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

Representing IUCC at OC Pride Parade & Festival on June 24th!

(photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes)



PRIDE Sunday at IUCC on June 25th

Article by Pastor Sarah, photos by Tricia Aynes

IUCC PRIDE was filled with love and learning as we heard from our own Christine Roy and our guests Ginger Klee and Cucu Chanel! Here's to celebrating 32 years as a proud Open and Affirming Church that continues to grow in its understanding of the spectrum of God's children as we seek to reflect God's ever expansive love. A beautiful day!



Reflections on OC Pride

by Tricia Aynes

Over 25 years ago, I marched in the Long Beach Pride Parade with a group that represented a variety of Orange County LGBTQ organizations. I took my 14 year old daughter along. While we were getting into position along Ocean Avenue, someone from a nearby building hurled a rotten egg at us, and it hit my daughter in the leg. My colleagues were outraged - so very angry that someone hurt a child. I was outraged too. But you know what? While it stung for a minute, she understood from that day forward on a visceral level what the LGBTQ+ community was up against and why it was so important that we stand up as allies.

Despite that early experience, I absolutely love going to Pride parades and the festivals afterwards. I love seeing all the happy people being their authentic selves, and I love the palpable excitement in the air as people wave rainbow flags and applaud as we walk by. I feel good about being there and showing my support. It fills my heart with love that my church is there in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community and offering a warm invitation to visit us on Sunday morning.

At our IUCC festival booth after the parade, Alex had an array of swag he had purchased from his event budget. What a blessing he is! The temporary "tattoos" were a big hit, as well as our colorful bracelets and stickers. We had rainbow colored beads, refrigerator magnets, bubble wands, and candy. There was a crowd around our booth for much of the day as folks checked out all the goodies.

Our crafters' crochet hearts were very popular, and people seemed amazed that our members had made them by hand especially for Pride participants. When told "They're for you," people picked them up with something close to reverence, touched by the act of love and generosity of spirit they represented - the message of grace they sent.

I had two interactions that made quite an impression on me. A woman came up to the booth and held up her cell phone for me to see. It displayed a text that read, "I come from a country where people like me are hurt, imprisoned, and killed. Thank you for being here and for your support." She never said a word, just showed me the text and walked away. It brought tears to my eyes. Never doubt that your simple presence can make a difference!

The second interaction was with a woman who noticed we had a variety of LGBTQ+ flags, not just the rainbow ones. Our sweet Alex had ordered colorful flags representing the many different sexual and gender identities on the spectrum. She said, "Thank you for including ALL of us. It means a lot." [Alex said he'd heard that from others too.]

There were some haters, of course. There always are at events like this. For the most part the police kept them on the sidelines, separated from the crowd (you can see the officer in the foreground of the picture below, standing guard). But they were scattered along the parade route with their gigantic signs, shouting unintelligible things at us through bullhorns. They seemed quite intent on convincing the crowd to repent from sin and find Jesus.

Alex posted on Facebook that one of them came up to our booth and tried to bait our volunteers, wanting to know how we could believe as we did and still follow the Bible.



Alex got to use his professional call center skills to diffuse the situation. He told the man that these were volunteers and not ordained, and his questions would be better answered by our pastor. He gave the man our brochure and pointed out the church email. Alex just kept reiterating that he needed to take his questions to our pastor. He kept his cool and told the man he was welcome to take some

candy, stickers, and to email our pastor with his questions. Instead, the man ended up just walking off without taking anything (including the brochure with the email).

I always wonder how people like that can cherry-pick Bible verses to justify their hate while missing the whole point of what Jesus taught - to love our neighbors as ourselves, to show goodness and kindness to others, and to welcome the stranger. My friend Ken thinks they may be misguided souls who will someday reach a point where they challenge their old beliefs, reflect on interactions like this, and come around to a new way of thinking. I hope he's right.

For me, these scenarios of grace juxtaposed with hatred only serve to reinforce how vitally important it is for us as a congregation to be present and supportive at events like this so our LGBTQ+ siblings will see in real time that we are here for them. We care, we show up, and we practice love and compassion. With everything happening in the world right now, it's the least we can do as followers of Jesus. I'm confident that radiating a loving and accepting presence sends a far more powerful message than a few horrible signs ever will.

