Welcome back, Pastor Paul & Carl!

Special thanks to reception coordinators/hosts
Karen Smith and Kathi Smith!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
At the Special Congregational Meeting on September 10, the congregation voted to approve phase 1A of the Building Project.

Photos (L to R from top): Cindy rings the gong, David & Michael sign people in, Mark reviews the financials, Pastor Paul recognizes the Building Committee, Renae reads the motion, Ken collects the ballots, and the congregation votes.

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
Thank you! Carl and I thank you for the gracious welcome back to IUCC, for the special music, the wonderful words and the delicious cake. Special thanks to Kathi Smith and Karen Smith for putting this special reception together. It is good to be back with so much to look forward to. And what a great sabbatical it was! We’ve been to theatre and opera festivals all over the place, arriving home in between to rest up before going out again.

It was an honor to be a delegate at our UCC Synod in Baltimore. There were some very emotionally charged resolutions which were thought about, discussed, and voted upon in very thoughtful ways that were respectful of different viewpoints. You can read about them here: http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/ I hope to use some of these as sermon topics.

Following that, I flew to the Syracuse area and stayed with friends who bought a house on a hilltop that looks out in all directions. There, I retraced my steps back to my childhood haunts and found an old friend or two along the way.

Carl and I met up in Buffalo, where joined some old friends in Niagara-on-the-Lake for the Shaw Festival. Carl has been going there for 40 years, and I might be in the 25-plus category. We saw five extremely good productions, including Shaw’s “St. Joan,” and “Androcles and the Lion.” After saying, “Good-bye,” we drove to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival where we met up with another group of friends from High School, and we saw four plays. We were gathered together because we all shared one incredible teacher—Miss Helen Foley. (Her most famous pupil, Rod Serling, wrote a “Twilight Zone” episode featuring a character named after her.) Helen cast us in a production of “12th Night” in 1972, and 45 years later, some of us sat down together to see Stratford’s brilliant production of the same play. It was an emotional parting when the play was over—Helen’s spirit was in the theatre with us. Some of us still have letters she wrote to us throughout our lives.

After being back home for a while, Carl and I then set out on the last leg of the trip. We met Nick and Stephanie Sanders (IUCC members) at the Globe Theatre in San Diego, where a small group of us were treated to dinner and a well-cast production of “Hamlet.” A couple of days later, we were at the Santa Fe Opera, and soon after, we met up with friends at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and saw another five plays.

Meanwhile, I checked into Michael’s e-blasts from IUCC and saw that the church was involved in some very creative programing, and what I have seen so far on YouTube looks like it was a good summer here, too.

The Lilly Grant for Clergy Renewal gives their grant both to the pastor and the congregation so that both might grow together. In our case, there will soon be a “Worship Renewal Task Force” that will be charged with finding ways to integrate the arts a little more into our worship. I will be Co-Chairing this group with John St. Marie. You may see a survey not too far down the road about our worship service as well. What needs tweaking after a decade? Is something missing, or does something no longer work? How are we incorporating technology?

Looking ahead to what is right in front of us, I hope to see you at this weekend’s big event. The Jesus Seminar on the Road folks always have a good program for us, but this one sounds different from any we have had so far. How do we use those texts that did not make the canon? How can they inspire and influence our worship/spiritual practices today? Our scholars, Dr. Celene Lillie and Dr. Natalie Perkins, will talk about some early Christian texts that were discovered at Nag Hammadi, and excluded from our canon, and talk about how they may inspire our spiritual practices today, including new art and music. They will introduce and speak on, the Gospel of Mary and Thunder: Perfect Mind both in their ancient context and creative, modern expressions. See You in Church!
I have a confession to make (this won't come as a surprise to any of my friends here at IUCC who have visited our home). I am a “seasonal decorator.” Whatever the season or holiday, I love to decorate our home with various pictures and items that I’ve collected through the years. And now fall is here! Granted the season of fall is not like what I grew up with in Minnesota. Nor is our fall the glorious colors of New England or that special “crisp apple” feeling that I equate with fall days. Actually some of the days here in September and October remind us of summer and “mushy apple” days! Nonetheless, I embrace fall and decorate accordingly.

