

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

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



Thalia Moore



Joy Dorko

**Our magnificent choral interns
dazzled us with a wonderful
concert on August 27!**



Jaime Reza



*Dr. Chris Peterson (IUCC Choir Director),
Joy Dorko, Jaime Reza, and Thalia Moore*



Yuyoung Jeong



*Connie Jones
& Mike Wilcox
served ice cream
cake at the
reception
afterwards*



*Felicity Figueroa
& Susan Sayre
enjoyed the
concert!*

*Photos courtesy of
Tricia Aynes &
Pastor Sarah*



Coming Soon!



Comma Groups 2023-2024

The members of IUCC have enjoyed a small group experience called “Comma Groups” since the Fall of 2011. These groups:

- Expand current relationships, giving members deeper connections with each other.
- Provide opportunities for visitors and new members to become part of our community.
- Provide a safe context for stimulating discussions and conversations around topics and issues that are important to our church and its members.

A Comma Group consists of 8 to 10 people who sign up to be part of a six month experience. The groups meet once a month in a member’s home, at church, or at a restaurant for a meal and discussion of a predetermined topic. The groups are designed to be friendly, conversational, personal and spiritual. Members have time to catch up with what is going on in each other’s lives as well as share thoughts about the mission and vision of our church. Each group has a volunteer leader who coordinates discussion while each member participates in decisions regarding where to meet and what to eat.

Here’s the link to our Comma Group video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2KK0K027Mo>. You can register through our website, by contacting the office, or by clicking here: <https://shorturl.at/efhNX>



Annual All-Church Picnic on Sept. 24

Looking for a perfect way to savor the sun, scrumptious bites, and wonderful company? Look no further!

Our annual IUCC Picnic is coming up on Sunday, September 24, at 12:30 p.m. It will be held at William R. Mason Regional Park, 18712 University Dr., Irvine, CA.

We have lots of fun things planned like sack races, egg toss and a musical cake walk! We will also be BBQing burgers, hotdogs, veggie patties and sausages and asking everyone (if possible) to bring a side dish or dessert to share.

To ensure we have enough food, please RSVP to: iucc@iucc.org - subject line: Picnic

We also need some help setting up, BBQing and shopping. If you would like to help out with either set up, shopping, or BBQing please email Myrna Bohan at myrnabohan@gmail.com.

See you there!

Myrna Bohan, Fellowship Chair

Coming Soon!



Bon Vivant Dinner on September 23

Pre-pandemic, Bon Vivant dinners were regularly scheduled events held each month. We gathered at people's homes, the beach, or a park to enjoy an evening of laughter, camaraderie, life stories and shared experiences. We came away enriched, knowing each other a little better.

The Bon Vivant dinners are back, and they're happening every fourth Saturday! You can sign up as a guest or host. This month's dinner is September 23rd at 6:00 p.m., and it is hosted by Keith and Renae Boyum. Space is limited. If you have not already done so, sign up at the information table or contact Debra Banwell. You can also call or text Debra at 949-433-1494.



Prayer Shawl Ministry: Woven in Prayer

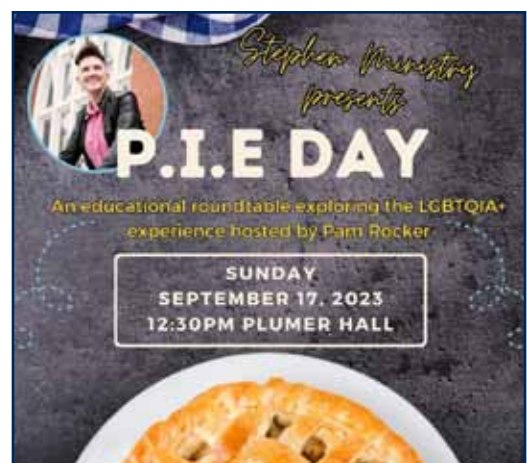
The prayer shawl ministry meets on the second Saturday of the month at 2:00 p.m. Do you knit, crochet, or craft in some other way? Please join the next meeting on Saturday, September 9, for shared fellowship, food, and prayer! Bring your yarn or other materials!



