had the exquisite pleasure recently of getting to spend a good deal of time outdoors in God's good creation doing the work of the church. As I write, I am just recently (a couple hours ago) returned from a couple days up at Pilgrim Pines Camp, having taken part in a training session for Summer Camp Directors. I'm excited to be serving as Director of Junior High programs for the first week of camp, July 8-14. Our Southern California/Nevada Conference camp is a tremendous outdoor ministry, which has been treasured by generations of UCC folks over the years. I have my own very fond memories of being a camper up there in the San Bernardino Mountains since I was in junior high myself, attending many conferences and retreats over the years (including our fabulous recent IUCC Women's Retreat), and also serving as a counselor throughout college and more recently as a minister.

And to tell the truth, our camp has fallen on hard times. This year, to cut costs, we have transitioned to an all-volunteer staff. And your camp needs your help! If you have any inclination at all to spend a glorious week working with amazing kids in the beautiful mountains, please be in touch with me. Your church needs your help! But Pilgrim Pines serves not only specifically UCC church kids, but all kids who are interested, many of whom are in the foster care program in LA County and are so incredibly blessed by spending a week outdoors with God and people who care deeply about them.



I remember meeting one little girl, Kayla, when I was her cabin counselor in 1998. Kayla was the most generous child I've ever met—sharing her toys, stories, and kindness with all the other kids whenever she could. But she certainly bore her own burdens. One night she told me about how her mom had just gotten out of the hospital recently. According to Kayla, Mom had accidentally hurt her wrists after her boyfriend left them. So Kayla came up to camp while Mom recovered and received therapy.



Pilgrim Pines is a beautiful and inclusive place for all of our kids, as well as developmentally disabled adults, to be truly embraced in community, in song, in expansive starry skies, in good progressive theology put into practice, in woods and creek and craft projects and pool parties and more... Basically it's Club Med for kids, as one high school camper put it. Please see pilgrimpines.org or ask me for an application to get more information about signing up to volunteer, or signing up kids you love to have an amazing and unforgettable experience this summer. Camp runs for four weeks, Sunday-Saturday, July 8-August 4.

*You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.*

--Psalm 65:9

I have also had such a good time lately playing in God's creation much closer to home in our own church garden with our own IUCC children. On Easter Sunday, we planted radishes, sunflowers, beans, carrots, and edible nasturtium flowers in our little raised bed plot of land. Kids have been visiting, watering, wedding, and picking the first fruits of our labors ever since. When I visited the preschool-aged Sunday School class last week, one little boy immediately enthusiastically shouted, "Pastor Elizabeth, can we go water the garden again?"

This little garden project was launched two years ago as a joint venture with our Child Care Center, and it has been wonderful to work with them on it. Whether consulting with teachers over the best methods of mixing in compost to create rich soil, or chatting with little students over the taste of fresh veggies, it has been great to use our little outdoor space to do big things in the lives of these children. Early lessons on cultivating not only flowers and vegetables, but also cultivating respect for the Earth and what God has given us are so important for us to impart.

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.*

*Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In God's hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.*

--Job 12:7-10

Indeed the life and breath of every single one of us is in God's hand! And I really look forward to living into this scripture passage in a few weeks when we embark on our Youth and Young Adult Mission Trip to Mexico, June 21-26. In God's loving eyes and in God's caring hands, there is no distinction between plant and animal, bird and fish, human being born on one side of an artificial border or one born on the other. Our one Creator and Sustainer is responsible for us all.



The seven of us embarking on this trip will have the opportunity to get closer to God's natural creation of the Earth as well as to more of God's children who are our Mexican sisters and brothers when we visit *Casa Colibri* (Hummingbird House) Catholic Worker Community in Hostotipaquillo, MX [note red arrow on map]. Dear friends of mine with whom I used to live and work at the Catholic Worker House in Los Angeles decided to move back to their native Latin America to open up a desperately needed house of hospitality in this dusty little town. Their home is one of art, beauty, generosity, education, abundance, and is an oasis of interfaith understanding and LGBT inclusivity.

IUCC teenagers Alaina Haynes, Taelor Exelby, and Mike Trout; along with young adults Chase Brown and Jerrod Anderson will be accompanied by our dear Youth Leader Sarah Fiske-Phillips and also myself on this incredible international journey. We will tend the community's small organic farm, work alongside local ranchers, help provide meals for hungry local kids, collaborate with a lesbian workers' collective, visit local pre-Hispanic ruins, explore the town highlights as well as the cuisine, escort kids on a field trip to swim in a nearby lake, put on a talent show, and help organize our own liturgy service of intercultural celebration.

Muchas gracias to everyone who has contributed to help make this trip happen. We promise to bring back lots of pictures and stories!