Exciting Website News!

by J. Alex Ingal, Communications Co-Chair



The ECC has its own WEBSITE!

Happy Independence Day! The thing I remember most about the Revolutionary War from my biased history books is the concept "No taxation without representation!" Learning from the past, we have decided to give the Early Childhood Center (ECC) its own representation well before anyone dumps the crayons in the water fountain.

The new website is young and rapidly growing. This means it will be riddled with mistakes and we would LOVE to hear your feedback and then ignore it like we ignored helping the French in their war. There are several pages that are under construction and will go live in a few weeks.

Please direct any questions/comments/concerns to your local representative (talktome@iucc.org) so they can die in committee. While IUCC will directly own the website through the Communications Ministry, the Childcare Committee will be responsible for the overall website layout and the ECC itself will handle day-to-day changes. This means that many of your suggestions will be sent to one of them.

Please be patient, but visit the pages so Google sees ALL this website traffic! Better yet, send the website to your family and friends who have kids of the appropriate age to attend. <https://irvinepreschool.com/>

IUCC needs your Views!



Have you visited our IUCC website in the last 3 months? I hope the answer is YES. If not, go visit it! See the new look. Now that the general bones of the new website have been set, it's time to make it evolve into something better. That requires your feedback!

One of the most important analytics of a website is its daily visitors. With the new ECC website, our daily visits

have dropped by nearly 20% to less than 50 views a day. We have some ideas for improving this (like updating our information on YELP), but we would like to hear from you. Email us at talktome@iucc.org with your ideas for improving our daily/weekly viewership.

Keep in mind we are all volunteers and I am an electrical engineer, not an IT specialist, so please keep your ideas simple ones that don't require hours a day to accomplish. We have plenty of ideas and would love to share them with you, but we do not want to influence any ideas you might have. So please ask yourself: What would it take to get me to visit iucc.org more often? Any ideas to get your peers, people older/younger than you to visit? Our goal is to get back up to 60 people a day or even higher!

IUCC Website Visibility

Let's make IUCC number 1 on Google! We have talked about this before, but there is always more that can be done. There are three things you can do now that will greatly improve our standing on Google:

1. If you google IUCC for any reason, even by accident, do not close your internet but instead click on one of the links for IUCC. It looks embarrassing when only 21% of people who search the term "IUCC" actually click on our website. Makes Google wonder if there is a different IUCC people are looking for.
2. Now that you are on the IUCC page, look around, set your phone down and use the restroom, do whatever it takes to keep on the page for at least 90 seconds. Google loves to see people spending more than 30 seconds on a page. It means you might be interested in that company. Anything over 5 minutes is excessive and will make other data so don't just visit our website and leave it open in the background while you go to the beach.
3. Check out more than the home page. Google LOVES people who visit multiple pages on a website. While you are on the website, look under what's happening. Check out the events listed. How about checking out the News & More page? Check out the MYP page too! They have loads happening all the time.

With you help, we can make IUCC the place to be, as far as Google is concerned.

J. Alex Ingal, Communications Co-Chair

So Many Smiling Faces at the Ministries Fair on June 4!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes



Kudos to all participants in the June 4 Ministries Fair! It was a particularly warm, cozy and welcoming event because the tables were laid out in a circle: what a clever and inspired idea! The rainbow tablecloths were gorgeous - so colorful and pretty - and such a wonderful way to celebrate Pride month.

The passports were a big hit, and everyone wanted to fill them up with stickers. They were a great ice-breaker, getting us to chat with each other! It was all so friendly and festive. The Fair represented a lot of hard work by Administrative Pastor Craig Tyrl, our hard-working team of Deacons, and all the Ministry and Committee Chairs. Congrats to all of you for a fun and memorable event! Thank you!