Fall also signals the beginning of the church year for many. Here at IUCC, September has been a busy, exciting, energizing month. We joined in worship on Labor Day with the last of our summer events and were enthralled by the readings and drama provided under the leadership of Craig Tyrl. Then on September 10, we welcomed back Pastor Paul with a Dixieland band, incredible music from our choir and a resounding “I've got Joy” from our amazing John St. Marie, AND then we overwhelmingly (98 YES and 1 abstention) voted to begin building Phase 1A that will provide much needed office and meeting space. An amazing day in the history of IUCC!

September truly displayed all the facets of this faith community that make it so special and unique - a vital music program, enriching worship experiences, a commitment to social justice and a sense of inclusive community!

October 15 will be an important day in the life of IUCC! Join us between the two services as we break ground on our new office/meeting space. Bring your own shovel (and hard hat, too) and together let us dig in! As part of the ceremony, there will be words of commemoration, music and some special refreshments. I am excited beyond words that we are finally at this point in what has been a “long and winding road.”

Even here in Southern California, fall surrounds and envelops us - the days indeed are getting shorter and the light casts different patterns and shadows. I hope you will join us at IUCC to celebrate the magic and beauty of this special time of year!
We dedicated the banner we received from the national UCC Environmental Justice Program. It designates our congregation as one of the UCC’s GREENfaith/Creation Justice churches. The banner honors our accomplishments, but also is a reminder that we’ve just begun the journey of working for environmental justice in our lives, in our congregation, and in our community. GREENfaith Team members are Judy Curry, Tony Dover (new chair), Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, Martha Hansen, Ashley Herndon, Vivian Johnson, Bonnie Shaffstall, and Eileen Vincent.

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
October’s big event is **Jesus Seminar On the Road**! This has been a much-requested program, so I’m looking forward to seeing lots of IUCC people there (hint, hint…). If you haven’t already registered, you can do so at the door – Friday evening at 7:30 and Saturday at 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Dr. Celene Lillie and Rev. Natalie Renee Perkins will bring us scholarly updates on some ancient Christian texts found in Egypt, and will also demonstrate and help us explore how these ancient writings might inspire new spiritual practices.

And if you forgot to sign up for **Comma Groups**, there’s still time! Contact me right away, to get involved with IUCC’s small-groups program of developing relationships and growing in faith.

A big Thank-You to Rev. Terry LePage for presenting three weeks of **Adult Sunday School** on spirituality and activism! For the rest of October and most of November, I’ll be leading discussions on seven major world religions – at 8:45 & 10:00 a.m.

Ken Wyant’s **Tuesday Bible Study** is working through the three Letters of John from the New Testament, as we explore all the Christian scriptures in the order they were written, with the help of Marcus Borg’s *Evolution of the Word*. Ken always brings a mix of learning and levity to the discussion!

Many thanks to Kelly Garrity for a great **Midweek Salon** last Wednesday! Howard Emery will share some recent experiences with forest spirituality in Japan, on Wednesday, October 25 at 7:00 p.m.

Looking ahead, Rabbi Rachlis and our friends at University Synagogue will host this year’s **Thanksgiving Service** on Tuesday, November 21, at 7:30 p.m. The speaker will be UCI law professor Jennifer M. Chacon, an immigration-law expert and also involved with El Sol Academy in Santa Ana.

### Ancient Christian Texts Inspiring New Spiritual Practices

October 6-7, 2017
Irvine United Congregational Church

In 1945, a collection of early Christian texts was discovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. Many were written at the same time as the more familiar texts of the New Testament, but ultimately were excluded from it. As scholarship makes these ancient texts increasingly accessible to the public, they are inspiring new art, music, spiritual practices and more. In this Jesus Seminar on the Road, Celene Lillie and Natalie Renee Perkins will introduce The Gospel of Mary and Thunder: Perfect Mind both in their ancient context and creative, modern expressions.

Register at: [https://www.westarinstitution.org/upcoming-events-calendar/irvine-2017/](https://www.westarinstitution.org/upcoming-events-calendar/irvine-2017/). If you haven’t already registered, you can do so at the door – Friday evening at 7:30 and Saturday at 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.
Winston Churchill claimed that, “We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” Well, IUCC, we can start dreaming about how our new building is going to shape us! Supported by strengthened facilities, we can grow in community significance through strong programs and service to our region. We want IUCC’s shared values to impact and improve our Irvine and Orange County communities.

