

October 2016
www.iucc.org
Editor: Tricia Aynes

Our all-church picnic on Sept. 18th was a fun event!



Photos by Tricia Aynes & Teri Houston

From the Pastor's Desk

the Rev. Dr. Paul Tellström



The *Faith and Works* Conference with Justin Lee was thought-provoking and forward thinking. Thank you for welcoming him so graciously on Sunday as well. Great thanks to Steve Swope for lining everything up and helping to make things unfold so smoothly with the help of the ONA Committee, the Adult Ed folks and our leaders.

I want to take some time in this space to invite you to a special Sunday coming up. Over the last year, I have been planning a few services that feature themes that I believe need to be handled with more depth than a single worship service can explore and feature voices that are different than my own. The idea for employing these Sundays in this manner is to theologize on the topic during worship, and then bring the public policy side of the issue to a forum after church where people are welcome to come and learn more, or feel that they have been filled by the worship experience alone.

So far, I have devoted a Sunday to the theme of mass incarceration with Delonte Gholston preaching, and David Gist leading a panel discussion afterwards. I also invited the Rev. Alexia Salvatierra as a guest preacher and panelist, along with other voices, including a "Dreamer," a young undocumented man who spoke on his experience of having one foot in and one foot out of this country.

On October 16, our services will be dedicated to looking at gun violence in our country and connecting it to our faith. The Rev. Anne Felton Hines, a Unitarian Universalist Minister, will join me in worship. Anne is recently retired from Emerson UU, where she served for 12 years. Since Sandy Hook, she has spoken and participated in various common sense gun legislation demonstrations

After church, members and guests are invited to Plumer Hall for a forum on Sensible Gun Policy. There will be sandwiches and something to drink, courtesy of the Advocates for Peace and Justice. Among our panelists will be:

- Jay Wachtel, Ex-ATF Agent, Criminal Justice Lecturer at Cal State Fullerton. Author, "Stalin's Witnesses."
- Ron Steiner, Professor of Law, Chapman University, IUCC member.
- The Rev. Anne Felton (see above).
- *There may be one more panelist TBA*

I hope to see you there!

Yours,
Pastor Paul



Recap of Second Annual Faith & Works Conference on Sept. 23-24

Photos and article by Tricia Aynes



IUCC's second annual Faith & Works Conference was a fitting conclusion to the celebration of our 25th anniversary of becoming an Open & Affirming church. From the delicious dinner provided

by the amazing Pat Sauter (and served with style by our wonderful youth pictured above!), to the beautiful music provided by Joni Baker and interns Angelica Rowell and Guillermo Gonzalez, to the riveting speaker and outstanding panelists, the weekend was full of truth and insight.

Our featured speaker was Justin Lee, Executive Director of the Gay Christian Network. Good-natured, passionate, and articulate, Justin spoke movingly about the need to maintain dialogue with conservative Christians. Justin grew up as a Southern Baptist who thought he was doing "the Lord's work" when he preached against homosexuality. It came as a shock to him and everyone else to realize he was gay. That background gave him a unique perspective into the mindset of conservative Christians.



"As I began to meet others on the LGBTQ spectrum and hear their stories," he said, "I realized my church had it all wrong – and if they got this wrong, what else did they get wrong?"

He listed three things that are the biggest threat to the work Progressive Christians are trying to do:

1. Complacency in our ranks. "Consider racism – it's a terrible shame that it's taken recent developments to get white people talking about it. Racism is our issue as well, and it's far from a done deal. A lot still needs to be done."

2. Appropriation of Jesus, the Bible, and Christianity. "We've surveyed people ages 16-29 to see what they think about modern Christianity. 91% of outsiders (non-churchgoers) use the term 'anti-gay.' It shows us that people as-

sociate Christianity with THEM (conservative Christians). We cannot let them appropriate our faith and say they are the true Christians, because they are NOT."

3. Polarizations in our culture and church. "We are in an echo chamber where we hang out with the people who agree with us and watch news programs that agree with us. This comes at the expense of never interacting with those who don't agree with us. It is important for us to work in those spaces – to go there and see what we can do with folks outside of our bubble. We need to fight the temptation to condescend – to judge and look down on others that disagree with us. I've had 'clobber passages' [from the Bible] used on me, and it just shuts down dialogue. Every person has room to grow, and we can't give up on folks – we need to be willing to sit down and talk with them."

