Our Winter Party on January 24th was great fun!

Viva Las Vegas! We enjoyed an entertaining evening of fellowship that included blackjack, roulette and craps tables, plus a delicious chicken and tri-tip dinner. See page 4 for a great article about this fantastic event!

All Winter Party Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes

Look for more photos inside!
More Winter Party Photos!
Lent is upon us again - on Wednesday, February 18, we will gather for our yearly Ash Wednesday service in the sanctuary, and journey through the seven weeks of wilderness and inward-thought to arrive at the gates of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and Easter at the culmination of Holy Week.

Before we get there, there are two Sundays of note: This coming Sunday, February 8, we are receiving a number of new members, including members of a family from Iran who were baptized here a couple of Sundays ago. I am one of many clergy who have signed on to the “Clergy Letter Project,” where we promise to honor a day set aside to lift up to celebrate the harmony of faith and evolution (you can read about it here: http://www.theclergyletterproject.org/rel_evolution_weekend_2015.html). And so, that will be the theme of the morning. At lunch, however, we are welcoming new friends from a “sister congregation,” Tapestry. Tapestry is a Unitarian Universalist Association congregation with whom we have partnered to do a study over the course of a year on immigration reform. The two events we have had here already this past year were a part of this partnership. This Sunday, their pastor, the Rev. Kent Doss and I will talk a little about our common roots as a church (we were once from the same Congregational heritage), the split, and what now brings us back together. We will also have a lunch and special guests brought to us from OCC-CO (our local organizers and partners), who will bring us up to date on immigration reform issues. Please plan on coming between 12:15-12:30 and welcoming our guests!

For more information, speak with Howard Emery, Felicity Figueroa, or Colleen McNamara.

On February 15, the Rev. George Johnson will be speaking on “Why Water is Sacred,” as a prelude to a three day conference (2/22-24) that we are invited to take part in up in the seclusion of a beautiful retreat center in Santa Barbara on this very topic. I plan on being there for part of this time. You can find more information here: http://www.courageToFitThinkDifferently.com.

On page 5 of this issue, you will find a letter from our Conference Minister, the Rev. Felix Villanueva. What you will read will not paint a healthy picture of our Conference. At the conclusion of this article I am going to ask you to just consider giving of your time and talent.

First, what is a “Conference”? The United Church of Christ is a “bottom up” organization where the local church is the most important unit. Our churches are gathered in small “Associations.” IUCC is in the Southern Association here in Southern California/Nevada. This past Sunday, the Rev. Dr. Terry Le Page, along with Matthew and Chris Redrich, attended a bi-annual meeting in San Diego as our delegates along with many other churches so that we could conduct business. This business includes overseeing candidates for ministry, fitness reviews for new/long-time pastors, boundary training, and mediation when it is needed. We pay very small per-capita dues to our Association, and it is the strongest of the four Association in our Conference.

There are 38 Conferences of the United Church of Christ across the country, and our national setting is in Cleveland. We have roughly one million members. Our Conference is called the Southern California-Nevada Conference, and we have 130+ churches. IUCC is one of the stronger churches in the Conference. A majority of our churches, like so many mainline churches over the years (and recently joined by many evangelical churches) are not flourishing.

Carl does the real estate work for the Conference. In the past few years, he sold our churches in Mojave, Barstow and Hollywood. He sold staff housing at Pilgrim Pines and some of their land. He now has a well-known old Japanese-American church in escrow, with a listing ready to go on a 100 year old church in South Central and another one after that.

When churches close their doors or move on, the agreement is that they should turn over their assets to the Conference so that new churches can be planted—letting a Phoenix rise from the ashes. For example, in 1979, the Conference appointed a group (Don Bjorklund was a member) to scope out a site for a progressive church in Irvine.

The problem of late is that many of our churches have gotten down to very few members who have changed their by-
laws to exclude the Conference from the agreements made when their churches were full and healthy. Other churches have just gotten tired, and when budgets are hard to make, support to our wider church is the first item that gets cut. Today, about a third of our local churches give nothing to the Conference or to the UCC, but still expect to receive full assistance when they have a need. Hence the letter you will read. I hope that as one of the two-thirds of our churches who shoulder the weight of supporting the wider church, that we will continue to lead by example and not shrink back.

