

March 2024 | [www.iucc.org](http://www.iucc.org) | Catch up with us on Facebook, Insta, Tiktok, and YouTube!

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

## Mardi Gras Sunday on February 11 was colorful and festive!

We welcomed David Carruthers and his Bourbon Street Dixie Band to play for us, and Alex Ingall baked some amazing King Cakes, and several people discovered “babies” inside!



*Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes*



## Photos from Sundays in February



February 4 was Evolution Sunday, and we welcomed evolutionary biologist Dr. Boris Baer and his wife, Dr. Barbara Baer-Imhoof (both entomologists from the University of California Riverside). We learned about insects and evolution and especially bees, then got to experience an insect “petting zoo”! *Photos courtesy of Pastor Sarah & Glenda Wyant*



*Above: Our wonderful choir sang beautifully on February 11 (as always!)*

*Left: Pastor Craig preached an electrifying sermon on February 18*

*Right: Princess Daisy & Alex Ingal took a break from greeting fans on February 18*

*Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes*





## Coming Attractions



### IUCC's Got Talent (Talent Show/Chili Cook-off)

This fun event will combine our annual chili cookoff with an old but not forgotten IUCC talent show. Prizes and trophies will be available to our participants and winners. Do you have talent? Do you make awesome chili? Do you just want to come to share in the fun? If the answer is yes, this is your event! ANY TALENT WILL QUALIFY!



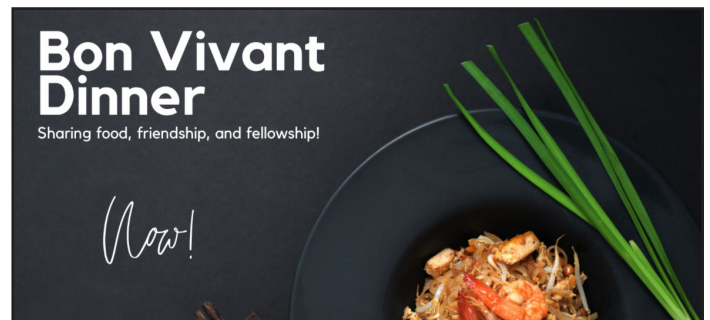
### Women's Discussion Group: Digging Deeper

IUCC women who want to "dig deeper" into spiritual questions, gratitude, and epiphanies of the soul are invited to join a new discussion group meeting from 5:30 to 7 pm on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month in the church meeting rooms. Just come with an intent to share from your heart. For more information, contact Marilyn Smith at marilysmithmsw@yahoo.com.



### Women to Women: Second Date! Tuesday, April 30, from 6-7:30 p.m.

Our first "date" between IUCC women and University Synagogue women was so successful that we want to do it again! Please save the date of Tuesday, April 30, from 6-7:30 p.m. for our "second date" as we seek to further deepen our friendship with this vibrant and interesting group of women from our sister congregation. Join us for food, fellowship, and sharing! Sign-ups will begin in early April. For more information, contact Marilyn Smith at marilysmithmsw@yahoo.com.



### Bon Vivant Dinners Return!

We hope becoming better acquainted at IUCC is one of your 2024 goals, because Bon Vivant is your easy and enjoyable way to meet fellow IUCCers. BV is a once-a-month dinner hosted by a volunteer and open to everyone. The size is limited to 8-10 guests. The host provides the main dish and non-alcoholic beverages with each guest bringing a side dish or beverage to share. We meet monthly on the fourth Saturday. You'll find the sign-up sheet at our Sunday information table, or you can text Debra Banwell at 949-433-1494 to sign-up for dinner on March 23.

## From the Senior Pastor

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



I love the season of Lent. The deep purples remind us to jump into the depths of our own souls, pools of color, that call us to deep places. There's something about this time of contemplation that invites us to reflect upon our faith as we journey together. Like life, we often realize that the journey itself is just as important (if

not more so) than the destination. This year we've been wandering with Peter. He's the disciple with so many sides: he's brave and a coward, he's full of faith and doubts, he is a loyal follower and a denier of Jesus, he can be dimwitted but also knowing. He's an interesting guy: sinner and saint. But best of all, perhaps the reason Jesus called him to fish for people instead of fish, is because he was real. He's as human as the rest of us, and we see our journey in his.

I'm really enjoying our Wandering Heart series. I find myself researching Peter in ways I've never done before. I've learned so much already and I hope you feel like you're learning too. Reflecting on Peter's lessons has given us an opportunity to define how we understand our lives as progressive Christians and offers us direct opportunities to delineate and differentiate ourselves. In following Peter as he follows Jesus, we can experience the journey to the cross in a whole new way, perhaps a way that is more authentic to our own journey of discipleship. I hope you'll continue to join us each Sunday this month as we make our way to Holy Week with Palm Sunday (March 24) followed by Maundy Thursday (March 28) and culminating in a celebration on Easter Sunday! Because Peter's journey continues beyond the cross, ours will too. So plan on joining us the Sunday after Easter as well as we see who Peter becomes as he stands on his own strengthened by his journey with Jesus to continue ministry in a new way.