With construction starting this month, we want to share how it will impact our church campus. First and foremost, we ask for your patience and understanding during construction. We know that construction will cause some inconvenience but our motto is: “short-term pain for long-term gain.” Throughout construction, we'll provide regular updates to keep congregants, visitors, preschool families and neighbors apprised, especially regarding how construction is impacting parking and driveway access.

**Maps:** Please review the two construction maps on page 8, which illustrate those areas that will be impacted as well as driveway access and parking information.

**Timeline:** Construction is expected to start on Monday, October 16. With an approximate 6-month build, we hope to be occupying the new building in April 2018.

**Driveway access:** For at least the first three months of construction, our Alton Parkway driveway will be blocked. Please use the entrance off Creek Road.

**Parking:** Disabled parking will be moved to near Plumer Hall; look for signage marking the relocated stalls. Overflow parking will be available near Woodbridge Village Association. Please allow yourself a little extra time on Sundays.

**Construction zone:** The construction zone will be fenced off and accessible only to contractors. An 8-foot wide pathway will be created for sanctuary entry/exit. We'll be encouraging the use of the side entrance into the sanctuary, especially as the preferred ADA pathway.

Our wonderful deacons will be on hand for the first few Sundays to provide assistance. Please contact any member of the Building Task Force or the Church Office with questions and concerns.

It has taken several years for us to get to this point - that is, beginning the real work of fulfilling our promise to update the IUCC campus. There are many who deserve our gratitude and appreciation:

- This congregation – for your patience, generous support and vision for IUCC’s future and legacy.
- Domusstudio architecture, our architects – for their commitment to IUCC and strong collaborative partnership.
- Michael and Heidi – for their expert management of the endless paperwork associated with this project and much-needed facility expertise.
- IUCC leadership - for the skilled shepherding of this project by pastoral and lay leaders through its many delays and detours.
- Building Task Force - for their hard work and dedication with tremendous gratitude to: Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Cindy O’Dell, Jim Raver, Anne Rosse, Pat Sauter, Michael Spindle and Pastor Paul. Extra special thanks are owed to Mark and Jim for giving so very generously of their expertise – we couldn’t do this project without them.
- The Capital Campaign Team – for their success in leading IUCC’s most successful fundraising campaign ever, with more than $1.2 million in pledges and donations for the new building: Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Linda Haghi, Tommie Kozlov, Bill Lawrence, Chris Redrich, Anne Rosse, Pat Sauter, Pastor Paul and, with tremendous thanks, Rev. Priscilla Bizer (UCC Capital Fundraising Executive).

Speaking of the capital campaign...your support is especially important now that we are starting construction. Every pledge payment and new gift is essential to making this new space a reality. So please continue to make your pledge payments generously. And, if you haven't joined your church family in supporting this project, we invite you to make a gift today.

We look forward to seeing you on October 15 – with your shovel and hard hat – when we come together as a community to celebrate our new building with a ceremonial groundbreaking. See you there!
IUCC New Addition Site Logistics Plan
Project Duration: 6 months

IUCC - Church Parking Lot Access

Entry off of Alton Pkwy will be closed during construction. All access to the church shall be off of Creek Rd.

**Sunday Parking**
- Additional IUCC Parking
- Church Parking Lot Entry
- Construction Zone
- No Parking
In the life of IUCC ...

Members of Boy Scout Troop 602 collect aid for Hurricane Harvey Relief. Photo courtesy of Nancy Dreckman.

Art banner in progress (left) and completed version on display in sanctuary.

Create your own caption.
Building Task Force Chair Anne Rosse took some ribbing when she was spotted outside Plumer Hall with a sleeping bag and pillow. What does it mean? Is she moving in to supervise the new build? Is she planning to sleep through the sermon? Draw your own conclusions!

Accidental twins Susan and Nancy wore similar blouses to church on a recent Sunday. Photo courtesy of Nancy Dreckman.

It’s official – Eric is adopted!

Eric Houston thanks the congregation for supporting his adoption, which became final in late September. Congratulations!