Here is a prime example of a challenge we need to meet: On Saturday, March 7 at 10:00 a.m., our Conference Youth Minister, Neil Washburn, will be holding a Youth Roundtable Summit at IUCC for all of the youth in our Conference (including at least four of our own) to talk about the elimination of staffed youth programming. Our youth deserve better. I plan on being at the meeting, and I am in touch with some of our leaders to see what alternatives there are to ensure that good programming continues.

So, here’s my pitch: Over the years, I have served on Conference and Association boards and committees, and I’ve gotten others involved. Last year, I asked Matthew and Sarah to serve on our Annual Gathering Committee for three years, and they are hard at work. Our Conference needs strong leadership more than at any other time I have known. I am the Chair of the Nominating Committee this year, and I would dearly love to send just one of our many strong leaders into a one or a two year position on the Conference Board. If you would like to know more, please ask me or call me—I may be calling you. This is a part of our mission in securing a foothold for Progressive Christian churches to thrive in the cities and counties around us.

Yours,
Pastor Paul

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From the Pastor’s Desk, continued from page 3

This year’s annual winter party, planned by the church’s Fellowship ministry, was a casino-themed evening of entertaining games, delicious food, and a fun environment for people to socialize. Plumer Hall was transformed into a social venue with professionally-hosted blackjack, roulette and craps tables, decorated cocktail tables, a bar, and a serving station for the catered dinner by StoneFire Grill. We started the evening off with a few games of bingo, hosted by Brian Pearcy-Schofield and Alyssa Cornett, with opportunities to double your chips for playing the casino games. Then the evening really kicked off with dinner and casino games.

Some people were beginners, completely unfamiliar with some of the casino games, but our expert dealers were there to show each player the ropes. Other party-goers were delighted to play their favorite games. We even had a few expert craps players who put it all on the line for the chance to win it big. Before long everyone was enjoying themselves, winning or losing, because it didn’t really matter. The cost of the ticket covered all the gaming expenses, dinner, drinks, and childcare. However, we did have a few winners. At the end of the evening, the players could exchange their chips for raffle tickets, with a chance to win one of seven prizes, donated by members of the Fellowship committee. The gifts included several gift baskets, a steakhouse gift card, a beautiful organic terrarium, and several other wonderful prizes.

The Fellowship committed sold 70 tickets, and there were several sponsored tickets and donations from generous individuals who could not make it but wanted to ensure that the event was an enjoyable time for all who wished to attend. The ticket sales covered the expense of the party, while keeping the cost low enough to be affordable. The members of the Fellowship ministry, August Lobato, Debra and Wayne Banwell, Brian Pearcy-Schofield, David Schofield, Cindy O’Dell, Robin Palmer, and returning member Lindy Garber all worked hard to put this event together for the benefit of the congregation under the direction of Alyssa Cornett, chair of the Fellowship ministry. If you enjoyed the party and would like to be involved in planning next year’s winter party, or would like to find some other way to lend your services to the church in the Fellowship ministry, please contact Alyssa Cornett (IUCCFellowship@gmail.com). Additional thanks to Pat Sauter and Bonnie Shaffstall, who were members of the Fellowship ministry last year and helped out in part during the initial planning of the event, but were unable to continue into 2015 with the committee due to personal reasons.

Warmest Regards,
Alyssa Cornett
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

May God’s peace with you and your families! I give daily thanks to God for the great ministry you provide to this Conference and to our youth.

As you probably know, our Conference is facing some financial challenges. Our current deficit budget for 2015 is $720,000. We can only sustain that rate of spending for approximately four years. These challenges require that we make some painful decisions in order to continue providing effective ministry to our constituents. For this reason, our Board of Directors unanimously approved to eliminate both the Youth Minister and the Acting Young Adult Ministry Coordinator positions effective March 31, 2015. This means that both Neal Washburn and Thea Mateu will cease their functions effective that date. Please know that Neal and Thea performed their duties in an outstanding fashion and we are grateful for their work! Both of them have been of great blessing to this Conference.

