

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

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

It was a super fun Spooky Sunday/Trunk or Treat at IUCC on Oct. 29!



More Spooky Sunday/Trunk or Treat photos!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes & Alex Ingal





Invitation to Special Congregational Meeting

Sunday, November 12, between services (hybrid: both in person and online via Zoom)

IUCC will be conducting a Special Congregational Meeting for the congregation to vote to accept the transfer of title to the property located at 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine, CA from the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC (Conference) and pay closing costs. In order for us to conduct this meeting, we need a quorum of 25% of corporate members, so your attendance is very important!

After the Special Congregational Meeting, join the Admin Board as they host Coffee Hour in Plumer Hall. They will be providing financial updates for the congregation, progress on our strategic plan, and other administration updates. Come meet IUCC leaders and ask questions!

Informational Forum: Sunday, November 5, between services (also hybrid)

Per our Bylaws, when a congregational meeting is conducted electronically, there must be a Informational Forum at least 7 days beforehand to answer any questions. Edith Guffey (Project Manager for Administration for the Conference) will be available online to explain the transfer and answer any questions.

Reason for Special Meeting

IUCC began as a new church start-up sponsored by the Church Development Commission of the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC in 1979. In all the years since then, the Conference has held the deed to our property. Even as we opened our preschool, built our new sanctuary, and added new offices and meeting rooms adjacent to the sanctuary, we've done so as a long-term lessee, not as an owner. All of the improvements we've made to the property through the years have increased its value to the Conference, not to IUCC itself.

Now, a major opportunity has presented itself, and we are thrilled beyond words! The Conference has decided it should no longer be in the business of owning church properties, and it is ready to remove itself from the title. The Conference has notified us that we – along with about a dozen other UCC churches – will be given the deeds to our facilities. This action will give us 100% authority over the property we have worked so hard to build and maintain, which we don't have right now. This is something we've long wanted to happen, and we couldn't be more pleased and excited!

All the Conference asks in return is that we pay the closing costs of the transfer (up to \$4000) and acknowledge that if our church dissolves, the property will revert back to the Conference (this is consistent with our covenantal values and already part of our bylaws right now). Our Treasurer has assured us that the Administration Board can absorb the closing costs as part of its discretionary fund should the congregation vote to accept the transfer of property.

Because our bylaws require that any kind of transfer of real property be authorized by a vote of 2/3 of the congregation (even when the transfer is of tremendous benefit to us), we are calling a Special Congregational Meeting for this purpose between services on November 12. As with all our congregational meetings, we must have a quorum present to take care of business matters. Thus, we urge you to attend the meeting and vote YES on this amazing gift to our congregation!

Photos from AIDS Walk on Oct. 7

Our 13 member 2023 IUCC Walk the Walkers Team (Felicity Figueroa, Pastor Sarah, Maria Carrillo, Tricia Aynes, Steve Goetz, Bill Lawrence, Alex & Jon Ingal, Daisy Ingal, Kathi Smith, Myrna & Lisa Bohan, and Esther Tang raised \$2,529 to fight HIV/AIDS. Our own Felicity Figueroa served as Co-Chair of the event as well as our IUCC team captain, while Pastor Sarah gave a stirring invocation. We greeted numerous people at our colorful IUCC booth (thanks to Alex & Jon and Communications Ministry!) and spread the word about our wonderful church. Our own Daisy Ingal participated in the "Cutest Dog" contest and won a second place medal. Many thanks to those who walked and those who supported us!



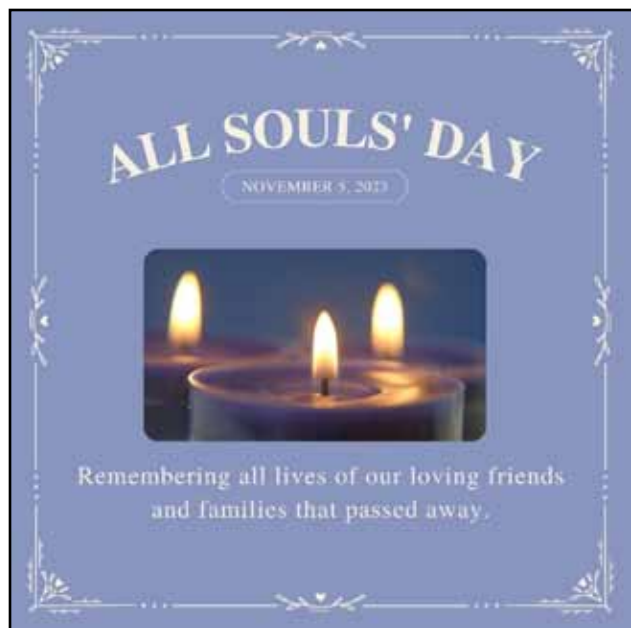
Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes



IUCC Walk the Walkers AIDS Walk Team



Events in November



Did you lose someone in 2022-2023? Do you want to remember a loved one who is no longer with us? We will be creating a memory montage for All Saints Day on November 5, 2023 to be shared during services. Please send any digital photograph you want to include to Pastor Craig in the office with the name(s) of the person(s) you want to remember.