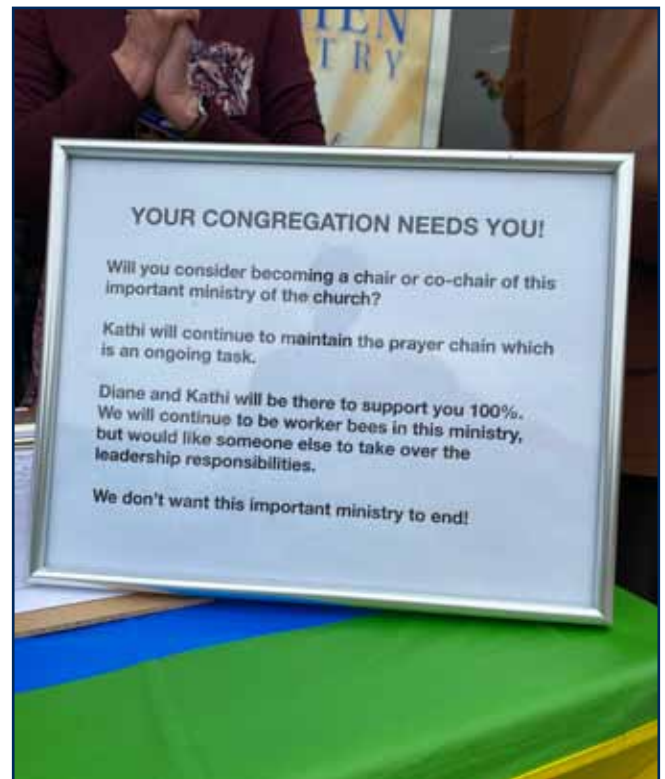


More Photos from Ministries Fair

Photos courtesy of Pastor Sarah



And a Special Plea from the Congregational Care Ministry...



From the Senior Pastor

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



Well, I say it every month, but WHAT A MONTH! As I look back on our June I'm amazed at how much we did in 4 short weeks! We celebrated Father's Day, held our first Pastor's Potluck of the summer under the sails, honored the life of Tom Silk, had a parents' night out, enjoyed family bowling, completed our Preschool Refresh, hosted a Welcome

Luncheon for visitors, and our choir joined forces with Church of the Foothills, leaving us awed with the sounds of their magnificent voices! And then we ended the month by marching in the OC Pride Parade and celebrating our own Pride Sunday! Somewhere in the middle of that I caught Covid, which brought our own Chaplain Richard Davenport to the pulpit! And thanks to Zoom, I was able to virtually join our Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC, while a handful of our members represented in person to witness the exciting vote to call our new Conference Minister: the Rev. Dr. Monica Dawkins-Smith. She will begin her ministry with us sometime in September, and I've already invited her to join us at IUCC when she settles in.

While the summer months usually mean a slowdown at church, that's not the case for IUCC! Yes, the choir is on leave for the summer, but our music community (like the sun) is just heating up! You may remember last summer's fun series: The Gospel on Broadway. We looked for God among us, listening for God's still-singing voice as we explored Broadway shows. This summer, in a similar vein, we'll be exploring Disney animated films to find God in the secular once again as we embrace an Animated Faith! This should be a fun summer for the whole family and a great time to invite friends. We'll explore some of the classics as well as some of the newer films that have been released recently. I hope this series invites you to think theologically in and beyond our Sunday services as you animate your faith!

I'm looking forward to being outside as much as possible this summer experiencing God in Creation! One of my favorite summer traditions is heading to camp! So I can't wait to go up our sacred mountain to our church camp, Pilgrim Pines, for a few days. We have a brand new executive director, Tracy Brown, who is the first ED we've had in over a decade. We had a management company running camp until late last fall when we hired our own director. So this summer camp will be special.

We'll be taking advantage of the long evenings for a few more Pastor's Potlucks this summer. Be sure to join us on Tuesday, July 11. Bring a side dish, dessert or drinks to share and something to throw on the BBQ – maybe your favorite veggie dog or impossible burger. I think Pastor Craig will even cook meat if you bring it!