I would also like to reassure you that youth ministry is an important part of the ministry of this Conference. For this reason, Keith Clark, our Executive Associate Conference Minister, is currently working with the Youth Round Table and our Outdoors Ministry Team to design a volunteer-driven Conference Youth Ministry approach. We have seen the Conference become much more engaged with Outdoor Ministries as we have taken this approach with Pilgrim Pines. We hope that we can utilize a similar model for our youth ministry program.

To this end, we are inviting our youth and youth leaders for a Youth Summit. The summit will be held on March 7, in conjunction with the next Youth Round Table meeting. The meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. at Irvine Congregational Church. Please mark your calendars. I am counting on each and every one of you to help us develop a sustainable model that will propel youth ministry in this Conference into the future.

The elimination of these two positions represents a cost savings of over $55,000 for 2015 and approximately $90,000 for 2016. This will be the first round of cuts and budget adjustments that our Board and staff have deemed necessary as we move into closing our Conference budget deficit gap. Our Board and staff are currently engaged in discussions about further cost reduction strategies. The results of those discussions will be presented at Annual Gathering this year. Our initial figures indicate a possible reduction of a total of $87,000 for 2015 and $278,000 for 2016, but we will not know the final figures until Annual Gathering.

Although these cuts will affect how we do ministry and the way our Conference staff manages its time, we anticipate they will not hinder us is providing the same quality of ministry we have been providing so far. Having said that, any further cuts will seriously impact the level of service the Conference setting provides in the areas of Search & Call, crisis intervention, leadership development, building community among settings, and speaking to issues of justice. This means that we need to find new forms of revenue to continue serving all of you at our current service level. We welcome your feedback and ideas as we consider possibilities for the future.

One final thought: Our Conference is not bankrupt! Worst case scenario, we are looking at 6 years before we run out of money. Again, that is worst case. A lot can happen in 6 years. Having said that, we want to be good stewards of the resources that have been entrusted to us. I am confident that we will find viable solutions to our budgetary challenges before we run out of time.

In Christ,

Felix
It’s hard to believe that I first visited IUCC four years ago. I remember it vividly… being welcomed by Don and Iris and Becky and Suellen. I could hardly get out that I was a Chapman student before they asked if I was interested in being the youth leader. They didn’t know I was already interested in the job, but just coming to test out the church. I will never forget that beginning welcome. It gives me such joy to see new people who come visit and get that same warm vibe.

After I was hired, my first meeting with the kids was a trip to the Catholic Worker in Santa Ana (see photo at left). After the outing to the Catholic Worker, I knew I was in the right place. From there, we built the youth group together. The kids were dedicated and invested and we crafted mission trips, youth services, overnights and discussion topics together to make it a place we all wanted to be.

When I left for India after a year and half of employment at IUCC, I knew my work wasn’t done. I was excited to go to India, but I had never left something in life that open-ended. Coming back to IUCC in my new role as the Ministry for Young People Director has been the best gift. It’s been a joy to see kids move in to the youth group, graduate, and achieve so many things in my time here. While my work is a little less hands-on these days because of my gifted and dedicated staff - Annie, Tricia, and Amanda - working with the kids on Sundays remains a high point of my weeks.

Co-teaching the confirmation class this year has been especially rewarding. These kids, who are mostly in 7th grade and 8th grade, are so amazingly insightful and thirsty for exploration of Christianity and other religions. In Barbara Brown Taylor’s *Leaving Church*, she says, “If I had been born in another time and place, I might have headed to a convent or to a small beehive-shaped hut made of stone on a holy island. I might even have found a shaman to lead me deeper into the mysteries.” I think this rings true for many of our kids, and it’s how they see truth in other religions. As we cultivate their faith identities, many of them realize that had they been born in other situations they would have different identities. We have enjoyed talking about the person Jesus was and why we strive to live our lives like he did. The discussions are rich and our spring field trips to the Hsi Lai Buddhist temple, a synagogue, the Museum of Tolerance and a mosque will provide another outlet for growth. I look forward to them becoming members of the church on May 24th.
On February 1, 2014, IUCC held its Winter Congregational Meeting. We approved the new budget, voted on changes to the bylaws, had a State of the Church report from Pastor Paul, and got an update on the building project. It was a good turnout with lots of positive energy!

