

March 2023 | www.iucc.org | Join us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)!

OPEN AND AFFIRMING · JUST PEACE · GLOBAL MISSION · CREATION JUSTICE/GREEN FAITH

IUCC celebrated Fat Sunday on Feb. 19 with a band, delicious king cake pastries, and colorful Mardi Gras beads!



Several lucky folks found "babies" in their King Cakes!



Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes

Why the Preschool needs your financial help

by Tricia Aynes
Photos courtesy of Keith Boyum

Our wonderful preschool has been serving the community of Irvine for many decades. Through the years, it has grown and evolved into an important source of revenue for our congregation as well. Now that we have completed our initial “refresh” project (scraping and refinishing the ceilings, adding beautiful new lighting, and painting the walls a bright and cheerful white), it has become obvious that further work is needed to finish the job. Since the shutdown, our preschool is still not back to its full enrollment capacity, and we need to do more to attract new families to our facility. We depend on the income from the preschool to help fund our many programs and services, and its success is vital to the financial security of our congregation.

On February 18, our three most involved volunteers from Phase 1 of the Refresh Project (Mark Willcox, Paul Feick, and Tom Mason) were kind enough to provide members of the Child Care Committee with a walk-through to point out what still needs to be done to improve and update our facility to make it safer and more attractive to prospective families.



Cabinets are too small and structurally failing



What you probably can't see from the small photos above is the sad condition of the cabinets, which are very old, small, and of poor quality to begin with. They are woefully inadequate for the kind of frequent usage they get in a busy preschool. They are in bad enough shape that they won't accept new hinges, so some of the doors hang at a slant. We are looking to replace them with much nicer and more durable birch wood cabinets (see photo at left) that will handle the rigors of heavy wear and tear.

Since storage space is a treasured commodity in our preschool, we are looking to reconfigure and expand our cabinetry so it goes higher (to the ceiling) and wider (from wall to wall in certain places). This will greatly add to our storage capacity and enable us to dispose of the large metal cabinets found in various spots throughout the facility.



Sinks at wrong height for preschoolers

What you can see clearly in the photos at left and right are that the sinks throughout the facility are at adult height. To accommodate our little ones, the teachers have improvised with portable wooden stools to enable children to reach the sinks. This is a concern because the stools pose a risk of accidents. We'd like to lower the sinks to child height so we can dispense with the stools and make things safer for our little ones.



Article continues on Page 3

Refresh article continued from Page 2



While you may not be able to tell from the photos above, the current linoleum floors are old. Our records show they were installed 19 years ago. They are already well past the usual lifetime of such floors. We'd like to replace them with composite laminate planks in three of the classrooms. Note: We don't need to replace the flooring in what used to be the administrative office (it is fairly new), the bathrooms (ditto), or in the entry/hallway (which is carpeted).

Why should this matter to us?

Donating money for this worthwhile project makes a lot of sense. When our preschool is doing well, so are we! When parents come to visit, they are looking at aesthetics, cleanliness, and environment. In an affluent area like Irvine, parents notice things like this, and it can impact their enrollment decision. They have choices, and we want them to choose our preschool. These improvements will help us stay competitive. They are an investment in our future!

Why now? Why not wait?

We have great volunteers ready to pitch in and help finish the job - we're on a roll and we have lots of momentum! We need to move forward as soon as possible, and it would be a huge help if congregants could contribute towards the cost of materials.

What is the anticipated cost?

We are looking at about \$29,000 to finish Phase 2, which is a fraction of what it would cost us to hire a contractor. The Admin Board has approved this expenditure from the ECC reserves, but we are hoping to replenish that outlay as soon as possible through donations.

How can you help?

Sponsor Phase Two at the ECC! There are several ways to help. You can make a general donation in support of the project by clicking here: <https://www.iucc.org/portal/donate-2/> (just be sure to complete the memo section to let us know that it's for the Refresh Project). You may also choose to memorialize your support in a different way by choosing to contribute to a countertop, cabinet, or section of flooring (you can even sign your donation of flooring before it gets installed so your name lives on in the actual new floor!). On Sunday mornings, you can check out the donation display board created by Pastor Sarah to choose a piece of the project to support and drop off your check then:

- 5 sq ft flooring (\$25)
- 10 sq ft flooring (\$50)
- 20 sq ft flooring (\$100)
- 50 sq ft flooring (\$250)
- 100 sq ft flooring (\$500)
- 200 sq ft flooring (\$1000)
- Countertop (\$250)
- Half of Cabinet (\$1000)



However you choose to support Phase 2 of the Preschool Refresh Project, we thank you!

From the Senior Pastor

by the Rev. Dr. Sarah Halverson-Cano, Senior Pastor



The Season of Lent has begun and with it comes a new series “A Covenant of the Heart” as we begin a journey in relationship with ourselves, our God and one another. We’ll be thinking about what it means to be in holy relationship. In many ways our relationships are dictated by unspoken and even unconscious agreements we make with ourselves and

others and maybe even with God. So, this Lenten Season we’ll focus on how the agreements we make with ourselves can have an effect on the relationships we have with others. Pastor Craig and I invite you to join us on this journey as we explore Miguel Ruiz’ “The Four Agreements” and how taking on this practice of agreement-making with ourselves may lead us to more fulfilling relationships with others, our God, and even each of us personally with ourselves. I hope you’ll join us for the journey!