"A lot of damage is still being done to LGBTQ folks in the name of Christ," he added. "People are living with depression and self-hate because of the way they're being treated. As Progressive Christians, we need to do something about this. One way is to engage conservatives in dialogue. People tell me that the work of the Gay Christian Network has had an impact – that people's minds have changed."

What DOES work? "Evangelicals are struggling with a 'victim narrative.' Kim Davis is a good example (the clerk who refused to issue marriage licenses to gay couples). The victim narrative is powerful in evangelical spaces. How do we get past it? It's important not to hammer on their core beliefs, because that doesn't work. Instead, focus on their misconceptions about LGBTQ folks. Telling our stories can help to undermine their whole victim narrative."

Lee provided some great tools for engaging in dialogue. "Seek to understand, then to be understood," he said. "If you listen to them, they'll listen to you. After awhile they will run out of stuff to say. If they feel they're being heard, they're more open to hearing something from you in return. If you try to be a friend instead of a salesperson, you become more influential in their life. If you listen, you can learn about them – what motivates them – and it will help you to reach them. You can figure out where they are on the spectrum and move them to the next place. We move people along the line by telling our stories. Once we have them to the solidarity space, we can move them over to affirmation. Remember – the most powerful tool you have is

Faith & Works article continued on Page 4

your story. Share your pain, define your terms, and disprove their misconceptions.”

But what do you do when you can't get your story out – if they keep interrupting you? “Pivot back to where you're trying to go,” Lee suggested. “Keep bringing the conversation back to what you want to say. Pick yourself up and get back to work. But remember that there has to be enough cognitive dissonance to get through to them – to humanize LGBTQ people for them. If you can just change one mind, it can have a ripple effect on others.”

Even though a lot of progress has been made on social justice issues, Justin has given some thought to what the next steps should be for Progressive Christians. “The first thing I thought of was - who are the underserved and misrepresented who need our support? The transgender community because we need to listen to their stories - there's a much bigger conversation that needs to take place within the community about gender itself; undocumented immigrants; Muslims -we need to be at the front of these conversations - you do not have to be a Muslim to stand up for these folks. Look for cultural scapegoats, the disenfranchised – it's our responsibility to stand up on their behalf.”



Our panelists (pictured above) focused on answering an audience member's question about how to open lines of communication with children and help them decide for themselves what they are. Here are some of their suggestions:

- “The most important thing is to create safe space for kids – to let them know you're there for them – let them set the terms and the labels. Kids have access to social media – that's something – but there's still a lack of religious LGBTQ voices.”
- “It's important to keep the dialogue open. I had to struggle with ‘Who am I?’ It's an internal process where each of us must determine who we are.”
- “Young people struggling with their sexuality feel so alone. All of us have a responsibility to let them know they can find an accepting community. Ground your children in the Gospels – if you stick to Jesus, there's nothing in there to make you feel excluded or unloved. He hung out with the people who needed friends. The

Gospels give us what we need to feel accepted as LGBTQ people.”

- “One of the things I love about today is the openness that can happen. We all have our own paths. The biggest lesson I've learned is that people do things when they're ready. For me, I needed to be totally honest about myself, to know that the path is between God and me, and to know that I could break free.”
- “Your gender identity is something you're born with and have to discover as you grow up.”

Special thanks to the Rev. Steve Swope, who did a fantastic job planning and organizing the conference, and to the many volunteers who made it such a worthwhile and memorable experience! ~ Tricia Aynes



Steve Swope shows Justin Lee his name on the plaque of IUCC guest speakers



Former IUCC intern Matthew Redrich was on hand to welcome his friend Justin Lee. L to R: Matthew Redrich, Chris Broskie, Justin Lee, Pastor Paul, and Steve Swope.



We were privileged to include a display of AIDS quilt replica panels as part of the conference.





Adult Education

by the Rev. Steve Swope

Thanks to SO many people, **Faith & Works** came off without a hitch. Nearly 60 people attended, and speaker Justin Lee was insightful and engaging. My deep gratitude to: Michael and Heidi for office assistance; Pat Sauter for a wonderful dinner Friday; Sarah Fiske-Phillips and four youth for dinner help and Aidan Mitchell for child care; John St. Marie and our vocalists and musicians; our panelists Lorraine Fox, David Schofield, Larry Gates, Alyssa Cornett, and Justin Massey; Brian Sadler for the AIDS Quilt panels and David Schofield for that connection; Ashley Herndon and Nancy Dreckman for publicity; numerous volunteers and Renae Boyum for scheduling them; Renae, Tommie Kozlov, the Adult Programs Ministry and Pastor Paul for suggestions, encouragement, and oh-so-important reminders!



