IUCC News & Notes

An Open and Affirming – Just Peace - Global Mission Congregation
A Progressive Christian Voice for Irvine and Southern California

May 2017

www.iucc.org
Editor: Tricia Aynes

IUCC was well represented at the People’s Climate March on April 29!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes & Nancy Dreckman
It was a spectacular Easter morning at IUCC thanks to our talented and hard-working staff, choir, and volunteers!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
Members of our youth group process with palm branches in hand

the Rev. Loren McGrail gave the sermon at 2nd service

Youth prepare for the processional

Combined youth and adult choir

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
An all-day event at church last Sunday featured lectures and a panel on global warming, which moved to Plumer Hall for a vegan cooking demonstration. Later, the OC Climate March moved from our campus to the corner of Alton Parkway and Culver in huge numbers. You can see a video of it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8q0D_bbypGk&feature=share

What a great day! Thanks to our Greenfaith team for making this happen here at IUCC, and thanks to Barbara English, Living Ubuntu and OC Climate Action for providing the forum for people to come together for what is most likely the most serious issue facing the world today—global warming. There were similar marches all over the country. Sunday gave us the opportunity to observe Earth Day in worship. This was a good example of what it means to be a “Creation Justice Church,” as designated by the UCC.

I have four more weekends with you before I go on sabbatical, so here’s what is making me excited about each one of them:

- The AIDS Walk is Saturday, May 6. We always have a great showing. If you would like to sponsor a walker, here is a link directly to our team- http://asf.convio.net/site/TR/Events/General?team_id=2181&pg=team&fr_id=1081
- The memorial service for Sara Rodriguez (Elizabeth's mother) will be at 2:00 in the sanctuary.
- On Sunday, we will receive six new members. They are: Erin Burke & Tiffany Wilding, Stefania Forner & Alessandra Martini, Steven Sprenger, and Arthur Ullrich. At 12:30 there will be a film presentation with a panel discussion to follow called “Exploring the Gender Revolution.” RSVP if you would like a lunch provided.
- On Mother's Day, May 14, there will be a compelling story about a mother and child reunion quite unlike any you have heard before. Don't miss this special presentation.
- May 21 will bring special greetings from our UCC Conference at our services as our churches prepare to come together for Annual Gathering at Chapman University on June 2-3. We are a loosely-knit group of 130+ churches that make up the Southern California-Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ.
- The Baptism of Lewis Blackburn will take place during Second Service on May 28. Join Daniel, Lauren and Jennifer for this special day.

At the conclusion of the last service in May, I will be sent off on sabbatical, and you will have three months of services that will be somewhat different each week. There will be other voices in the pulpit and the music will be augmented by such treats as a Dixieland Band on Pentecost Sunday, June 4. As I enjoy the benefits of a Lilly Grant this summer, so will IUCC in its weekly worship. My grant is geared around the arts.

My pastoral duties will be divided between Steve Swope and Pastor Sarah. For example, Steve will be leading the unwinding of the sabbatical activities at the church, while Pastor Sarah will be leading in regular visitation and other pastoral calls. In many areas, they will simply be sharing the work and checking in with each other. The two of them have talked it through and the list makes good sense. Steve will be more of a presence on campus with increased hours while I am gone. As Steve was your Interim Minister before I was called, it makes perfect sense that he should lead this sabbatical time.

Carl and I will take our sabbatical time in “Three Acts.”

- **Act One:** In June, we will travel to Amsterdam, small towns in Germany, France and Switzerland. Then, home to rest up.
- **Act Two:** In July, after attending General Synod, I will meet up with old friends here and there as I head through upstate New York. I will meet Carl and go on to Niagara-on-the-Lake for the Shaw Festival, where we will join old friends for several days of theatre. We head on to Stratford, Ontario to the Shakespeare Festival to meet friends from a High School production of *12th Night* and yes, we will see *12th Night* together 45 years later. Then, home to rest again.
- **Act Three:** August is on the West Coast. We start with Santa Fe Opera, and end at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, though we would like to add the Globe in San Diego. Then, home to rest, celebrate an anniversary, and appear at IUCC on September 10.

You may imagine how grateful we are for this time. I hope to come back refreshed and ready to move into a creative period of new ministries, a new building and new long-range plans for our future.

Until then, I’ll be looking for you every Sunday in May!

See You in Church—

Pastor Paul
Pastor Sarah is graduating May 16!

