January will be an exciting time for IUCC - Please mark your calendar & plan to participate!

In anticipation of our Winter Meeting on January 31, IUCC has scheduled a series of forums to share information and answer your questions. At the Winter Meeting, we will be voting on the 2016 budget and making a decision about embarking on a capital campaign for the first phase of our newly-approved Master Plan. Please join us for any or all three of the forums, then plan to attend the Winter Meeting. For more information, please contact the Church Office, Renae Boyum, Anne Rosse or Mark Allen.

Sunday, January 10, 2016
12:15 p.m. Sanctuary: Building Plan Forum
Learn more about the IUCC Master Plan, our vision for an enhanced and expanded church campus. Learn what would be accomplished in each of the three phases, especially Phase I.

Sunday, January 17, 2016
12:15 p.m. Sanctuary: Capital Campaign Forum
Learn more about the proposed capital campaign and how IUCC would meet the financial goals to fund Phase I of the Master Plan.

Sunday, January 24, 2016
12:15 p.m. Sanctuary: 2016 Budget Forum
Learn more about the proposed 2016 budget being presented to the congregation for approval at the Winter Meeting on January 31.

Sunday, January 31, 2016
ONE service at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Winter Congregational Meeting & Potluck!
The morning will begin with special music at 9:30 a.m. in the sanctuary. Next, we will join together for one worship service at 10:00 a.m. The Winter Meeting will begin right after worship. At the end of the meeting, we’ll gather in Plumer Hall and on the patio for an all-church potluck. This promises to be an exciting day as we ALL come together for a time of worship, decision-making, and fellowship.
Our “12 days before Christmas” party on December 13th was lots of fun!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
More photos from the party!

Photos courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips, Teri Houston, Jessie Billings & Tricia Aynes
Photos of early Christmas Eve Service at IUCC

Photos courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips
Take a deep breath. Concentrate. This isn’t “church as usual” this month.

This extraordinary church family is being asked to discern together and then take a big step forward in faith on January 31. We all need to understand why over the course of the last couple of years your leaders, including a well-informed building task-force and our architectural firm, came to the conclusions they did with regard to the plans for our physical plant. Further, people might need to be reminded why these plans need to unfold in the particular way they do in order to keep us fully functioning at every step of the way.

I was able to read this issue before writing this column, and from pretty much cover-to-cover, you will be able to get more information on our building project. For an extremely good primer, I encourage you to read Anne Rosse’s articles on the Capital Campaign Planning Update and the Building Plan Update on pages ten and eleven. Moderator Renae Boyum also recaps some important information from the cover on page seven with regard to the upcoming forums. These will help answer any questions you might have on the building plans, the capital campaign and the budget for this year. Read up. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. We all need to be on the same page, even if we don’t agree on all of the particulars.

Now that we are here, I want you to know where I stand on this project. It was important for this to be a lay-led endeavor. The enthusiasm for a project like this can only come from the congregation, and so it began with a task-force and our leadership. I was quietly supportive. I watched the excitement that bubbled up in the congregation from that early meeting that caused this forward momentum to grow, and now that we are moving towards making a decision about constructing this project, I need to tell you that I am completely behind it. It makes sense on so many levels. Our campus is a little “down at the heel” in some areas, and we are short on space for how many groups we accommodate during the week and the many activities that happen on Sunday morning.

I think it is an incredibly exciting addition to our building that creates a vibrant frontage. It really puts us “out there” on Alton Parkway. I have heard it said by colleagues that new construction can create a new vibrancy in a congregation (St. Marks Newport is an example). To have new rooms for small meetings and a reception area in which to welcome people during the week is something I am all for!

But, if I’m going to say I’m behind it, then I have to bear the cost with you. If the congregation votes to move ahead with the campaign, Carl and I will pledge to support it with one of many gifts that will be needed to make this dream for IUCC come true—that we grow into an even more present, vibrant and far-reaching Progressive Christian witness here in Orange County.

It isn’t a new idea for this congregation. We have a beautiful sanctuary that was built by many of you—creating a space to grow into and a legacy for the future. Before that, it was a dome built from a kit that still serves us after over thirty years. In this New Year, we are entering into a time of discernment about creating a new legacy—one that will reach out to people who have not yet found us, and inviting them share our mission and vision from there.

Happy New Year!