Wednesday, Oct. 26
7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Dr. Lorraine Fox

Light refreshments will be served.

This month's **Midweek Salon** speaker will be our own Dr. Lorraine Fox. Lorraine will engage us in a consideration of "God Is Not a Laughing Matter...or Is She?" And due to the presidential-campaign debates, the date has changed to **Wednesday, October 26** – still at 7:00 p.m. in Plumer Hall.

Lorraine holds a doctorate in clinical psychology and a doctoral certificate in organizational development, and is a Certified Child Care Worker. She walked into the world of child and youth care in September 1964 and found her career home working with children and youth who were declared "emotionally disturbed" as a result of abuse and neglect.

She has been a direct service worker, a supervisor, a clinical director, an Executive Director, and an Assistant Professor. She was awarded the Outstanding Service Award for Excellence in Teaching by UC-Davis. Lorraine has published numerous scholarly articles, writes a monthly Parenting column for our church newsletter, and co-authored an internationally recognized training curriculum. She has appeared on radio and television in the U.S., Canada, and Australia [biographical information is from her website at <http://www.drloorrainefox.com>]

What is Midweek Salon?

Midweek Salon is an exciting series from the Adult Programs Ministry that is held monthly on select Wednesday evenings. Based on a TED Talk model, each Salon features a lively, knowledgeable speaker followed by a stimulating, interactive discussion and an opportunity for attendees to exchange ideas. The speakers are chosen from among our own IUCC members to address topics that are fascinating, intriguing and thought-provoking. Join us!

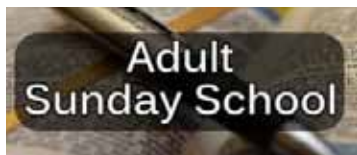


Comma Groups are beginning this month! Your group leader will be contacting you soon to set up your first group gathering. I'm excited that our study and fellowship together this year will help our entire church understand how Creation Justice might be a part of our future.

Bible Study



Bible Study continues every Tuesday at 4:00 pm, with Ken Wyant leading us through the Gospel of John.



Adult Sunday School will wrap up its study of Walter Brueggemann's book *Reality Grief Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks* in mid-October, and November and December will look at the biblical Christmas stories. And Bil Aulenbach asked me to note that conversations with members of the Muslim community (an outgrowth of our study of Islam back in July) will probably begin in late October.

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Building Project Update

by Anne Rosse, Chair of the Building Task Force

At our September 11 Special Congregational Meeting, this faith community thoughtfully reviewed and approved the proposed path forward for our building project. Yet again, this congregation has stepped up in generosity and stepped forward in faith. Thank you, IUCC, for your generous support and for embracing our future!

There were four main components to the proposed (and now approved) plan:

1. Re-scope the construction project into Phase 1a and Phase 1b
2. Remodel the current Church Office (in the Atwood Building) into a fourth preschool/Sunday School classroom
3. Take on approximately \$530,000 in new debt and up to \$350,000 in a bridge loan
4. Utilize a suite of financial strategies to afford the new debt service

As a result of the congregation's approval, IUCC will now move forward with Phase 1a construction planning. Please see the related article about the newly-formed Building Task Force that will work closely with our architects, domusstudio architects. Phase 1a, with an estimated cost of \$1.8 million, would add more than 2,600 new square feet of space and includes all of these campus enhancements:

- 3 flexible meeting rooms with operable partitions (for a total capacity of 80 people)
- 2 enclosed staff offices
- 1 patio for pastoral counseling and small group gatherings
- 2 staff work stations
- 1 future office to be used as flex work space for Church Office functions until Phase 1b is built
- 1 single-occupancy restroom
- Both outdoor (new) and indoor waiting areas
- A centrally located and convenient "coffee corner"
- Fellowship courtyard
- Frontage landscape improvements and widened driveway
- Signage/art installation fronting Alton Parkway that will evoke our mission and core commitments (artistic elements may represent Micah 6:8, interfaith welcome, Just Peace, Creation Justice and Global Mission)

- Free up existing Church Office space in the Atwood Building for other purposes

The goal is to be back in front of the congregation in May 2017 with construction bids and permits in hand, ready to break ground for the new building. Remodeling of the current Church Office into a fourth preschool/Sunday School classroom will begin soon after the new building is done and the church staff can be relocated into the new space.