Our own Pastor Sarah Fiske-Phillips is graduating from Claremont School of Theology on May 16 at 9:00 a.m. on the front lawn in Claremont. This is a major event for Sarah and for all of us! Congratulations, Sarah!

Photos courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips

Photos from IUCC’s Earth Day Sunday on April 30

Earth Day decor in the narthex

Howard Emery collects signatures at the advocacy table

Photos courtesy of Vivian Johnson
I taught high school seniors for many years. At the end of each year, as the seniors were getting ready to graduate, I would ask them to sit on the floor of my classroom. I reminded them that they had begun their school careers by sitting on the floor of their kindergarten classrooms while their teacher read them a book. So, I was going to offer a finish to their school careers that felt like the beginning. I read *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* aloud to them.

If you’ve read it, you know that the Dr. Seuss book is a light and optimistic “forecast” of the challenges and joys of new adventures to come. However, Seuss also describes a place where I’ve visited over the last few weeks: the “waiting place.” As Dr. Seuss describes it - “a most useless place ... for people just waiting. Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come or a place to go or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow or waiting around for a YES or NO ... waiting for a Better Break or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants or a wig with curls, or Another Chance.”

As many of you know, tests showed this year a recurrence of my cancer from ten years ago. And so the waiting began. First, it was waiting for the results of a CT scan; then waiting for the biopsy results; then waiting for results from a PET scan and an MRI of the brain. Well, the cancer had not spread beyond a lung nodule, and thus I’m waiting now to see a thoracic surgeon to determine next steps and near-certainly a date for surgery. Then, there will be more waiting for the surgery.

Yet here is an important point to the story. Through all of this waiting, I have been sustained by my own family and by my church family here at IUCC. The cards, e-mails, texts, visits, flowers, and hugs fill my heart with joy and lift my spirits every day. I feel the power of prayer on a daily basis. I know, too, that this outpouring of love and support is not unique to me. IUCC is a place where people truly care for each other and make the love of Jesus come alive in the world. And this faith community is a place where folks truly sustain you while you are waiting.

As a church, we are also in a waiting place -- waiting to move forward with our building project. We had hoped to have plans in place to present to the congregation at the May 21 Spring Congregational meeting. The Building Task Force, under the amazing leadership of Anne Rosse, has been working diligently with our architects and the City of Irvine. Our outstanding treasurer, Mark Allen, has been working to ensure the best possible financial plan and outcome. So, we will continue to wait, this time for what will be a special congregational meeting. We wait, knowing that it will all be worth it. That is because the waiting will not affect our goal, which is enhanced facilities that will support the work that this congregation does as a beacon of progressive Christianity here in Irvine and Orange County.

As Dr. Seuss says, “Everyone is just waiting. NO! That's not for you! Somehow you’ll escape all the waiting and staying. You’ll find the bright places where Boom Bands are playing. With banners flip-flapping once more you’ll ride high! Ready for anything under the sky!"

May this be so for all of us at IUCC!

In faith and community,

Renae
Late last year, Pastor Paul and IUCC moderator Renae Boyum asked me to lead a small group that would plan worship and educational activities during – and related to – Pastor Paul’s sabbatical this summer.

“Sabbatical,” of course, comes from the biblical idea of Sabbath – a day of rest to contemplate one’s relation to the Creator and the rest of Creation. In modern times, it refers to an extended absence from one’s career (usually academic or professional) to study, write, or engage in some other significant activity.

As part of the Lilly Foundation grant Pastor Paul received, IUCC was given funds for our own “sabbatical” in his absence – exploring ideas and experiencing growth that will prepare for whatever he might bring us on his return.

Since Pastor Paul’s sabbatical experiences will be focused on the dramatic arts, it seemed to me that our own summer might explore an enhanced use of the creative arts – including visual art and dance as well as drama – for IUCC. So in January I began to meet with Pastor Sarah Fiske-Phillips, Michelle Lin, Lauren Fleming, and Craig Tyrl to develop the experiences we’ll share this summer under the banner of “The Arts: Creating in Hope, Challenging In-justice.”

Each Sunday as we share worship together, we’ll incorporate aspects of the arts in new and different ways. A poet will preach through her poetry on June 18, for instance. Spirituality scholar Matthew Fox will lead us in a Saturday workshop and stay for worship, July 22-23.