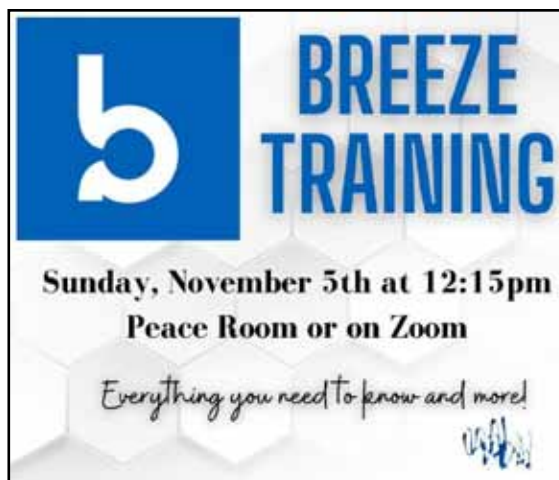
Pre-Thanksgiving Joint Service with University Synagogue on Nov. 19

At the request of University Synagogue, we have moved the annual Pre-Thanksgiving joint service with them to Sunday, Nov. 19. The service will be part of our 9:30 a.m. service at IUCC that day. The joint choirs of IUCC and University Synagogue will sing.

This will be Rabbi Rachlis' last Thanksgiving service with us, since he is retiring soon. Please come to celebrate his ministry and wish him well!



Stephen Ministry Presents: Patty Barnett Mouton, Vice President, Outreach & Advocacy, Alzheimer's Orange County, will hold an educational forum to discuss the challenges and landscape of persons with dementia and Alzheimer's.



Feeling lost with Breeze? Want to master the basics? In search of a patient teacher to guide you through? Look no further! An exciting opportunity is on the horizon. Join us for an in-person training session in the Peace Room right after the second service on November 5th. We promise to demystify Breeze and empower you to navigate it with confidence.

For those who love hands-on learning, consider bringing your phones or laptops with you – it's optional but highly recommended! This way, you can immediately put your newfound knowledge to the test and make it stick. If you prefer a remote approach, don't fret – you can also join the session via Zoom.

Whether you're a beginner just starting out or someone looking to refine your Breeze skills, this session is tailored to meet your needs and help you become a Breeze pro. So, mark your calendars for November 5th, and get ready to level up your Breeze game!

From the Senior Pastor

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



While gratitude is an attitude to cultivate all year long, I love the intentionality that culturally we share in a season of gratitude during the month of November. I am fond of the challenges that invite us to daily name those things for which we are grateful because a habit of gratitude can make us happier people less likely to covet others' lives and things, and find contentment with ourselves and the gifts we have even as we seek to work towards a better world for all.

There are so many reasons to give thanks! Writing a newsletter article always puts me in a reflective mood, recalling the memories we created together in the past month. October ended with so much joy as we celebrated Halloween with our Spooky Sunday and Trunk-or-Treat! It was so much fun with incredible creativity! I love all the themes that people bring and how much thought goes into creating a trunk! My favorite car was at our preschool Trunk-or-Treat where a VW bus came as a whale! It was adorable! But there were so many amazing set-ups at both of our events that it's really hard to choose just one favorite! Thank you so much to everyone who made this a special time for our kids! They were all so excited and so happy to dress up and celebrate with us. The preschool kiddos melted our hearts and our IUCC kids had a blast! My daughter embraced her costume as Wednesday Addams. She stayed in character the whole morning, even singing "Come, Now is the Time for Worship" with a glare in her unblinking eyes! And did you catch the Spooky Fresh Word led by Dustin, our MYP Youth Coordinator? His maniacal laugh and spooky poetry was eerily perfect for the day!