The budget passed overwhelmingly!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
Well, dagnabit, Lent is almost here and honestly I’m dreading it. No, not dreading Lent but dreading my annual commitment to give up swearing. Every year, I pledge six weeks of “Jiminy Cricket” and “Fiddlesticks” in an effort to overcome my deeply entrenched use of “colorful metaphors” – aka words that make my mother blush. My goal is to actually give up swearing entirely so I use Lent as a really intentional step toward that end result. But, despite my best efforts, each year I fail quite spectacularly! So, here I am at the cusp of another year of trying to break this habit once and for all – will this year be any different?

Lent is the Christian season of preparation before Easter, preparing the believer through various acts that can include: prayer, repentance of sins, almsgiving, atonement, penance and self-denial. For me, personally, it is a time for self-reflection, an intentional check-in on my own spiritual journey, an opportunity for course correction. Giving up swearing is key to my Lenten practices because it is a daily challenge – a constant reminder of my intentions for this period. Every time I pause and have to come up with “cheese and crackers” or “good gravy,” it is a fresh commitment to Lent.

Now, as the youngest of four, I would be completely remiss unless I pointed out that my swearing habit started young, the result of being taught to say “go to heck” in German by my older siblings. You see, Mom, it’s not really my fault that I swear. And, yup, I’m not too old to tattle. Along with teaching me to swear, my siblings also introduced me to the richness of German language authors, including Goethe, Grass, Rilke, and Walser – to name just a few. In the works of Rainer Marie Rilke, I hear echoes of my own search for both God and self. In “Love Poems to God,” he writes:

“Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final. Don’t let yourself lose me.”

And, a statement in one of his letters resonates so deeply with me for how I want to experience Lent: “My internal gardening was magnificent this winter.” What I might call course correction, he beautifully names “internal gardening” – such a fabulous metaphor to represent the snipping off of bad habits so new ones can grow in their place while creating fertile ground for new growth, all toward the goal of blooming forth in vibrant colors. How perfectly this represents the journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter.

What does Lent mean for you?

Speaking of internal gardening, this year IUCC will undertake an important update to our Long Range Plan. The plan helps us envision the church we want to be in five years (and beyond). There is a German proverb that reminds us, “To change and to change for the better are two different things.” Change for the better requires a thoughtful process and we are looking for congregants to participate in this essential strategic planning effort. Please contact me for more information. And, if strategic planning isn’t your cup of tea, there are many other ways for you to be meaningfully involved.

No matter who you are, there is a role for you here at IUCC. Perhaps that role is to share your musical gifts via the choir. Or teach a Sunday School class. Invite a friend to church. Maybe host Coffee Hour. Walk up to that visitor or shy fellow congregant and offer a warm smile. Attend an event. Join a ministry. Visit a shut-in. Sign a letter. Become a leader. Or, simply stop to pick up and throw away that piece of trash you see on the church campus. Whatever role you choose, IUCC will be blessed by you doing it!

As always, I invite you to share your thoughts. You can catch me on the patio, pull me aside at one of our terrific events, send me an email or give me a call. I look forward to hearing from you.
Save the Date! Jesus Seminar on the Road
Coming to IUCC March 27-28, 2015!

All Events at
Irvine United Congregational Church
4915 Alton Parkway
Irvine, CA 92604

Registration
All Sessions
Pre-registration (by Mar 13, 2015) $60
Registration (after Mar 13, 2015) $75
Additional Family Member $50

Single Sessions
Friday Evening, 7:30–9 p.m. $20
Saturday Morning, 9:30 a.m. to noon $30
Saturday Afternoon, 1:30 to 4 p.m. $30

Contacts
Westar Institute
Willamette University
900 State Street
Salem, OR 97301
(503) 375-5323
events@westarinstitute.org

Rubén René Dupertuis (Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University) is Associate Professor of Religion at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. He has written on Greek education in the ancient world and on the Acts of the Apostles. He is a contributor to Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report (2013) and is the co-editor of Engaging Early Christian History: Reading Acts in the Second Century (2013).

Milton Moreland (Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University) is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. Since 1993 he has served as a Senior Field Supervisor at the archaeological excavation in Sepphoris, Israel. He is a contributor to Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report (2013) and is a contributing editor to Between Text and Artifact (2004).