AIDS WALK on October 7

Come and celebrate the arrival of autumn with a special Pride walk! It's happening on Saturday, October 7, 2023, at the 37th AIDS Walk Orange County. Join us and honor our LGBTQ+ community and those affected by HIV/AIDS. Be part of the IUCC team! This walk will be an amazing experience filled with happiness, love, and togetherness as we embrace the spirit of our community. You can participate in our "Pride walk," watch exciting performances, play games, and explore the vendor fair. You can choose to walk alone or with a team. There are lots of ways for everyone to be part of this event. Here's the link to **join our walk team or donate** to Team IUCC: <https://donate.radianthealthcenters.org/team/515304>

Attending the AIDS WALK? Why not tell people about IUCC! Just drop by the **IUCC booth** when you are ready and stay as late as you want! Feel free to email Alex at talktome@iucc.org for questions.



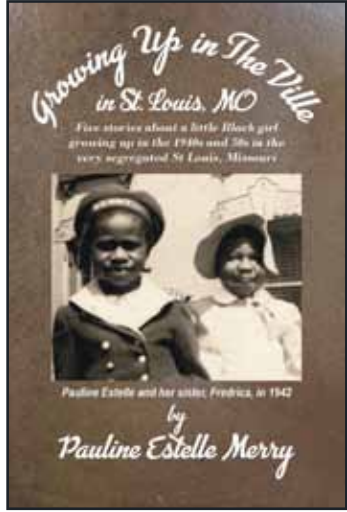
As part of their continuing education series, the Stephen Ministry has invited the executive director of Affirming Connections, Pam Rocker, to host a roundtable discussion focused on the Public, Intentional, and Explicit work of being an Open & Affirming Congregation (P.I.E). Bring your curiosity and join us for a 45-minute roundtable followed by a Q&A while enjoying a light lunch and delicious pie.

**Please Welcome our
New Members-August 27**



Kent & Lisa Pelt

**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
book club meetings in September**
from Lesli Mitchell, Co-Chair of DEI



We will be reading ***Growing up in the Ville in St. Louis, MO*** by Pauline Estelle Merry. This book includes 5 stories about a little black girl growing up in the 1940s and 50s in the very segregated city of St. Louis, Missouri.

The author will be present for the book study for discussion. Please join us on Zoom.

Sept. 12 - Prologue-Chapter 2, pp 1-49

Sept. 19 - Chapter 3, pp 50-115

Sept. 26 - Chapter 4, pp 116-151

Oct. 3 - Chapter 5-Epilogue, pp 152-193

Here is the Zoom link:

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87905370822>

Meeting ID: 879 0537 0822
One tap mobile
[+16694449171](tel:+16694449171),87905370822# US
[+16699009128](tel:+16699009128),87905370822# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location
[+1 669 444 9171](tel:+16694449171) US
[+1 669 900 9128](tel:+16699009128) US (San Jose)

Please note: This book is available on Amazon. There are also two copies available in the DEI library shelf in Plumer Hall.



Martin Valle



Angela Jenks

From the Senior Pastor

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



It's that time of year when even if you don't have children, you feel the "back to school" energy in the air. My kids both started school two weeks ago. Our district, like many, has decided that the post Labor Day start time we'd all become so accustomed to was just a little too late. So in the heat and humidity of August we summon all

of our energy, get our last hurrahs in and head back to school. This year was a big year for my family: Micah began kindergarten.

He'd spent the last nearly 3 years at our IUCC Early Childhood Center. It was an interesting time to begin. In September of 2020 most of the world was still "dark" - we had just opened back up after being closed for several months. There were only 12 students. Most of you know the struggles we faced. Yet, as a parent I felt the relief of getting out of my home, the safe prison of a two bedroom condo, where everyone is on top of each other constantly. I was only too eager to get my two year old out of the house. And what a relief it was to know our preschool was committed to safe standards. I had the privilege to work with Irma Rosales, our preschool director, during our most challenging of times. She and our team of teachers created a safe space where my two year old came into his own. They potty trained him. (I'd been eager with Mollie, a little more lazy with the second child, and it made everything so simple to have them take on the task). It was his home away from home. I watched as he flourished there, soon the ambassador of welcome to other new kids as they joined along the way. When we finally got to graduation last June, I reflected on everything Micah and his classmates had been through. It certainly wasn't the traditional preschool experience, but as a parent I felt nothing but gratitude. And as the pastor, I felt nothing but pride.