Be sure to join us on July 16 as we celebrate the completion of the Preschool Refresh and thank Paul Feick and Mark Willcox, along with Facilities Chair Tom Mason for all their hard work. We'll be honoring donors as we "Bless the Boards," so if you donated to the Refresh please be sure to join us between services for the celebration. It's not too late to contribute and add your name to the boards, every little bit helps keep us from tapping into reserves. Every time I walk into the Atwood Building, our preschool, I'm amazed at the transformation. It's thanks to all of you who picked up a scraper, painted, gave a gift from your heart and supported the hard work of our team. The gratitude from the teachers, our cook, and our families is overwhelming. We are confident it will help us recruit new families to our community and help our preschool to flourish into the future.

If you came to Pride Sunday at the end of June you heard from three incredible speakers (if you missed it, I hope you'll watch it on YouTube or Facebook.) One of those speakers was drag queen, Cucu Chanel. She was so articulate and taught all of us something while bringing a little joy with her! I'm so excited that we'll get to see her again on Friday, July 28, when our Drag Queen Bingo returns, and this time it's 80's night! So wear your best 80's gear - your neon leather jackets, your big hair and your moonwalk and get ready to play Bingo! We had a blast at Broadway Bingo last time, and we even raised some money! Tickets are on sale now! Invite your friends and join us!

July also marks the beginning of a new leadership year, and I want to take a moment to thank all of those who completed their term last month, especially Moderator Tricia Aynes, Administrative Board Chair Daniel Blackburn and Ministries Board Chair Felicity Figueroa. Each of these three led us through some of the most challenging years of IUCC's existence. Serving in the time of an interim is difficult enough, but they not only transitioned through an interim to a settled pastor, but they also led us through

"From the Senior Pastor" column continued from Page 7

this unprecedented time of the pandemic. We may be on the other side of it, but we'll be feeling its effects for years to come. Thank you for your dedication, courage and faithfulness. We'll be celebrating all of our old and new leaders at a Leadership Social on Friday, July 21, and then our new leaders will join together the morning of July 22 for a retreat.

I know I can speak for the whole congregation in sharing our gratitude to those who have accepted the task to serve on behalf of our church. This church has pastors, but it is run by the people. And it's thanks to all of you who give of yourselves that we are the progressive inclusive community that is Irvine United Congregational Church and this is important not just for us, but for those who need us. Thank you!

There's so much to be grateful for, and so many opportunities to connect with one another as we share our lives in ministry! I hope you'll participate in the many opportunities to grow, give, serve, and love along your journey this month. And don't forget to linger a little longer outside with the sun! At the mountains or at the beach, or anywhere in between- I hope you feel joy in God's Creation!

Hope to see you this summer!

In love, joy and gratitude for our shared ministry,
Pastor Sarah



7/04	Randy Brown	7/04	Jon Ingal
7/09	Myrna Bohan	7/11	August Lobato, Jr.
7/31	Jean Dietrich	7/28	Jeanne Maag
7/04	Eduardo Figueroa	7/09	Kristen Norton
7/03	Steve Goetz	7/16	Louisa Probeus
7/05	Kathie Guth	7/18	Randy Romine
7/03	Donna Haehl	7/22	Kerin Wilson
7/13	Martha Hansen	7/28	Scott Zane

The Combined Choirs of IUCC and Church of the Foothills presented a concert of choral music on June 11



Combined Choirs
(photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes)

It was a spectacular evening on June 11 as the Chancel Choirs of IUCC and the Church of the Foothills joined their beautiful voices to perform a stunning series of musical offerings including In the Spirit, Bridge Over Troubled Water, We are Called, Here Am I, Send Me, and John Rutter's incomparable Gloria! Under the superb direction of Dr. Chris Peterson (IUCC) and Tina Glander Peterson (Church of the Foothills), the two choirs sang separately and in combination to electrify the crowd and celebrate the joy of community, faith, friendship and love. Many thanks to all who made this such a memorable experience, including the choirs, soloists, musicians, and tech people. The sanctuary was packed with an appreciative audience who provided the performers with a prolonged standing ovation afterwards. - Tricia Aynes



IUCC Chancel Choir performing alone

Mark your calendar for these Fabulous Events in July!



80's Drag Bingo! Tickets are now on sale!