While for some Lent is a time of giving up fun things, that's not the case at IUCC! On the second Friday of Lent we had another great Drag Bingo Night: Broken Hearts Bingo -with a full house! You'll be as proud as I was when I walked into Plumer Hall that night and saw a room filled with people I didn't know! Of course, there were lots of IUCCers present, but it was really beautiful to see the way we are serving our community, by providing a really fun night with the purpose of standing in solidarity as leaders in the queer community ensuring that drag queens and all people know they are welcome here. As you know, not only are these really fun events that outreach to folks beyond IUCC,

they're also wonderful fundraisers! And I'm told this one was the best yet! Thanks to Cucu Chanel and her queens and to the fabulous team at IUCC who made this really fun event possible! I'm so proud of this church and the way we've combined prophetic witness and support, with community outreach, and joy, fun, art, with fundraising - it's truly incredible!

One of the things I love about IUCC is that this really is such a fun, joy-filled community! Our Fat Sunday celebration bid farewell to the season of Epiphany with great music and an opportunity to not just think about our faith but enjoy it, following Jesus out into the streets to party – to celebrate life and invite everyone to the feast. Thanks to [David Carruthers](#) and his band for the fabulous music! And if you ask me, Evolution Sunday was pretty fun too! Our guest Dr. Boris Baer joined by his wife Dr. Barbara Baer-Imhoof and their guests (stickbug and a beautiful beetle) were really so fascinating as they talked about entomology and specifically bees. I was pleased to learn even more about the insects who have such an impact on our food chain and our very existence, and while the situation can sometimes look dire, we learned that Irvine itself is the perfect breeding ground for all sorts of bees. I love the idea that here is the place where they all come together, and that if we can strengthen the bee community here, we'll have an impact far beyond our own region. As a Green Fatih church, it is so important for us to learn, and act and the joy is just a really wonderful added benefit.

The joy continues into March when we celebrate "IUCC's Got Talent" on Saturday the 9th. It's going to be a really fun night with some fabulous acts demonstrating talent, and an opportunity to share in talent, and even compete with talent as we bring our chili cook-off back! So be sure to sign up for the show and chili cook-off! (talent auction?) And of course, if we fast forward to the end of the month we arrive at the end of our Lenten journey where our wandering hearts will celebrate Easter! And with it comes a lot of joy with singing, flowers, and crepes!

But I'm reminded that our faith also calls us not simply to the fun and easy. It asks us to hold the tension of joy and sorrow. My heart, like yours, is so heavy with the ongoing violence in Gaza and the failure to cease fire. Our minds can't fully fathom the devastation of life: so many innocent lives lost, children, elderly, families. There's no place to run, and no place safe. The pain is so deep it resonates across the world. How can we not cry out for peace? To shout "Stop!?" To beg "Please!?" To pray, "Help!?" A call to an end of violence seems like the only human thing to do. I've met with faith leaders in our community and our city council members - people are tired of wringing



*From the Senior Pastor continued from page 4*

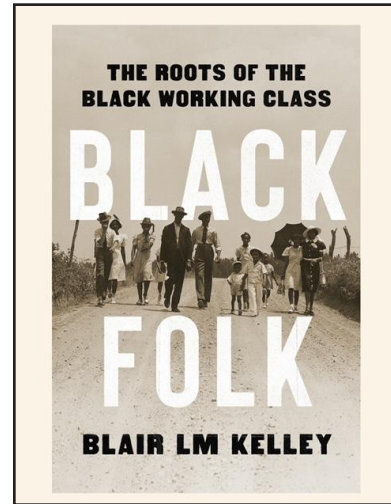
their hands, of this feeling of helplessness, if only to unite and ask for peace, to demand with what little power we have to cease the violence, end the killing. Our council chambers are filled each time they meet as community members seek to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza where Palestinians are being killed at devastating rates and those who live are cut off from any viable aid, hospitals raided and bombed, safe spaces hard to come by, and shutdowns throughout the Palestinian territory mean no one can move beyond their homes. Fear and terror reign as more and more people are killed or captured. The trauma of Palestine and Israel is not confined to that space, it's here too, and while the violence is nothing like what is experienced there, we have wounded among us. There is so much fear and pain and conflict. I'm so aware of our neighbors who feel all of this daily as they pray for loved ones, siblings in faith, and strangers whose lives seem forgotten. My heart breaks knowing our own community is suffering so deeply. As someone who has always worked in interfaith circles, I find this to be particularly devastating. I wish we could be united in our prayers for peace and I'm grateful to those who have joined me in conversations to seek healing here as we work for peace in the middle east and around the world.

I'm always reminded in Holy Week that we must face the darkness of our world. Jesus didn't shy away from it. He met the pain head on. He named the injustice; he died because of it. So as we journey our way to the cross this month, may our wandering hearts be not afraid of the dark, but find hope and courage in the man who let love lead him to the horror of humanity in hopes of being part of its redemption.

As we walk through March along our Lenten journey may you be filled with the joy of community, even as you hold the pain of a hurting world. Holding this tension is always our challenge, but knowing that we do it together offers us hope and strength for the road ahead. Easter is coming... may it bring a resurrection of peace and love in our world once more.