As I reflect on the short month of February, I’m shocked at how much we managed to pack in. We’re four weeks into our separate services. Each service has had changes: first service has seen a return of some favorite traditions and songs, while second service has taken on a new style and aims to be shorter in length. We hope you find both services to reflect our progressive Christian faith with the wonderful music you’ve come to expect at IUCC and the same heart for justice, invitation to think, and willingness to be open to wherever we are on our journeys.

We welcomed lots of guests in February starting with Evolution Sunday as we celebrated the co-existence of faith and science. UCI geneticist Adolfo Sequiera joined us to explain his work. I found it particularly interesting that while there is no evidence of Adam, there is a mitochondrial Eve - the first woman and our common ancestor! The following week we had a celebration of Scout Sunday, perhaps our best yet! At first service Girl Scouts and Scouts from Scouting BSA led us in an interfaith service, then at second service we had a conversation with our own Paul Strasma to hear his personal journey with Boy Scouts and how it has intersected with the transformation of Scouting over the last decade. Both services were amazing! Then the following week we celebrated Fat Sunday where our own David Carruthers brought in an incredible band to get us in the spirit and then the saints came marching out to coffee hour as they paraded us straight to our last chance for Kings Cake until next year! Ultimately, that led us to our powerful Ash Wednesday service and the final Sunday of February which began our first Sunday of Lent.

And here we are, beginning March to journey our way to the cross together. We have a lot to look forward to this month! Our Preschool Refresh Phase 2 is set to begin with flooring and cabinetry getting installed over the next several months. Our hometown heroes Paul Feick and Mark Willcox have been working hard with Buildings and Grounds Chair, Tom Mason, presenting a plan with excellent quality of cabinetry that will last the next 20 years. These updates will not only make the preschool look better so that we can attract new students, but also be safer and more user-friendly. We’ll be lowering sinks to kid height so they don’t have to climb to wash their hands which helps decrease our risk of falls. Our oldest cabinets have been here since we opened our second-hand building 40 years ago, and the newer ones were made of MDF and are literally crumbling before our eyes. The new storage will be a lot more functional.

You can read more about Phase 2 on pages 2 and 3 and perhaps even consider sponsoring this phase of the refresh. Our volunteers have already saved us \$30,000 in labor (that’s right, my jaw dropped too!) but the quality flooring and wood cabinetry is expensive. If you can help pitch in to defray those costs we’d all appreciate it. We’ll be “Blessing the Boards” on March 26 and hope you’ll donate to help us “ground our kids in love” as we literally lay that love at their feet! You can sign your name to the bottom of a plank and your plank will be installed and become a part of IUCC’s foundation of love. So much gratitude to all of our volunteers who have helped us get this far, to the donors who have already given (we have about \$4000 so far), and to everyone on the childcare committee along with our preschool staff who have given their hearts to our childcare center. I’m so thankful at what transpires when people come together and give of themselves in time, talent and treasure! Thank you all so much! I can’t wait to see it when it’s done!

And if you feel like you’re missing out on doing something around the church, don’t worry - we’ve got you covered. On March 19 we’ll have an all church work-day and we invite you to join in! Sorry, no installing of cabinetry that day – but you can help clean and organize the church!

Finally, save the date of Friday, March 31, and check your e-blasts for an invitation, because we’re hoping to have our first Drag Queen Bingo Night! It should be a lot of fun and a great night out so invite your friends! We’ll let you know when it’s officially a go – but for now, get your bingo daubers ready!

I hope you lean into relationships this month, with your family and friends, with our IUCC faith community, with your God and yes, even with yourself. May it be a joyful, reflective, and growth inducing journey as we walk the path of Lent together.

Yours along the journey,
Pastor Sarah

'Prayer, Epiphanies and Other Holy Surprises' is the theme for annual Women's Retreat

Registration begins March 16 for the May 5-7 retreat



Women from IUCW and their friends are invited to attend the annual May 5-7 retreat at Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference Center near Yucaipa. IUCW member Jerri Davenport, who holds a Masters of Divinity with an emphasis on religion and creativity, will offer activities and conversation around "Prayer, Epiphanies and Other Holy Surprises."

Registration will be available online beginning March 16. Registration and more information will also be available on the church patio Sundays from March 19 to April 12.

Participants are encouraged to sign up for the full Friday evening through Sunday morning retreat to take advantage of the complete program, other activities and meals. Saturday only and Saturday-Sunday morning options are also available.

- **Friday-Sunday will cost \$175** and includes five meals, comfortable accommodations and the full program, including time for conversation and fun activities on Saturday night. Plan to arrive by 5 p.m. May 5 and leave about 11 a.m. May 7, following an outdoor service.
- **Saturday-Sunday will cost \$150.** Plan to arrive by 9 a.m. for check-in. The cost covers three meals, activities and accommodations.