(Photo courtesy of Nancy Dreckman)
“You are not required to complete the work. Neither are you free to desist from it.” *Pirkei Avot*, Jewish Mishnah

We want our personal efforts to live green, and our advocacy for green policy, to make a difference for the planet. All God’s children depend on it for life. Recently it seems ground is being lost—ecologically destructive policies and practices are accelerating. We might be tempted to think our efforts are futile in the face of the grim news we face. We might despair. I invite you to recognize the self-perpetuating trap that despair is, and to choose faith instead.

Faith is different from optimism. Optimism assumes things will work out. (Here is a wonderful essay on optimism: [http://www.alexsteffen.com/ the_politics_of_optimism](http://www.alexsteffen.com/ the_politics_of_optimism)) If you have optimism, more power to you! If you don’t, try faith. Faith doesn’t give up when odds are long.

For some of us, faith is a kind of belief that God makes a difference, and we can make a difference. All is connected. Our choices and actions ripple out beyond us in ways we cannot fully know, and we seek God to guide us and weave our actions into a radiant web of love and care. This web of light is, for me, a powerful visual metaphor for how we support each other, and the planet. The web may have many gaps, but by reaching out to serve, preserve, or care, we weave one small thread across a gap. The web becomes a little stronger. Our actions matter.

Faith can also mean faithfulness. We are faithful to God, to our beloved earth, and to the beings on it. So in spite of setbacks and long odds, we take faithful actions for those we love, because we love them. Whether we can “fix” anything or not, we show up, to show that they matter to us. I am not sure what is “fixable” and what is not, but we all need to know that we matter. We can be faithful to people suffering from the effects of pollution and climate change by naming their plight and working for their safety.

Prayer is a tool of faith. What difference does prayer make? I don’t know what it changes outside of me, but it makes a big difference to me. Prayer allows me to know my own heart, to grieve the latest news, to admit complicity and guilt (I have a huge carbon footprint), and to feel the freshness of forgiveness. (Not usually all at the same time!) Prayer allows me to name my hopes and dreams, to feel a connection to my values and to those I hold dear, and finally, to discern constructive actions and gather the courage to carry them out.

Witness is also a tool of faith. We tell people why we do what we do. Because God gave us one home, and the creatures on it, and entrusted it to our care. Because we are one human family, relying on the earth for life. Because the poor and powerless, to whom Jesus calls us particularly to show care, are usually the first and most severely afflicted victims of ecological devastation. In the public square, we can insist that ecological sustainability is a moral issue.

The prognosis for climate change is very grim. Greenhouse gas generation was massively unsustainable before the last election. The current administration is “outing” many harmful practices that had been going on long before 2017–fracking and oil pipelines, for instance. My faith leads me to hope that a “wake-up call” energizes a new and more effective green movement. Miracles can happen! But in the meantime, we will stay faithful. We continue to find small and large ways to live green and advocate green law and policy, as an expression of our faith. Remember that local and state laws do not depend on the current administration. And personal habits make a difference too!

Yours in Green Faith,  **Terry LePage**

(GREENfaith team: Judy Curry, Tony Dover, Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, Martha Hansen, Ashley Herndon, Bonnie Shaffstall, Eileen Vincent, and Vivian Johnson)

**Eco-Tips from YOU**

Make one lifestyle change each month
**Miss Lily’s Green Tips**

Dear Readers,

My nieces, Iris and Poppy, love the fall. It is their favorite season. Iris likes to walk thru the autumn leaves. Poppy adores Halloween.

Poppy grows pumpkins. Poppy carves pumpkins into jack-o-lanterns. She makes costumes. She wears the costumes, and she eats lots of chocolates and candy corn.

I’ve been growing pumpkins, too. We have green beans in the garden and eggplant. There is nothing more delicious than a fresh vegetable. Their flowers are beautiful, too. The purple eggplant flower is my favorite.

So, stop to pet the pumpkins, and grow fresh fruits and vegetables in your garden.

Love,

*Miss Lily*

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**Coffee Hour Hosts Needed**

Ah, coffee hour snacks! They’re yummy, they’re colorful, and they provide a wonderful backdrop of warmth and welcome to our patio after services. Happy IUCC people gather around the snack tables to visit, catch up with friends, and meet interesting new people. It’s our guilty pleasure, and we love it! Besides, snacks eaten at church have no calories, right??