You've heard us talk a lot about our preschool over the last 9 months and all that we've done to ensure that the Atwood Building is up to par and competitive with other preschools in the area, but I want to remind you of what it's all about: the heart of our school, the heart of our church, is love. It's being a safe space, a refuge (in my case from the quarantine back in 2020), a place where growth is encouraged (even if it's challenging sometimes), a warm hug when you're hurting and a smile to let you know you're on the right path: you've got this.

So as we all get in that "back to school" spirit, I hope you'll feel that "back to church" spirit too, knowing that we are the safe space, the soft landing when the world can be scary, or lonely, or overwhelming. This may be exactly what you need right now. Come over, we're here. Or maybe you've got this - thank God - now help us ensure we're the space for someone new- so they feel secure, safe, loved and encouraged to grow, learn, and feel welcomed home at IUCC. .

This is going to be a great month! We start the month with Labor Day, and this year we've seen a number of strikes with workers like writers and actors along with hotel workers and nearby UPS drivers, all pushing back against bad contracts. As we observe this day and rest, we also pause to think about the need for safe, healthy, respectful working environments where a worker can receive a living wage. The United Church of Christ has been committed to economic justice for decades, standing with workers and working alongside them to ensure dignity in the workplace. This Labor day we are welcoming Laura Shapiro a writer with the writer's guild to share her story as a writer on strike, along with workers from Kingspan who are standing up for respectful, safe workplaces and a healthy environment. Please join us to connect, learn, and support these workers as we consider how people of faith stand for economic justice.

Then it's our Welcome Back Sunday, also known as Rally Day, where we rally our church family to return back after summer. We'll have new IUCC t-shirts for sale, so consider getting into the spirit and showing off your IUCC pride! We had a great summer here at IUCC as we reflected on God in the secular exploring Disney films in our series: Animated Faith. While we have very much missed our choir, our music team brought us special music as they made the characters come to life. It was as if Mary Poppins, Elsa, Rapunzel, Moana, and Mirabel (among others) were right here among us singing their hearts out! I'm amazed at how our musical community practically put on a different show every week. Their caliber of music and embodiment of the characters moved me each Sunday. It's hard to say goodbye to the summer, but it's made easier knowing that First Service will welcome back the choir and Second Service will return to its shorter services. We've missed all of your voices (and faces) and can't wait to see you back at the chance! Be sure to invite families back as

we'll have a special celebration and a pool party for the kids after church that day.

The following week we'll be sitting down with the Rev. Bill Aulenbach to learn about his new book entitled "How to Make Love with Jesus." That's a pearl-clutching title if I ever heard one! The Stephen Ministry is offering its first "Stephen Ministry Presents" to explore more deeply the LGBTQ experience. Then on September 24, we have our All Church Picnic! Be sure to join us at William Mason Park (and wear your new IUCC tee) -we'll be at shelter number one as usual.

I look forward to seeing you back at church as we embrace the energy, the Spirit, and the excitement of returning home and beginning again together.

See you in September!

Pastor Sarah



From the Moderator

by *Connie Jones*



Good Morning, Church Family,

Last Sunday filled my heart. I had to stand back and just observe how well IUCC does church. It started with the final *Animate Your Faith* themed service featuring the story and music from the Disney film *Encanto*. Next, we welcomed new members into our community. Coffee hour was graced with the annual Noah's Pudding (Ashure) traditional celebration from our Turkish friends.

That evening, the music interns performed a benefit concert as a way of giving back to a church they love. The incredibly expressive music had at times many in tears. The message from our young singers was that they originally started to work at IUCC for the paycheck but soon found out that they were working at a church they didn't even know existed. Here was a church that believed in science, believed in talking about climate change, racism and injustice. To quote Jaime Reza, our tenor intern, "I was blown away by the different vibe in this place" and the unconditional love shown for everyone. And he stressed "everyone" meant everyone. Jaime soon became a member of our church, leaving the guilt from his earlier church experiences in the past.

IUCC members don't always know how important they are to some who enter our sanctuary. I just wanted to thank you, congregation, for showing love and respect to everyone who walks through our doors. This is a special place!

Hugs,
Connie Jones,
IUCC Moderator



Do you like to sing?

The IUCC Chancel Choir returns Sunday, September 10, 2023. The choir rehearses on Thursday night at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome! If you are interested in joining the choir, please contact director of music, Dr. Chris Peterson.