Pastor Paul
It is unbelievable that 2015 has already come and gone! Last year brought a lot of changes for the IUCC Music Ministry. Larry Gates left as our Chair to take a position as an organ-ist and music director at St. Clement's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church. Suellen Rowe jumped in to fill the void, for which we are extremely grateful. She does such an outstanding job keeping the Music Ministry running smoothly. We bid farewell to our three choral interns and hired Angelica, Guillermo, and Ulysses. Their youth, vitality, and eagerness to learn and contribute is exciting to watch. We also said goodbye to David Clemensen and welcomed Christopher Luthi as our new accompanist. David is missed, but Chris's talent and warm, gracious spirit have truly blessed us. I for one, am ready for 2016 to calm down a bit!

In the midst of all these changes, the Chancel Choir prepared for our usual activities: weekly anthems for Sundays, our joint Thanksgiving Service with University Synagogue (pictured below), the annual Winter Solstice Concert, and the beloved Candlelight Christmas Eve Service. We could not have made it without the leadership of John St. Marie, who maintained such grace under pressure. His consistent love and support for all of us in the choir is a blessing.

The crown jewel of the season is always our Winter Solstice Concert. This year we had a near full audience and raised $1,800 for the IUCC General Fund. Chris Luthi had his first of hopefully many concerts with us, and the addition of oboe for a few of the pieces was really special. As always, Lesley Wheland did an outstanding job selecting the readings, which were all excellent, as were the readers. Thank you to Michael Gordon who handled our sound and lighting. The concert was followed by a wonderful reception organized by Carol Getz. We want to thank all others who ushered, baked cookies, helped with clean up, or anything else that I may be forgetting. We couldn’t do it without you.

Finally, now is a great time to join the IUCC Chancel Choir. We start again with our weekly Thursday night rehearsals on January 8th at 7:15 p.m. in the sanctuary. We are a warm, wacky, wonderful group of people, so all are welcome!
Happy New Year! 2016 promises to be an exciting, challenging year for IUCC - so get out your calendars (electronic or otherwise) and note some important dates in the life of this vibrant, faith community!

Beginning on January 10 there will be a series of forums designed to inform and give you a chance to ask questions about important items upcoming at our January 31 congregational meeting. Note: all will be held at 12:15 p.m. in the sanctuary. We will discuss:

- January 10 -- plans for our potential building project
- January 17 -- plans for a potential capital campaign
- January 24 -- the 2016 budget proposal

**JANUARY 31:** Winter Congregational Meeting --mark this date on your calendar! The morning will begin with special music at 9:30 a.m. in the sanctuary. Next, we will join together for one worship service at 10:00 a.m. The winter congregational meeting will begin right after worship. At this meeting we will vote on the 2016 budget and make a decision on embarking on a capital campaign for the first phase of our newly-approved-by-the-city master plan. At the end of the meeting, we’ll gather in Plumer Hall and on the patio for an all-church potluck. This promises to be an exciting day as we ALL come together for a day of worship, decision-making, and fellowship.

2016 also marks the 25th anniversary of IUCC officially becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation. Plans are being made for a special series of adult education classes/classrooms somewhat replicating the series of classes IUCC offered 25 years ago. Details about these upcoming classes (which will begin in February) will be forthcoming. Another date to mark on your calendar is JUNE 12. On that date, we will celebrate and commemorate the ONA anniversary with a special worship service. Our Pastor Emeritus, Fred Plumer, will be here to reflect on this milestone with us. Over the course of the summer months, we will discuss the next steps for what it means for us to be an Open and Affirming church today. Our ONA designation is a key part of IUCC’s “DNA” and I hope you will be part of this year-long celebration.

In April of 2006, we welcomed the Reverend Paul Tellström as our pastor. Almost ten years later, Paul continues to amaze me with his caring, commitment, and contemplative ways. With Paul as our leader, IUCC has grown both in numbers and in a commitment to social justice. His sermons both comfort us with the good news and challenge us to follow us the example of Jesus in our own lives. We are indeed blessed to have Paul as our pastor and I look forward to a bright future for IUCC with Paul as our pastor.

A final note: We end 2015 with stronger financial reserves than we reported at the end of 2014. We end 2015 with friends and members of IUCC stepping forth in faith to ensure a 2016 budget that will allow IUCC to continue to be a beacon of progressive Christianity in Irvine and in the greater community. Thank you to all of you for the many ways you contribute to IUCC through your time, talents, and treasures. It is indeed an honor and privilege to be your moderator!