IUCC is proud to present 80's Drag Bingo hosted by Cucu Chanel and her Drag Queen Divas. \$25 Entry Fee

GREAT PRIZES & PERFORMANCES! GREAT FOOD & DRINK!

The entry fee gains you access to the games and show. Dobbers, food, and beverages will be available for purchase. Must be 18 years old or older to play.

Childcare provided! Limited capacity! Doors open at 6:30pm! Please email Pastor Craig at iucc@iucc.org

Tickets can be purchased by mailing a check or making online payment to IUCC using BINGO in the memo section.



THE NEXT BON VIVANT DINNER IS JULY 22

Do you wish you had the opportunity to get to know your fellow IUCCers beyond a five minute conversation at Sunday coffee hour? Are you wishing for a little more social life that is low stress?

How about a Saturday night dinner party where you share a dish and enjoy a conversation over dinner? Join us for the return of the monthly BON VIVANT dinners every fourth Saturday of the month.

The next one is scheduled for **July 22**. Hosts are already chosen - you need only bring a side dish, appetizer, or dessert. Sign-up at the membership table after church or reserve your space by texting Debra Banwell at (949) 433-1494. We can't wait to get to know you better!



The IUCC Legacy Circle

by Duane Vajgrt, Co-Chair of Fund Development



Many of you know one of our Legacy Circle members, **Dr. Duane Vajgrt** (pictured at right). Duane was kind enough to record a wonderful video about why he felt it was important to remember IUCC in his estate planning.

You can view his video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tk5ybsAHPN8>

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>



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

Here's the text of Duane's video:

Hi, My name is Duane Vajgrt. Most of you know me best as a board member of Radiant Health Centers or as co-chair of the Fund Development Committee, but I'm also a member of the Legacy Circle about which I would like to speak with you today.

For those of you that don't know, the Legacy Circle is a planned giving program intended to make IUCC financially sustainable well into the future. As a 13 year member of this church, and one so impressed with the work that our church does, especially in the arena of social justice, I want to ensure that IUCC is able to do its invaluable work for decades to come.

IUCC has such a rich history of advocating on behalf of the marginalized, becoming the first open and affirming church in Orange County 32 years ago. IUCC helps shelter the homeless and feed the hungry. It provides support to immigrants and the incarcerated and so much more. IUCC is such a beacon of hope for our community that I want to be sure it continues to be able to flourish and expand its missions.

By being a part of the Legacy Circle, I am helping to make sure that happens. That is why my husband Jeff and I have named IUCC as a beneficiary in our trust. That is why I would ask you to consider joining the Legacy Circle to add your legacy to that of IUCC.

As a physician, I'm actually hoping that this acts as sort of public service announcement, because equally as important as the Legacy Circle, however, is the broader topic of encouraging everyone to plan for the future. By that I mean such things as drawing up a will and a trust that includes your wishes regarding life support, the nature of your funeral or memorial, the disposition of personal items as well as your estate, and so much more. I know this is not an easy topic to talk about nor one that most people want to deal with. It is so easy to procrastinate, but you never know what's around the corner. And while you might assume that I'm addressing this to the older ones in our congregation, I really mean this is something everyone, no matter what age, should address. As a physician dealing with major trauma at a trauma center, I know all too well how quickly life can turn on a dime. Making such preparations is the biggest favor you can do for your loved ones, including you young parents with children.

Again, please don't procrastinate on this very important issue. After you've developed a will and a trust and addressed all those important issues that I've mentioned, please consider joining me and others fellow congregants creating your IUCC legacy with a legacy gift to IUCC.

For more details on the types of gifts that support the Legacy Circle, please visit <https://iucc.org/legacy-circle> or contact me, Duane Vajgrt, at djvmd@iCloud.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Our Cup Runs Over

by Linda Heath, Chair of the Childcare Center Committee



The Childcare Center Committee is filled with gratitude for all the donations from the congregation for the Early Childhood Center. These contributions have impacted what could be accomplished during the refresh. Since completing Phase I, the school, students, and staff have enjoyed an amazing transformation within the preschool walls.

