On February 21, our Ministry for Young People hosted a very successful Parents’ Night Out!

Photos by Sarah Fiske-Phillips
Lent. I’ve had this discussion with colleagues and lay-people alike. When did we start observing Lent? That was always what our Catholic friends did. I remember Ash Wednesday at school—it was clear who some of the Catholic kids were, with the smudge of ash on their foreheads and the slightly self-conscious look on their faces throughout the day. Other friends were taken to Mass after school was over and didn’t wear the mark throughout the school day.

I don’t think any of us knew how far reaching Vatican II would be for the church (for we are all a part of “the church” in one way or another). Now, most mainline churches that I know of have moved to following the liturgical seasons of the year through scriptures, music and customs. When specifically did it happen? None of us really seem to know. It just slowly crept into Sunday morning and found a place to sit and stay, and we have been changed by its presence, just as we have moved at the same time to the more progressive end of Christian thought and expression. It is an interesting mix!

Lent is a special time of prayer, change, making amends, forgiveness, and good works in preparation of the celebration of Easter.

IUCC is preparing for a special Lenten season this year. The Rev. George Johnson will be giving another memorable class (twice each Wednesday) and our calendar is predictably full. You can choose to join me to hear Dominic Crossan at Chapman’s Founders Day on March 13-14, and find our MYP team together at the bowling alley for Family Bowling on March 16. I make a fleetingly impressive sight with my own bag, shoes, ball and glove—I look like I am going to be a pretty good bowler until I throw the ball. Carl more than makes up for my incompetence, though.

Our two Bible studies and Sunday adult education will continue through Lent, as will all of our activities for youth and kids. But something more is in the air, and this is where I need your help.

We are absolutely committed to growing our Ministry for Young People. I think you can see that good things are happening when you watch our staff in action on Sunday mornings. Sarah, Annie, Tricia and Honah are a team—they work so well together and they are dedicated to providing learning and social-bonding activities for our younger people.

Right up until Easter, our two services will be the same—our choir has more than graciously volunteered to sing twice, and our full Sunday school program will be offered at both services. Build it and they will come? Help your church by inviting a family or a friend, or bring your kids’ friends with them to church. This would be such a blessing to see even more young people receiving the message of Jesus’ love and inclusiveness as we know and understand these teachings. Your invitation is the best outreach there is. And…we are ready for them.

Our moderator, Anne, will say more about this in her column on page 4. You can see that all of us, staff and leadership alike, are onboard and unhesitant to ask for your help. During Lent, you can have the same experience at first service that you have at second—music, kids, energy! And, if you like the “Teaching Moment” join me at 8:40 in Plumer Hall. I am bringing the coffee, bagels and cream cheese on March 9!

I have some wonderful women lined up to preach during Lent as well. Our Ash Wednesday service (March 5) will feature the Rev. Heidi Hester giving the sermon, and she will join Matthew and myself for Communion, a ritual of forgiveness, and the imposition of ashes.

The Rev. Nancy Brink from Chapman University (and a fine preacher) will speak on March 30. Her sermon title is: “Beloved Children into Belief-Full Adults.”

Laura Kemp, our seminarian, will give her first sermon at our Maundy Thursday service on April 17.

Let’s be intentional about making this increased commitment work, and continue the journey after Easter is over.

See You in Church (at both services!)  

Pastor Paul
I am so excited by the energy within the Ministry for Young People right now! Annie, Tricia, and Honah bring such life to the program and have great ideas about how IUCC can best serve our younger demographics. We had huge success with our Parents’ Night Out last week with 15 children and two visiting families! The Senior High youth also went to February Camp at our local camp, Pilgrim Pines, this month. On March 16, we will try out another new event, All-Church Bowling at Irvine Lanes! We will meet at 6 p.m. and the cost will be $10 for shoes, pizza, and an hour and a half of bowling. We hope you can join us (and don't miss seeing Pastor Paul out on the lanes!).