In faith and community,

Renae

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**What does it mean to be Open & Affirming?**

*From our website www.iucc.org:*

Open and Affirming (ONA) is the United Church of Christ’s (UCC) designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the UCC which make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Reflecting the Open and Affirming action of the General Synod (1985) and the Transgender action of the General Synod (2003), to say that a setting of the UCC (a local church, campus ministry etc.) is “Open and Affirming” means that it has publicly and specifically declared that those of all “sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions” (or “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender” people) are welcome in its full life and ministry (e.g. membership, leadership, employment, etc.). It bespeaks a spirit of hospitality and a willingness to live out that welcome in meaningful ways.
Pacific Plastic Island

Have you heard about this man-made island of plastic bits and debris floating in the ocean? I certainly hope you have heard about it and like me are concerned about the consequences. Unfortunately, it is not a benign island. The plastic bits and textile fibers have become part of the food cycle involving fish, sea birds, marine animals and humans.

In an October 16, 2015 Los Angeles Times article entitled “Plastic waste making its way into seafood,” journalist Louis Sahagun writes that researchers from UC Davis and Hasanuddin University in Indonesia are reporting some of the first findings of plastic debris and textile fibers in fish on consumers’ dinner plates. In California the majority of the contaminants consist of fibers from textiles.” The article and links to other informative articles can be found online using Louis Sahagun plastic waste. An internationally recognized expert, Captain Charles Moore of Algalita Marine Research Foundation, speaking in September at Sea & Sage Audubon on marine plastic pollution, said he wants to prevent additional plastic trash entering the ocean. If you want to learn more, Capt. Moore can be found on YouTube and TED TALKS.

Three ways I’m trying to help: Use my own shopping bags. Can’t claim I always remember, but I am trying. I plan to use the mesh produce bags I purchased recently at Albertson’s. My third way is picking up plastic trash when bird watching in the regional and other parks in the county. Yes, it is someone else’s trash; but I don’t want that plastic making its way to the ocean. Do you have other good ideas of ways to help?

~ Carol Getz, for the Green Faith Team

(Judy Curry, Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, Eileen Vincent, and Vivian Johnson)
Newly licensed Pastor Matthew Redrich was recognized by Pastor Paul and the congregation on December 20.

We just had to celebrate when the City of Irvine approved our Modified Conditional Use Permit!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes

Photos courtesy of Anne Rosse
A few weeks ago, I was sitting in an Irvine City Hall conference room with other IUCC leaders and our wonderful architects, domusstudios architecture, waiting for the City to give its approval to our plan to enhance and expand the IUCC church campus. In preparation for this final approval hearing, I had been asked to prepare a very brief response to the question, “Why does IUCC want to do this project?”

Why indeed? There are lots and lots of ways I could answer that question ... our aging campus doesn’t really support our goals and activities, good luck finding a place to meet on any busy Sunday, and have you tried having a confidential conversation in the Church Office recently? But, all of those are simply by-products of a campus that just doesn’t quite fit anymore.

No, for me, the answer is pretty simple. IUCC wants to enhance and enlarge our campus because we are a vibrant and active faith community that follows Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us to follow Him – not to worship or believe in Him – but to follow Him. And, what does that mean? It means that we are concerned and progressive, committed to improving the human condition both locally and throughout the world. And, we do this through our mission and ministry in some pretty key ways:

1. We strive to educate tomorrow’s leaders through our preschool, youth programs, and educational activities.
2. We strive to follow Jesus Christ’s teachings to love and care for our neighbors.
3. We strive to follow His teachings to be good stewards of our environment.
4. And, we strive to follow His teachings to live in peace.

On January 31, this congregation will be asked if we are ready to embark on a capital campaign to fund the first phase of the IUCC Master Plan. We have spent a couple of years getting ready for this decision by developing a shared vision for a new church campus and then laying the groundwork in terms of modifying our Conditional Use Permit so we have City approval to undertake these church campus enhancements and expansions.

The IUCC Master Plan, itself, is a strong vision for a new church campus. Designed with green practices in mind, it is comprised of three flexible phases. In the first phase, we would build an administrative building with staff offices, volunteer work space, and configurable meeting rooms (with a total capacity of 100 people), an expanded Narthex with a new entrance, an enhanced patio for fellowship, and a welcoming new church frontage. In Phase II, Plumer Hall would be torn down and a state-of-the-art preschool/education center (with a playground designed to promote creative and collaborative play) built in its place. During this phase, we would use the meeting rooms in the new administrative building for fellowship. In the final phase, a configurable fellowship hall, with indoor/outdoor and dedicated youth space would be built.