Wandering with you,  
*Pastor Sarah*

## DEI Book Club News



The next book for our IUCC DEI Book Club is *Black Folk: The Roots of the Black Working Class* by Blair LM Kelley. Named one of Smithsonian's Best Books of 2023, it tells the story of the adversities and joys of the Black working class in America through a stunning narrative centered on the author's forebears.

We began our discussion on February 27th from 9-10:30 am, focusing on the Introduction and Chapter 1 (pages 1-62). All are welcome to join in the discussion about *Black Folk* in March - you are welcome to join in later. A few copies of *Black Folk* are in Plumer Hall on the DEI bookshelf. It can also be ordered from Amazon.

- Lesli Mitchell



This is a photo from our January DEI book study lunch at Alta Baja in Santa Ana to discuss *Orange County: A Personal History*. The wife of author Gustavo Arellano owns the restaurant, so we got to meet and chat with them while having fresh, wonderful food!! --Lesli Mitchell



## Women's Retreat May 3-5



Sign ups for the 2024 IUCC Women's Retreat at Pilgrim Pines begin Sunday, March 24, on the IUCC patio between services. Spaces are limited so early registration is recommended.

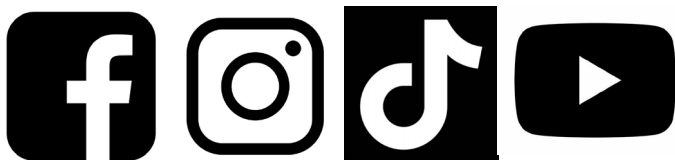
The Rev. Terry LePage will guide the weekend with the theme "Living as if Earth matters." The retreat will be the first weekend in May, May 3-5. The cost is \$170 and includes two nights of comfortable beds, five meals, snacks and Sunday morning worship.

In addition to the weekend's three themed workshops, participants will be able to choose among additional workshops, discussion groups, nature hikes and crafts. There's also plenty of time for fellowship with IUCC members and friends.

More information is available by contacting members of the retreat committee: Laura Long, Lorraine Fox, Jerri Davenport, Pat Sauter, Marilyn Smith and Cindy O'Dell.

--Cindy O'Dell

## Catch up with IUCC events on SOCIAL MEDIA!



<https://www.facebook.com/irvineucc>  
<https://www.instagram.com/irvineucc/>  
<https://www.tiktok.com/@iucctiktok>  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/iuccorganic>

## Amnesty International



*Photo from Amnesty's Write for Rights*

Please join us and help the work of Amnesty International. Recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977, Amnesty International is a worldwide, member-run human rights organization founded in 1961 by the British lawyer Peter Benenson (1922-2005). The organization is politically and financially independent as well as neutral in terms of religious affiliation. Amnesty International compiles information about abuse and human rights violations.

We have meetings once a month at IUCC in the Peace Room on the last Tuesday of the month, at 7:30 p.m. At our meetings we write letters, discuss current human rights business, plan our events, and will have guest speakers or show human rights informational videos. The meetings are free and open to the public. Every month we will take action for multiple human rights defenders, people imprisoned for their peaceful actions. Find out the latest on current and ongoing human rights issues in the world. And we will also have cookies! For more information, please contact Jacques Kilchoer at [jacques.kilchoer@aiousaoc.org](mailto:jacques.kilchoer@aiousaoc.org). Hope to see you at our next meeting!

- Felicity Figueroa





# Lent Curriculum Update & Exciting Activities in Sunday School!

*by Jackie Logwood, Sunday School Coordinator*



As we delve deeper into the Lenten season, I wanted to take a moment to update you on our Sunday School curriculum and share some exciting highlights from our recent sessions. We've been exploring the Lent curriculum with great enthusiasm. The discussions have been incredibly engaging, and it's been heartwarming to witness the children's curiosity and understanding deepen as we explore the teachings of Jesus together.

In addition to our thoughtful discussions, we've also embarked on some creative activities that have truly brought the lessons to life. Last week, we had a blast creating a Lent-themed board game that allowed the children to apply what they've learned in a fun and interactive way. Watching them collaborate, problem-solve, and express their creativity has been a joy to behold. Moreover, I'm delighted to share that our Sunday School sessions have been filled with laughter, learning, and lasting memories. It's truly a privilege to witness the growth and spiritual development of each child in our community.

I'm also thrilled to inform you that our Souper Bowl collection was a tremendous success! Thanks to the generosity of our Sunday School families, we were able to make a significant contribution. Your support and participation truly made a difference in the lives of those in need.

As always, if you have any questions or would like to get involved in our Sunday School program, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your support and involvement are invaluable to us.

Thank you for entrusting us with the spiritual education of your children. We look forward to continuing this journey of faith together!





# Nerd Theology: Pokémon

by Dustin Nguyen



*Dustin tests the youth's knowledge of Pokémon with a game of Jeopardy!*



*Pokémon cards were given out as prizes.*



*Dustin leads discussion on the themes of Pokémon and their relation to the Bible.*

Is Pokémon satanic? NO! At our *Nerd Theology: Pokémon* event on February 25th, the youth learned about theology in a fun way by tying it to Pokémon. The Pokémon franchise has many lessons to teach us, and its central themes also coincide with themes in the Bible.