- **Saturday only will cost \$140** and includes two meals and the program. Participants are welcome to stay for the evening social activities.

In addition to the program, there will be opportunities to visit the nearby Oak Glen Nature Preserve (<https://wildlandsconservancy.org/preserves/oakglen>), participate in small group workshops and yoga, or spend time reading, napping, talking or exploring Pilgrim Pines or the nearby apple pie shops.

The retreat needs at least 20 women to sign up. People are welcome to help underwrite the retreat financially, whether or not they can attend.

For more information, talk to a member of the organizing committee: Laura Long, Lorraine Fox, Pat Sauter, Marilyn Smith or Cindy O'Dell.

Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference Center (<https://www.pilgrimpinescamp.org/>) is part of the Southern California-Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ. Their mission is to provide an inclusive and safe environment for personal and spiritual growth and encourage care and concern for all of God's creation.

See Registration Form on following page.

Have questions or need a response? Contact Laura Long at iuccwomen22@gmail.com

“Prayer, Epiphanies, and Other Holy Surprises” IUCC Women’s Retreat at Pilgrim Pines

May 5–7, 2023

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME:

PHONE:

ADDRESS:

CELL:

CITY/ZIP

EMAIL:

- \$175 — Entire retreat (Friday evening – Sunday morning)
- \$150— Saturday/Sunday only
- \$140 — Saturday only (no overnight)
- I plan to register and pay online (no later than April 14, 2023)
- I am paying by check payable to IUCC, and memo: Women’s Retreat (DUE BY APRIL 14, 2023)*
- I’d like to make a contribution to help with retreat expenses: _____
- I would like to talk with someone about financial assistance to attend.
- I would like to room with _____

VEGETARIAN: YES or NO (Please circle)

Do you have other dietary restrictions? (Please specify):

CARPOOLING:

1. Can you help with carpooling? YES or NO
2. If yes, how many passengers can you take? _____
3. What day/time will you plan to leave Orange County? _____

Have you been fully vaccinated? Yes _____

Refund policy:

CANCELLATIONS MADE ON OR BEFORE APRIL 13, 2023, WILL RECEIVE A REFUND OF \$110 ONLY;

NO REFUNDS WILL BE GIVEN FOR CANCELLATIONS AFTER APRIL 15, 2023

Why Not Join the Choir?



Do you love to sing?

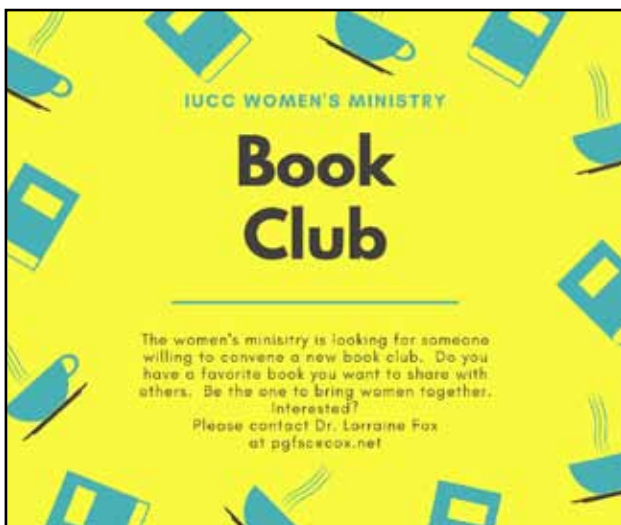
It is never too late to join the IUCC Chancel Choir under the leadership of Dr. Chris Peterson. This powerful ministry brings friendship, fellowship, and sacred music to our sanctuary. All are welcome! The only requirement is that you love to sing.

The choir rehearses Thursday nights at 7:15pm, prepares two major concerts a year, and participates in Sunday worship and other special occasions.

Want to join? Contact Dr. Chris Peterson at chris@iucc.org

Convening a New Book Club

The Women's Ministry is looking for someone willing to convene a new book club. Do you have a favorite book you want to share with others? Be the one to bring women together! Interested? Contact Dr. Lorraine Fox at pgfsc@cox.net.



All-Church Work Day



Feeling energetic?

Join us on Sunday, March 19, after second service for an All-Church Work Day! We'll be cleaning, organizing, and purging unnecessary items from our current storage areas as well as addressing other needs. Watch your e-blasts for more information!



- | | | | |
|------|------------------|------|------------------|
| 3/20 | Anne Aulenbach | 3/24 | Xin Li |
| 3/07 | Mahmoud Baghbani | 3/10 | Lauren Louie |
| 3/10 | Wayne Banwell | 3/26 | Barbara Moss |
| 3/11 | Daniel Blackburn | 3/16 | Jan Osborne |
| 3/16 | Erin Burke | 3/17 | Fred Plumer |
| 3/27 | David Carruthers | 3/24 | Tom Ruiz |
| 3/10 | Dylan Dobbert | 3/01 | Ruth Sandberg |
| 3/16 | Anders Evensen | 3/26 | Melissa Sokol |
| 3/11 | Suzie Feick | 3/25 | Jordan Willcox |
| 3/10 | Lynette Herndon | 3/29 | Nicholas Willcox |
| 3/11 | Panee Hsiang | | |

Hospitality

by Alex Ingal



Make 2023 the year you volunteer to assist with coffee hour! Coffee hour will happen without you, but WITH you it could be much easier, and with more variety of snacks.