9/17	Kiana Austin	9/23	Lizabeth Kerr
9/17	Maya Austin	9/26	Susie Lang
9/17	Scott Bollens	9/14	Laura Long
9/16	Lavinia Cooper	9/16	JoAnne Mansell
9/14	Alyssa Cornett	9/29	Iris Mecartney
9/14	Judy Curry	9/25	Don Mineo
9/26	Ruby Fulton	9/22	Ava Mitchell
9/26	Greg Furtado	9/11	Jeff Oleson
9/08	Peggy Goetz	9/09	Suellen Rowe
9/19	Vivian Johnson	9/18	Mary Swope
9/06	Cristina Jones	9/10	Paul Thornton



New 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 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month in the church meeting rooms. No outside reading required, but do come with an intent to share from your heart.

To sign up, please send an email with “Digging Deeper” in the subject line to iuccwomen22@gmail.com. Drop-ins welcome. For more information, contact Marilyn Smith at marilynsmithmsw@yahoo.com.



Bil Aulenbach is leading this series of workshops on **Growing as a Progressive Christian** on Wednesday evenings from 7-8:30 p.m. on September 20, 27, and October 4 & 11.

The workshops will be repeated on Thursday mornings from 9:30-11 a.m. on September 21, 28, and October 5 & 12. They will include lots of discussion and sharing. For more information, call Bil at (949) 240-2033, contact the church office, or stop by the information table on Sunday mornings.

Our Reality Bites Group (late 30's-early 50's) went bowling on Aug. 25

Photos courtesy of Pastor Sarah



Our Young Adult Group (early 30's and under) went bowling on Aug. 31

Photos courtesy of Pastor Sarah



Our Pastor's Potluck on August 16th was great fun!

Photos courtesy of Glenda Wyant

Back by popular demand, Mock-Tails & Cocktails Under the Sails returned on August 16 with delicious beverages served by members of the Membership Ministry. A good time was had by all!



The IUCC Legacy Circle



September is Make-A-Will Month, a time to take action for yourself and the people you love. Surprisingly, only one-third of all adults in the U.S. currently have a will. If you are one of them, please consider the lasting impact your legacy could have. After all, the future is something we can protect. The good news is that organizing your affairs does not need to be a complicated or expensive project. Here are a few tips to help you get started:

- 1. Comprehensive Asset List:** List all of your assets, such as investments, properties, bank accounts, and those sentimental possessions like art and jewelry that mean a lot to you.
- 2. Ensuring the Future You Want:** Review all of the beneficiary designations of your life insurance, investment, and retirement accounts. Make sure they align with your current wishes.
- 3. An Evolving Will:** If you already have a will in place, remember to review it every couple of years. Update it with any new assets and make any necessary changes to your wishes.
- 4. Trusting Your Executors:** While reviewing your plans, also consider the executors that you have chosen. Trust is vital, so make sure they are still capable and willing to fulfill their responsibilities.
- 5. The First Steps Matter:** If you haven't made a will yet, seek guidance from a lawyer or explore free online tools like Free Will (www.freewill.com) or Trust & Will (www.trustandwill.com). They might not be for everyone, but they can be a valuable starting point for thinking through your plans.

For the sake and peace of mind of your loved ones, take action now. Get your affairs and final wishes legally documented to spare your loved ones any unnecessary burdens at a difficult time. As part of this process, we hope you will include IUCC and the Legacy Circle as part of your personal legacy. For any questions regarding Legacy Circle, you can contact Duane Vajgrt at djvmd@icloud.com.

Many of you know one of our Legacy Circle members, Dr. Duane Vajgrt (pictured above). Duane has recorded a follow-up video about the Legacy Circle, which you can view here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOmepUWGdeQ>. If you have questions or would like to participate in the Legacy Circle program, please click on this link for more information: <https://iucc.org/legacy-circle>

The Mission of the Legacy Circle is to contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of IUCC:

- through will or trust bequests
- designating IUCC as a beneficiary of an IRA, 401(K), annuity or other retirement account
- designating IUCC as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy
- through other gifts such as cash, marketable securities and marketable real estate

A gift to the IUCC Legacy Circle by members and friends of IUCC will ensure that the goals and dreams of IUCC continue for future generations!