One of the most important themes in the Pokémon universe is the power of love vs. the love of power. Season after season, generation after generation, the show and the video games illustrate that those who value companionship and empathy will eventually become victorious over those who merely use Pokémon as objects to serve their own selfish ambitions. The bonds formed between Pokémon and their trainers through loyalty, trust, and empathy mirror the teachings of love and compassion in the Bible.

Another core theme of Pokémon is chosen family. In the series, we see examples of abandoned Pokémon banding together to look out for each other, Pokémon adopting humans as one of their own, and Pokémon choosing to leave behind their own kind to follow their human trainers. The series drives home the idea that the strongest kind of familial relationships aren't necessarily blood family relationships, but chosen family relationships. Jesus, too, emphasized chosen family, saying, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).

What I hope the youth take away is that popular culture can be enjoyed when engaged with a critical-thinking lens rather than succumbing to unwarranted fears or prejudices.

The youth were also tested on their Pokémon knowledge through a game of Jeopardy!, and some of them got to walk home with Pokémon cards as prizes! Overall, it was a fantastic night and I'm thrilled to see that the high school cohort is beginning to blossom. The next youth event will be a movie night on March 24th, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM in the Peace Room. We'll be screening *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*!





# A Word or Two

by Vivian Elaine Johnson



My doctor was unavailable when I was ill, so I was connected by phone with an on-call doctor. He answered my questions, then sent an email report detailing our conversation. Under the category “describe patient” I laughed when I read the doctor’s description of me: The patient is a female in her eighties *who speaks in full sentences*.

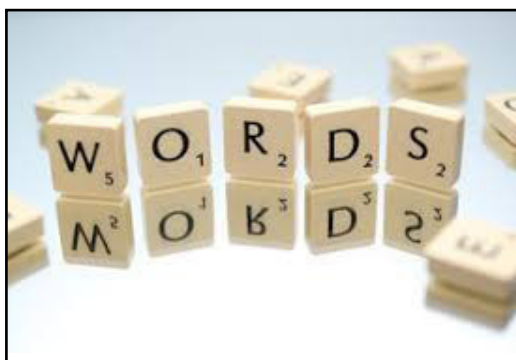
Good to know. *She speaks in full sentences*. I’ve never before been described in quite that way. Is having the ability to speak in full sentences a measurement of cognitive function in an older patient? Later, my doctor informed me that it meant that I was breathing normally, was able to speak without gasps, and wasn’t in dire straits.

Thinking back, I remember that some of the most important communications in my life have not been full sentences but, instead, just a word or two. I remember the absolute delight of hearing my baby’s first word: *mama*. I called my husband at work, then my mom across the country, next my neighbor, and, finally, my best friend in another state. “She said *mama*,” I related with the joy of an Olympic winner.

The little word *sorry* can be the impetus to bring a broken relationship back to wholeness. Have you experienced the blessed relief of a sincere *sorry*? For me, a shared expression of apology contains a soothing balm that washes over my entire being. One Saturday when I was a teenager, I spoke unkind words to my father. I avoided him the entire day, creeping around the house like a burglar, afraid I’d have to look into his hurt eyes. Finally, my nagging conscience gave me the courage to walk down the basement stairs where I found him polishing shoes. In a squeaky, tiny voice, I said, *sorry*. He looked up at me over his glasses and said, “That’s okay, Vivian.” Oh, the bliss, the relief, the gratitude – life was good once again.

How about a one-word response to a wedding proposal? It could be *Yes*. Or a disappointing *No*. Or a wishy-washy *Maybe*. Any of these responses have the power of sending chills up your spine. It’s a response that requires significant thought because that one word can impact your entire future whether you’re the asker or the responder.

Have you been in court being charged with a law suit? After hours of wiping your sweaty hands and attempting deep breaths to calm your thumping heart, the judge finally banged her gavel and pronounced the case *dismissed*. That one word magically transformed you from a withering wreck to a whole person once again.



One of the most stressful times can be while waiting for the results of a medical test. People report that they held their breath for a week waiting for the results. Finally, if the finding is *negative*, it is like hearing the Hallelujah chorus. It is glorious music to your ears.

Have you stood by the bedside of a beloved person who is dying, and who no longer has the ability to speak, but miraculously manages to mouth *thank you*? That end-of-life loving murmur can elicit some of the strongest emotions of our lives. Likewise, a prayer at that bedside with its closing *amen* conveys a message of finality, a “may it be so” closure.

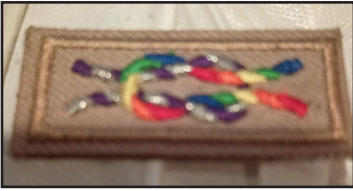
Some of my favorite words are those spoken to me by someone who loves me: *darling, dear, honey, sweetheart, my love*, you name it – such words from the mouth of a loved one carry the tenderness and warmth of a first kiss.

The words *pass* or *fail* and *winner* or *loser* are powerful. As are *hate* and *love*. You can name many more of great consequence, I’m sure. In closing, I’m truly grateful that I can still speak in full sentences. It’s good to be reminded, however, that just a word or two can hold significant importance.