In our Spooky Sunday sermon, I reflected on a terribly frightful thought: what would happen if IUCC never existed? Or we woke up one day and it just wasn't here? That's a real nightmare, if you ask me! We don't always realize the impact we make in individual lives or the community, but in preparing for my sermon, with the thanks of several contributors, it became obvious that IUCC has a reach that is much farther than we probably had thought. We're different people because of this church - this community and we have made our larger community a better place for our existence.

As we contemplate our Stewardship theme **Christ's Among Us**, it becomes clear that we do live as Christs in community - we must. And my Nightmare on Alton Street (er...Parkway) made it clear to me that if this community, this interconnected network of christs, were not in relationship the way we are and have been, life would be very different for all of us. But because we exist, because we have so many people with generous hearts, committed to giving of themselves, to working for justice, to sharing love, breaking bread, waging peace, and making the world a better place - the world really is the better for it! November 12 is Pledge Sunday - please consider making or increasing your pledge so we can ensure IUCC continues to exist for the next generation.

I'm so grateful for all that we shared in the packed month of October with our celebration of World Communion and our Blessing of the Animals celebration. It was amazing to see all the animals that joined us for our second service on October 8! Many thanks to the Rev. Dr. Terry LePage for taking the pulpit and sharing about the process of writing her book, becoming in touch with nature, and finding peace in the midst of chaos by building relationships and recognizing our deep connection to one another and God's creation. Such a timely message as we live with the pain of our world, the war in Palestine and Israel, Ukraine and elsewhere and the devastation of our climate.

And now, as we enter into November, we gather first to remember the Saints, carving out space and giving permission to grieve as we remember those who have died. It's not too late to send in a photo for a visual remembrance or to bring a photo for the altar. If someone you love has died within the last year, we'd like to light a candle to remember them. Please reach out to ensure we have their name and date of death.

November 12th is not only Pledge Day (and my daughter's birthday), it's also the day of our Special Congregational Meeting. Please read up about it in this newsletter. We are thrilled to finally own the property we have been paying on and very happy that the Conference has decided to transfer it to our name. This will be in congruence with our United Church of Christ polity which believes in local church autonomy. We are the stewards of this church and now we'll officially be the name on the title just as we are already the ones who pay the mortgage! We'll have a 30

From the Senior Pastor continued from Page 6

minute forum on November 5 between services with Edith Guffey zooming in to explain the transfer, and we'll vote on November 12 between services. Please plan to attend or make it a priority to zoom in.

Then on November 19, we will be celebrating Thanksgiving in an Interfaith Service with our friends from University Synagogue. This is Rabbi Arnold Rachlis' final Thanksgiving service with us because he's retiring next year. Normally, we gather in the evening, but this year we'll be celebrating during our 9:30 a.m. service. We want to make this a very special service and have invited a couple of special guests -so you won't want to miss this celebration! I'm so grateful for this long standing relationship. Rabbi Arnie was the first rabbi I ever met over 30 years ago and his presence in my life has certainly been a blessing. His friendship and collegiality with Pastor Fred, our pastor emeritus, gave us access to Judaism in a way that most Christians never get. He and Pastor Paul continued that relationship through the 13 years that Pastor Paul served at IUCC, and we've continued this relationship in my role. We are so grateful for this friendship that IUCC and the University Synagogue have shared and for the leadership that Rabbi Arnie has shown in our community.

I'm so grateful for all of you. Thank you for being a human being that cares. Thank you for being a part of this church, for living in community, and saying yes to act as Christ's hands, heart and voice in this world. Thank you for being a Christ among us.

May we continue to live in gratitude as we journey into this new month together.

Pastor Sarah



From the Moderator

by Connie Jones



Hi church family,

I'm pleased to report that as of today, we have 44 pledges in support of IUCC's 2024 budget for a total of \$190,905. We have reached 48% of our goal of \$400,000. Good job!

To those who haven't yet pledged, please do so as soon as possible via our website or with the pledge cards at this Sunday's service.

Our progressive Christian voice has made a such a difference in Orange County and the city of Irvine. Let's do everything we can to ensure IUCC keeps growing and stays healthy for the next generation.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ is on title as owning our campus. They have decided to transfer title to IUCC and per our by-laws, our congregation must approve this. There will be a forum to answer questions. This is a very good thing!

Hugs,
Connie Jones,
Moderator, IUCC

P.S. If you missed Pastor Sarah's spooky Sunday sermon, don't miss out. Play the recording from our website.





Dear friends and members of I.U.C.C.,

As you can see from the header, the theme for the 2024 stewardship pledge campaign is CHRIST'S AMONG US. You may be wondering what that means exactly. As we reflect upon the accomplishments that our church family has achieved this year, there are many notable examples of those who have acted as CHRIST'S AMONG US in making a difference in our church community and/or the community at large.