Dancers will interpret music. Actors, including some of our own members, will present the realities of workers on Labor Day weekend, as well as highlight other issues on other days. In these and other ways, we’ll discover how to proclaim Jesus’ message not only with ideas and words but through sound, sight, and movement.

We will also be developing, throughout the summer, a significant art piece designed to symbolize our experience visually. It will be something many people can contribute to and assist with! And the supervising artist will also offer a hands-on workshop for all ages, August 5-6.

More details will be available at the Spring Congregational Meeting. I’m excited by the possibilities awaiting us, and I hope you’ll be a part of them all!
Last month I had the privilege of marrying my best friend, Emily, to her husband Adam. It was a beautiful ceremony surrounded by friends and family in the church Emily and I grew up in, Redlands United Church of Christ (RUCC). There was one moment, while in the garden taking photos, that I was chatting with Emily about our years at RUCC. I asked her, “Do you remember when we used to sit in this garden and talk about the day we would be in each other’s weddings here?” Of course, she remembered, and I got a little teary thinking about all of our memories there and how our time in youth group had led to this day. I will forever treasure the friendships I made in youth group - a place where we were all accepted for just being ourselves. From wheelchair races to bible studies to pool parties, youth group made being a teenager a little less difficult.

It is because of my experience at RUCC that I find myself in church work now. It is also because of RUCC that I strive to create an environment where our young people can be authentically themselves. This means a place where they are accepted no matter what their sexual preference, gender identity, race, socio-economic, family structure, etc. may be. Over the past few months, especially, I have been struck at how much I learn from our young people. They challenge me to think differently, love deeper, and always have Plan A, B, C, and D.

As we move to the summer, we have a lot of exciting things coming up. We will be taking a group of youth and young adults to the Oakland Peace Center, there will be a group of kids at week 3 of summer camp at our local Pilgrim Pines, and we will host our 4th annual Vacation Bible School. We need people to sponsor kids for these activities, so if you are interested we will gladly accept both monetary and prayer support.

In addition, we will be hosting a Mother’s Day Art Show on May 14 right after both services. There will be art made by our young people auctioned off and we invite you to come and bid. The art is really incredible, and I can’t wait for you to see it!

Thank you for helping us make such an amazing environment for our young people. It is such a blessing to work with them and all of you.

Blessings,
Pastor Sarah
Building Project Update
by Anne Rosse, Chair of Building Task Force

Last fall, this congregation voted to move forward with pre-construction planning for Phase 1a of IUCC’s Master Plan. This first phase will add much-needed meeting rooms, outdoor fellowship spaces, and staff/administrative offices. Since then, the Building Task Force (BTF) has been hard at work with our design team, domusstudio architecture and Wieland Corp. Our goal had been to be back in front of the congregation at the May 21 Spring Meeting with bids and permits in hand, ready to break ground.

Unfortunately, with so much still in process, we won’t have the necessary pieces in place by the Spring Meeting. We will, however, provide a project update and revised timeline at the May meeting. Once we have all of the necessary groundwork completed, a Special Congregational Meeting devoted to this topic will likely be scheduled. We are committed to having permits, bids, and comprehensive financial analyses completed so this congregation can make a thoughtful and informed decision about breaking ground.

IUCC’s permit application was submitted to the City of Irvine in mid-February. In late March, we received the first round of comments back from the City; our design team has been in discussions with reviewers since then. In late April, we submitted a revised set of plans and required testing/inspections from such agencies as the Orange County Fire Authority and Irvine Ranch Water District. We are also working to fulfill the “conditions of approval” that accompanied our Conditional Use Permit modification. So, for example, the Administration Board recently approved a vendor contract to complete a required acoustical report.

We expect at least one more round of comments/response before the City issues permits. Using the revised plans just submitted to the City, our contractor, Wieland, is now beginning the approximately 4-week process of securing competitive subcontractor bids to help us determine final project costs. Wieland’s initial project estimate came in higher than expected so this subcontractor bid process is absolutely essential for cost validation.

IUCC is blessed by a dedicated team working on behalf of the congregation, serving as your eyes/ears/voices. They are: Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Cindy O’Dell, Jim Raver, Anne Rosse (chair), Pat Sauter, Michael Spindle and Pastor Paul. Their efforts are deeply appreciated!

For more information, please contact any BTF member or email btfchair@iucc.org.