With the congregation's decision to move forward with Phase 1a, we can now gratefully receive your campaign pledge payments. Pledges may be fulfilled over three years (through July 31, 2019). For those who can, we would deeply appreciate generous pledge completion by December 31, 2018 to help lessen our debt needs.

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

Please contact the Church Office or capitalcampaign@iucc.org if you have any questions, need additional information or would like assistance.

This new indoor and outdoor space will substantially improve our ability to live out our mission and ministry by supporting our commitment to be 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. At the same time, we strongly encourage our fellow congregants to keep their stewardship strong to support core staff and programs while IUCC is stepping forth in faith to begin its campus transformation.

Congratulations, IUCC, for taking another important step forward to embrace our future!

The Gifted Fees Program

by Anne Rosse, Chair of the Building Task Force

Did you know that 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? We are currently paying off those fees via twelve monthly payments. Once our contract fees are paid, 70% 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 Administration Board has designated Family Promise and Pilgrim Pines as our recipients. In late summer 2017, each organization will receive more than \$8000. What a fabulous way for IUCC to support these treasured entities!

As part of our commitment as a “support congregation,” we typically hold an annual fundraiser for Family Promise each June with the goal of raising \$5000. Because of the gifted fees program, in 2017 we will be able to be even more generous than usual. And, we won’t need to hold next year’s fundraising drive. As our congregation is meeting their campaign pledges, we can still very generously support Family Promise without the additional financial burden of that fundraiser.

Thank you, IUCC, for supporting Family Promise and Pilgrim Pines through this gifted fees program!

New Building Task Force is Formed

by Anne Rosse, Chair of the Building Task Force

To move forward with construction planning for Phase 1a of IUCC’s Master Plan (as approved by the congregation on September 11), a new Building Task Force (BTF) has been formed. Pending approval of a new contract with our architects by the Administration Board, the BTF will begin meeting soon with domusstudio architecture. The goal is to be back in front of this congregation in May 2017 with bids and permits in hand, ready to break ground on the new building.

Task force members represent the congregation and are your eyes/ears/voices for this project. They are: Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Cindy O’Dell, Jim Raver, Anne Rosse (chair), Pat Sauter, Michael Spindle and Pastor Paul. Additional members may be added in the coming weeks. Contact any task force member with your building questions and be sure to stay tuned for regular BTF progress reports.

Photos from Special Congregational Meeting on September 11



Five of our youth led the opening prayer



Moderator Renae Boyum calls on a questioner



Treasurer Mark Allen got a nice shout-out from his kids

Photos by Tricia Aynes and Sarah Fiske-Phillips

Moderator's Column

by Renae Boyum



When our son, Andy, was in preschool, the children in the class were asked what it was their parents did for a living - what job did they have? As was to be expected, some children said their moms or dads were doctors, or worked in an office, or worked at home. When the time came for Andy to speak up, he said "Well, I'm not sure what my Mom does, but I think she goes to meetings!" That was said over 30 years ago about

me and it still is true today - I go to meetings!

As moderator of IUCC, I go to many meetings. But I'm not the only IUCC member and friend who does that. I'd like to highlight a few of the multitude of meetings that are part of the fiber and fabric of this marvelous community of faith.

The Administration Board meets the third Monday of every month. At these meetings, we discuss budgets, personnel, building needs, ongoing financial needs and strategies - all those topics that fall under the "business" side of our church. Even though it's about business, the members of the Administration Board reflect on these topics with both their hearts and minds. All of the discussions and actions lead to a church that is well-run and managed and cared for.

The Ministries Board meets the second Monday of most months. At these meetings, we discuss the upcoming calendar of events for this busy church, programs and activities that are about to happen, programs that are still in the "imagination" stage, and how to publicize and get volunteers for the myriad of programs that are the lifeblood of our church. The members of the Ministries Board also reflect on these topics with both their hearts and minds. All of the discussions and planning lead to a church that is vibrant, meaningful, and cared for.