We have many CHRIST'S AMONG US participating in our missions and ministries to thank and be thankful for all they have done this past year:

- Those that gave up so much of their time and talent in the ECC Refresh and those that donated to defray the cost of the Refresh
- Those in leadership positions on our Administrative Board and our Ministries Board
- Those that donated their time facilitating celebrations under our sails, church picnics, bingo nights, Bon Vivant dinners, Comma groups, children and adult Sunday school, Bible study, PRIDE, and the AIDS Walk and Second Harvest Walk
- Those that served us as deacons, Stephen ministers, and in our office
- Those that brought God's love to us through song, music, and word
- Those that gave so much to I.U.C.C. through their time, talent, and treasure.

We have referenced, time, talent, and treasure, which are all key to the success of I.U.C.C. They are like a three legged stool. If one leg is broken, the stool can collapse! Obviously, stewardship deals with our treasure. Your pledges are what build our treasury, supporting the many programs and missions that we have at I.U.C.C.

As you hopefully know by now, my co-chair Bill Lawrence kicked off the start of our month-long stewardship campaign on October 22nd. As Bill mentioned in church, our leaders have determined a 2024 budget for I.U.C.C. for which we've set a goal of raising \$400,000 in pledges. I

am pleased to say that our church leadership had 100% participation in already, pledging \$126,000.

We've had a fair number of new people joining our church this past year. For those not aware of the concept of pledging, this is asking you to determine a dollar amount that you can realistically give to I.U.C.C. over the course of 2024 and then satisfying that pledge with installments that can be made in several different ways. Some pay in a single lump sum at the very beginning of the year. Others do monthly or weekly installments by credit card or cash. However, be certain that if you do it by cash in the collection plate, please put it in an envelope with your name to be certain you are credited with that amount towards satisfying your pledge.

The stewardship pledges serve a very important function. They allow our treasurer to see how realistically close projected revenue will match the projected budget for the next year. Given that pledges historically represent nearly 70% of our annual budget, pledges are critically important. We ask that you thoughtfully and prayerfully determine a pledge that is meaningful to you, hopefully increasing your pledge over those of the past to compensate for the ever increasing cost of services and salaries that the church faces so that we hopefully don't experience a deficit at the end of the year.

This is very much the same as you would determine a budget for yourself at home after evaluating your resources. No pledge is too small and certainly none is ever too large. A pledge that you can realistically give is certainly better than no pledge at all. If somehow circumstances change and you cannot satisfy your pledge by the end of 2024, we do ask that you notify our office. Fortunately, too, there are instances of members graciously supplementing their pledge with additional donations throughout the year.

So, please join Bill and myself and the rest of the I.U.C.C. leadership in making your pledge as soon as possible either online using this link: <https://iucc.breezechms.com/form/f2783e> or by filling out a hardcopy pledge form which will be available at church during services, in the narthex, or at our information table.

At the time of this writing, we have raised \$190,905 towards our goal of \$400,000. Now that we are a little over halfway through our month of the stewardship pledge campaign, we're starting to fall behind a little, so please make your pledge just as soon as possible.

In the fellowship of service,
Duane Vajgrt and Bill Lawrence
Fund Development Committee Co-Chairs



Financial Update

by Chuck Heath, Treasurer

It's Stewardship **and** Budget Planning season once again!! Since our last update presented at the Spring Congregational Meeting, IUCC's financial condition is close to break even when balanced with the General Fund deficit and Preschool's surplus.

Below are the Early Childcare Center and the IUCC General Fund financial summaries, followed by the IUCC Combined Summary.

Early Childcare Center	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	9 Months YTD		Variance Pos (neg)
				Actual	Budget	
Tuition Revenue	\$ 56,331	\$ 58,561	\$ 61,407	\$ 568,709	\$ 542,536	\$ 26,173
Other Revenue	2,350	2,668	7,394	15,537	7,237	8,300
Total Revenue	58,681	61,248	68,801	584,246	\$ 549,773	\$ 34,473
Personnel Compensation	45,285	50,066	51,243	440,809	419,516	21,293
Other Expense	11,104	9,893	11,400	93,899	100,397	(6,498)
Total Expense	56,389	59,960	62,643	534,708	519,913	14,795
Net Income (loss)	\$ 2,292	\$ 1,289	\$ 6,158	\$ 49,537	\$ 29,860	\$ 19,677
Add back Depreciation	3,132	3,161	3,194	27,664	27,664	-
Adjusted Net Income (Loss)	\$ 5,424	\$ 4,450	\$ 9,352	\$ 77,201	\$ 57,524	\$ 19,677

Year-to-date revenue exceeded budget by 6%, totaling **\$ 584,246**. September revenue reflects an annual tuition increase of 7%. Expenses reflect the annual personnel COLA now on a September-August school year calendar. Personnel COLAs were in the 6% range, consistent with current market rates at competitive schools.