Even if you are not ready to commit, please take time to visit <https://iucc.org/coffee-hour/> and read about the different ways you can assist in the future.

J. Alex Ingal
Hospitality Chair

Calling All Collaborators!

by Alex Ingal

The Communications team is excited this month to be working on designing a streamlined version of the IUCC website to mirror current style expectations! We are looking for those who have creative ideas or input. If you have seen a website that you like the looks of (or even a specific page) please share it with us so we can use it as a reference when planning the new website layout.



In addition, if there are pages/content that don't exist now but would be good to include on our new website, we would like to hear about those too. As there are over 100 pages currently attached to the IUCC website, if there is a 'hidden' page that has useful information on it (example, how to crochet hearts), send us that IUCC URL so we can make sure that information makes the move to the new platform style.

Thank you for your assistance!
J. Alex Ingal, Communications Co- Chair

Ministry With Young People

Photos & article by Lauren Louie, Co-Chair MYP

Wow! What a great outpouring of support for MYP's Souper Bowl of Caring Soup Drive to Tackle Hunger!

Thank you IUCC for helping us to tackle hunger in our community! We delivered 237 cans to Families Forward!

From the youth of MYP



New Beginnings: IUCC's Work with Afghan Refugees



The Mission & Service Ministry is involved in many projects. One that is taking a lot of our energies is working with the many new Afghan refugee arrivals to Southern California. Our work has been to make their landing here a little softer. We offer them a warm welcome. We welcome the stranger as a friend.

A short history: In or around April of 2022, Rev. Bill Jacobs, Interim Assistant Pastor of Church of the Foothills, contacted our Pastor Sarah asking whether a rep from IUCC would attend an organizing meeting of a new group to help the many refugees coming from Afghanistan, fleeing from the Taliban. Sarah alerted Mission & Service and we joined with a consortium of 3 other congregations: Church of the Foothills, First Christian Church of Orange, and Tapestry Universalist Unitarian Church. We determined as a group that, even though Ukrainian refugees were arriving as well, our focus would be to assist Afghan refugees exclusively, partly because of our initial contacts with International Institute of LA who were disseminating various Afghan families throughout Southern California.

We are a group of volunteers who are learning as we go through this process of welcoming these families and trying to provide a little relief from their ordeals. We now serve 9 families with 29 individual members. We had 30 until a month ago, when one of the fathers died of a heart attack. Six of the families arrived under the umbrella of Humanitarian Parole, giving them access to some subsidies and 2 years to get their act together on their road to citizenship.

Three of the families are undocumented, having arrived at the Mexican border after a harrowing journey from Brazil where visas are available for a price. All faced the 17 mile walk through the jungles of the notorious Darien Gap. None of them have escaped being victimized in some way during their journey. All have been robbed of any money they've carried. Four children as young as 9 were part of these traveling families.

A sample of things New Beginnings has done since our inception:

1. Provided a warm welcome to all.
2. Moved a family to a more affordable apartment.
3. One volunteer provided a room for 2 young men.
4. Signed individuals up for MediCal, for their court hearings, for schools, and colleges.
5. Provided transportation to various appointments from medical/dental to prayers at the mosque.
6. Provided furniture, clothing, and food as needed.
7. Provided tutoring.
8. Provided help with their first tax filings.
9. Helped register families into local schools and 3 different community colleges.
10. Helped some find jobs. One young woman is now working and attending classes at Orange Coast College, providing an income stream. Others are now working as Uber drivers and security guards. One is a Ralphs employee, another is a mechanic, and another has applied for a business license.

Shortly after New Beginnings started, people asked how they could help. After getting approval from the Administrative Board, we collected some gift cards and we received some donations here and there. To make Heidi's job easier, Chuck Heath helped set up an account separate from the Mission & Services Budget called New Beginnings. This would be a flow-through account that would stay intact at the end of the fiscal year. It would also be easier to access emergency funds immediately.

Recently, we received some generous (but unsolicited) donations to this refugee fund from several people. These donations were inspired by the work being done and by word of mouth. We draw our spending on behalf of refugees from this account and the accounts from the other 3 congregations. If you would like to give to this effort, simply write a check to IUCC with the word "refugee" in the memo.

New Beginnings is also collaborating and attracting funds and support from the Islamic Center of Irvine, The Jewish Coalition for Refugees, Sabil USA, and Church World Service to name a few.

I'm happy to report that the dominant group of volunteers in New Beginnings are IUCC members. I'm not surprised. I'm always inspired by not only those with whom I serve, but also the courage of those individuals and families that we have the privilege of serving.