Irvine, California
March 27–28, 2015
The Other Bible
Early Christianity beyond the Canon

Exploring Early Christianity’s Non-Canonical Sacred Texts
Jesus beyond the Canon
Paul beyond the Canon
Christianity beyond the Canon
Is the Canon Closed?

Ruben Dupertuis & Milton Moreland

Of the hundreds of texts produced by early Christians, few made it into the New Testament. Why? What happened to texts that were left out? How did the New Testament come to be? What impact has the closed canon had on the Christian tradition? What would happen if we opened the canon and took an active role in determining the future of Christianity? By reclaiming our right to debate what counts as scripture, we can make congregations places for active intellectual discussion and fruitful debate.
As described at the Winter Meeting, IUCC’s Master Plan continues to make steady progress through various required review processes. The plan was submitted in late June to the City of Irvine for a Modified Conditional Use Permit (CUP), the next step in planning for IUCC’s future and legacy.

In response to the City of Irvine’s requirement for a traffic study, a proposed scope of work was submitted in mid-January. Once that is approved, KOA Corporation will undertake the study, which will include: traffic analysis, site access analysis, shared parking re-evaluation, and data collection. They will then prepare and submit a report to the City.

Also in January, our architects, Domusstudio Architecture, met with the City to present what is hopefully our final submission of information. The feedback was encouraging. So, assuming no new issues, our Modified Conditional Use Permit could be issued in approximately March.

We have been monitoring our expenses closely and, at this time, we expect to be within budget for the two phases approved by the congregation: (1) development of the Master Plan and (2) approval from the City.

We continue to closely monitor our financial stability in light of the Early Childhood Center’s 2014 enrollment struggles. With both steady financial standing and approval from the City of Irvine in hand, we will start the process of asking the congregation to consider a capital campaign for the first phase of the Master Plan. In anticipation of that meeting, we will make sure this congregation has all the information it needs to make an informed decision. A small group has been formed to help us navigate this process – many thanks to Renae Boyum (chair), Pastor Paul, Dawn Price, Mark Allen, Bill Lawrence and Ken Wyant, along with our advisor, Priscilla Bizer, from UCC Capital Campaign Services.

Friends of Orange County Detainees visit immigrants at the Musick Facility in Irvine and the Santa Ana Jail. Our purpose is humanitarian. We visit to listen and care. Many detainees have no visitors and are thrilled to have a visit. We offer an orientation and welcome you to come and learn more.

Sunday, February 22, 2015
3:00 to 4:30 p.m.
Tapestry Unitarian Universalist
23436 Madero, Suite 140
Mission Viejo

Directions from the 5 freeway: East on Alicia Parkway, left on Via Linda, left on Madero. Tapestry is on the right. There will be signs posted.

RSVP at friendsofocdetainees@gmail.com by February 15. We hope you can make it!

Friends of Orange County Detainees is a program of Tapestry Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Mission Viejo.

Irvine United Congregational Church is an affiliate congregation.
Your Mission & Service Ministry is very busy with numerous worthwhile projects, and we’d love to have you join us! Here is a sample of our upcoming activities:

- **AIDS Walk** is coming on May 9th. Our IUCC Walk Team is registered and ready for sign-ups. Contact Team Captain Felicity Figueroa for details.
- Our next opportunity to provide meals for **Family Promise** is coming up at the end of March. Both Family Promise & Families Forward need canned goods and non-perishable food items - there will be a bin in the narthex to collect donations!
- We visit **Isaiah House Women's Shelter** every month to provide meals (see right column). They could use toiletry items. Please drop off any spare items in the bin in the narthex.
- **Friends of Orange County Detainees** needs visitors for immigrants in detention - please come to the volunteer orientation at Tapestry Unitarian at 3 p.m. on Feb. 22 (see page 10 for details).
- The **Great American Write-In**, a program of Women For: Orange County, provides an opportunity for people to write advocacy letters on behalf of progressive causes. IUCC will have letters to sign. Join us at Delhi Center in Santa Ana from 9:30 - 1:30 on March 7 (see page 17 for more details).
- As part of our global mission, Alaina Haynes is organizing a March 21 trip to help at a **Mexican orphanage**. The cost is $52 per person. Watch the patio for opportunities to participate or to sponsor a participant!