The preschool now has new floors that are not just a practical addition but beautiful too. The surroundings of each room now have a new and increased number of cabinets. Teachers can now store supplies without stacking or overloading. Sinks are now at child height in classrooms and bathrooms; no more climbing steps to wash hands. The cabinet tops provide a new increased workspace, and the edges are protected to avoid head bumps. The classrooms are now safer and more efficient. The aesthetics are calming and inviting within the learning space. An amazing transformation has taken place.

A space that was not considered when planning was taking place was the kitchen. However, the kitchen has been included in the makeover with the contributions provided. New lights have provided a well-lit space. No more spotty lighting; light is everywhere. The new lighting shows off fresh paint on all the walls and the ceiling. An

oversized stove, which gave off unhealthy fumes, has now been replaced with a more appropriate-sized stove with ignition lighting rather than pilot lights. The windows were repaired and covered to prevent the hot sun from adding heat to the kitchen. Two updraft fans are being installed

over the refrigerators to help control heat (an infrared thermometer reads 85 degrees when placed in the space over the refrigerators). Marta, the preschool cook, can't stop thanking everyone involved.



Big thanks go to the congregation for the contributions that enabled the job to be done right. We are very grateful to Mark Willcox and Paul Feick for the many months they put into doing all construction, electrical, plumbing, and problem-solving at no cost to the school. These men are true heroes and beautiful examples of giving talents. Please pat them on the back for a job well done. Last but not least, thanks go to Pastor Sarah for the initial idea of refreshing the preschool. It exceeded the initial

expectations; we are eternally grateful for that.

Remember to sign the flooring boards if a contribution was made. We'll be Blessing the Boards and celebrating all of our donors as well as our stellar volunteers on Sunday, July 16th.

How to Give an “Extravagant Welcome”

by Renae Boyum, Membership Chair



At IUCC we proudly proclaim that “all are welcome here.” That sense of being welcoming is part of our image and hopefully we live up to that proclamation. But what does that look like -- how can ALL of us offer a word of welcome? The Membership Ministry recently discussed this and came up with a few ideas:

- It starts with wearing your IUCC name tag and then . . .
- Look around at our worship services; see if there’s someone you don’t know.
- Either before or after the service, say hello -- introduce yourself -- ask them if they are visiting today or have they previously attended a service or another IUCC event?
- Here are a few follow-up questions: Do you live around here? How did you find IUCC? (the most common answer is the internet) Is there a particular topic or area of interest that brought you here today?
- Invite them to join you at coffee hour. Introduce them to several others at coffee hour.
- Invite them to fill out a **GREEN** interest card (these are at the Visitors’ table).
- Above all, be friendly, listen, and encourage them to come again!

Obviously, these “tips” work at any of the activities or programs that we offer here at IUCC. An extravagant welcome is an easy “JOB” for all of us to do and will help to spread the word about this remarkable community of faith!

Ministry With Young People

Calling Kids, Youth, & Young at Heart



Summer Spirit Day at IUCC!

Aug 5th Saturday 12– 4pm

An afternoon of fun & meaningful activities

- Safe, friendly, & fun!
- Loving, inclusive environment
- Drop off or sit together with child



Let’s Grow as we Care for Creation
Learn more at IUCC.org/MYP



Ministry With Young People

Photos courtesy of Pastor Sarah & Lauren Louie, paragraph by Lauren Louie

MYP youth, families, & friends had fun bowling together on June 4th at Irvine Lanes! Many gutterballs, strikes, pizza, and laughter aplenty. Some MYPers got to bowl for the first time!



A BIG THANKS from MYP

Thank you Myrna, Lisa, Julia, & Eliza for giving the many kids and their grown ups a super wonderful time at Parents Night Out on June 2!

Ministry With Young People

by Lauren Louie, Co-Chair of MYP



Calling all Young Adults!

We're setting up a new group to get to know each other & start coordinating activities! The goal is a fun inclusive group to hang out and be YOU. Get in touch by emailing Coordinator Lauren at llouie735@gmail.com

Our own Eliza led the Sunday School lesson on Loving our Earth (we planted marigolds!)