Our coffee hour snacks are provided by volunteers. Won’t you add your name to the list of volunteers? Sign up sheets are on the patio on Sunday mornings. If each of us committed to one Sunday each year, our calendar - and our tummies - would be full. Thank you!

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**New Members**

Please welcome these new members who joined September 10, 2017 (L to R: Tony Dover, Kristen Norton, and Cheryl Schou).

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**Want to represent IUCC?**

The Fall meeting of the UCC Southern Association is fast approaching - it will be on Sunday, Oct. 15th at 3:00 p.m. First Congregational Church of Escondido will be hosting (1800 N. Broadway, Escondido 92026-2020). We need up to four delegates who are willing to go to Escondido and represent us. Costs are covered by IUCC. If interested, please contact Pastor Paul.
**IUCC’s Ceremonial Groundbreaking**  
**Sunday, October 15, between services**  
Bring your shovels and hardhats and be a part of a very historical event! IUCC will officially “break ground” for construction of Phase 1a.

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**Crop Walk**  
**Saturday, Oct. 21, at 9 a.m.**  
The walk is at Our Lady Queen of Angels, the same location as last year. Sign up here to join or donate to Team IUCC: https://www.crophungerwalk.org/newportbeachca

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**The Seeker’s Women’s Group**  
**Tuesday, Oct. 17, 9:30 a.m.**  
The Seekers meet on the third Tuesday of each month for theological and spiritual study and discussion. Newcomers are always welcome! Call Reefia for details - (949) 859-7091.

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**Midweek Salon**  
**Wed., Oct. 25, at 7:00 p.m.**  
Howard Emery will speak about spirituality through nature and healing in the forest.

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**Prayer Shawl Ministry**  
**Sat., Oct. 14, 2-4 p.m.**  
**Wed., Oct. 25, 6-7:30 p.m.**  
Calling all Shawl Ministry members! Welcome back from our summer off, and make note of our Fall meeting times: second Saturday of the month in Plumer Hall from 2-4 and the second Wednesday for dinner at 6 p.m. at Gelson’s food court. We are planning our annual Thanksgiving Feast for Nov. 29, with turkey and all the fixings. All are welcome!

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**Women’s Fellowship**  
**Wed., Oct. 4, 6:30 p.m.**  
Women’s Fellowship will hold its monthly supper. Come join the lively conversation and fellowship! Sign up on the patio. The other dates for Fall are: Nov. 1st: All Saints Day  
Dec. 6th: Christmas dinner and Boutique

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**Trunk-or-Treat**  
**October 29 at 12:15 p.m.**  
Kids are invited to come in costume for this family-friendly event featuring trick-or-treating to various decorated car trunks. Volunteers should plan for about 30 children. Please see Sarah or come to the table on the patio to sign up!
It isn't even Halloween yet, and stores have Christmas decorations on the shelves! It seems that retailers are in an ever-growing hurry to start selling their holiday products. Well, the Chancel Choir followed that trend, having our fall choir retreat earlier in the calendar year than ever. In preparation for our December concert, we participated in a wonderful four hours of rehearsal this past Saturday. We are so appreciative to John St. Marie and Joshua Chandra for their gifts in leading us through the music.

In addition to rehearsal, we had a dinner and game break which served a great purpose. This was a time to nourish not only our physical bodies, but the body of the choir as well, strengthening bonds of individual friendships within the group and the wider choir community.

The choir has grown in number over the last few years, thanks to the inspired leadership of John St Marie. With that growth, the challenge becomes maintaining a cohesive community. Our unity and camaraderie are necessary to provide inspired offerings to the congregation each week. Being part of this group is a blessing to our lives as we really are a family.

We are the largest small group in the church, and we take our responsibility very seriously. The choir is an excellent example of a group of people working together to achieve a common goal which benefits others. It works because we have excellent leadership and many willing hands and hearts. We look forward to continuing to bless the congregation and ourselves through our continued, unified effort. As always, you are welcome to join us!

SAVE THE DATE!
Winter Solstice Concert
Sunday December 10th @ 7:00 pm
Photos from the Church Picnic on September 17th

Photos courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips
There has been a rise in societal distress about what seems to be a loss of “civility” in social interaction. Concern has reached a peak with the election of a President who calls fellow politicians names, and even leaders of foreign governments names, with no apology. He has made fun of reporters and people who are disabled, and has been recorded using crass names for women. This behavior has not only been un-reproached, but has been rewarded.