Warm regards from your Mission & Service Ministry,
Steve Goetz, Chair of Mission & Service

Mission & Service: Food Pantry Collection for Families Forward



Our Mission and Service ministry will sponsor IUCC's annual **Families Forward Food Drive** in March. Please read on to see how you can participate! [You are encouraged to make food or dollar donations directly to Families Forward any month of the year, of course, but March is our congregation's month for emphasizing this need.]

The March timing is especially good. That is because the need for donated food, always ongoing, is about to become more acute. CBS News reported on February 10 that:

A "hunger cliff" is looming for millions of Americans, with 32 states set to slash food-stamp benefits beginning in March.

California is one of those states. The reductions are due to the end of so-called emergency allotments provided by Congress, which bolstered food-stamp (SNAP) benefits at the start of the pandemic. The cut-off provision was included in the December omnibus spending package. As further context: the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates that groceries cost about 10% more at the end of 2022 than they did 12 months earlier.

Food banks like the one maintained by Families Forward are sure to see a jump in demand for donated food. So there is the reality, friends: the wealthiest nation on the planet is making hunger a bigger problem than it has been for the last two+ years.

And here is how to react, friends (in addition to registering your point of view with those who represent you in Washington and Sacramento). *For help with that, please see the following article: "How to Send Your Elected Representatives a Message."*

Throughout March, you will find a donations bin in the church narthex. Please bring your donations of non-perishable goods there, and Mission & Service will insure that they get to the Families Forward headquarters, here in Irvine.

Here is a list of what is most-needed, per the Families Forward web site:

- Cereal
- Rice, 1 - 2 lbs. bags
- Canned soups
- Canned fruits
- Canned beans
- Peanut butter (12 or 16 oz.)
- Baby wipes
- Canned veggies
- Canned pasta
- Canned meats (tuna, chicken, etc.)
- Mac 'n cheese
- Pasta (dry)
- Pasta sauce

You can find more information at www.families-forward.org

How to Send Your Elected Representatives a Message

by Keith Boyum

Do you want to send your elected representatives a message? Perhaps about cuts to SNAP (food stamp) benefits? Well, good. You can send the same or very similar message to six elected people, all of whom represent you. A two sentence message is as impactful as several paragraphs.

Every elected person listed below maintains staff who read and tally every communication that they receive, and then the staff report the number and content of the messages received to the elected person whom they serve. Most have a routine along the lines of *when x number of messages or letters on a particular topic are received, the Member will make a public statement about the issue*. So, yes: elected people pay attention to letters. And perhaps getting “a load off of your chest” may make you feel good too.

Here are six (or fewer) easy steps to take by using your computer or smart device:

STEP ONE. You can send a message to the President of the U.S. here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

STEP TWO. You can send a message to your U.S. Senator(s). Just click on either or both of these links:

Dianne Feinstein <https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-me>
 Alex Padilla <https://www.padilla.senate.gov/contact/contact-form/>

STEP THREE. You can find out the name of your Member of Congress. Just enter your home address at this link: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>. Advance to Step Four if you already know who your Member of Congress is.

STEP FOUR. You can send a message to your Congressional rep. Choose the one who represents you in the table below.

District	House Member	Send a Message
38	Sanchez (Dem)	https://lindasanchez.house.gov/contact
40	Kim (Rep)	https://youngkim.house.gov/contact
45	Steel (Rep)	https://steel.house.gov/contact
46	Correa (Dem)	https://correa.house.gov/contact
47	Porter (Dem)	https://porter.house.gov/contact/
48	Issa (Rep)	https://issa.house.gov/contact
49	Levin (Dem)	https://levin.house.gov/contact/email-me
50	Peters (Dem)	https://scottpeters.house.gov/email-me

STEP FIVE. You can find out the name of your California State Senator, and your Member of the California Assembly. Just enter your home address at this link: <https://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>. Advance to Step Six if you already know who your State Senator and State Assembly member are.

STEP SIX. You can send a message to your California State Senator, and/or your California Member of the Assembly. Choose the one(s) who represent you in the tables below.

District	Senate Member	Send a Message
29	Newman (D)	https://sd29.senate.ca.gov/contact
30	Archuleta (D)	https://sd30.senate.ca.gov/contact/message
34	Umberg (D)	https://sd34.senate.ca.gov/contact
36	Nguyen (R)	https://sr36.senate.ca.gov/contact-me
37	Min (D)	https://sd37.senate.ca.gov/contact

District	Assembly Member	Send a Message
67	Quirk-Silva (D)	https://a67.asmdc.org/contact
68	Valencia (D)	https://a68.asmdc.org/contact
72	Dixon (R)	https://a72.asmdc.org/contact
73	Petrie-Norris (D)	https://a73.asmdc.org/contact
74	Davies (R)	https://a74.asmdc.org/contact

From the Moderator

by Tricia Aynes



Believe it or not, we are already in the season of Lent! This roughly 40 day period began on February 22 and will end on Maundy Thursday (April 6). Sundays are not included in the 40 day count. While it's often considered a primarily Catholic observance, many other Christian denominations participate as well.