Capital Campaign Update
by Anne Rosse

In 2016, IUCC stepped forward in faith to raise money for a new building. We knew this much-needed campus expansion would help IUCC become an even more significant beacon of Progressive Christianity, strengthening our bonds with each other and with our community.

As Pastor Paul stated: “We have been inspired by and grateful for the legacy left to us by those who came before us at IUCC. Now we are embarking on the creation of another legacy not only for the next generation of people who share in our Progressive Christian values, but for the City of Irvine itself. We are here, we are a strong voice in the faith community, and we matter.”

Thank you for embracing IUCC’s future through your generous support of our capital campaign! Every pledge payment and new gift brings us another step closer to being able to break ground.

*Now as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you – so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.* -1 Corinthians 8:7

If you have already pledged, please continue to make your pledge payments generously. The more construction funds on hand, the better options we will have.

If you haven’t joined your church family in supporting this important project, we invite you to make a generous gift today. Your gift can make a real difference and help us bridge our shortfall.

Campaign pledges are payable over three years (through July 31, 2019). For those who can, we would deeply appreciate pledge completion as quickly as possible. Being able to collect most campaign pledges by the time construction of the new building is done (projected to be in Summer 2018) will help IUCC stay financially strong.

When submitting a paper or electronic check, please note “building” on the memo line. When submitting a check that includes both your annual offering (“stewardship”) and campaign pledge (“building”), please also indicate the split on the memo line. These actions will make sure we are applying your gift correctly. For pledge payments that involve the transfer of stocks or securities, or if you are doing an IRA distribution, please contact the Church Office.

For questions, assistance with your pledge or to learn more about this exciting project, please contact: capitalcampaign@iucc.org.
One of our featured composers is Gwyneth Walker. Per her website (http://www.gwynethwalker.com): “Widely performed throughout the country, her music is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. Dr. Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music. She holds B.A., M.M. and D.M.A. degrees in Music Composition. She was originally a physics major to follow in her father’s footsteps. While looking through the catalog at Brown, she found a lot of interesting musical offerings to which she availed herself. Before long, she was pursuing a degree in music. A former faculty member of the Oberlin College Conservatory, she resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Brantree, Vermont. She now divides her time between her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut and the musical communities of Sarasota, Florida and Randolph, Vermont. Walker’s catalog includes over 300 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo voice. A special interest has been dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement.” We will be performing her beautiful and poignant “Crossing the Bar” set to the poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson; and “Sounding Joy,” an anthem inspired by Psalm 95.

Alice Parker is another of our featured composers. Per her publisher’s website (http://www.morningstarmusic.com): “Parker, internationally renowned composer, conductor, and teacher was born in Boston, MA in 1925. She began composing as a young child, and wrote her first orchestral score while still in high school. She graduated from Smith College with a major in music performance and composition, and then received her master’s degree from the Juilliard School where she studied choral conducting with Robert Shaw. As Shaw began to organize the Robert Shaw Chorale, he enlisted the young Parker to do research and create choral arrangements for the new touring and recording ensemble. The many Parker/Shaw settings of American folksongs, hymns and spirituals from that period form an enduring repertoire for choruses all around the world. Ms. Parker continued to work on her own compositions and arrangements and has composed in all the choral forms from opera to cantata, from sacred anthems to songs on texts by distinguished poets. She has been commissioned by such well-known groups as Chanticleer, the Vancouver Chamber Singers, and the Atlanta Symphony, as well as hundreds of community, school and church choruses. Her works appear in the catalogs of a dozen publishing companies.”

I want to share with you excerpts from an interview with Alice Parker from On Being with Krista Tippett. Parker speaks about the power of singing and how it shows our humanity. She says, “There is no such thing as song without human beings to sing it. There might be, but there’s no way that I can possibly ever know that. And if my calling, my work is to get people singing, then my job is to release them into the knowledge that there is this whole means of communication which does not depend on rational thinking, which does depend on using our voices differently to create tones and rhythms. But as you’ve kept coming back to, it’s the only one of the arts that is immediately available to human beings.

Parker continues, “I feel the most complete when I’m singing. And it has nothing to do with the sound of what’s coming out of my mouth. But I am using every bit of any ability that resides anywhere in me, the limits of my imagination…And I’m using spiritual, physical, mental, sensual, whatever the other senses are that we have no idea of and don’t acknowledge. They’re all I’m using, every one of them. When I’m spinning out a melody just all by myself, it doesn’t take anybody else, and particularly when I can enlarge that into other people joining me in that melody, that it’s the most — it sounds ridiculous, but I really believe it’s the most complete human experience that there is. Everything else is partial.”