LEGACY CIRCLE SCROLL

Anonymous
Anonymous
Keith & Renae Boyum
Glenna Matthews
Marilyn Smith
William A. Lawrence & Jeffrey L. Stuckhardt
Jeffrey Benedick & Duane Vajgrt, MD

Ministry With Young People - Sunday School fun!

by Lauren Louie, Co-Chair MYP

We used circle time conversation, role play, and games to connect lessons from *Winnie the Pooh*, *Moana*, *Tangled*, and *Encanto* to explore stories about God and love!



A matching game as we imagine about Winnie the Pooh and his friends!



We helped take a lost caterpillar outside!



Sneaky statues & the night guard as we learn about the “when and why” of rules and when to speak up about rules for *Tangled*.



Sunday School Lesson Reflection

(inspired by Sandy and Martha's *Encanto* lesson!)

What kinds of gifts do you have?

They can be anything. They don't require payment, medals, or to be superhuman. In fact, many of us struggle or make mistakes while using our gifts. Any kind of gift can be with you for a long time or could even be used to help others: whistling, art, listening, speaking in an unfamiliar language, growing things, folding a paper airplane...the sky's the limit!

God loves you just as you are!

STEPHEN MINISTRY AT IUCC ...

by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

On August 20, five new Stephen Ministers (all men) were commissioned by Pastor Sarah. This is the first class since Covid began in 2020. The new Stephen Minister director, David Schofield, has done a wonderful job of leading Stephen ministers in the past and we are looking forward to his strong leadership. Each of these men will be assigned to what we call a "Care Partner" a person going through some sort of crisis. Here are our new Stephen Ministers:



Richard Davenport and his wife Jerri are relatively new members of the congregation. Richard is a retired military chaplain who was instrumental in starting a new UCC church back in St. Louis, Missouri. Richard brings a great deal of experience to this ministry.



Jon Ingal is a Navy veteran who just graduated with honors from UC Irvine and is on his way to medical school. Jon is married to Alex Ingal and both have become very active members. We are so delighted to have some young Stephen Ministers in this program.



Craig Tyrl, our Administrative Pastor, comes to us with a Master's in Divinity. At one time, he trained to be a monk. He left the monastic order and became a restaurateur and with his Master's in Theater Arts became a Cal State Fullerton drama professor. Craig brings great strengths and knowledge to our church.



Jerry von Talge, a retired UCC pastor as well as a licensed psychotherapist, also brings great background experience into this ministry. He has many different abilities. He and the other men are great additions to the Stephen Ministry.



Michael Wilcox is new to IUCC but is already chairperson of our Music Ministry. Mike also plays the guitar at the 11:15 service. Outside of IUCC, Mike works in the world of technology. He is young, full of energy, very friendly with a wonderful smile and a great desire to make this a better world in which to live.

I hope you will congratulate these men and perhaps in the future consider becoming a Stephen Minister or help by referring someone in crisis who might need a Stephen Minister.

PC @ IUCC ...

by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

I would like to continue to share my ideas of what I think Progressive Christianity is today (see my ideas 1-4 in the August 2023 newsletter):



5. Listening to young people as they share their ideas of what the church should be in the 21st century.

Us old guys have had our say and day. Now we have to get out of their way. It's time for new voices to say what works for them. That's why it is so fulfilling for me to see so many young people involved at IUCC and to see their willingness to assume leadership.

6. For almost 2,000 years the church has preached that "Jesus died for our sins."

In my own writings and those of so many younger clergy, that concept is ancient history. Young minds are much more interested in promoting agape: unconditional love with lots of forgiving and a heavy emphasis on caring for "the least of these." They want to eliminate poverty and injustice.

7. There's a great deal of difference between legal justice and moral justice.

PC demands, as did Jesus, moral justice, which is justice for all, not just those with money. Consequently, we are starting to see prisons and jails becoming vacant, and bail bonds eradicated except for the most horrendous crimes. PC wants prisons and jails to become rehabilitation centers to offer inmates life skills and a new beginning, not caged like animals and dehumanized.

It's ideas such as these that are going to bring new life into dying churches. For the past 10 years, about 4,000 churches a year closed their doors. In my new book, *"How to Make Love (agape kind) With Jesus,"* I offer a glimpse of the church of the future.