Last Sunday Annie hosted her Summer Trip meeting in the sanctuary. We had 13 young people in grades 7-12 along with their parents. Annie presented the three things that are available for our youth to participate in this summer:

- UCC Western Regional Youth Event in Seattle for our Senior High youth (June 29-July 3)
- Summer camp at Pilgrim Pines (week 1, July 6-12)
- Summer service trip in Utah at the Best Friends Animal Shelter (August 10-16)

For our younger kids, ages 2 through grade 6, we have the following activities:

- Summer camp at Pilgrim Pines (week 1, July 6-12)
- Vacation Bible School (August 4-8)

And for our young adults (20s and 30s group) we will have:

- Young Adult Camp at Pilgrim Pines (July 2-5)

We have young adults, youth, and children who will need partial or full camperships/scholarships, so please let me know if you would like to financially contribute. We also need lots of prayerful support as well as volunteers for fundraisers.

Thank you, beloved community, for your support of our Ministry for Young People. I look forward to our continued growth in numbers and consistency throughout the upcoming Lenten season.
Moderator’s Column
Anne Rosse

I am a BIG fan of holidays – they justify my “guilty pleasure” of thematic decorating and provide opportunities to gather with friends and family over favorite meals, sharing love and laughter as we linger around the dining room table. While I love all holidays, Easter is my favorite, with its wonderful associations of hope, renewal, egg hunts, chocolate, brightly colored outfits, and beautiful spring flowers, to name just a few!

Lent is traditionally a period of fasting or penitence, sometimes symbolized by the giving up of some “luxury.” I always mark the Lenten journey toward Easter by giving up something, striving to challenge myself in at least one key way. This year, I will again endeavor to give up “colorful metaphors,” otherwise known as the occasional use of words that make my mother wince. I’m already finding joy in the use of “dagnabit” and “Jiminy Cricket,” so hopefully this will be the year that my Lenten practice becomes a permanent commitment!

IUCC will be challenging itself this Lent by striving to be even more hospitable, even more intentional in our outreach to others. We will celebrate the renewal of Easter with a fresh commitment to congregational renewal – to welcoming new folks to join our loving IUCC family.

Throughout Lent, we will hold parallel services while still offering the “Teaching Moment” that normally takes place during the 9 a.m. service. It has been moved to 8:40 a.m. in Plumer Hall. Please continue to partake in our informal and always interesting discussion of seminal topics, just in a slightly different location.

At both services, we will offer our abundant welcome to all demographics, with a special emphasis on young families. Heartfelt appreciation to John St. Marie and our amazing choir for their generous commitment to “double duty!” Kudos as well to our talented and dedicated outreach team (Dawn Price, Paul Tellström, Matthew Redman, Chris Goodrich and Sarah Fiske-Phillips) that has been hard at work on a variety of strategies to promote IUCC during Lent. And, many thanks to Susan and Mark Allen, and Phoebe and Faren Eng, for their generous contributions to our outreach efforts. You can check out our new Lent/Easter graphic on the IUCC website.

To make these outreach efforts even more successful we need your help! Here’s what you can do:

• Bring your neighbors, friends, and relatives to church with you. Let them experience the love and joy that is IUCC.
• Like us on Facebook – the church page, not the closed group - and help spread the word via all of your Social Media networks.
• If you regularly attend the 11 a.m. service, why not take this opportunity to attend the 9 a.m. service at least once during Lent?

After Easter, we will have intentional dialogue and follow-up surveys about our Lenten experiment and Sunday mornings at IUCC.

We are blessed to part of the IUCC family – a church that proclaims God is still speaking and offers abundant and radical hospitality to ALL those seeking a church home. Everyone is welcome here! Jesus teaches us to live a generous life, to grow intentionally in our welcome by breaking down barriers, creating and sustaining a community of compassion and care. As a church family, we will journey together to find the love of Easter.

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.
Our Choir Retreat had a Mardi Gras Theme!

by Tricia Aynes

Starting with a festive Mardi Gras-themed breakfast, the choir met for its Spring Retreat on March 1st to practice music for the Spring Concert on June 8. Sporting exotic feather masks and beads, choir members clowned around for the camera (see surrounding photos). At lunch, we played a game of trying to match up choir members’ names with a list of their likes and dislikes. The top five likes were singing (big surprise!), travel, chocolate, dogs, and hugs. A delicious luncheon treat was supplied by John in the form of a King Cake (New Orleans specialty) that included a small plastic “baby” buried inside (discovered by Wayne Banwell).