During snack we used our candy boxes to make excellent music!



Kids and super youth volunteers at play!



Ms. Priya often leads the lesson for our younger kids. She's a dynamo story-time narrator!



Ms. Myrna reads to us about Juneteenth!



STEPHEN MINISTRY PRESENTS.....

by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest



The Stephen Ministry in action

As of July 1st, there are 5 Stephen Ministers and 5 Stephen Ministry Care Receivers. Our Stephen Ministry is difficult to see in action because it is done quietly. No one but the individual Stephen

Minister and SM Supervisor know any names. (Even in SM Supervision the name of the Care Receiver is **never** mentioned.)

We have 6 candidates (all men) going through 40 hours of training. (We have completed 15 hours.) They will be "Commissioned" at the end of August and within 2 weeks, each new SM will be assigned a Care Receiver, some within the congregation and some outside of it.

The denomination behind the SM organization is Missouri Lutheran Synod, vastly different from what we believe at IUCC, so the Leaders have been working diligently to tailor our SM materials to our beliefs. For instance, the SM organization calls their program "Distinctly Christian Caregiving," insinuating that Christian caregiving is better. As an interfaith/ecumenical congregation that concept does not sit well, so we have renamed this to "Distinctly Loving (agape kind) Caregiving."

The SM trainee manual states that "God is the Curegiver." This is not Progressive Christian thinking because it always brings up the question, "Why did the Curegiver "cure" my nasty neighbor of their cancer but my good friend died of hers?" IUCC does not believe in a god who does bad things to good people or visa versa.

SM's main objective is to teach our Ministers to be good "listeners" (not always easy - ask me), but we also hope that during this training and ministry that our candidates and Ministers will grow in their faith.

After 65 years of ministry, I am thoroughly convinced that the basic concept of SM is exactly what Jesus told us to do (minister) 2,000 year ago, and today this is one way that IUCC is doing it.

PeaceLoveJoyHope
Bil Aulenbach, SM Leader

PC @ IUCC

by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

It was quite by accident (pun) that I became a Progressive Christian (PC). It was 1958 when I was in an accident that killed my best friend, a fellow former Marine and seminarian. A day after the accident, an Episcopal priest came into my hospital room and asked, "What did you and Brad do to deserve this?" He was insinuating that God engineered this accident as payback for something awful we both did in our earlier life. As groggy as I was, I ordered him out, never to return. Another lady, thinking she was being consoling, suggested that "God needed two Episcopal seminarians in heaven that day." (I wanted to suggest that her god picked a lousy firetruck driver, he only wiped out one, but didn't.) She believed her god planned Brad's death and my mangled body.

At that moment, I became a Progressive Christian and didn't know it. I wanted nothing to do with that Old-Man-In-The-Sky. I was going to drop out of seminary and the church. I shared this with the Dean of the seminary. His response: "Bad theology!" Don't pay any attention to that priest. Nice advice, but now I had to figure out who and/or what God was/is. I am thankful to St. Paul (I am usually not very thankful to him), who gave me an idea when he substituted the word Creator for God in Romans 1:25. Bingo! My new God became **Creation**. I liked that terminology then and now. It has no gender, includes every living thing and involves the universe, all 2-4 trillion (12 zeros) galaxies. Unfortunately, most institutional churches believe this Old-Man-In-The-Sky is running the show. So, as a PC, I/we are constantly fighting that image.

An interesting thing happens when one uses the word Creation for God: the theology of the church disappears (fine with me) and suddenly Jesus becomes a total human. I like this Jesus. He's one of us.

Next month let's look at this human Jesus who has become my **Christ**, meaning my foundation stone in life. Everyone has a christ. It can include money, power, sex, winning, to name a few. For me, the human Jesus is much more tangible than the one so many Christians have invented. Stay tuned! This gets better, or maybe worse, depending upon one's point of view.

Fortunately, PC encourages followers to question and doubt our faith all the time. Bishop Spong used to say, "If you're not preaching heresy, you're not doing your job."