Amen.

# How the UCC and IUCC changed Scouts BSA

by Matt Mirmak



First, I want to give a welcome to Scouts BSA Troop 691 who are being chartered by IUCC. The Scouts are meeting every Monday night in Plumer Hall. As an Eagle Scout and

a founding member of the national UCC Working Group on Scouting, it makes me happy to see IUCC continue to support the Scouting program and the vision that we had for Scouting in our national UCC working group. I look forward to providing the troop any type of support as a volunteer with the Rancho San Joaquin District.

Did you know that IUCC played a significant role in changing the current culture of Scouting as we know it today? Over 10 years ago, the thought of IUCC sponsoring a Boy Scout (now Scouts BSA) troop would have been unheard of. Somewhere along the line of its 100+ year history, religious fundamentalists such as the Southern Baptists, Assemblies of God, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (aka the Mormons) got involved with sponsoring BSA troops and tried to make them into an organization that had a focus on their values. For some reason beyond my knowledge, the term “morally straight” was co-opted by these religious fundamentalists as being heterosexual, cisgender, and Christian.

Although Scouting in the United States has been open to youth and adults of all religions, it was not open to people who were gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender. The public exclusion of gay and transgender youth and adults in Scouting came into being around the 1970s when the gay rights movement was becoming more vocal and on the rise nationally. The BSA made it public that gay and transgender youth were not permitted in Scouting because they were seen as the antithesis of being “morally straight.” This stance caused a rift between the BSA and the UCC. The UCC went as far in 2003 to denounce the Boy Scouts for their discriminatory membership policies and supported local congregations that severed their relationships with the Boy Scouts.

Back in February of 2013, the Boy Scouts of America had announced that they were looking at changing their membership policy to allow gay youth into their program. Pastor Paul told me about the news and wanted me to speak with Rev. Michael Schuenmeyer at the 2013 General Synod in Long Beach. I met up with Brian Conn, a fellow

Eagle Scout from Broomfield (CO) UCC and the Denver Area Council and Rev. Schuenmeyer at General Synod to talk about re-establishing the relationship between the BSA and the UCC. We had Dave Knapp, an Eagle Scout from the Connecticut Yankee Council, go to the mic and present our work group’s proposal in front of the General Synod. Since the BSA was going to open its membership ranks to LGBTQ youth, we felt that it was important to support the BSA in this new direction and re-establish our denomination’s support for Scouting. I remember a few skeptical people at General Synod telling us “good luck” after listening to Dave Knapp give our proposal to the attendees.

In May of 2013, the National Committee of the BSA voted in favor of allowing gay youth into Scouting. In 2015, the same committee unanimously voted to allow for gay adults to be volunteer leaders thanks to the urging of Dt. Robert Gates, the president of the BSA who was the Secretary of Defense during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama presidencies. The BSA was making progress in the right direction when it came to making their program more inclusive for youth and families.

In 2014 while all of this was going on within the BSA, I along with Ron Steiner and Becky Roach formed BSA Troop 602 sponsored by IUCC. Our Admin Board voted unanimously to sponsor Troop 602 and they began to meet in Plumer Hall with Ken Steinhart and Keith Bauer, Sr. acting as the Scoutmasters. The troop became part of the IUCC family as seen in the photos at the top of the next page: helping to restore the child care garden as part of a service project that they coordinated and led on their own; and assisting during the Easter Sunday services from 2017 to 2019 by performing parking patrol in making sure that traffic was moving smoothly between services. They even helped with a memorial service for an IUCC member at the request of IUCC member Adele Bloom. They also did all of the usual Scouting stuff like camping and hiking and went to summer camp at Lost Valley Scout Reservation. The sight of them getting ready for summer camp in the IUCC parking lot with a pre-departure blessing by Pastor Paul (and one time with Pastor Steve Swope) became a troop tradition.

In 2016, our UCC Working Group on Scouting had our first meeting at IUCC. We hammered out the language

*Scouts article continued on page 11*





*Scouts article continued from page 10*

of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the UCC and the BSA and discussed our visions for a more inclusive Scouting program. I pointed out to our group during this meeting that Scouting in the USA has its early roots with the Congregational church. I found out during my historical research for the MOU that the first Chief Scout Executive of the BSA, James E. West, was the Sunday school coordinator for Mt Pleasant Congregational Church in Bethesda, MD. Mt Pleasant CC is now known as Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ, which is an Open and Affirming congregation. ([James E. West \(Scouting\) - Wikipedia](#)) I also discovered that some of the oldest Scout troops in the country were sponsored by UCC congregations. Troop 253 of Kent, OH has been sponsored by Kent United Church of Christ for 103 years. Kent UCC is also an Open and Affirming congregation. ([Scouting - Kent United Church of Christ \(kentucc.org\)](#))