Our concert will feature some really beautiful poetry set to music. We are so fortunate to have the incomparable leadership of Dr. John St. Marie and the keyboard magic of Dr. David Clemenson. You will love this concert!

Many thanks to the Music Committee (especially Suellen Rowe and Lesley Wheland) for all their hard work in making the retreat so much fun!

Photos by Suellen Rowe
 IUCC hosted Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek, our UCC Japanese missionary, for a bento box luncheon on February 1. There were 11 present from IUCC and representatives from 3 other churches.

Jeffrey updated us on the disaster recovery efforts and the continuing crisis in the Fukushima area. The headquarters for the church’s disaster relief efforts is the Emmaus Center, a UCC donated ecumenical center, which is now the headquarters for the Kyodan, the association of Japanese northeast churches. This association includes all the 83 churches in the tsunami and Fukushima disaster area.

The center continues to offer services to small farms and fisheries in the Sendai area and also has a branch location in Ishinomaki. They also serve people, mostly elderly, still living in temporary housing in those areas and provide independent testing for radiation in people, food and farm products. The Japanese government also offers testing services, but it is not widely trusted. Also, the safety level for radiation has been significantly increased since the disaster to levels that are significantly higher than international pre-disaster standards. New secrecy laws passed by the national government are now allowing information to be withheld from the general population and some independent testing in the areas of high radiation has been made illegal. Many churches are joining in demonstrations protesting the new secrecy laws. They are also supporting actions calling for the closure of the 50 nuclear reactors in Japan.

The low coastal areas of from Sendai to Ishinomaki were completely destroyed and many small coastal communities will not be rebuilt. Many families have relocated to higher areas that have less damage and are already being rebuilt. The churches in these areas are small and offer support in any way they can to those resettling. These are the churches that Jeffrey is asking us to build relationships with. This began with our our Christmas card project where we joined with 40 other churches in the US to reach all 83 Kyodon district churches. There are 8 UCC churches and 3 DOC (Disciples of Christ) churches in that group and we will be in relationship.

The UCC and DOC have a common Global Ministry and I joined the conference Global Ministry Committee and attended their meeting in Claremont on February 10. The agenda included discussion on mission projects for Japan, Mexico, Palestine, Peru and Nicaragua.

There was also a report from former IUCC member the Rev. Loletta Barrett. Loletta recently returned from Africa and will be scheduling a visit and presentation on her mission for IUCC sometime soon. Also, it was agreed at the meeting that Global Ministries should have representatives on the conference’s four district boards and that I would be the Global Ministry representative for the Southern board. We now have contact information for all the conference global mission activities, and that information will soon be posted on our website under mission and service.

Ken Matsuyama will be visiting Japan in March and deliver scarves donated by our prayer shawl ministry and blessed at our March 2 services. These scarves are reminders that we continue to lift up these churches and Japan in prayer. The scarves will be given to two pastors serving 5 churches and prayer points in the northern Japan tsunami/Fukushima disaster areas. The 2 pastors are the Rev. Hideharu Fuda, of the Izumi Aisen Church in Sendai, and the Rev. Yutaka Hara of the Tendo Church and the Sagae and Yamanobe Preaching Points. The third scarf is being delivered to our UCC Japanese missionary, the Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek. Jeffrey will be returning to Japan with his family in March and beginning a new position as a university chaplain and teacher. We will be continuing our missionary relationship with Jeffrey and he will be meeting with Ken in Japan next week to discuss and plan mission projects in the disaster area served by the UCC donated Emmaus Disaster Relief Center in Sendai. Ken will have a report for us when he returns.

If you would like to be added to the Global Ministry email updates list please send your email to Rwromine@aol.com.
In late November 2013, the congregation approved the development of a Master Plan for the IUCC campus. The Building Task Force hopes to be able to present the plan for review and approval at the May 2014 Congregational Meeting. If approved, we would then submit the plan to the City of Irvine for a Modified Conditional User Permit. With no unexpected delays, the target timeframe would be a January 2015 congregational vote on whether to proceed with a phased build-out and associated capital campaign.