Year-to-date adjusted net income is **\$ 77,201**, exceeding the budget by 34%. The increase is partly thanks to the many ECC Refresh donations received earlier this year from the congregation that are now recognized as revenue to offset the refresh expenses.

Student enrollments were at 80% capacity at the end of September and are projected to increase over the next three months. The new ECC website and recent marketing initiatives should help increase enrolment to capacity.

The **ECC Profit Contribution** to the General Fund has increased over budget in recent months as profit returns have been positive. Year to date, ECC has contributed **\$ 29,000** in cash profits to the IUCC General Fund and **\$ 28,995** in IUCC office staff reimbursement for a total of **\$ 57,995**.

General Fund	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	9 Months YTD		Variance Pos (neg)
				Actual	Budget	
Pledged Contributions	\$ 29,128	\$ 35,837	\$ 45,932	\$ 265,804	\$ 267,632	\$ (1,828)
Non-Pledged Contributions	3,815	2,903	4,925	39,139	41,560	(2,421)
Special Contrib. Recognition				10,007	10,000	7
Complete Prior Yr Pledge				2,045	-	
Other Income	7,511	13,657	25,400	88,129	109,259	(21,130)
Total Revenue	\$ 40,454	\$ 52,397	\$ 76,257	\$ 405,124	\$ 428,451	\$ (23,327)
Personnel Expense	30,347	28,866	28,743	273,351	300,586	(27,235)
Other Expense	31,591	29,821	49,286	284,380	290,801	(6,421)
Total Expense	61,938	58,687	78,029	557,731	591,387	(33,656)
Net Income (loss)	(21,484)	(6,290)	(1,772)	(152,607)	(162,936)	10,329
Add back Depreciation	11,170	11,170	11,170	100,530	100,530	
Adjusted Net Income (Loss)	\$ (10,314)	\$ 4,880	\$ 9,398	\$ (52,077)	\$ (62,406)	\$ 10,329

Year-to-date revenue is **\$ 405,124**, \$ 23,327 below budget. YTD pledge revenue is 1% below budget. Non-pledge contributions are 6% below budget YTD.

As of October 31, 2023, **85%** of pledge commitments have been received, totaling **\$ 329,157**.

Other income includes facility rentals, which have grown significantly this year to **\$ 32,156**. Combined with the Woodbridge Parking rental, rentals total **\$ 40,139** YTD. The ECC Profit Contribution was increased over budget, totaling **\$29,000** YTD, 21% above budget.

General Fund **Adjusted Cash Net loss** is **(\$ 52,078)**.

Combined cash plus investments for **General Fund and ECC entities** was **\$ 520,076**. Based on the average monthly expense run rate from both operating entities, cash reserves cover **4.34 months** of operating expenses.

Combined Financial Summary

Consolidated IUCC Operating Entities	General Fund	Early Childcare	Eliminating Entries	Total IUCC
Revenue	\$ 405,124	\$ 584,246	\$ (57,995)	\$ 931,375
Personnel Expense	273,351	440,809		714,160
Other Expense	284,380	\$ 93,899		378,279
Total Expense	557,731	\$ 534,708	\$ (57,995)	\$ 1,034,444
Net Income (loss)	\$ (152,607)	\$ 49,538		\$ (103,069)
Add back Depreciation	100,530	27,664		128,194
Adjusted Net Income (loss)	\$ (52,077)	\$ 77,202		\$ 25,125

Financial Challenges Ahead

While IUCC is in an overall safe financial position, we continue to focus on cash flow and cash reserves to support our operating expenses and the programs they support at IUCC. Cash reserves must be maintained and grown to support planned and unplanned capital expenditures.

Note from Mission & Service Ministry: We will meet on Sunday, November 12, in the Wisdom Room starting after 1st Service at about 10:30. All are welcome to join us!

Join
Mission & Service along with Families Forward to
Adopt-a-Family



Two ways to get involved:

Sign-ups for Adopt-a-Family will be available
Sunday, November 12th
between the first and second service.

Once signed up, you will receive detailed instructions.
All gifts must be brought to IUCC by December 3rd.