In addition to these two "big" meetings, there are countless ministry and committee meetings: Advocates for Peace & Justice, Mission & Service, Stephen Ministry, the Music Ministry, the Ministry for New Member Development, the Green Faith Committee -- to name just a few. All of the meetings have enthusiastic leadership and energetic members and friends of IUCC in attendance who are ready to make sure that this progressive Christian community puts our mission statement into action:

Irvine United Congregational Church is radically inclusive, declaring to neighbors and strangers alike. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. We celebrate the Creator's diversity as we worship God and grow in our faith. Guided by God's unconditional love as taught by Jesus Christ, we see ourselves as children of one God, brothers and sisters of all people. As servants of God, we take responsibility to act with compassion, to work for peace and justice, and to share the joy of Christian community.

Behind the scenes, there are other meetings that take place. Staff meetings led by Pastor Paul are a vital part of making sure that all is ready, not just for Sunday morning, but throughout the week. About once a month, the Coordinating Council meets. The Coordinating Council is made up of Pastor Paul, the Moderator, the Chair of the Administration Board (Dave Schofield) and the Chair of the Ministries Board (Ken Wyant). We meet to make sure that the two boards are in contact with each other and aware of the "big" picture here at IUCC. We discuss immediate areas of concern and long range needs. All of this is done in a confidential setting to ensure that there is open and candid discussion about the challenges and opportunities that are present and yet to come.

One of the other "behind the scenes" meetings is the Pastoral Relations Committee. This committee is established by the Bylaws of IUCC and does the following:

- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be a personal support group to the Pastor(s) and shall serve as confidential communication between the Pastor(s) and the Congregation.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall consist of 3 corporate members. The members shall be chosen jointly by the Pastor and the Moderator. Neither the Moderator, the Chair of Ministries or the Chair of Administration may serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall not operate from a formal agenda, and shall not keep minutes.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall make their membership known to the Congregation and invite members to express themselves with respect to the Pastoral Leadership.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet at least quarterly with the Pastor to provide a forum for conscious two-way communication and to review any concerns of the Congregation or of the Pastor.

Current members of the Pastoral Relations Committee are Howard Emery, Steve Goetz, and Susie Lang.

As you can tell, there are many ways to make your voice heard and to share your talents here at IUCC -- I hope you will consider doing both of the above!

In faith and community, *Renae*



GreenFaith Team

Committed to Environmental Justice



Blind Spots

by the Rev. Dr. Terry LePage, IUCC member, temporarily relocated

*“You are not required to finish the work.
Neither are you free to desist from it.”
-from Pirkei Avot, in the Jewish Mishnah*

Helped by the soundtrack of the musical *Hamilton* and my current history-filled setting near DC, the founding fathers are coming to life for me. They were real people, real characters, and politics has always been a nasty business.

Some of our founding fathers’ ‘blind spots’ are glaringly obvious. “How could you?” it is tempting to ask Thomas Jefferson, that eloquent advocate of human equality, whose table-waiting slaves bore an eerie resemblance to their master. He might talk about owning a plantation that needed slaves to sustain it, and debts, and plans for posthumous manumission, and just not knowing how to live any other way... “Really? How could you justify enslaving your own children?”

What are our own blind spots? Two hundred years from now, looking over the sunken ruins of Florida and our coastlines, our descendants will ask us bitterly, “How could you... drown our planet with global warming from fossil fuels?” And I would stammer, if I were around to reply, “I drove a Prius. I went carless for years at a time. I turned the thermostat down a notch. And I didn’t know how to live any other way...” They will compute the million plus tons of carbon dioxide emissions I produced in my lifetime (over 150 billion gallons, if you’re counting), and say: “Really? How could you justify flooding the coastal homes of over a billion people on this planet?”

Our blind spots make virtue a chimera. What to do? Guilt paralyzes. Humility and mercy remain. I want to remember this when climate refugees come seeking higher ground.

~ Terry LePage for the GreenFaith team (Vivian Johnson, Judy Curry, Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, and Eileen Vincent)

Green Tips

by Miss Lily

Dear Readers,

My niece is harvesting the fruits and vegetables of her labors. Over the summer, she has grown tomatoes, celery, eggplant, and nasturtiums. She tends to them every day.



She has become creative in making summer salads. She combines fresh “baby girl” tomatoes with parsley. Friends cook eggplant dishes. Nothing equals the taste of home-grown fruits and vegetables.

Now, my niece is preparing for a winter garden. She will grow broccoli and pumpkins. She mainly grows the vegetables for their beauty. Yet, they are tasty, too.