The Building Task Force has begun to meet regularly with domusstudio (http://domusstudio.com/) and is building a strong collaborative relationship as we work through identifying IUCC’s near- and longer-term needs. With the survey of our campus completed, along with the title report, we have a comprehensive picture of our options and limitations with regard to this property. Subsequently, domusstudio provided us with a variety of preliminary conceptual plans for potential campus build-outs. The Task Force found a couple of the options particularly promising - so they will be developed in greater detail.

The Master Plan is being developed to ensure maximum flexibility – giving us options for phased build-outs, depending on church priorities, needs and growth, along with our financial capabilities.

In terms of a potential capital campaign to fund the first phase of building, a conference call with Priscilla Bizer, UCC’s expert on capital campaigns, was extremely informative. She counseled that IUCC could proceed with an intensive 13-week campaign beginning in, say, February 2015, with folks having 3 years to complete their pledges. Priscilla would visit IUCC in Fall 2014 to outline the specifics of the campaign, would visit regularly during the course of the 13-week campaign, and would continue to be available to us over the 3-year term. Having UCC manage this campaign would cost approximately $45,000, with 70% of that fee being allocated back for UCC philanthropic work and projects that IUCC would designate.

The Building Task Force is encouraged by the excellent work being done by domusstudio and the progress being made on this project. For more information, please contact any member of the Building Task Force: Martha Selby (chair), Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Lindy Garber, Laura Long, Cindy O’Dell, Jim Raver, Anne Rosse, Michael Spindle and Paul Tellström.
Mark your calendar now for our Coming Events!

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE
WEDNESDAY * MAR. 5 * 7:00 p.m.

Join us for a meaningful, contemplative service including our Chancel Choir.

WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP
WEDNESDAY * MAR. 12 * 6:30 p.m.

Women’s Fellowship has been moved to Mar. 12. We will honor St. Patrick with baked potatoes and all the fixins. See Pat Sauter to sign up. $5 donation.

2014 LENTEN SERIES
“Exploring Courage to Think Differently”
* 5 WEDNESDAYS *
March 12, 19, & 26 and April 2 & 9
10 a.m. OR 7 p.m.

Join George Johnson in a wonderful Lenten series of instruction and discussion. Pre-registration is encouraged! For more information, contact georgesjohnson@gmail.com

IUCC GOES BOWLING
SUNDAY * MARCH 16 * 6:30 p.m.
* IRVINE LANES

Join us for a game of bowling, pizza, and soda at Irvine Lanes! The cost will be $10 per person and there will be a sign up sheet on the patio after church on March 2nd and March 9th. Don’t miss out... it will be a lot of fun, and the whole MYP staff and Pastor Paul will be there too! All are welcome.

SEEKERS FOR WOMEN
TUESDAY * MARCH 18 * 9:30 a.m. *

This group meets on the third Tuesday of each month to foster friendships and spiritual growth among our church women. Discussion is sparked by a video of prominent theologian’s conversations with each other. Every meeting starts with food, coffee and tea.

March Birthdays

Anne Aulenbach
Daniel Blackburn
Steve Bullington
David Carruthers
Rachel Dill
Dylan Dobbert
Anders Evensen
Suzie Feick
Lindy Garber
Panee Hsian
Kramer Johnson
Cindy Katz
Phyllis Larkin

Xin Li
Lauren Louie
Barbara Moss
Jan Osborne
Dawn Price
Jerry Price
Melissa Sokol
Kristen Thoreson
Michael Trout
Walter Trout
Jordan Willcox
Nicholas Willcox
Photo sessions are scheduled for May 5 through May 10 in the sanctuary. Online appointment scheduling will be available shortly. Committee Members are: Jean Stewart, Chair; Tricia Aynes; Janet Emery; Tommie Kozlov; and Patty McCarthy.

If you are interested in working as a host for our photo shoots, please contact Jean. She will be glad to give you details.

Last year, IUCC adopted a new “Safe and Healthy Church Community Policy” with the purpose of protecting the physical and emotional safety and well-being of all members of this church community. Provisions of this policy include:

- Background screenings for employees per policy guidelines.
- Best practices for Sunday School and youth events.
- Guidelines for volunteers who will work with children and youth, including self-disclosure registration forms.
- Dissemination of the policy to all outside users of IUCC facilities.