Or

If you wish to donate to this special project rather than purchase gifts, please
make your check out to
IUCC with Adopt-a-Family on the memo line.

Checks can be turned in:
November 5th ~ November 30th
To the office
Monday ~ Thursday between 10 am – 4 pm

or
Delivered to the Narthex on Sundays
In an envelope marked “Adopt-a-Family”
Collection basket on the shelf as you enter the Narthex

Ministry With Young People: Upcoming Events in November!

SCAN ME!



TO REGISTER FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL

all students must be registered to attend starting Sun Nov 5th

IUCC Young Adults

End your week with a FRIENDSGIVING BRUNCH

November 26th 12:30

JR. YOUTH Dance PARTY


LET'S BOOGIE!

NOV. 5TH 10:30 AM PLUMER HALL



SERVICE PROJECT

MYP Hosts Coffee Hour Nov 5th



Special lesson showing WELCOME as a way to be "Christ's Among Us"

We're helping to host the snack table!

Calling all our Jr. Youth, aged 9-12, for an exciting invitation! Get ready to groove and boogie with Dustin in a lively dance session in between our services this coming Sunday, November 5th. Join us at 10:30 a.m. in Plumer Hall for a fun-filled dance party that's sure to put a smile on your face and a rhythm in your step. Don't forget to bring your dancing shoes and enthusiasm. See you there!

We're learning a way of being "Christ's Among Us" with a hands on service project. Bring a food for the table, come host between services, or help with set up or clean up! Sign up on our website.



A huge THANK YOU to volunteers for all of your amazing decorations, treats, and costumes that made Trunk or Treat a terrific time!



Ministry With Young People: Sunday School

Photos & Captions courtesy of Lauren Louie, Co-Chair of MYP

What a month! We learned about the love behind communion, embracing animals, and the beauty of seaweed. We've been doing a multipart series on Stewardship.



The Power of Compliments

Ms. Jackie and Ms. Rachel show the power of compliments and gratitude as ways to love.



Stewardship and Trick or Treat Bags

Decorating trick or treat bags while learning about the love that powers Stewardship.



Stewardship Learning about Budgets 1 & 2

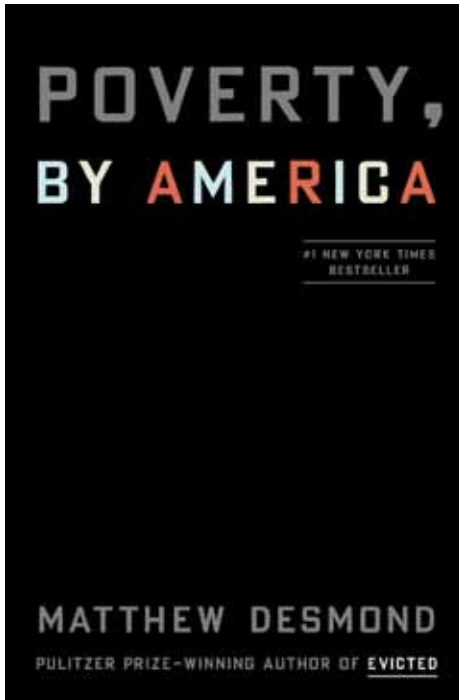
We got to see MYP's budget and then saw for ourselves whether we could make a grocery budget work!



Sunday School Seaweed Day!



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Book Group Continues



The current book for the DEI Tuesday Morning book group is “Poverty, by America” by Matthew Desmond.

Why does the richest country on earth have more poverty than any other advanced democracy? Acclaimed sociologist Matthew Desmond argues it is because we benefit from it - affluent Americans knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor. This book shows us another way to understand the issues of poverty and challenges us to think of solutions to end poverty.

Reading schedule:

- Oct. 17 - Prologue-Chapter 1
- Oct. 24 - Chapters 3-4
- Oct. 31 - Chapters 5-6
- Nov. 7 - Chapters 7-8
- Nov. 14 - Chapter 9 - Epilogue

Poverty, by America

By: Matthew Desmond

304 pages

On Amazon: <https://a.co/d/51elyG7>

As usual, we meet Tuesday mornings from 9-10:15 am via Zoom. We hope you will join us!

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Ministry Event on Nov. 3



DEI Ministry Event: Film Showing and Discussion of the Documentary “1000% Me” on Friday, November 3, 6:30-8:30pm, Plumer Hall. Please join the DEI ministry as we watch and discuss W. Kamau Bell’s documentary, 1000% Me, a film about growing up in multiracial/multiethnic families. Showcasing interviews with all different kinds of families, this documentary captures the joys and struggles of growing up “mixed” in the Bay Area. The film is suitable for all ages.