During Lent, some people commit to fasting, while others give up a bad habit in a spirit of self-sacrifice or add a spiritual discipline to feel closer to God. It is a time of contemplation and renewal when we are encouraged to ask for forgiveness, do good works, and strive to become better human beings. All of these can give us a sense of purpose and focus right now.

IUCC celebrated **Fat Sunday** on February 19 with rollicking music (including a band!), festive beads, and delicious king cake with a few "babies" hidden inside (thanks to the wonderful Alex Ingal). Three days later, we held a solemn and contemplative **Ash Wednesday** service that was especially lovely, intimate, and moving. Kudos to all who worked so hard to make two wildly different church services capture the meaning and spirit of each special day.

I was on vacation when the **newly revitalized second service** debuted on February 5, so I didn't get a chance to see it until just a few days ago. If you're looking for a fun, upbeat contemporary service, this is it! Our choral interns are teaming up with Pastor Sarah and some talented musicians from the choir to bring spirit and joy to an informal service that makes you want to clap your hands and tap your feet. Check out the picture above to get a small taste of what it's like. The format is reminiscent of the first service we had many years ago when Fred Plumer was our pastor - just livelier! We are already seeing an upsurge in attendance and hoping to draw more folks. Come try it out and see what you think - I think you'll be glad you did.



Someone asked me recently how long I'd been editing and producing this **newsletter**. I looked it up and was surprised to find out that this month marks my 10 year anniversary! It is a true labor of love, and I continue to enjoy doing it very much. I get to write the occasional article as well as indulge my hobby of amateur photography. All of you have been very good sports about letting me take your picture at various church events, and I love your beautiful smiles!

I think of the newsletter as a congregational magazine of sorts: it allows us to look back on what we've accomplished over the previous month and look forward to what's coming up. It reflects our rich history and our hopes for the future. Our columnists continue to inspire and delight us with interesting, insightful articles that get us thinking in new ways. We are especially fortunate to enjoy the wit and keen observations of the delightful Vivian Johnson, who is a congregational treasure in so many ways.

I'm always so impressed each month by the work being done by our various ministries. A quick perusal of this month's stories includes:

- The incredible outpouring of support for MYP's Souper Bowl of Caring Soup Drive to Tackle Hunger - 237 cans of soup were delivered to Families Forward!
- IUCC's wonderful work with Afghan refugees, helping them thrive in a new environment.
- Rainbow Connection Bowling Night, helping members of our LGBT+ and allies get together and enjoy an evening of fun and fellowship.
- Mission & Service's food pantry collection for Families Forward.
- Welcoming new members into our church family.
- Raising funds to refresh and improve our preschool, making it a more welcoming place.
- An opportunity to engage with other IUCC women at this year's Women's Retreat.

All of these enterprises take time, effort, and a generous spirit. We have these qualities and more, IUCC family. Let's keep doing good things!

Membership Ministry News

by Renae Boyum, Membership Ministry Chair



Fund Development News

by Duane Vajgrt, Co-Chair of Fund Development



...ensuring our future

IUCC Legacy Circle Vision Statement

IUCC -- a place wherever you are on your faith journey you are welcome. A journey that binds us together through all the ages and stages of our lives. A faith journey that resembles a circle -- no beginning, no end, but rather encircling us with faith and community. May that circle be unbroken and thus may we remind you of the formation of the IUCC Legacy Circle. The Legacy circle will be a way for members and friends to leave a financial legacy to IUCC.

Stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks regarding the IUCC Legacy Circle.

Looking Forward to Holy Week

HOLY WEEK SERVICES



Palm Sunday
9:30 and 11:15 a.m.
April 2



Maundy Thursday
7 p.m. on April 6



Easter Sunday
9:30 and 11:15 a.m.
on April 9

Thanks to all of you who are proudly wearing your IUCC name tags on Sunday morning! It truly does make a difference to both our "old" and "new" members, not to mention the many visitors who continue to join us for worship. IF you need a name tag, please stop by the visitors' table and we'll make sure you get one.

One of the best things that the Membership Ministry does is to host Welcome Luncheons for recent visitors to IUCC! We take a brief tour of the campus and then share food and fellowship. Those attending the lunch are asked to share whatever they are comfortable with about their journey of faith and what brought them to IUCC. These shared stories are powerful and riveting. Several ideas are mentioned frequently -- *I was looking for a safe, peaceful place. I was looking for a place of unconditional love. I felt distance from God and wanted to find a place where I would be welcome. My previous experience with church left me feeling unloved and alone. AND I have found IUCC to be a place of unconditional love and acceptance.*

So whether you are an "old" or "new" member, I hope that the reasons listed above resonate with you and reinforce the importance of this vital, vibrant faith community.

On **March 12**, we will welcome our newest members to IUCC. They will join us in our membership covenant -- *We join together with God and with each other to provide an environment for all to worship God, to develop Christian values, to share life's experiences, to strive for truth, justice and peace, and to respond with compassion to the needs of others. We do this in the love of Jesus and in our desire to do the will of God in all things.*

RAINBOW CONNECTION BOWLING NIGHT

Our Rainbow Connection Bowling Night on February 25 was so much fun! Participants showed a wide range of bowling talent, and we had a great time. There was even a cake for Alex Ingal's birthday! Thanks so much to Craig Tyrl who made all the arrangements.