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

--Revelation: 4:11

As we offer our Creator God all glory and honor, we are also reminded that it is God who holds all power as well. We only borrow a little of it when we need to—to build up community, to tend to the Earth and to our own little ones, to tell the stories of the beautiful places in our lives and to share them with others who also need such sustenance. Thank you God for creating the Earth and for creating us to care for and enjoy it together!

In God's great love and peace,

Pastor Elizabeth

Jillian Allen Raises Funds for Family Promise of Orange County

from THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER (*Irvine World News*)
<http://www.ocregister.com/articles/family-355558-county-orange.html>

Northwood elementary School sixth-grader Jillian Allen held a fundraiser for [Family Promise of Orange County](#) – a community group that assists local homeless families – on Saturday, May 19. The event was at a part near her Irvine home.

FPOC is a new non-profit organization that leverages underutilized space and volunteers from 19 houses of worship. It provides emergency housing, meals, and social services to help families return to self-sufficiency. It can accommodate families of any size and composition.



She had heard about the group through her church, Irvine United Congregational Church. The fundraiser had a cake walk, games and food. Students from Irvine's Aspire Art Studio donated 10 pieces of art for a silent auction. Jillian raised about \$250 for Family Promise of Orange County.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSAN ALLEN

Youth Group Report

By Sarah Fiske-Phillips



Sarah

This month has been full of exciting youth events. I have learned so much from working with our amazing young people, and I am very grateful for the support of the IUCC community.

Here are some of the highlights from May:

- Confirmation Sunday: Four of our young people completed their classes and were confirmed at IUCC.



- AIDS Walk: The youth got up very early in the morning to head to Disneyland for the Orange County AIDS walk. We volunteered at the IUCC booth and talked to folks about what our progressive community has to offer. It was great for the youth to be so involved in the promotion of the church and volunteer at such a meaningful event.



- Game Night & Overnight: This past weekend we had a wonderful time at the church. First was the all-church game night, where we shared in fellowship, food, and fun. All-church game nights are good opportunities for inter-generational conversation and meeting new people. After the game night, both Pastor Elizabeth and I stayed over in Plumer Hall with the youth. We baked cookies and brownies for our youth fundraiser, had a bonfire, watched a movie, and continued to build our youth community (with little sleep J)

Photo credits: Sarah

- Mexico Fundraising: We continue to raise funds for our upcoming trip to Mexico. Thank you to all who have contributed both financially and in thoughts and prayers, we could not do this without you.

Upcoming Events:

- June 10, 12:30-2:30: Bowling at Irvine Lanes (All youth, grades 4-12)
- June 21-26: Youth and Young Adult Mexico Trip

Peace,
Sarah

A Few Words About *Bon Vivant Dinners*

We gather in small groups of 6 to 10 at someone’s house, usually. Everyone brings something to contribute to a shared meal. The host decides the theme and gives assignments, and the host does not even have to cook! After all, the host has the responsibility of having a clean house and taking care of the dishes.



Foods do not need to be fancy. Hamburgers on the grill are perfectly acceptable.

F We’d love to welcome families, including families with small children.

The sign-up sheet should be out on the patio starting the first Sunday of the month. You can also let me know directly that you would like to participate: LMLindy@cox.net

Join in! Get to know some people in the congregation!
Hoping to see you on June 23!

Lindy Garber
Fellowship Chair



PS. All-Church Picnic at Mason Park will be on September 16, 2012. Put it on your calendar!

Scenes from the Women's Retreat

Photos: Anne Rosse





Confirmation Pictures – May, 2012

Photos by Scott Rychnofsky



Taelor Exelby



Ben Allen



Alaina Haynes & Annika Evensen



Annika & Taelor



The Allens



The Haynes



Congratulations!



Laurie & Sara McComb



Building communities, strengthening lives.

Through mobilizing community faith groups, Family Promise of Orange County works to assist homeless families to achieve sustainable independence, while offering hope, compassion, and preserving individual dignity.

Editor's Note: on Father's Day, in fulfillment of IUCC's commitment to support Family Promise, we will take a special offering for this worthy effort.

And, here is another support opportunity:

Time For A Celebration!

Family Promise is planning its first Benefit Dinner. The event will honor those families that have already graduated and help us to continue to provide support to parents and children who find themselves in tough situations. The event will be held at the beautiful and historic Wilcox Manor in Tustin.



Date: Saturday, July 28, 2012

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: 310 South Pasadena Ave, Tustin CA

Tickets:

\$75 Individually

\$125 - VIP Tickets: Meet the owners of Wilcox Manor, enjoy a private tour and cocktails at 6 pm.