The documentary will be shown in Plumer Hall. Doors will open at 6:30 for a short social time and a light dinner of pizza and snacks (drinks provided). We will start the one-hour film just before 7 and then have discussion until around 8:30pm. Everyone is welcome to attend. We look forward to seeing you!



- | | | | |
|-------|---------------------|-------|-----------------|
| 11/30 | Jonas Alejo | 11/09 | Beverly Nielson |
| 11/10 | Cheryl Arguile | 11/28 | Ben O'Dell |
| 11/10 | Jennifer Bullington | 11/28 | Roni Portillo |
| 11/04 | Beverly Deshler | 11/03 | Jean Raymoure |
| 11/17 | Janet Emery | 11/08 | Christina Ruiz |
| 11/29 | Emme Exelby | 11/02 | Olivia Sirchio |
| 11/15 | George Fulton | 11/10 | Michael Spindle |
| 11/30 | Kelly Garrity | 11/05 | Irene Thornton |
| 11/13 | Dean Inada | 11/17 | Rob Thornton |
| 11/07 | Glenna Matthews | 11/11 | Robert Zane |

A Thanksgiving Ode to the People of IUCC

by Vivian Elaine Johnson



Thank you, People of IUCC, for being my sanctuary, that is, a place of refuge and safety:

A place where you are interested in me and I in you.

A place where you don't expect me to be perfect and I do not expect perfection from you.

A safe space for us to ask questions and share concerns and opinions without feeling judged.

A place of a spirit of openness to learn about people different from ourselves and about beliefs contrary to our own.

A place where we stay in the room together *even* if our opinions differ.

Thank you, People of IUCC, for providing a place where all my senses are awakened:

My sight is enriched by your personal smiles, by the colorful banners and altar décor, by the videos and material on the screens for our worship services.

My taste is satisfied by the communion elements, by coffee time between services, and the food found at meetings, dinners and parties.

My hearing is pleased with our children's high voices, our pastor's wise sermons, the glory of our music, the wisdom shared in class settings, and by your kind words of encouragement.

My sense of smell delights in the aroma of altar flowers, the pine-scent of the Christmas tree, the sweet wafting of the Easter lilies, the aftershave and perfume emanating from your hugs.

My touch is gratified by your welcoming arms and handshakes, the blessing moments of the knit gift-blankets and shawls, by the communal holding of hands as we sing Alleluia, and your comforting arms when I'm in need.

Thank you, People of IUCC, for being a launching pad:

You stimulate my thinking, especially to see beyond myself.

You offer me opportunities to share my financial resources for our property, staff, and ministries home and abroad.

You graciously and energetically invite me to be involved in the work of the community, nation, and world.

As you inform me of social justice issues, you gently but firmly challenge my apathy.

You remind me to walk in the love and the ways of Jesus, and you invite my spirit into the universe of God.

~This is my Thanksgiving Ode of Love to you, People of IUCC, this Thanksgiving Season of 2023~



Elli Luke

Personal Pronouns: They, Them A Non-Binary, Beautiful Transition of Personhood

by the Reverend Doctor Jerry von Talge



Dr. Jerry von Talge



Elli Luke

Let us celebrate the ever-new ways of defining gender, of being, of living, of self-expression. Let us celebrate a beautiful transition of personhood.

Elli Luke has a beautiful personality, a quick mind and a gentle spirit. They are currently going through a process of gender identity change. Gender identity, rather than being static, is dynamic: an ever-flowing stream of humanity.

Looking through a transgender lens, we see a beautiful transition into a new form of personhood. Elli sees themselves as non-binary but is currently in a trans space. According to Elli, the transition of personhood to become non-binary is both beautiful and difficult. It is hard work. It is expensive, including the cost of medical bills. It takes courage and perseverance. There is harsh societal blowback. In spite of all the difficulty, Elli fully embraces their personhood with joy, passion and pride.

Background

Elli was an actor in the *Wayward Artist* (Craig Tyril's theater company) production of *The Queer Couch*. They participated in a Pie Day queer panel, a program of our Steven Ministry. Intersectionality is a big factor in their life because of being black and intersecting and interacting with having a non-binary gender identity. They were born and grew up in Westminster. The relationship between them and their parents was somewhat troubled. When Elli came out at age 17, there was quite a bit of resistance from their parents, who tried to tell them what to wear and what to do, and sometimes yelled at them. Because of the toxic home environment, Elli moved out and has been on their own since age 17. Elli was fortunate to have friends who were supportive.