After three years of hard work, our UCC working group on Scouting completed the language of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and submitted it to the leadership of the BSA to review. On October 5, 2016, the leadership of the UCC and the Boy Scouts of America signed the MOU. The MOU was signed by Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the UCC, and Michael Surbaugh, National Scout Executive for the BSA. The relationship between the UCC and the BSA had been reinstated and restored. The promise to support Scouting if they made changes to make their membership policy more inclusive was kept by the United Church of Christ. ([UCC Scouting Working Group - United Church of Christ](#))

While I am sad that Troop 602 folded as a result of the pandemic, these Scouts left a positive impression of Scouting on our congregation. A number of these Scouts went on to earn their Eagle Scout rank. It was a joy to witness these young Scouts evolve into confident leaders and compassionate and thoughtful citizens. Troop 602 was seen by the UCC Working Group as the blueprint on how to make the Scouting program more inclusive for youth and their families. I was happy to know that IUCC has continued to support Scouting by sponsoring Troop 691. IUCC went from being derided in 2014 as a publicity

stunt by veteran Scouters for sponsoring a troop to a well-respected charter partner in our council and district. The volunteer committee of the Rancho San Joaquin district now meets in Plumer Hall once a month after the local LDS church told them that they were no longer welcome to meet there. The district committee has been meeting at IUCC since 2019.

Our council is looking at the possibility of participating in Orange County Pride, which would include a Scout color guard in the Pride parade. 10 years ago, the council would have had an issue with Scout participation at Pride. Today, the Scout council is making sure that the Scouts remember to wear comfortable shoes on the parade route and to “be prepared” to help anyone who falls ill or gets hurt on the parade route. At the 2023 National Jamboree at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in Glen Jean, WV, our UCC Working Group sponsored a safe space for LGBTQ Scouts, Scout leaders, and their allies. It was a far cry from my experience at the 1985 National Jamboree at Ft. A.P. Hill, VA when we heard the news about Rock Hudson contracting AIDS and hearing some tasteless comments about AIDS patients from fellow Scouts in our sub-camp.

I am very proud of the work our UCC Working Group did to make Scouting a better organization for all youth and families. I am posting a picture of the UCC Scouting Working group that helped re-establish the relationship between the UCC and BSA. This was from our meeting at IUCC in January 2016. Thanks to the efforts of the UCC Working Group on Scouting, we helped make Scouting a much safer and more inclusive program for our youth and adult volunteers with our advocacy. We also helped Scouting discover what it really means to be “morally straight.” Being morally straight does not give us a blank check to discriminate against people who have a different sexual orientation, have a family with two same sex parents, or whose gender identity is different from ours.

That is how IUCC helped change the current culture of Scouting as we know it today. I see better days for Scouting in the future as long as we have good charter partners like IUCC supporting the Scouting program.

## Memorandum of Understanding between the Boy Scouts of America and the United Church of Christ

*by Steven (Steve) Liechty | published on Oct 5, 2015*

Whereas, The United Church of Christ (UCC) and the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) have worked together to provide leadership and character development programs to serve the needs of boys, young adults, and their families through the member congregations of the United Church of Christ, chartering more than one thousand units, for more than one hundred years; and

Whereas, The Declaration of Religious Principle of the Boy Scouts of America states, "The Boy Scouts of America, therefore, recognizes the religious element in the training of the member, but it is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. Its policy is that the home and the organization or group with which the member is connected shall give definite attention to religious life"; and

Whereas, the twelfth point of the Scout Law teaches, "A Scout is reverent. ... He respects the beliefs of others," and Whereas, the mission of the United Church of Christ is grounded in scripture, joins faith and action, and serves God in the co-creation of a just and sustainable world; giving witness to the continuing testament of the still-speaking God, extending extravagant welcome to all, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, and changing lives through the power of God's love and by living the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

Whereas, it is the mission and vision of the Boy Scouts of America to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law, and to prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Scout Law; and

Whereas, the Boy Scouts of America provides family-centered programs related to leadership and character development for youth where the programs are delivered through and according to the values, aims, and objectives of chartered organizations; and

Whereas, membership criteria for adults in Boy Scouts of America units appropriately includes certain background information reviews to protect the health and safety of the youth and adult members of the units; and

Whereas, Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting; and

Whereas, no youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone; and

Whereas, the Boy Scouts of America requires that chartered organizations be responsible for the selection of adult leaders according to the chartered organizations' values, policies, and guidelines, and the Boy Scouts of America's standards, with at least one adult leader for a unit being a member of the chartered organization for such unit; and

Whereas, the Boy Scouts of America requires that each chartered organization "Conduct the Scouting program according to its own policies and guidelines as well as those of the Boy Scouts of America;" and

Whereas, the Boy Scouts of America agrees "to respect the aims and objectives of the [chartered] organization" in the Annual Charter Agreement.