Each phase was designed to cost approximately $2 million (without factoring in inflation). To meet Phase I costs, we would need to raise at least $1.5 million, plus fundraising costs and interest reserve, with the remainder of project costs being met through financing.

Our timeline looks something like this:

December 2015
Conditional Use Permit Approval and Celebration

January 2016
Vote on Capital Campaign (Winter Meeting)

February-May 2016
If approved, 15-17 Week Capital Campaign launches

May 2016
If Capital Campaign is Successful, Vote on Proceeding (Spring Meeting)

Early 2017
Shovels in the Ground

2018
Occupancy

“Capital Campaign Planning Update” continued on page 11
We’ve been advised that from the time we decide to move forward with building (May 2016?), it will be 6-9 months for planning/permitting/bidding and 18-24 months to occupancy (from the original decision date). It would be up to the congregation to decide when we are ready to undertake fundraising for the next phase.

To help us assess our readiness for a capital campaign, we’ve been working with the Rev. Priscilla Bizer, our UCC campaign consultant. Based on her interviews with congregants and a wealth of expertise with church-based campaigns, Rev. Bizer advised that the giving capacity to successfully reach $1.5 million or more is within this congregation. It is a matter of faith ... of entwining the generosity and commitment with people’s capacity for giving.

In the coming weeks, we’ll be hosting a series of forums to provide this congregation with the information it needs to make an informed decision about embarking on a capital campaign to fund the first phase of our shared vision. We hope you plan to attend these forums and, more importantly, to attend the Winter Meeting on January 31 when this important topic will be discussed.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions. And, I’d love to hear your answer to “Why does IUCC want to do this project?” Drop me a line or stop me on the patio – I can’t wait to hear your answer!

As we joyously celebrated in church on December 13, the City of Irvine granted us a modification to our Conditional Use Permit, the final step in our planning process. It took more than a year for the City to act on our request. The protracted review process involved working with Woodbridge Village Association to obtain their endorsement, multiple exchanges with the City to provide them with additional information and respond to their questions/concerns, and a traffic study to analyze the potential impact of our proposed new campus. These months and months of waiting finally came to end on December 9 when the Zoning Administrator approved Resolution 15-1311.

This decision paves the way for us to enhance and expand our church campus as envisioned in the IUCC Master Plan. Coming together as a faith community, IUCC developed a shared vision for a new church campus. We recognized that our aging campus does not reflect the church we are striving to be - one that proclaims our extravagant and inclusive welcome, that we are committed to serving our neighbors while having more significance in the lives of our members. Together, we have taken another step on our journey — one step closer to a campus that will better support our commitments to nurturing tomorrow’s leaders and following Jesus Christ’s teachings to love and care for our neighbors, be good stewards of our environment, and live in peace.

There are many folks to thank for this outcome:
• Our very dedicated Building Task Force - Martha Selby, Laura Long, Keith Boyum, Michael Spindle, Lindy Garber, Paul Tellström, Cindy O’Dell, Pat Sauter, Mark Allen and - with special thanks - Jim Raver.
• Our very talented and gracious architects - domusstudio architecture.
• Our fabulous Bookkeeper, Heidi Wilcox, for processing the never-ending paperwork associated with this project.
• And, appreciation and gratitude to those who made the church-wide celebration so special – Pastor Paul, Renae Boyum and Pat Sauter.

The most important thank you, however, is to this congregation. All of this would not have been possible without the commitment and investment that this church made in IUCC’s future and legacy. So, thank you, IUCC! And, thank you for all you do to make IUCC an active and vibrant faith community, concerned and committed to improving the human condition both locally and throughout the world.
I’ve returned, dear readers, after yet another “break” in our parenting column. As we discussed after my first break, my experiences with traumatic injury and treatment for same has provided much grist for the mill in terms of addressing issues of the “self.” I wrote about my experiences being “nobody,” in terms of who I really am, in the two rehab facilities I spent time in after surgeries.