Elli has five siblings, brothers age 22 and 33, and three younger sisters, ages 12, 14, and 15. Because their parents worked a lot, Elli had to take over the responsibility for the whole family, including their older brother. They are biracial, with a Caucasian mother and a Black father. They identify as Black.

Elli identifies with being non-binary, but is currently living more of a trans life. They are in a process of changing voice to a higher pitch, taking voice lessons and wearing different clothes.

They have received quite a bit of flak from people in general, having been called names and received cat calls. They are also acutely aware of an element of danger because of the violence against trans people. Elli is also concerned about laws passed and laws pending in the United States that would prohibit a person from being trans. Elli's desire is to be appreciated, respected, and validated for who they are, a person like anybody else.

Unfortunately, this inclusive attitude towards the queer community has been sadly lacking, with the opposite being the reality. A pervasive fear has caused deep seated prejudice and many instances of violence, as well as a plethora of litigation in the last few years, denying LGBTQ+ rights.

A non-binary gender-identity and authenticity

Self-identity (including gender identity) comes primarily from our interaction with other people when we are children growing up. However, there is within all of us, to varying degrees, an independent and autonomous spark that allows us to stand our own ground, to decide for ourselves freely and independently.

This autonomous (and authentic) inner self can be out of sync with a personality that has been formed from interaction with people in our cultural environment. A person can look in the mirror and see somebody else, rather than who they are. Elli speaks of the phenomena called body dysphoria, which is a big thing for trans people. Parts of their body are not them and they feel uncomfortable having body parts that do not fit their personhood. Surgery is sometimes used as a corrective to body dysphoria.

What it means to have a non-binary gender-identity

Traditionally, gender was defined as binary: male and female. Non-binary means that there are more than two definitions of gender. A non-binary person does not identify as a man or a woman. Elli explains that non-binary means not only avoiding being male or female physically,

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but also avoiding all of the roles that women and men are pressured to play. Further, it allows a person to avoid all of the decisions that a man or woman must make. A person enjoys more freedom of choice, less restriction and not having to fill gender roles.

The queer community

Elli is a strong advocate for the queer community, for which they have a passionate love, along with a deep appreciation and respect. They talk about the cohesion and sense of belonging, and that even though a person may not be totally understood, they will be entirely respected and accepted by others. One member will battle for the rights of another member in a sacred solidarity and loyalty. They see true beauty, the beauty of human nature at its best.

How non queer (cisgender) people can be helpful allies

Elli speaks of the critical need for listening. (I would add that listening needs to be with our heart, mind, and soul, our whole being.) Respect is essential. Don't make assumptions, just listen and learn. Be non-judgmental.

Elli makes a profound statement, that we must be open to changing our outdated thinking. To fully accept and respect people in the queer community, we must be willing to change some of the gender ideas that we learned as children and adults. This requires a radical openness to accepting new ways of being, of dressing, and new ways of expressing oneself. The job of an ally is to listen, learn, change thinking, validate and advocate for the general welfare of the queer community.

Plans for the future

Elli is currently attending Fullerton Community College, seeking a degree in theater. They plan on pursuing an acting career, ultimately appearing in films. They want to live in New York in the future. Strong and smart, they are a passionate advocate for the queer community. They will spread sunshine wherever they go.

**Sneak Peek! Save these
(tentative) dates in December!**

**Snow Day & Advent Workshop on
Saturday, Dec. 2 at 2:30 p.m.**



Get ready to chill out at the IUCC Snow Play event in sunny California! Save the date for December 2nd at 2:30 p.m., and remember, it's a snow day for ALL ages! Join us for a frosty-fun time filled with snow, crafts, and jolly holiday spirit. Let's all sled into the Advent season together! Stay tuned for more info, but like snowflakes, details may change, so be sure to check the e-blasts for updates.

**Christmas Pageant on Sunday,
December 17**



Step into the holiday spotlight at IUCC's "Who is my family?" Christmas Pageant! Join us on December 17th at IUCC for a heartwarming celebration that's perfect for all ages. There are roles to suit everyone, so whether you're young or young at heart, you're invited to be a part of this festive extravaganza! To make it even more special, share your family stories with Myrna and get ready for a jolly good time. Contact Myrna to discover your role in this unforgettable Christmas tale!

Pastor Sarah performed a Blessing of the Animals on October 8

Photos courtesy of Craig Tyrl