Miss Lily



There is a shocking study by noted author and Professional Engineer Craig Hover that shows what our future will be if we ignore global warming, and how we can make the change to a livable future. Please come to hear his talk and slide show. His book, *“A World to Come Home To - Ending Global Warming in our Lifetime”* will also be available for purchase at a discounted price. The date is November 12, 2016 at 2:00 p.m., and the place is the Unitarian Church of Anaheim located at 511 South Harbor Blvd., Anaheim. You will not want to miss this presentation! It is one of a kind! Please come! All are welcome!

~ submitted by Vivian Johnson

IUCC News & Events



SAVE THE DATE! TRUNK OR TREAT

SUNDAY * OCT. 30 * 12:15 p.m.

Kids are invited to come in costume for this family-friendly event featuring trick-or-treating to various decorated car trunks in our own IUCC parking lot. Volunteers should plan for 30 children.



Jean Arce
Bil Aulenbach
Judy Bateman
Renaey Boyum
Torrey Capobianco
Lauren Dobbert
Kristjana Gailiun
Laurie Gaskill
Skip Gaskill
Liz Henderson
Steven King
Roger Laule
Don Mansell
Melanie McDonald
Brian Osborne

Eddie Padilla
Brian Pearcy-Schofield
Penny Portillo
Becky Roach
Susan Sayre
David Schofield
Dave Smith
Michelle Stover
Craig Tyrl
Dale Vaughan
Connie Weir
Heidi Willcox
Glenda Wyant
Allie Zane



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Wednesday * Oct. 5 * 6:30 p.m.

Join us for fun & fellowship! Contact Pat Sauter for details.



ELECTION 2016 BALLOT MEASURE REVIEW

Sunday * Oct. 9 * 12:15 p.m.

Sponsored by the Advocates for Peace and Justice, Dr. Keith Boyum (Political Science professor emeritus, CSU Fullerton) will lead the review, and there will be time for sharing views and asking questions.



TROOP 602 PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Saturday * Oct. 15 * 8:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Troop 602 will be hosting their inaugural Citizenship Breakfast to encourage people to be active participants in civic matters. The cost of the breakfast is \$7.00 which will include pancakes, sausage, and juice.



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.



SAFER GUN POLICY FORUM

Sunday * Oct. 16 * 12:30 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist minister, the Rev. Anne Hines, will join Pastor Paul for both services and will be the keynote speaker at our forum after the 11:00 a.m. service. The forum topic will be the current state of gun violence in our country. Rev. Hines spoke at the Sandy Hook Vigil at the Federal Building in December 2013, and has since participated in various common sense gun legislation demonstrations. Please plan to attend this informative and compelling presentation on a very timely issue.

Progressive Christianity at IUCC

by Bill Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

I am hoping to make this column a monthly feature in the IUCC newsletter because I think it is important that we, in this church family, have an understanding of why we call ourselves “Progressive.” Our previous pastor, Fred Plumer, is the President and Acting Director of The Center for Progressive Christianity located in Gig Harbor, WA (see progressivechristianity.org). Almost all of the speakers we have had at IUCC over the years would be called “progressive,” and these include Bishop Spong, Marcus Borg, and Dominic Crossan as well as the speakers from “The Jesus Seminar on the Road.”

I became a progressive Christian even before there was such a grouping, quite by “accident.” (A pun!) It happened on a beautiful Friday afternoon in Berkeley where I was in my second year of the Episcopal seminary. I was with my good friend Brad with whom I had served in the Marine Corps. Each of us was on our own motorcycle and three blocks from the seminary, when a fire truck answering a call broadsided us. Brad was killed instantly and I was badly banged up.

On my second day in the hospital, a priest from the seminary came into my room and asked, “What did you and Brad do so bad that you deserved this?” I couldn’t believe my ears. I ordered him out of my room, told him never to come back, and called the dean of the seminary to ask if what that priest suggested was true. He said it wasn’t, and that day, I became a “Progressive Christian,” even though there was no such thing. This means that on that day I decided that there was no theistic god up there who ruled the world like a Master Puppeteer and who ordered a fire engine to run over Brad and me so that he could have two Episcopal seminarians up there. (Someone actually suggested that to me.)