**February Birthdays**

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BREAKING BREAD & BUILDING BRIDGES

Please join us

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2015
12:30-2PM

IRVINE UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
4915 ALTON WAY, IRVINE CA., 92604

We are gathering to celebrate our collaborative with Tapestry Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Irvine United Congregational Church, the Orange County Congregation Community Organization and community members from South County. We will be discussing the ways we can get involved around immigration reform issues and the new immigration executive action.

For more information and to RSVP please contact:
Felicity Figueroa- 949-280-3165 or Jan Meslin – 858-395-4675
Happy New Year to all IUCC families, and welcome to another year of deliberations on the challenges of raising healthy, resilient, happy, responsible children. It will be no easier this year than any other year, but then, if you’re a parent, it’s a challenge you signed up for. The beauty of community is, you don’t have to do it alone.

Despite the open invitation, no one came to me with any suggestions for a theme for this year, so I’ve chosen one myself. I remember when I was a kid and someone would say: “Who says so??” We’d reply: “me, myself, and I.” Making ourselves into a kind of trinity, I guess, was meant to give us some weight or authority. Looking back, it is amusing to think of that phrase which was uttered in complete ignorance or any real insight the making of a “self,” but I wonder if it was almost some kind of strange intuitiveness sometimes noticed in children.

This year we will delve into the development of the “self,” and, of course, the crucial role that parents and other adults play in that lifelong outcome from our inputs. And interestingly, the “self” is a kind of trinity, with three distinct parts that each individual has: self-concept, self-esteem, and self-awareness. We will consider each in turn, and then explore how each aspect of the self interacts with other aspects. I’m writing this on a Sunday afternoon after the baptism of a baby this morning, and I’m aware that each of these three parts of the self are already forming in little Ava, who still needs to be carried about. As Pastor Paul carried her around for each of us to admire and bless, I was once again in awe of the power of parents and other adults to actually help form who someone will become. It’s both wonderful and a little unnerving.

People like me get involved with children when something has gone awry in the development of the self, most often due to carelessness or harmfulness at the hands of adults who are supposed to be caring for them. Even when working with very young children it is disheartening to realize that we are often “too late” to reverse some of the damage that has been done. It doesn’t take long to get “off track” in terms of the development of a healthy self. Getting back on track is often surprisingly tedious, or sadly not possible.

Those of you reading this column are already pretty much “cooked” and your “self” is as it is. But at the same time, I want to begin the new year with good news, before we start to ponder the fragilities of forming the self. While it is frequently dismaying to look back at things we wish we either hadn’t done or had done differently, we are always faced with the reason for the dismay: what’s done, is done. We can’t go back and do things again. However, with regard to the “self,” there is less reason for despair. The self is always in process, and can always be repaired. Not necessarily rebuilt, but definitely repaired. We can, indeed, change who we are – at any age. Not easily, and almost never without help. But as we look at how individual’s thoughts and feelings about themselves develop, we can also reflect on ourselves and gain a better understanding of how we came to be who we are.

Doing a good job, or at least a good enough job, with our children benefits both them and us. When we are careful about what we say and what do with them, we reflect on what was said and what was done when we were developing. Thus we can both take care of our kids and take of ourselves; the more we watch our effect on them, the more we understand the effect of others on us. In that way, we’ll be more careful with our kids, and more understanding of ourselves. It’s a win-win.

I’m looking forward to the year of introspection: How did you get to be you, and how can you carefully observe the impact of who you are on who your kids will be? I hope our musings together will be helpful.
We had the first meeting of anyone who might be interested in going to Ecuador. 12 people showed an initial interest, so we're going to continue to put the challenge out there, opening the opportunity for others to hear what it entails.

This trip is going to be different in that each person/couple gets to design their trip the way it would work best for them. We will be working with the Yanapuma Foundation (Google them), which has the capabilities to provide a volunteer project suited to your needs and the length of time you would like to do such a project. It could be one or two weeks, a month or a year.

You can choose to work in either Quito (the capital) or Cuenca, a wonderful historic city south of Quito. It would also be possible to work a week in one city and then a week in the other. Yanapuma also has the capability of teaching you Spanish at any level, if that would be of any interest. I had a great professor who took me to new heights in three weeks. However, you do NOT need to do this in order to be involved.