She shares a powerful message about how a group comes together when they sing together, “I feel that every time I start to lead any group. There’s always an initial resistance, or almost always an initial resistance of the group. “I don’t dare make a sound,” kind of thing. And then it grows. And my job is to submerge myself in this. I’m not trying to control the song; I’m trying to bring the song out of them. It’s astonishing what’s happened. I just remember, in our little church, my mother reporting to me once after a Christmas carol sing that I’d done. That she saw two local farmers who were very strong-minded individuals, and had had some kind of a quarrel for a generation or so, never speaking to each other, just turning around after they’d just sung a carol together, and smiling at each other. It just — it breaks down those walls.”

This is just a tease to pique your interest in the women we will be honoring by sharing their creations. It has been a pleasure preparing these pieces, and we look forward to sharing this beautiful program with you. We will have business cards again that you can share with your friends and family. This is a wonderful, welcoming way to introduce friends to IUCC. Please join us Sunday, June 11th at 7:00 p.m.
With heartfelt thanks to the following: Steve Swope for doing such a great job of overseeing the Comma Groups this year; our wonderful Comma Group facilitators for their invaluable leadership; Vivian Johnson and the GREENfaith Team for their efforts to get the congregation focused on the environment; Pat Sauter for providing the delicious lunch; and to everyone who participated in a Comma Group and joined in the warmth and fellowship. What terrific teamwork! - Editor
I think most of us know the significance of the word “green” in the name of our IUCC ecological committee. However, we may have some questions about the second word, “faith.” What does faith have to do with our concern for the environment?

Care for the earth is rooted in our Biblical and theological foundations. We read numerous scripture passages that focus on the beauty of God’s creation and our responsibility to care for it. There are approximately 2428 passages about water alone, such as “Everything will live where the river goes.” (Ezekiel 47:9)

Our theology focuses on LOVE: the love of God, self, and neighbor. The love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor, near and far, as well as future generations. We fail to show that love if we neglect and abuse creation rather than care for, restore, and work for a sustainable future.

Our theology also includes a focus on JUSTICE. Unfortunately, it is the most vulnerable among us who are impacted the most by climate change. Most often they have done the least to cause it. Our Christian faith calls us to do all we can to defend their interests. There is concern that as land becomes uninhabitable due to agricultural and water instability, flooding, disease, or the effects of natural disasters, more people will be forced to leave their homes to seek opportunity elsewhere. With increased migration and job loss, populations – and especially girls and women – become increasingly vulnerable. Human trafficking will increase because as traditional sources of income evaporate, the incentive to exploit others becomes higher. (Source: Sojourners, May 2013)

We as individuals and as a congregation have a moral obligation to take concrete, hope-filled action to care for people by caring for creation. We can walk and bike, eat less meat, get a home energy audit, compost, recycle, reuse, reduce use of plastic, or join local or national climate advocacy efforts. The list goes on and on. You’ve heard this before. Are you, am I, taking action?

“The New York Times (3/25/17) had an opinion article titled “What You Can Do About Climate Change.” The authors pulled no punches as they hit us between the eyes with the following:

“You could drive a few miles fewer a year. Reduce your speed. Turn down your thermostat in winter. Replace your incandescent light bulbs with LEDs. Reduce your meat consumption. Any one of those actions would help. But none would come close to doing as much as driving a fuel-efficient vehicle.” [italics added] They go on to say, “American drivers are a significant contributor to greenhouse gas pollution, so having a vehicle fleet that burns less fuel can have an outsize impact on total emissions.” We can be proud that the UCC was the first denomination to vote to move toward divestment from fossil fuels as a strategy to combat climate change. Let’s consider our vehicles as well.

We’ve learned that determined hope-filled action by people of faith has accomplished much in the past. Are we GREEN faith people? Are we living our faith?

Every Day is Earth Day,

Vivian Johnson

(GREENfaith team: Judy Curry, Tony Dover, Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, Eileen Vincent & Vivian Johnson, chair)

Dear Readers,

“April Showers bring May Flowers” my granddaughter, Daisy, tells me. Even though we don’t get a lot of rain in Southern California, we do have many beautiful flowers.