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes



Inhale and Exhale

by Vivian Elaine Johnson



I've been thinking recently about the process of breathing. Twice a day I use a nebulizer to aid my breathing due to abnormal airways in my lungs. While breathing in and out, I think about the process. Life began for my babies when they took their first breath; that inhale was literally "the breath of life." Physical life ended for my loved ones when they stopped breathing; on that last

exhale, the breath of life left.

When we inhale, we take in, we in-spire. The word Inspiration comes from that process. Inspiration is a two-way process, just like the act of breathing. We inhale to receive inspiration. We exhale to *be* an inspiration, a breath of fresh air to inspire others. A biblical way of saying it is that we are blessed to be a blessing.

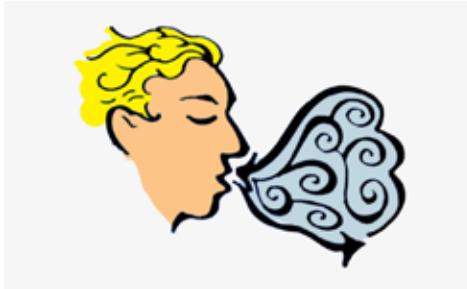
Where do you and I receive inspiration?

For me, it may be through music or through the words of a sermon or a friend. Inspiration may come from a book, a work of art, or a leisurely walk in God's beautiful creation. I feel good, full, and enriched when I've been inspired. But I don't want to just hold that breath, keep it all to myself; I need to exhale, to *be* an inspiration. Scripture addresses this: *For just as the body without the spirit (breath) is dead, so faith without works is also dead.* (James 2:26)

In Nicaragua I met Carmen, a woman who remains in my mind as an example of the inhale and exhale of inspiration. After hearing the priest speak about Jesus' concern for justice, Carmen convinced a small group of women to tackle problems in the community. Each week they met and discussed how to apply their faith in a practical way. The first problem they chose to address was the lack of lighting on their dark and dangerous streets. The women were fearful but, together, they went to the powerful

politicians in their community. They urged and pushed until they finally received lights. When I met Carmen, the women had moved on to imploring the authorities for trash cleanup. I asked her why her group bothered to get involved. After looking at me as though I'd asked a foolish question, she replied, "Because Jesus inspires us."

There was a new pastor in a church far from here. On his first Sunday, he preached a sermon that everybody raved about. The congregation was thrilled; they were inspired. The following Sunday he preached the *same* sermon. There were some raised eyebrows and a bit of grumbling, but some said that it was good to hear it again as they got even more out of it the second time.



When on the third Sunday he preached the *same* sermon, members of the leadership stood at the back of the church looking like they'd swallowed dill pickles whole. They confronted the pastor and said, "You preached the same sermon three times. You can't do that. You have to preach a different sermon each Sunday." The pastor smiled broadly, and with a loving voice said,

"My dear friends, as soon as you all start following *this* sermon, I'll preach a different one." The congregation had inhaled but failed to exhale. The pastor believed that inspiration without results is hollow.

I wonder if Carmen and the pastor had heard the words that I came across: *to feel inspired and not express it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.* (anonymous)

So, there is a question to ask ourselves: What can we do to be an inspiration, to be life-giving people? I suggest that we inhale. Then, exhale.

Farewell

by Dr. Eduardo Jesús Arismendi-Pardi, Former C-Chair of Adult Education Ministry, Diversity & Inclusion Ministry



I struggle saying goodbye, but for now I will just embrace the words “Hasta Siempre” (Until Forever) which can be interpreted as a farewell with a hope that we will meet again. It has been a year since I relocated to Henderson, Nevada after my retirement. I am embracing the words recorded in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. The time has come to embrace my transition from “what once was” to “what is and will be.”

Before departing, I wanted to share how I found IUCC which was an incredible journey. I met so many loving people. You welcomed and accepted me as I am. After my near death experience nearly 18 years ago now, a series of events led me to contemplate the finiteness of life and I began a life-changing spiritual journey.

My journey started by reading the Bible which was not easy to do. I gave it a try and up to now I have read ten different translations of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in addition to many non-canonical books.

Some years ago, Cheryl and I attended a Labor Conference at the Anaheim Convention Center. One of the keynote speakers was Rev. Dr. Sarah Halverson-Cano. I felt that a woman wearing a collar at a Labor Conference sponsored by the California Federation of Teachers AFT-AFL-CIO was unusual. I remember that woman, our beloved Pastor Sarah, was standing along with Disneyland Hotel workers who were on strike due to oppressive working conditions. The message that I heard from Pastor Sarah was something I would never have expected from a clergy person. She was passionate, intelligent, articulate, and unusually progressive. I was impressed, and I Googled her name to learn more about her. On our way home Cheryl suggested visiting her church in Costa Mesa. Months went by and we never visited her church. Months passed, and I felt something that inexplicably came to me which led me to be open to studying theology with the goal of understanding God and spirituality as a function of my personal explorations rather than accept how someone else understands God and spirituality. One of the experiences that I will take with me is to have had the opportunity of serving on the Pastoral Search Committee. Pastor Sarah was one of the applicants. I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to be a part of the committee who brought her to IUCC.