### ***Therefore, Be It***

Resolved, That the United Church of Christ and the Boy Scouts of America will work cooperatively with each other within the policies and regulations of each organization to establish and nurture scouting units as an expression of the nurture and outreach of the ministry of the United Church of Christ and its member congregations so that boys, young adults, and adults may grow in their relationships with God, develop into responsible citizens, serve the needs of others, and develop personal fitness to achieve their greatest potential; and be it further

Resolved, That the United Church of Christ and the Boy Scouts of America will work cooperatively to establish and nurture safe environments for all those participating in units chartered by congregations of the United Church of Christ, consistent with the values of the United Church of Christ and the policies of the Boy Scouts of America, including the full implementation of the Youth Protection standards, the Guide to Safe Scouting, and other methods prescribed by the Boy Scouts of America and by the United Church of Christ to protect the health and safety of the members of the units; and be it further

Resolved, That the Boy Scouts of America will respect the spiritual and moral responsibility of the United Church of Christ's chartering congregations with the understanding that there is no Boy Scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local pastor and the congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of those who participate; and be it further

Resolved, That it is agreed all member congregations of the United Church of Christ may rely on the stipulations in this Memorandum of Understanding in operating under any charter they sign with the Boy Scouts of America.



## Statement of Support of the Boy Scouts of America's Decision to Welcome Girls into its Membership

On Wednesday, October 11, 2017, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced a change to its membership policy to allow girls to enroll in the Cub Scouting program beginning in 2018, and to enroll in the Scouting program in 2019. The Cub Scouting program serves families with youth in grades 1-5, and the Scouting program serves families with youth in grades 6-12. This decision was made by unanimous vote of the Boy Scouts of America's Executive Board.

The BSA's action to admit girls very much resonates with the mission of the United Church of Christ (UCC), "United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all." The UCC Scouting Working Group applauds this action and offers its support, solidarity and partnership for the implementation of the change to create more inclusive Scouting programs.

As with previous changes to the BSA's membership policies, including the change to allow LGBTQ youth and adults to enroll and participate in its programs, we understand that this decision was difficult, balancing the perspectives of current and future members. This membership policy change will generate many conversations within our congregations and communities, with many diverse perspectives. We also understand that diversity and inclusiveness are foundational principles of the BSA organization, codified in its definition of the twelfth point of the scout law, "Reverent": "Reverent. A Scout is reverent toward God. [They are] faithful in [their] religious duties. [They] respect the beliefs of others."

The BSA's founders engaged diverse faith traditions and community organizations to charter units to serve the needs of the families in their communities, understood that respect for others' beliefs must be a core guiding principle, and so this definition is repeated in BSA's Charter and Bylaws as a condition of membership.

We urge our congregations to encourage and support thoughtful, prayerful dialog and accompaniment as the BSA implements this significant policy change to welcome girls, and we call on our churches to encourage and support inclusive scouting programs that welcome girls. We also call on all BSA membership and staff to ensure that all settings of BSA programs, whether unit, district, council, or national, are safe, welcoming, and affirming spaces for girls, and indeed, for all youth and adult members, participants, and staff.

*Brian Conn, Chair, on behalf of the United Church of Christ Scouting Working Group* [scouting@ucc.org](mailto:scouting@ucc.org)

## Great American Write-In

**GAWI is back!!**

IUCC's Advocates for Peace & Justice will once again have a table at the Great American Write-In!

**Saturday, March 9, 9:30am-1:30pm**

**Delhi Center**

**505 E. Central Ave, Santa Ana, CA 92707**

<http://www.womenfororangecounty.org>

[womenforoc@aol.com](mailto:womenforoc@aol.com)

Women For: Orange County, a non-partisan women's group, is pleased to present the 36th Annual Great American Write-In. This free event is offered to the public every year to provide attendees with the means to influence policy decisions by writing letters to their legislators. It's also a great opportunity for participants to experience first-hand what informed citizen involvement in government is all about.

More than 50 different organizations and advocacy groups will be represented with information regarding some of today's most vital issues, including education, health care, human and civil rights and the environment. Attendees are invited to visit the various tables and then voice their opinions by writing letters to government and corporate decision-makers in the hopes of bringing about constructive change.

There is no cost for this event; Women For: Orange County will supply the post cards, stationery, postage, refreshments and parking. At our last full event in 2019, more than 550 attendees generated over 4,250 letters and postcards!

Here is the Eventbrite link to pre-register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/great-american-write-in-tickets-82328648102>. (Each person in your group should register separately.) Registration is free and also available at the door on the day of the event.

**For a list of participating organizations, see next page.**

See you at the Write-in!

*--Felicity Figueroa, Chair*

# Great American Write-In participating organizations

CELEBRATE  
THE 36th ANNUAL  
**GREAT AMERICAN  
WRITE-IN**

Sponsored by  
**WOMEN FOR: ORANGE COUNTY**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2024**  
9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**DELHI COMMUNITY CENTER**  
505 E. Central Ave., Santa Ana 92707



**The Pen Is Mightier Than The Sword!**

**At the Write-In:**

- **MEET** representatives of local and national advocacy groups!
- **LEARN** about today's vital issues!
- **RAISE YOUR VOICE** by **WRITING** to the decision-makers who can make a difference in health, the environment, peace, human and civil rights, education!