I would love to hear your ideas about what Progressive Christianity means to you today. I will be leading this series of workshops on **Growing as a Progressive Christian** on Wednesday evenings from 7-8:30 p.m. on September 20, 27, and October 4 & 11. The workshops will be repeated on Thursday mornings from 9:30-11 a.m. on September 21, 28, and October 5 & 12. They will include lots of discussion and sharing. For more information, call me at (949) 240-2033, contact the church office, or stop by the information table on Sunday mornings.

The Wisdom of Abby

by Vivian Elaine Johnson



A friend emailed me recently and asked, “Are you happy?”

After giving it some thought, the word “happy” seemed narrow or limiting, perhaps because we use it so often. There is a surface or skin-deep element to it. Consequently, I responded to my friend, “Yes, I’m happy. But, more importantly, I’m joyfully content.”

Never in my life had I imagined that as an older person I would enjoy life as I do. Yet, now in my eighties, I am experiencing an unforeseen joyful contentment. I remember those days of yore when I rushed off to work, and on my way saw an elderly person sedately sitting on his front porch. I envied him. I was furiously trying to meet a work deadline, so I mused how pleasant it would be to sit and calmly watch the world go by. In my fifties, I had a dream of a silver-haired woman spending her days attentively tending her potted plants on her patio. When my dream zoomed in on the woman, I found she had my face. The dream unearthed an unconscious desire. A desire to be joyfully content.

Well, now I’m the person on the porch, the one tending her plants, the one watching others pass by. I’m the one reading until two in the morning if I wish. I’m the one having time to write a book. I’m the one lingering over coffee or wine with friends for as long as I please. As people say, “What’s not to like?” I’m joyfully content.

Yes, there are plenty of upsetting things that seep into contentment – illness, politics, injustice -- the list is long. We can choose to marinate in them, count them like notches on a belt, and curse the unfairness found in life. Or, since elders have more time, we could devote some time to addressing such issues in a positive way like some of my ninety-year-old friends do. Even with declining health, they support deserving causes through words,

donations, and actions. I saw an epigram that appears to be their mantra. It read, “What God requires of us is that we not stop trying.” (Bayard Rustin, 1912-1987) In our trying, our striving, we may not live to see the end goal but anything worthwhile takes time. In contributing, we can feel contentment in knowing that we had a part in bringing about good.

I love it when a young person becomes my role model. Nine-year-old Abby’s contentment was interrupted with disappointment when her teacher didn’t assign her the desk she wanted. With a maturity beyond her years, she tossed her curly red locks, and said with a giggle, “You take what you git, and you don’t throw a fit.” How did she get to be so sensible? Did her grandparent or teacher instill that ditty in her head? Did she read it in her favorite book? Whatever or whomever the source, she heard it and she got it.

In contrast, there was a man of my acquaintance who didn’t *get* it. One morning after learning that his wife ran out of his favorite brand of breakfast cereal, he threw a hissy fit, yelling and stomping out of the house. He certainly believed he was the center of the universe in that household. He lacked the wisdom of

Abby to deal with minor problems.

As disappointing as it is, I’ve learned that the world doesn’t revolve around me. I don’t always get my way. My expectations aren’t always met. If things don’t go as we’d like, we can pout and claim, “It’s not fair.” Others may point a finger and say, “It’s his (or her) fault,” or “Nobody cares.” Some, more philosophically, say “It’s God’s will,” or “That’s life. Win some. Lose some.”

In the face of disappointment and unmet expectations, I vote for Abby’s wisdom: You take what you git, and you don’t throw a fit. Maybe then we’ll be happy, or better yet, joyfully content.





... JOIN Mission & Service



Hunger affects residents of all ages everywhere in Orange County. Hungry kids lack the energy and focus to do well in school. Hungry adults struggle to perform at work. Consistent access to nutritious food helps fuel focus, productivity, and well-being so everyone can thrive.

Help Second Harvest and M&S feed OC during the month of September

Two ways to give:

1

Purchase Grocery Gift Cards from Albertson's, Vons, Pavilions, Ralphs, or Food 4 Less

or

2

Write a check to IUCC. On the memo line indicate "Second Harvest" as the designee

Checks and grocery gift cards can be turned in
September 3rd ~ September 28th

To the office
Monday ~ Thursday between 10 am – 4 pm

Or

Delivered to the Narthex on Sundays
In an envelope marked "Second Harvest"
Collection basket on the shelf as you enter the Narthex