Panelists on news shows can be heard interrupting each other, raising their voices to drown out someone who is speaking, and name-calling others who disagree with them. This behavior is again being rewarded as these people are repeatedly given opportunity to appear on national television panels and thus invade our living rooms. As the familiar song says, “Children are listening.”

Parents and other adults who interact regularly with children and teens might want to re-examine their role in providing guidance about “civil” behavior, and why it is important. Most parents start off fairly well, teaching toddlers and pre-school children about accepted “rules” of civility – like saying please and thank-you, and not interrupting when someone else is speaking. But today many who are in a position to regularly observe children’s behavior and the behavior of older teenagers, close to adulthood, are writing with deep worry about what seems to be happening to “civil” discourse and behavior with children as well as adults.

Civility has to do with being “polite,” or courteous to other people. It is not the same kind of deep spiritual connection to others, such as “compassion,” but while superficial it is meant to make life for ourselves and others more agreeable and less stressful. It goes a long way to helping interface with others we encounter more predictably pleasant. It actually helps to relax our stress-response systems by reassuring our minds and bodies that there is no need to prepare for “battle.” Emotional battles, no less than physical battles, take a toll on our well-being. Civility is meant to keep our emotional responses even.

I remember the first time I asked someone about what I thought was a “ridiculous” practice in Congress of referring to each other as “the distinguished gentleman from Alabama” or “my respected colleague from Arizona” when we knew the people speaking often couldn’t tolerate each other. I still remember the simple answer: “It keeps them from hitting each other.” It turns out that debate in the early days of our democracy often became physical, with fistfights and even duels as a response to hearing something one didn’t like. It was discovered that instilling very strict rules about how one was to address another when speaking to them in Congress put an end to that raucousness. So it turns out that when parents tell brother not to call brother names because “it’s not nice,” it’s also not safe.

So I would like to throw out a challenge to everyone reading this column, because I assume you have care and concern about our young people if you’re taking the time to read. The challenge is to get involved in introducing “civility” to children and teens you encounter, and that you make it a “rule” in your presence, even if they don’t understand its importance. Of course this implies that we have to practice civility ourselves when dealing with young people. If you’re watching television and there are children in the room observing adults behaving uncivilly with each other, and you do not comment, you are giving your tacit consent to the behavior. Yes, I do see the problem here – you will have to do a lot of talking and teaching given the sheer amount of rudeness and lack of civility we hear every day. It will be a chore. You will get tired of it and your children will get tired of it. But look at what has happened to our social interactions from our neglect!

We’ll dig deeper in the next few months. For now, if you’d like to delay your interactive homework assignment briefly, your assignment this month is to really pay attention - notice, ponder - how many times you observe both uncivil interactions between people as well as the negative consequences of such behavior. We’ll talk again. Politely, of course.
A “snapshot” of the Historical Jesus (continued)

by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

Last month we left Jesus during the period of the great unknown, from when he was twelve years old until the Gospels pick him up in his active ministry somewhere from one to three years before his death. We can only guess what might have happened. My guess is that he joined a Jewish community to learn more about his religion. Maybe it was a progressive Jewish community, because Jesus had a tendency to look at Judaism in a very different light. He felt that the laws (all 613 of them) had highjacked Judaism, but they needed to get back to their roots of loving YHWH, neighbor and self. Jesus felt that the religious leadership of Judaism had corrupted his religion (read Matthew 23 for a whole chapter of tirades against the leadership: “Damn you, scribes and Pharisees…”). He knew the rich were getting richer off the backs of the poor. He realized that the tax collectors were ripping off the poor by over-charging them and making them even poorer. He witnessed how the laws of his religion had locked out the sick, those with mental issues, the lepers, the handicapped and disabled. It was obvious to him that the temple taxes were outrageous and prevented the poor from participating.

However, his ministry wasn’t centered around the oppressed. He was trying to build his Kingdom on earth on the foundation stone of agape love. His favorite story was the Prodigal Son, a story about agape love as the father accepts his wayward son unconditionally, no questions asked, forgiving him for his errant ways and celebrating his return with a chance to start over. This was difficult for his older son who wanted a “pound of his flesh.”