Now that I am home, hopefully for good, I have yet another adjustment to make in terms of thinking about myself since I am no longer independent. While I am able to do a lot for myself, I am still quite dependent on others (bless you, Barb Carse) for many very remedial tasks. I can’t shower and can’t drive. I can’t go by myself down the ramp into the garage with my wheelchair, so I can’t do laundry or get supplies. I have to work a lot on being “gracious” with being so dependent on others, after more than thirty years of being self-employed and traveling around the globe, feeling quite self-sufficient, thank you.

In keeping with our “mission” of helping parents and other adults involved in the lives of children, I thought of how sometimes in the life of a young person there are “breaks” in their developmental journey. Such breaks can sometimes repair and bolster weak or damaged egos. But, other times breaks can break down and destroy emerging egos. Breaks in life routines for adults are somewhat different because of the solidity of self-notions, but since the self is always in process – even for adults - we are always somewhat vulnerable to input from others as life circumstances change. I found at my quite advanced age that I could still cry when someone perceived me to be different from my familiar conceptions of myself.

The vulnerability of the “self” provides reasons both to despair and to not despair. For example, an adult battered woman who has been verbally denigrated in addition to being assaulted can find a fortunate relationship with someone who sees something very different than what she has been told thus far. And this new information can cause her to rethink staying in an abusive relationship and give her hope for a different kind of life.

Thinking about “breaks” in development can be useful for parents in a few ways. It may be important to understand what happened to a child’s view of and feelings about him or her self after a dramatic “break” in normalcy. For instance, a best friend moving away can completely change how children think about their desirability to other people as they flounder about trying to fill the empty space left by their friend. (This often happens to adults after a break-up with a romantic partner.) Or, a parent’s divorce may suddenly produce immature behavior or “outbursts” last seen in preschool. Regression is not uncommon when a child either loses someone or loses their sense of security. It will not be helpful to criticize a child or teen who is showing us that something significant has happened and is causing them to feel “weak” and vulnerable. Rather, it will be helpful to let him or her know you can see how much they are hurting by seeing behavior you haven’t seen in a long time. Sometimes an illness causes a change in behavior (again, even in adults) and we will see what looks like a “slip” in maturity. Such breaks are part of life, as children will learn, and changes in developmental maturity from benign events usually don’t last. Understanding and empathy will be much more helpful than critical statements or demands to “grow up.”

Another useful way to think about developmental “breaks” is to realize that we can schedule them. For example, many children leave their families for short periods to go away to camp, or to visit grandparents or other relatives for a while. Such breaks in routine are good for children as they are forced to find strengths in themselves to face the challenges of loneliness, uncertainty, unfamiliar routines, learning new skills, and learning to be friends with kids they don’t know. Working through these challenges often give children inner resources that will last the rest of their lives. Once mastered, coping with unfamiliar and stressful events will teach children that they are “up” to the task, and this will come in handy next time their familiar world goes away, either temporarily or permanently.

Putting children in new situations can either reinforce budding strengths and abilities, or undermine such potential. For that reason, it is crucial that parents take the lead in guiding their children through breaks in familiar routines. It is never a good idea to leave children alone to figure out how to cope with a marital breakup, the loss of a cherished...
Please welcome our new members from Dec. 13, 2015! From left to right above, they are: David Merier, Jessica Cassman, Michelle Lin, Ashley Herndon, and Lynette Herndon.

At right is Jeanne Maag.

Welcome!

Photos courtesy of Paul Shirey

In this photo, the Comma Group known as “Bacon 6x” is celebrating a “White Elephant” gift exchange - Tom's gift (a phone) included a speed dial option directly to God :)! The members are: Tom Ricks, Lester Ricks, Craig Tyrl, Cindy O'Dell, Wayne Banwell, Todd Thompson, Debra Banwell and Anne Rosse.

Info & photo courtesy of Anne Rosse

friend, moving to a new school or church, or other changes in routines that have helped them to feel grounded. Watch them for cues that they are struggling. Talk to them. Share stories from your own life when you suddenly felt small, or weak, or less capable. Let them know that you understand and also that they will make it through with your help. And always take great care to scrutinize who your children will be with during times away from you. Self-concept and self-esteem are fragile, and a child's ego can be torn down by a thoughtless, rigid, or unkind adult. Even a brief time with someone who does not affirm a child's worth and potential can cause remarkable harm. Never give your child over to an adult who will not care for and about them, and do whatever homework is necessary to be sure it is so. Not even for piano lessons. And certainly not for a week's vacation. And always ask your children what they learned about themselves during their “break.”