I am grateful that Irvine uses reclaimed water for its parks and gardens. Daisy and I try to conserve water, too. We both have buckets in our showers. We turn off the water when we brush our teeth. We use recycled water in our gardens, too.

There are many ways to save water. Google some tips and tend the Garden.

With love,

Miss Lily
News & Events

A New Approach to Coffee Hour
Groups of volunteers may still sign up for doing it all (as done up until now) dividing food, set up and clean up among the group. Now, for those who can’t do it all, the choice can be made between “doing it” or donating. The donations can be in the form of $$$ (dollars) or “doughnuts.” There will be appropriate sign up lists, so people can choose the Sundays for which they are volunteering and we can know if enough refreshments will be donated or need to be purchased.

Midweek Salon
Wednesday * May 24 * 7:00 p.m.
Karen Smith will be speaking about the Pachamama Alliance, an international movement focusing on the environment, spirituality, and leadership development.

Spring Congregational Meeting
Sunday * May 21 * 12:15 p.m.
Mark your calendar and plan to join us for our annual Spring Meeting. Highlights will include: Building Project update, ratification of the 2017-18 Leadership slate, vote to become a “Creation Justice” church, and Pastor Paul’s State of the Church!

Join ICCC Walk-the-Walkers for AIDS Walk
Saturday, May 6, 2017 * Mason Park * Irvine
Sign up to support one or more of our walkers at AIDSWalkOrangeCounty.org

The ICCC Open & Affirming Committee is pleased to present a special event as part of our ongoing continuing education series:

“Exploring the Gender Revolution:
What is next for ONA?”
Sunday * May 7 * 12:30 p.m.

The 90 minute film “Gender Revolution” produced by award-winning producer and host Katie Couric, will be shown followed by discussion with a distinguished panel. A light lunch will be served.

5/28 Eduardo Arismendi-Pardi
5/10 Johannah Bullington
5/05 John Carson
5/28 Jeffrey Gaskill
5/23 Dave Hodges
5/23 Connie Jones
5/02 Nathaniel KeslerWest
5/25 Jeannie Lee
5/31 Terry LePage
5/20 Bob McClean
5/23 Christian Murdy
5/19 Cindy O’Dell
5/24 Allen Reese
5/18 Edward Rhodes
5/29 Mark Rychnovsky
5/26 Scott Rychnovsky
5/02 Elizabeth Schiller
5/05 Barb Sellke
5/29 Richie Sellke
5/05 Ron Steiner
Last month we talked about the ways that each of us use “defense mechanisms” to shield ourselves from the emotional blows of hearing truths about our ways of behaving that cause us to feel embarrassed, or ashamed, or guilty. We always want to remember those times when we have had to hear something about our own behavior that was hard to hear, so that we can be kind and respectful about the feelings of others to whom we want to give feedback. When we remember how hard it was for us to be on the receiving end of feedback, it sometimes tempts us to avoid being the cause of this emotional difficulty for another person. We can often find many ways of excusing ourselves from initiating such a conversation.

Even when our motives for providing feedback are “pure,” that is, meant for the good of the person we care about, and for the good of our relationship with them, there are many barriers to offering feedback that we want to acknowledge. These barriers often make it as uncomfortable to give feedback as to hear it.

At work there are often practical, “political” reasons why feedback may interfere with good working relationships. Sometimes the person who is causing difficulty in the relationship has power or authority over us. There are often “ways of doing things” that are sanctioned by the workplace that have become patterns of practice that are difficult to confront, even when these practices result in hurt feelings and uncomfortable interpersonal relationships. There is no way to address negative workplace “culture” without giving feedback.

For some people, it is just plain difficult to know that someone you care about will respond to your attempts at being helpful by disapproving of you. Other times we may fear that someone will try to get back at us for feedback they didn't like hearing. Sometimes we excuse ourselves from giving helpful feedback because we tell ourselves that someone else should do it, or should have done it. “It’s not my responsibility” we say to ourselves. There are times when we confront the reality that feedback, even when very accurate, has caused a relationship to end, and we fear possible separation and loss. Although we cannot “lose” our children when they are young, we can “lose” the comfortable relationship with them for a while. With teenagers, feedback can often cause considerable strain between a teen and a parent. And with adult children we may actually lose our relationship if we tell them something we think they will benefit from hearing that they do not want to hear.