This caused a rather large problem for me as a seminarian, because the church’s theology, prayers, dogma, doctrine and traditions are all built on the foundation stone of a theistic god. I was and still am not interested in serving such a god. However, I decided to stay in seminary hoping that with another year and a half until graduation and then ordination, that issue would resolve itself. It didn’t, but I found a way to circumvent this dichotomy: I decided to call God, “Creation.” I liked that word. It had no gender and made God so BIG that Creation could not become involved in the minutia of our daily living. There is no question in my mind that there is a creating “force” in the universe but I can’t de-

scribe it any more than I can describe the universe. I just call it “Creation.” The great theologian Paul Tillich calls this force, “The ground of all being.” I like that too. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups call this force a Higher Power with no attempt to define it. All this works for me because one of my core beliefs is the church’s teachings about “Free Will.” That means that we are born into freedom and have the ability to pick and choose what we want to do with our lives. Free Will eradicates the idea of a Master Puppeteer up there, running our daily lives.



I find it amazing what happens to the dogma, doctrine, theology and traditions of the church when one promotes this “force” to be in charge of the whole universe. It’s at this stage that one can then meet the real or historical Jesus.

(I need a disclaimer here. At every worship service we say, and I never grow tired of hearing it, that, “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” What that means is that each person can develop her or his theology and you will still be accepted as a member of our church family.)

With that in mind, allow me to share with you the final findings of our five week course (in August) entitled: “Charting the 21st Century Reformation.”

CHARTING THE 21st CENTURY REFORMATION THE THESES:

1. Post the “Eight Points of Progressive Christianity” on all bulletin boards and remind our church family of who we are in all newsletters and church bulletins.
2. Stress and continue to “Welcome everyone, no matter where they are on their life’s journey.”
3. Offer children, youth and adult educational opportunities which continue to promote Progressive Christianity.
4. Stay vigilant in ascertaining that our prayers, hymns and music promote Progressive Christianity.
5. Promote the God of the Bible and of our traditions to be THE GOD of the entire Universe, not just earth.

6. We need to admit that we cannot define this GOD primarily because we cannot define the vastness of the universe. Here are some ideas of what to call the “promoted” god: THE GOD of the Universe or “Creation” or “The Ground of All Being” or “The Higher Power.”
7. The Bible was written by men who wished to express their understanding of how God functioned in their society. Almost all the authors of the different books of the Bible were Jewish, so one cannot read these books literally but they must be read through Jewish “eyes.”
8. The nativity stories were not written to tell us how Jesus was actually born but were written 55 to 70 years after Jesus died to stress the idea that whenever and wherever his birth, it was/is a very special birth, even almost 2,000 years after he died.
9. The Resurrection: Paul, Mark (original version which stops at 16:8) nor 18 of the other new-found gospels include a resurrection story. Matthew, Luke/Acts and John all tell different resurrection stories. They were never told as stories that actually happened but are “religious history” told to share a great metaphor: Jesus gives us the tools to change a negative experience into a positive one.
10. When one reads the Bible through Jewish eyes not only does it make more sense but when one puts the dogma, doctrine and traditions of the past 2,000 years into the annals of “church history,” one can then meet the real Jesus and his powerful eternal truths...love (agape) self, neighbor and Creation in order to lead life to the fullest.
11. The miracles in Bible are not to be interpreted as actual happenings but as a stories which have to be interpreted by a process using the Hebrew word “Midrash” which means interpretation. Within each miracle story one finds the main point of the story.
12. Once the theistic god is promoted to be THE GOD of the universe and once Jesus is demoted to a fellow human being who had a prophetic message the following dogma and doctrine can be put into the annals of the history of Christianity: The Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin birth, the doctrine of the Atonement, Judgment, Pearly Gates, a Celestial Report Card, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, a Divine Plan, the Second Coming, Jesus as the Sacrificial Lamb, all the Creeds and almost all others of which you can think.
13. The ethical system for Progressive Christians is based on Jesus quoting Deuteronomy (6:5) and Leviticus (19: 5) which is referred to as the Great Commandment which paraphrased says: You shall love Creation with all your heart, all your mind and all your being and you shall love your neighbor as well as yourself. Then Jesus said, This Commandment shall supersede all the laws and the prophets.

14. The foundation stone of our faith is Agape (love), which includes unconditional love and acceptance of every human being (whether we like them or not), justice for all, forgiveness for everyone and anything, all culminating in caring for “the least of these my fellow human beings...” (Matthew 25:40)
15. Every human being is responsible for his or her own theology and life (see Thesis # 2). The Church can only offer possibilities. Each person must work it out for themselves.

The Eight Points of Progressive Christianity

By calling ourselves Progressive Christians, we mean we are Christians who...