In addition, a team has been formed to administer this policy and respond to any Safe Church-related concerns. Anyone wanting to report an issue or seek counsel on a Safe Church-related matter can confidentially contact a member of the IUCC Coordinating Council:

- Paul Tellström, Senior Pastor
- Anne Rosse, Moderator
- Martha Selby, Admin Board Chair
- Pat Sauter, Ministries Board Chair

The Coordinating Council will address the concern and seek additional expertise as needed to handle the matter in an appropriate manner, per the policy’s guidelines. This policy will be regularly updated to reflect the changing needs of our church, ensuring that it remains topical for our church family. If you have any questions or would like additional information, you can find a copy of the Safe Church policy in the “Documents” section of the IUCC website or please see any member of the Coordinating Council.

~ Anne Rosse, Moderator
We’ve been discussing the variety of sexualities experienced by different people, and this month we explore the intersection of sex and gender. Sex refers to biological differences between male and female bodies. Gender refers to social and cultural expectations and norms ascribed to that sex distinction. Gender identity refers to whether a person identifies as a female or male, regardless of that person's biological sex. Sex is biological, gender is sociological; sex is born in nature; gender is socially constructed.

All people have subjective experiences of what it means to be male or female. As a result, we all have reactions to behaviors we encounter that do not mesh with our deeply held expectations and assumptions about gender. Being confronted with a young person or adult who is dealing with gender identification confronts our values, our beliefs, and our customs.

Predominant sex difference theories rely on two central assumptions:
- That the division of the human species into male and female categories is natural and fixed.
- That the physical (genital) bodies of the male and female indicate internal features that define us as male or female.

You may recall reading that Sigmund Freud famously wrote that “anatomy equals destiny.” However, the ideas of inherent and fixed masculine and feminine traits do not hold up well under scientific scrutiny.

Gender traits are influenced by dominant ideologies and power dynamics: worldviews that rise to prominence through repeated reinforcement by people in positions of control and influence. That is, powerful people who are allowed to influence how others think and live have decided – in various time periods, and in various cultures - how people “should” act if they happen to be one sex or the other. Without looking at how history defines “appropriate” dress and behavior for one sex or the other, it can begin to seem that some things are “natural” that actually have nothing to do with nature! In fact, social customs are decided entirely by people, and not at all by a “natural order.” The development follows a pattern whereby each generation has a different experience dealing with how “men” and “women” should be. Eventually, it is thought that it is how men and women are. Social customs:
- 1st generation: “This is how we decided to do it”
- 2nd generation: “This is how our elders did it”
- 3rd generation: “This is how it is done”
- 4th generation: “This is the way the world is…this is reality”

But in fact, different cultures have different definitions of what is “masculine” and what is “feminine.” The same is true in nature, where males and females of different species behave differently.

A person struggling with “gender” issues finds that social structures reinforce girls and boys into distinct patterns, which some people believe to be wrong for them. Currently, in clinical circles, when people experience dissonance with their sex and their gender they are said to have “gender identity disorder.” It is called a disorder based on the assumption that there is a natural “order” to the feelings and behaviors of the different sexes.

A person who is called “transgender” does not feel or act like others of their biological sex. A transgender female feels and is most comfortable dressing and acting as a man in her culture would be expected to feel and act. A transgender male is a boy or man who feels and is most comfortable dressing and acting as a woman in his culture would be expected to feel and act. Many transgender people talk about “feeling like strangers in their own body.” These feelings are private and cause transgendersed young people to feel lonely and out of place in any group of peers, since their struggle is not with sexuality, but with their own sexual identity. It is not about how they feel about others, but how they feel about themselves.

Gender struggles become very complicated, and each young person has to decide whether to be honest with other people about their feelings since most people they encounter will find their situation quite a challenge because it is so unfamiliar. Complications increase and challenge relationships because personal feelings of discomfort with one’s “assigned” sexual identity are separate from one’s feelings of affection and attraction toward others. One could be a young man, who feels inside like a young woman, who is sexually attracted to either someone of their own sex, or someone of the other sex. The same is true for a female.

Life as someone not comfortable in your own skin is probably the most personally challenging of the issues we’ve been discussing. This is supported by findings of serious depression in this group of people and high rates of addiction and suicide. We will continue this topic next month so that we can be more prepared to be the friend a transgendersed person needs.