[www.facebook.com/events/1580615346106939/](https://www.facebook.com/events/1580615346106939/)

For more information, please contact  
Felicity Figueroa 949-733-0850 or [felicitynf@aol.com](mailto:felicitynf@aol.com)

**FREE ADMISSION! FREE PARKING!**

**Participating Organizations**

American Association of University Women (IBC-OC)  
Americans United for Separation of Church & State  
Amnesty International Irvine  
Arab American Civic Council  
Brady Orange County  
Braver Angels  
California Alliance for Retired Americans  
California Work & Family Coalition  
Childs-pace Foundation, Inc.  
Church of the Foothills UCC & DOC, Faith in Action  
Citizens' Climate Lobby  
CLUE-Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice  
Colombia Peace Project  
Community Action Fund of Planned Parenthood of OSBC  
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)  
CPI-Public School Defenders' Hub  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. OC Alumnae Chapter  
Freedom for Immigrants / OC Rapid Response Network  
Girls Inc.  
Global Hope 365  
Haitian Bridge Alliance  
HEAAL - Health Equity for African Americans League  
Housing is a Human Right OC  
Humanist Association of OC  
Iranian American Democrats of California  
IUCC Advocates for Peace and Justice  
Jewish Voice for Peace OC / If Not Now OC  
League of Women Voters  
LGBTQ Center OC  
Military Families Speak Out  
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America  
National Action Network Orange County  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., OC Chapter  
National Council of Negro Women, OC Section  
OC Interfaith Committee to Aid Farmworkers  
OC Justice Fund  
OC May Day Collective  
OC National Organization for Women (NOW)  
OC Peace Coalition  
Orange Coast Huddle  
Orange County Equality Coalition (OCEC)  
Orange County Friends Meeting (Quakers)  
People's Budget OC  
Public Law Center  
Radiant Health Centers  
Save Green Space, Save the Cougars  
South OC for All  
StandUp for Kids  
The Cambodian Family  
The G.R.E.E.N. Foundation  
United Nations Association - USA, OC Chapter  
Veterans for Peace Chapter 110  
Women for American Values and Ethics (WAVE)  
Yalla Indivisible / SoCal Palestine Coalition  
Zonta Club of Newport Harbor

**FREE REFRESHMENTS! FREE POSTAGE!**



## News from the Conference

The Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ (SCNCUCC) is in the final stages of calling a new Conference Minister. The Search Committee is recommending Rev. Rachael Pryor for this important position. There will be a special called meeting of the Conference on Saturday, March 16, at 9:00 a.m. to call and elect her.



**Rev. Rachael Pryor** currently serves as Associate Conference Minister with the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference, as well as Designated Associate Conference Minister for the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Tri-Conference, UCC. Her primary focus is with Committees on Ministry, but she also has experience with Search and Call, Annual Meeting Planning, communications, board development, and financial planning. She has served on the planning committee for the biannual Authorizing Ministry in the 21st Century Conference, sponsored by MESA (Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization Team) in the national offices, and as a resolutions committee chair at the last General Synod. Rachael also works as Director of Engagement with Kansas Interfaith Action (KIFA), a statewide non-partisan legislative advocacy organization. Prior to assuming the Director of Engagement role, Rachel served for six years on the Board of Directors of KIFA (three as Chair) and helped grow KIFA from a single part-time staff to more than 5 full-time staff while tripling the budget.

At the intersection of all these roles, Rachael finds a focus in building relationships and making connections. Her approach is strongly inspired by community organizing methods and influenced by the covenantal polity of the UCC. She has participated in both versions of the UCC Sacred Conversations on Race; the first in 2014 and the second 2018 Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER) created by Dr. Velda Love.

## Advocates for Peace & Justice



### Forum on Palestine March 17 from 12:30-2 p.m.

The Advocates will show portions of the Anna Baltzer video, *Life in Occupied Palestine*, and will moderate a discussion afterwards. This is the second of two forums. Advocates Co-Chair Craig Repp notes that the video, which is not a strident presentation, is the work of an American Jewish woman sharing her own experience. Snacks will be provided.



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

# Food Collection Event

## Sponsored by Mission & Service

### Benefiting **FAMILIES FORWARD**

UNTIL EVERY FAMILY HAS A HOME



When a family doesn't have enough food – the most basic human need – stability in other areas is impossible.

Currently, the Families Forward food pantry serves over 6,000 low-income individuals each year.

*Families Forward relies almost entirely on community donations to feed these local families.*

### Food Pantry Most Needed Items

- cereal
- rice 1-2 lbs. bag
- canned soups
- canned fruits
- canned beans
- peanut butter (12oz or 16oz)
- canned veggies
- canned pasta
- canned meats (tuna, chicken, etc)
- mac n cheese
- pasta (dry)
- pasta sauce

### NON-FOOD ITEMS

- baby wipes
- diapers (sizes 3 and up)

**Families Forward**, located at **8 Thomas, Irvine**, welcomes **food donations** from those who want to help end hunger!

Food donations can be dropped off at the pantry in the back of their building:

**Monday-Thursday between 10:00am and 4:00pm**

If you are unable to drop off during these days/hours, deliver donations to front office **Monday-Thursday between 9:00am and 4:00pm**, and **Fridays from 9:00am to 1:00pm**.

Or

Shop Online: [https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/XJDVNWJ0MB2K/ref=hz\\_ls\\_biz\\_ex](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/XJDVNWJ0MB2K/ref=hz_ls_biz_ex)