Housing would also be your choice. We lived in a very nice apartment, for a very reasonable price, close to the school for six weeks. Or you could do a home-stay with an Ecuadorian family for about $20 a day providing a room breakfast and dinner and lots of Spanish conversation. There is also the possibility of staying in an inexpensive hotel or, for that matter, a very expensive one. The cost of living in Ecuador is very reasonable and is the main reason so many Americans retire there.

There is still another choice you can make: when you want to go - in the summer or early autumn. Each person can design the sights they would like to see in Ecuador. Want to go into the jungle for three or four days? Visit the Galapagos Islands? Take a train up into the Andes? See Inca history? And on and on. Yanapuma is also a travel agency that can help you design your own trip or sign you up with a group.

We are going to be away for a month from February 1 until March 7, but will hold another meeting on Sunday, March 15. Even though we are away (skiing in Big Bear), we are always available by phone or email (see below) to talk with you and answer any questions you might have.

Here are some of the projects in Quito:

- Working with children in low income barrios.
- Acting as a teacher's assistant in the English classes.
- Working with senior citizens in a Monday thru Friday activity center.
- Working with children and young adults who are physically and/or mentally challenged.
- Working with girls in another very poor barrio.

These are projects in Cuenca:

- A before and after school program.
- A senior citizen home.
- A library helping students with their English and computer skills.
- A play-center in a children's hospital.
- An animal shelter.

There are more term projects in other parts of Ecuador.

We'd love to talk with you. Please feel free to call us at (949) 240-2933 or email: bilaulenbach@yahoo.com. We're here to help you design a rich opportunity to serve, see and learn.

Peace Love...Joy...Hope Bil & Anne Aulenbach
Mark your calendars now, because you won’t want to miss the annual IUCC Women’s Retreat set for May 1-3 at Pilgrim Pines camp, led this year by the Rev. Karen “Bear” Ride. A Presbyterian minister, “Bear” said, “I recently discovered that I match the UCC ‘profile’ better than the Presbyterian one.” Now residing at Pilgrim Place in Claremont, her last pulpit gig was filling in at the First Congregational Church of Long Beach while their minister was on maternity leave. “Bear” has been described as “fun, deep, and really interesting,” and we are confident her program will be very memorable. (And, yes, her sister was Sally Ride, the astronaut.)

Plans are underway to include thought-provoking activities, time to strengthen friendships, and a choice of Saturday afternoon leisure activities—including massages! Watch for more program information and registration materials soon!

~ Laura Long

Retreat planning team: Barb Carse, Janet Emery, Lorraine Fox, Laura Long, JoAnne Mansell, and Pat Sauter (all except Pat are pictured below at the 2014 Retreat).

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who offered support (both emotionally and financially) to us in the days following the fire that destroyed our home and caused the death of our beloved dog, Hogan. The outpouring of generosity from our Church family, our family and friends, and the community was unimaginable.

To our friends who created and contributed to the charitable donations website, the Congregational Care Ministry for the prayer shawl, the Stephen Ministers who prayed for us, and all of you who have called, hugged us, listened or just sat with us in silence when we needed to be silent and made meals for us, thank you! These two words cannot fully express how grateful we are for your kind thoughts, prayers and actions. They will never be forgotten.

We are happy to report that Henry, our surviving dog, has fully recovered from his injuries. We are happy to be alive, happy to have each other and happy we are so blessed to be part of such a loving community at IUCC. We appreciate your prayers as we continue to recover from this devastating event in our lives.

Dave Schofield & Brian Pearcy-Schofield
Get Involved! Here are some ways you can help serve here at IUCC.
Place a check in the box next to areas in which you are interested.

- **Welcome members & visitors**
  Serve before, during, or after worship services welcoming members and visitors and helping ensure everyone is comfortable.
  Time commitment: One worship service on any Sunday for which you sign-up

- **Prepare and/or serve food at events**
  Assist in preparing or serving food at church events including: coffee hour & potlucks.
  Time commitment: As needed

- **Write, design, or distribute church communications and advertising**
  Help spread the word within the Irvine and greater Orange County area about IUCC through advertising, social media, and print media.
  Time commitment: As needed for projects

- **Serve as a worship leader for Sunday morning worship services**
  Lead two worship services on a Sunday morning. This involves an introduction, scripture reading, and blessing the offering.
  Time commitment: Two worship services on any Sunday for which you sign-up