There can be no question that Jesus’ message was very popular with the commoner but equally unpopular with the Jewish leadership. I’m guessing that Jesus’ close followers convinced him that he should take his message out to the people in the Galilean region. Scripture says he was well accepted as a preacher/teacher and this became his full-time job. He set up his headquarters in Capernaum, a major trade route city situated on the northwest coast of the Lake of Galilee. He had his advance team who would go out, set up a preaching spot and spread the word that Jesus of Nazareth would be coming. And the crowds came, sometimes 5,000 at a time. At first, most of his audience was Jewish, the poor and oppressed. Then we see some of the leaders attending, some gentiles and even Romans. Jesus’ message resonated. He became more and more popular. The leadership became more and more threatened.

Someplace during the “unknown time,” I feel that Jesus married and his wife’s name was Mary of or from Magdala, a prosperous fishing village on the north-west side of the Lake of Galilee. She was reported to have had seven demons expelled from her body by Jesus – seven of them. The word “demon” covers a huge range of issues from mild to severe, and although the number seven is very important in Judaism, we don’t know what it means in this case. Over the years, many thought it meant that Mary was a prostitute, but that turns out to be simply conjecture. Whatever! As is so clearly shown in the Gospels, she was a very devout follower of Jesus who seemed to be there all the time. The Gospel of Mary (10:10) states that “For he (Jesus) knew her (Mary) completely and loved her steadfastly.” In my books, that means he was married to her. Mary’s Gospel also has Peter saying, “Sister, we know that the savior loved you more than all other women.” (6:1) If Jesus and Mary were married, then they, in all probability, had children because it was very important in Judaism that couples be “fruitful and multiply.” (Genesis 1:22)

Then Jesus makes the decision to go to Jerusalem to share his message. Some of his disciples thought that wasn’t a good idea, but Jesus goes and ends up being crucified. Even though it might have been considered a poor decision then, over time this move changed the course of civilization. Stayed tuned for the final composite of the “Historical Jesus.”

The Eight Points of Progressive Christianity:

By calling ourselves Progressive Christians, we mean we are Christians who...

1. Believe that following the path and the teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;

2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of the many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;

3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to: * Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, * Believers and agnostics, * Women and men, * Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, * Those of all classes and abilities;

4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;

5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;

6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;

7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;

8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion and selfless love.
Films for Halloween
Suggestions from Keith Dillon

Here's a list of movies for those adventurous souls among you who like a good scare at Halloween. Don't worry: there's not a lot of blood or disembodied bodies here, just some good old-fashioned thrills and chills. Boo!

1. The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920 - Robert Wiene, dir.) - By modern standards, this one isn't so scary anymore. Still, it's well worth a look. This Winmar era fable reminds us of the consequences of falling too deeply asleep.

2. Nosferatu (1922 - F.W. Mumau, dir.) - This is one silent movie that'll get under your skin. You've never seen a scarier vampire on film than Nosferatu, that pinched-faced, goatee-chin bloodsucker played ferociously by Max Schreck.

3. Frankenstein (1931 - James Whale, dir.) - A film about the destructive power of misunderstanding - a brilliant portrait not only of the innocence of the monster, but also of the lust for knowledge and power of the scientist.

4. King Kong (1933 - David O. Selznick, prod.) - Hollywood's original Beauty and the Beast, this parable about love and fear in Art Deco America can both frighten you and bring you to inconsolable tears.

5. Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956 - Don Siegel, dir.) - The finest of the 50's era anti-communist screamfests. This film leaves you with the eerie feeling that you can't trust anyone anymore.

6. Rosemary's Baby (1968 - Roman Polanski, dir.) - Mia Farrow's Rosemary is duped and terrorized into bearing Satan's child by a group of sweet elderly neighbors.

7. Young Frankenstein (1974 - Mel Brooks, dir.) - Screenwriter Gene Wilder insisted this film be as frightening as it was funny.


9. Videodrome (1983 - David Cronenberg, dir.) - A fable about out of control technology and how it can swallow the human soul.

10. The Blair Witch Project (1999 - Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sanchez, dir.) - By hiding as much as they reveal, this pair of student filmmakers use their camera to make the audience a participant in the horror they've created.