1. *Believe that following the path and the teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;*
2. *Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of the many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;*
3. *Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to: * Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, * Believers and agnostics, * Women and men, * Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, * Those of all classes and abilities;*
4. *Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;*
5. *Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;*
6. *Strive for peace and justice among all people;*
7. *Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;*
8. *Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion and selfless love.*



Photos from NMI Luncheon

by Nancy Dreckman

The Newport-Mesa-Irvine (NMI) Interfaith luncheon held at IUCC on Sept. 21 featured the police chiefs from Newport Beach, Costa Mesa, and Irvine.



Felicity Figueroa and Farrah Khan registered guests at the luncheon.

All three police departments have chaplains & rabbis to assist people in need.



The Police Chiefs of Newport Beach, Irvine, and Costa Mesa talked with the visitors about their jobs & departments.



IUCC has booth at South OC's Walk to End Alzheimer's

Photos by Nancy Dreckman

Representing IUCC's Ministry of Communications, co-chair Nancy Dreckman staffed a booth at the South Orange County Walk To End Alzheimer's at the Great Park on Saturday, September 17th. She gave away pocket prayer shawls in memory or in honor of loved ones with Alzheimer's disease, which association members call "the long goodbye."

Held annually in more than 600 communities nationwide, the Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's® is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research (from their website: <http://act.alz.org>).

Pictured in bottom photo is Jessica Hughston, Director of the Alzheimer's Association Walk.



Powerful Parenting

Dr. Lorraine Fox

HOLDING UP THE MIRROR: THE GIFT



Last month we began our discussion of providing “feedback” to help someone improve their self-awareness. We established the need for courage, commitment, caring about the other person, and the necessity that they trust our intentions for holding up a verbal “mirror” that will allow them to take a look at themselves. Courage is required because, more often

than not, looking at the mirror provided by someone else reveals someone different than we think we are, or different than we want to be. However, if no one ever cares about us enough to risk the discomfort of this process, we can continue for our entire lives with an idea about who we are that is not entirely accurate, which can interfere with all relationships.

The earlier someone learns to accept that sometimes we have to be open to the fact that we don’t always know how we are impacting others, the easier it will be for them to form comfortable relationships with friends, teachers, and parents. For this reason, the best time to begin providing feedback for people we care about is when they are children. If this is not done, it becomes more and more difficult later to give new information, or to hear new information.

We are outlining the necessary “conditions” for feedback to be effective, and we began with establishing that trust in the person providing the feedback is necessary. It is hard for people to grow up not understanding why others react to them as they do, and this is our motivation for feedback. The receiver needs to trust that our motive is to help them understand why others respond as they do to their behavior.

The second condition is this: Feedback belongs to the recipient, not the giver. That is, deciding what to do about feedback is entirely up to the person who gets the feedback. The person who gives the feedback is providing an “opportunity” to see in oneself what others see, with a clear understanding that we can never “make” someone accept feedback, and therefore we can never “make” someone

change. Although it is frequently unwelcome, feedback is a wonderful gift: A “mirror” to see ourselves through the eyes of others, and thus to decide whether we want to change something about ourselves in order to get better responses.

If you are the person who decides to give feedback to another person – child, spouse, co-worker friend – it’s important to keep in mind that those receiving feedback owe us nothing, and may or may not make the changes we want or suggest.

If you have gotten feedback from someone else you may have noticed that sometimes they become cranky with us when we don’t change in the way they want us to. They will say something like: “I’ve talked to you about this before,” with the implication that since they’ve mentioned something about you that bothers them they expected you to do something about it. Parents do the same thing with their children: “How many times do we have to talk about this?!”

Well, unhappily, you may or may not talk about something often, but deciding how one wants to be is the privilege of each individual person. None of us has to be as others want us to be. So, feedback is not meant to cause other people to change. Feedback is meant to give people information so that they can decide whether

they want to change if they are unhappy with how others are responding to them.

An important way to keep the uncomfortable interaction more tolerable is to let the person you are giving feedback to know that you understand that it will be entirely up to them whether to accept your feedback or not. You will then let them know what you will do if they do not change. In other words, I am going to tell you how I “see” your behavior, and then tell you why I respond as I do. You can then “hear” (believe) me, or not “hear” (believe) me. Depending on how troublesome a behavior is, you will then communicate the implications for your relationship if someone decides not to change. The “gift” is that you are open and clear, and giving another person a chance for “insight.”