Sometimes it is difficult, especially for a parent, to confront feelings of being a failure. This can happen in one of two ways.

Sometimes acknowledging the need for the feedback can cause a parent to realize that they are somehow responsible for the way their child is behaving. Another possibility for feelings of failure are when a child refuses to change a behavior that is causing all kinds of negative consequences.

There are times when we are tempted to avoid giving feedback because we don't want to be part of the very emotional responses people often have when hearing a truth about their behavior that they don't want to accept. Some people become furious and rant and rave. Some people cry and accuse us of deliberately hurting them. Some people walk away and refuse to engage in the conversation. Some people withdraw emotionally and become very “cold” and distant. Some people strike back and blame us for their behavior – which is a defense, of course, but which feels very personal and can tempt us to avoid the interaction.

If we believe that we “owe” someone we care about insight into their behavior that is creating negative consequences in their relationships with others, we want to be honest with ourselves about the difficulty this will cause, at least temporarily, in our relationship with them, and acknowledge our own internal “barriers” and hesitations. Tell yourself that it is okay to be uncomfortable, for the good of the relationship and the other person, and that it is okay to create a potentially uncomfortable situation for others, at least temporarily, in order for them to hear some truths about themselves that will help them in the long run if they can accept them. Remind yourself that you are doing this only because you care – about the other person, and about your relationship with them.
Get Ready! Get Set! Go!
PC at IUCC: A monthly peek at some Progressive Christian thinking
by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

It started on a Thursday, 35,000 feet in the air, as Annie and I were returning from Carol Stream, Illinois, and the Celebration of the Life of Fr. Tom (2,000 folks attended), a Roman Catholic priest I had befriended years before. Tom had the “nerve” (this is heresy stuff) to use a few of my books in his classes. He died vesting for mass on Saturday, April 2, 2011. I was invited back to “celebrate” Tom—another act worthy of defrocking. I said to Annie on that flight home, “I want to write another book on progressive Christianity and dedicate it to Tom.”

It took me almost five years and quite a few changes in direction before I had a manuscript that I sort of liked. Then in the summer of 2016, I invited five IUCC people to join my focus group to evaluate the manuscript. I can’t thank these folks enough for their honesty and support: Shirley Lorenz, Susan Sayre, Don Mansell, John Emerson, and my Annie. They were fantastic: honest, opinionated, and unafraid to tell the truth as they saw it. Then Ken Wyant and George Johnson, two clergypersons whom I deeply admire, shared their evaluations. After a big rewrite, in the fall of 2016 I sent the manuscript to my editor, who said, “I love it! Now cut the 350 pages in half.” By the end of February, I had a 160-page book, which we titled Cramming for the Finals: New Ways of Looking at Old Church Ideas. When the galley copies were ready (before the final version was printed), I asked sixteen folks at IUCC to evaluate the book and write a testimonial. They all did and were ever so complimentary. You’ll meet most of them at our “Launching Luncheon” on Sunday, May 28, after the 11:00 a.m. service.

GET SET! Steve Swope has so kindly asked me to lead the Sunday morning adult education classes during the month of May with the topic “Let’s Future Talk.” Also during May, there will be a flyer in the Sunday bulletins sharing some details about my book. The books will arrive from the printer on May 22. Then on Sunday, May 28, after the 11:00 a.m. service, Annie and I will be hosting our Launching Luncheon in Plumer Hall. Everyone is invited, and we’ll have free childcare.

GO! That luncheon will be the first time people will see the final product. After lunch, I’ll give a short overview of the book and then take questions about anything you might want to discuss concerning the book or its author. After that, people can buy books. In the marketplace, the book will sell for $15.95, but for our church family members and friends, there will be a special price: 1 copy for $13, 2 for $25, and 3 for $30. If you’re interested in 100 or more copies, there will be a very special price. We can take credit/debit cards, checks, or cash—even IOUs.

So that we have an idea of how many will be at the luncheon, Annie and I are asking people to please sign up by filling out one of my flyers, telling Annie or me at church, calling our home at (949) 240-2933, or e-mailing me at bilaulenbach@yahoo.com. We realize the luncheon will be on Memorial Day weekend, but that was the only time Plumer Hall was available (we have one busy church), and there is always a smart group of people who stay home on holiday weekends. —Bil Aulenbach