A Dollar Bill

by Vivian Elaine Johnson



In my growing up years, the generous nature of my Aunties and Uncles was displayed by a one-dollar bill enclosed in my birthday cards. The dollar bill held special charm if it was crisp. It meant that my relative took the time to go to the bank, and then had the courage to ask the dignified banker for a new bill. All that work just for me!

Rikka to the rescue until he died. Her niece Beatrice was now married with three children. Aunt Rikka moved in with them, becoming their housekeeper, laundress, and cook so that Beatrice could teach in a one-room country school. The children, now grown, remember her as the epitome of loving service. Rikka was proud of *her* Beatrice; in each conversation at family gatherings, she managed to slip in “Doesn’t Bea look good, then.” During all those years of caregiving, Rikka wrote cards of encouragement to others and sent the gift of a dollar or a hanky in celebration of some event.

My favorite gift of a one-dollar bill was from my husband’s Aunt Rikka on our wedding day. Aunt Rikka, the ultimate caregiver and doughnut maker, had meager financial means due to her life’s path. She was petite as a hummingbird and equally as active. Rikka was exceptionally neat in appearance, so neat that I suspect she ironed her undergarments. She kept a flowered handkerchief in the pocket of her starched housedress.

Rikka devoted her life to the care of others. When her sister died in her twenties, Rikka helped her brother-in-law by raising Beatrice, the youngest of his three children, from age eighteen months to adulthood. As Rikka’s parents aged and were in poor health, she became their round the clock caregiver. Her mother, ill with dementia, required complete care by Rikka: she dressed, fed, toileted, and even slept with her. Rikka took in ironing jobs to supplement a small government check. Poor as she was, people loved to visit because of her hospitality. The aroma of her famous baked beans in the oven of the wood stove greeted them at the door.

Finally, after her parents died, Rikka married. Soon after the marriage, her husband’s health failed. Once again,



Talk about generosity! A generosity greater than coins or bills. Is there any wonder that we were deeply honored and appreciative of her generous one-dollar wedding gift? Rikka’s faithfulness, loyalty, compassion, and love were remarkable. Her years of caregiving were etched in her arthritic, wrinkled, spotted hands and expressed through her soft, watery eyes. If compassion takes practice, Rikka was a practitioner.

Shortly after our wedding, we stopped by to visit Rikka. She warmly welcomed us into her tiny, but neat-as-a-model-home, apartment. We asked, “How are you, Aunt Rikka?” In a high, thin, whimper of a voice, she responded, “Ohhhh, it goes.” Her Scandinavian background and life experience didn’t allow her to be effusive in any expression, whether it be negative or positive. It was her opinion that life just keeps going. We discovered that this petite lifetime giver wasn’t done giving.

We left with a sack full of delectable homemade doughnuts!



BACK TO SCHOOL

Low-Income Students Need Your Help With Back to School Supplies

Mission & Service is once again collaborating with **Families Forward** to give every student the same “Back to School” experience. Grade-appropriate school supplies will be distributed to low-income elementary, middle, and high school students in August helping them to start on the same foot as their peers and building their confidence for the coming school year.

MOST NEEDED ITEMS

- ☐ **Sturdy 17" Backpacks w/pocket for laptop/Chromebook**
- ☐ Binders
- ☐ Dividers
- ☐ Lined Paper
- ☐ Pocket Folders
- ☐ Glue Sticks
- ☐ White Glue
- ☐ Colored Pencils
- ☐ Journals
- ☐ Highlighters
- ☐ Index Cards
- ☐ Thin Markers
- ☐ Thick Markers
- ☐ Graph Paper
- ☐ Dry Erase Markers
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Pencil Sharpeners
- ☐ Erasers
- ☐ Mechanical Pencils
- ☐ Pencil Box/Zipper Pouch
- ☐ Red and Blue Pens
- ☐ Rulers
- ☐ Protractors
- ☐ Scientific Calculators
- ☐ Scissors (Large)

**Donations will be accepted beginning Sunday, July 2nd
until Tuesday, July 25th**

In-person donations can be dropped off in front of the Church in our bins

Monday - Thursday	~	9:30 am - 4 pm
Sundays	~	9:00 am - Noon