- **Run sound, lighting, and/or slides in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings**
  Support our worship services on Sundays by running sound, lighting, and/or slides. This requires setup before service and monitoring throughout the service.
  Time commitment: Two worship services on any Sunday for which you sign-up

- **Teach adult Sunday school**
  Provide a compelling session or series, and facilitate discussion in our Adult Education classes on Sunday mornings.
  Time commitment: Two classes each Sunday for which you sign-up

- **Plan & teach youth programs**
  Help the Ministry for Young People plan events and/or teach Sunday school for children or youth.
  Time commitment: As needed

- **Serve & advocate for others**
  Join with other members to provide direct service to those in need in our community and/or advocate for change that helps promote justice and compassion in our community and the world.
  Time commitment: As needed

- **Sing or perform in our Choir**
  Use your musical gifts singing in our choir for Sunday mornings, special services, and concerts.
  Time commitment: Thursday evening rehearsals & two worship services each Sunday

- **Assist in planning church-wide events**
  Our church is an active community with various events, receptions, and potlucks. Help our various ministries plan church-wide events and coordinate set up and tear-down activities.
  Time commitment: As needed

- **Maintain our facilities**
  Help our Building & Grounds committee to fix electrical problems, replace lights, and other maintenance when needed.
  Time commitment: As needed

- **Care for our members & community**
  Provide necessary care and comfort for members, visitors, and the community by providing rides to church, prayer chains, and/or knitting for our Prayer Shawl ministry.
  Time commitment: As needed

**Don’t see something that interests you? Tell us the types of things which would!**
Please submit this form to the church office.

Name: ___________________________________________
Phone Number: (_____ ) _______ - _____________
Email: _________________________________________
Occupation/Education: __________________________
Special Skills: _________________________________

Available: □ Morning □ Afternoon □ Evening
□ Mo □ Tu □ We □ Th □ Fr □ Sa □ Su
CELEBRATE THE 30th ANNUAL GREAT AMERICAN WRITE-IN
Sponsored by WOMEN FOR: ORANGE COUNTY
SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2015
9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
DELHI COMMUNITY CENTER
505 E. Central Ave., Santa Ana 92707

Discover that The Pen Is Mightier Than The Sword!

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

FREE ADMISSION! FREE PARKING!

Participating Organizations
AIDS Services Foundation
American Civil Liberties Union - O.C. Chapter (ACLU-OC)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee - OC
Americans United for Separation of Church & State
Amnesty International, Irvine
California Alliance for Retired Americans
California Clean Money Campaign
Childs-pace Foundation, Inc.
Church of the Foothills Peace & Justice Ministry
Church of the Messiah
Collaborative Transition for U.N. Peace Sustainability
Compassion and Choices of Orange County
Concerned Citizens of Laguna Woods Village
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Cousins Club of Orange County
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., O.C. Alumnae Chapter
Food & Water Watch/OC Against Fracking
Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks
Friends of Sabeel in Orange County
Gay & Lesbian Services Center of O.C. (The Center OC)
Global Green Sustainable Communities
Health Care for All - CA, Orange County Chapter
IUCC Advocates for Peace & Justice
League of Women Voters, O.C.
Leagues for ‘Women’s Equity’ Collaboration
Los Amigos
LULAC (Santa Ana)
Military Families Speak Out
Money Out/Voters In
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI OC)
National Assoc. for the Advancement of Colored People - OC
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. - OC
O.C. 9/11 Truth
O.C. Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
O.C. Equality Coalition (OCEC)
O.C. Human Relations
O.C. Interfaith Coalition for the Environment
O.C. Interfaith Committee to Aid Farm Workers
O.C. May Day Coalition
O.C. National Organization for Women (NOW)
O.C. Peace Coalition
Organizing for Action (OFA)
Peace Alliance
Planned Parenthood of Orange & San Bernardino Counties
Reclaim Democracy/Move to Amend
UCI Community and Labor Project
United Nations Assn., O.C. Chapter
Veterans for Peace – Orange County Chapter

For more information, please contact Felicity Figueroa 949-733-0850 or felicitynf@aol.com

FREE REFRESHMENTS! FREE POSTAGE!