\$550 Table of Eight

To RSVP - Call the FP office at [714-787-3487](tel:714-787-3487) or email Casey at ccrosbie@familypromiseoc.org

Mail Checks to:



Family Promise of Orange County
161 S Orange Street
Orange, CA 92866

We hope that you will be able to join us for an evening of merriment and entertainment!

Blessings,

Casey Crosbie
Executive Director

June Birthdays!

					1 Andy Griffith (b. 1926)	2 Dana Carvey (b. 1955)
3 Raphael Nadal (b. 1986)	4 Russell Brand (b. 1975)	5 Jill Biden (b. 1951)	6 Eric Lutz Jonathan Trout	7 Diana Owings	8 June Kenney Jeanne Villacorte Carl Whidden	9 Ken Wyant
10 Jerrod Anderson Reefa Hanenberger Lois Jaeckle	11 Jackie Ala	12 Melissa Gaskill Cliff Kenney Shirley Lorenz	13 Tim Allen (b. 1953)	14 Flag Day 	15 Ice Cube (b. 1969)	16 Judy Lucas
17 Joseph Villacorte Katharine Villacorte Emily Wetherby	18 Sara McComb	19 Howard Emery Joan Thompson	20 Lionel Richie (b. 1949)	21 Lester Ricks	22 Meryl Streep (b. 1949)	23 Selma Blair (b. 1972)
24 Mick Fleetwood (b. 1942)	25 Bruce McDonald	26 Lesley Wheland	27 Don Weir	28 Paul Bunyan Day	29 Gary Busey (b. 1944)	30 June Bates Sylvia McDonald

BULLYING Part 6: Yes We Can! Strategies to Reduce Bullying Behavior



We've spent quite a few months talking about the now well documented problem of bullying behavior, which can take the form of being a young person who uses bully behavior to meet needs or being a young person who confronts bully behavior and needs help and support for not falling "victim" to such behavior. I will be presenting a keynote address and a workshop this month at a conference here in Orange County on bullying. I was asked to present "proven strategies". I told the conference organizers that such a task was not really much of a challenge since the truth is that most kids do not become involved in bullying behavior! Knowing that this kind of unhealthy and unpleasant interaction is not part of every child's life is what gives us reasons to be hopeful about our ability to deal successfully with such behavior.

While bullying is certainly a challenge, it is important not to think of it as either mysterious or overwhelming. There are clear reasons why children fall into one or the other "end" of such interactions. Understanding the interpersonal dynamics of these relationships allows us to feel confident that children can be helped to handle the needs met by such relationships differently. We've discussed some of the strategies already, so we'll just re-

view these. Those we haven't discussed yet will get more attention in future columns. So, we begin now 16 proven strategies for reducing the risk of bullying behavior.

1. Speak the truth about the power of words and emotional "sticks and stones". In February and March we talked about the power of words, and the importance of distinguishing between good-natured "teasing" and ill-willed ridicule and taunting. One more reminder that one of the greatest gifts a parent can give their child is respect for the power of words, since communication is the underpinning of relationships, both healthy and destructive.



2. Empowering children. In April and May we considered learning to stand strong and feel strong. Standing strong involves building power or "influence" skills, learning to believe that one can, indeed, have something to say about the way other people treat

you. Parents were challenged to build some “spunk” into their children, even when that means they will be more challenging at home as well. Assertiveness is both a way of thinking and a way of presenting oneself to the world. Assertive children are taught that they deserve to be treated with respect, to have their personal boundaries respected, and have the right to say “no” when someone wants to hurt them, whether it’s an adult or another child. Assertive children also learn to stand up for themselves and you were encouraged to do some “role plays” with your kids so they could practice not being victims and going for help when necessary. While it is important to learn to “go along” and not expect to always get one’s way, it is equally important to learn to set limits and protect oneself. Learning this balance is not easy, and children cannot do it without adult guidance. Feeling strong involves feeling secure enough within yourself to not need others to be “weak”. Children who do not experience “power” or some degree of influence in their homes risk developing two dangerous extreme reactions: learned helplessness, where they learn to give up on thinking they have influence over others, or developing “compensatory reactions” where they develop aggressive and controlling behavior to compensate for feeling insecure about their ability to influence others.

We have 14 more strategies to outline and will begin next month to talk about “operating rules” in families and classrooms and how the way adults govern behavior within their spheres of influence can unintentionally set up possibilities for children not only to experience bullying but not to report it and thus put themselves at risk for physical and/or emotional distress that we are not helping with. Developmentally appropriate immaturity makes it hard for children and young people to handle such distress alone and thus our need to examine closely what we teach through our household and classroom rules. We’ll pick up here next time.



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