After having read the Bible I decided to enroll in seminary, and I met a professor who later became my Spiritual Director. I recalled him saying, “Christianity is something that cannot be practiced in isolation; one has to be in a worship community.” I followed his suggestion. I explored many churches. I needed to find a community that embraced formality, ritual and all the pomp and circumstance that goes with dressing in Sunday’s best. In my search I found neither the formality nor the theology I was looking for.

Along my path I met Dr. Scott Bollens. We became close friends, and he is like a brother and a wise counselor to me. One day I thought I should give IUCC a chance. I asked Cheryl if she would go with me. Her response was “I am just not interested in religion.” I asked her if she would consider coming along just for one Sunday. I was uncomfortable going to a church where I knew no one. Cheryl agreed to go with me. Our first encounter was an Adult Education class on the topic of racism led by Rev. Steve Swope. I met the late Rev. Dr. George Johnson and the late Dr. Jim Martin. On our way home we talked about how different this church felt. We ended up attending every Sunday. We met the most wonderful people. Though ritual and formality was not something I found at IUCC, I found that I could be as authentic as I am and be me. I felt welcome and accepted.

I want to personally thank all the members of IUCC because everyone I came in contact with contributed to my spirituality and theological formation. I met wonderful people from whom I learned so much. Each and every one of you touched my life in some way. Finally, thank you for your support and encouragement and for teaching me so much. I am indeed grateful and humbled by all your wisdom and all that I have learned from you.

Hasta Siempre,
Eduardo



Understand the Term LatinX

*by Dr. Eduardo Jesús Arismendi-Pardi, Member in Discernment and Seminarian
Member of the Board of Directors of the Southern California-Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ*

The term LatinX is rooted in inclusiveness with good intentions. The term refers to persons of Latin American origin or heritage and embraces those who do not identify themselves within gender duality, that is, either male or female. The term LatinX has become a part of the English lexicon and many people use such term (e.g., journalists, politicians and professionals in corporations and educational institutions). In 2018, the term has found a home in the English dictionary.

The term Hispanic or Latino/Latina has been used frequently to refer to persons of Latin American origin (culture, language, and traditions). For me personally, the term Hispanic has a link to the people of the Kingdom of Spain. The term LatinX is not rooted in nor does it originate from the Spanish language.

The term LatinX is a made-up English word with two consonants that are unpronounceable in the Spanish language, and it does not fit the orthography, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics of the official Spanish language. The term Hispanic has been used to refer exclusively to persons whose language is Spanish, inclusive of those hailing from Latin America and Spain which would

exclude people from Brazil (Portuguese), British Guyana (English), French Guyana (French), and Dutch Guyana (Dutch), all of whom live in the Latin American Continent and are thus Latin Americans or South Americans. The same applies to the people of Belize (English).

The term Latino/Latina is much more appropriate because such term excludes the people from the Kingdom of Spain, who are Europeans. The term Hispanic is understood by many in North America to refer to people of Latin America. As a corollary to the aforementioned statement, the term American is also incorrect and does not belong to a country because America is a continent comprised of North America, Central America or Meso-America and South America.

The term LatinX has, indeed, good intentions and is meant to go beyond binary gender. A Pew Research Center interview of more than 3,000 persons of Latin American

origin in 2019 revealed that the term LatinX resonated more with younger people of Latin American heritage who were born in the United States which is part of the American continent. The survey revealed that the term LatinX tends to also resonate with bilingual persons of Latin American heritage who tend to be Democratic in political affiliation and who are college educated. Again, these individuals were born in the United States and are not immigrants to the United States.

The term LatinX has gained popularity in the United States among persons of Latin American heritage who, for the most part, were born in the United States. The term LatinX has become a substitute for Latino, Latina, and Hispanic while embracing inclusion beyond gender duality. Some

scholars including the leadership of League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) oppose acceptance of the term LatinX.

Many Latin American scholars believe that the replacement of the vowels “o” or “a” for an “X” is ridiculously incomprehensible and unpronounceable for Spanish speakers who lack fluidity with the English language. Professor Cristóbal

Salinas from Florida Atlantic University argues that the term LatinX is a North American (US) centrist term that suggests dominance and influence of the United States into the Latin American culture and countries of Latin America whose language is Spanish. Some scholars have suggested the use of the term “Latinu” or “Latiné” which would be more closely linked to the Spanish language lexicon but both words are not part of the official lexicon of the Spanish language.

Finally, regardless of the terminology we use, we must always remember that we sometimes create words to express our own realities and we must never allow such words to create the reality of others. I believe that when referring to the people of Latin America that we must exercise caution and never assume that a particular defined word in the English language will be welcomed by those whom the term is meant to refer to or represent.

