Celebrating 10 years of “building a beloved community” with Pastor Paul Tellström

Photos by Tricia Aynes
We presented Pastor Paul with a lovely custom-made, hand-carved bowl inscribed with the Bible verse from Micah: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?” It was filled with heart-felt notes of love and appreciation from the congregation.
That evening, Pastor Paul reported that it was “a very happy day indeed, in every way! It’s after midnight, and I JUST finished opening all the cards. Feeling affirmed & loved.”
Again, I thank you for the privilege of serving as your Senior Pastor as I move into my eleventh year with this congregation. Thank you for the love and support that Carl and I both feel here. The Tenth Anniversary services with cake and a toast in-between were something I will never forget—our talented choir, the lovely gift of the carved bowl, the video, your warm words and the many cards (which I stayed up late reading) were so supportive and heartfelt.

I want to be with you as we create a new chapter and (hopefully) a new building. You have heard updates from our Embracing the Future Chair, Anne Rosse. I’m your greatest cheerleader on this project. I remember the joy in the room when you voted with such passion to empower a building task force to bring us where we were at our last meeting in January. The 89% positive vote to move forward to where we are today means that we are enthusiastic about our future in terms of this project. It also means that we must back up that enthusiasm with something more tangible. Carl and I made our gift early. While at the time it felt like it was very significant (to us), now we wonder if we might be able to add more in order to see some of the dreams we’ve been talking about come true.

This project is important to me. I want to see IUCC doing ministry years from now in a facility that fits the church, its ministries, and the community around us. Those of us who attend meetings and events after church and during the week know just how short on space we are.

At our Spring meeting, we will thank the leaders who will step down in June, and those who have either agreed to stay on or step up. IUCC takes leadership very seriously, and I am grateful to each of you for agreeing to be a part the energy that will be a part of who we are as we step forward into our future.

This year we celebrate our 25th Anniversary of being an Open and Affirming church. Our celebration goes on with a special visit from our Pastor Emeritus Fred Plumer next month, followed by our Faith & Works event in September.

There is a growing new group at the church called the Greenfaith Committee. You will hear more about this at our meeting, but this group has an eye on us becoming more, “green” in our thinking and actions. They propose that we become what is known in the UCC as a Creation Justice Church. It is a designation like Open and Affirming and Global Mission.

Welcome back, Steve Swope! The Rev. Steven Swope was your Interim Minister for 18 months in 2004-2006, and he is now our new Adult Program Director. Steve has a great grasp on who we are, as well as a good eye for adult education. He is presently working on Year Seven of Comma Groups. If you are newer to this church (or if you just want to discover some new friends), you might consider a Comma Group this year. This is a small-group subset of IUCC where you just might find your “niche” as well as a community. You will be hearing more about that in the near future.

Say, “hello” to Ben Allen in the booth at the back. Ben is our technical aide, and he is working with the deacons to make sure we have good sound, lights and technology (including hearing devices).

Yours,
Pastor Paul
You’ve all heard them: when opening our Sunday services, most of our worship leaders declare that IUCC is an Open and Affirming, Just Peace, and Global Mission church. Those United Church of Christ (UCC) designations, chosen by our congregation following discernment, and marking commitment, aptly describe who we are and how we choose to announce that to the greater community.

At our Spring Congregational meeting on May 15, we will begin the process of deciding whether IUCC wishes to become a Creation Justice church (Creation Justice is the formal UCC designation). Here at IUCC, our Green Faith team, under the auspices of the Advocates for Peace and Justice Ministry, has been working diligently on education and activities that call attention to the need to care for our earth. Join us at the Spring meeting to learn more details about this process. As of January 2017, we may have four declarations for worship leaders to announce!

In addition to our formal labels, IUCC can be described in many other ways. After the 10th Anniversary celebration of Pastor Paul’s time with us, the words “glorious” and “spirit-filled” come to my mind. I’m sure you have your own adjectives that describe this vital and vibrant faith community. I’m also sure that you may have your list of things and moments that you love about our church. As I complete my first year as Moderator, here’s my list.

- Pastor Paul and his caring ways and challenging sermons.
- John St. Marie and the wonderful leadership he provides to our music program.
- The choir -- they add such vibrancy and life to our worship.
- Children’s time -- led by Pastor Sarah -- full of surprises and joy!
- Our Deacons who make Sunday morning run so smoothly and give their gifts Sunday after Sunday.
- Communion Sunday -- my favorite Sunday of worship. I love watching our family of faith come forward in a covenant of faith and community.
- The joining of hands during the Alleluia.
- Baptisms and the celebration of new life.
- New members who bring their own special gifts to IUCC.
- Coffee hour (even though I don’t drink coffee) -- a chance to connect with our church family over yummy food.
- The special people I’ve “wasted” time with this past year on the Coordinating Council -- Pastor Paul, Dave Schofield and Dawn Price. Their leadership and caring inspires me!
- Michael and Heidi who answer my questions, my emails and support all of us in remarkable ways.
- The members of the Ministry Board who lovingly plan programs and dream dreams.
- The members of the Administration Board who love this church and make sure we have the resources to dream.
- Comma Group for . . . -- my most recent one that has enriched my life as have the five other Comma Groups I’ve had the pleasure of being a part of!

There are so many other people and programs that I’m sure are part of YOUR list! What is important is to recognize and appreciate this special place we call our church home! During the month of May, our attention will focus on our capital campaign, Embracing the Future. As you receive information in the mail, as you hear special appeals during our worship service, and as you watch campaign videos, I hope you will remember all the things you cherish about IUCC AND then act on those feelings with a financial commitment to the future of IUCC!

Your gift will ensure that this Open and Affirming, Just Peace, and Global Mission community of faith -- and, I forecast, this Creation Justice community -- will leave a mark on our larger world, and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come!

In faith and community,

Renae
The Ordination of Matthew Douglas Redrich at IUCC on April 10 was very special and heart-warming. We were so happy to join with his family, friends and members of his new congregation (San Dimas Community Church UCC) to wish him well on his new call and his future journey!

(photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes)

Please welcome these new members who joined IUCC on April 10, 2016. Above photo L to R: Jan Wilson, Karen Smith, and Jane Smith. Below photo: David Cherry and David Kopfer.

We love to share our IUCC family story with others, and so you’ll see a lot of photos and videos being taken and shared in many ways. If you don’t want your image used in our story telling, please turn in a Media Opt Out form, which is available through our church office by calling us at 949-733-0220 or by e-mailing us at iucc@iucc.org. Thank you!
All-Church Bowling Photos

photos courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips
As we enter May, IUCC’s “Embracing the Future” campaign is moving into its public phase. Staff and lay leaders, along with early campaign supporters, have stepped up with generous sacrificial giving to demonstrate how important we consider this campaign effort. We now invite you to join us in making this exciting vision for IUCC’s future a reality.

This month, campaign videos and speakers will help share why this transformative effort is so important in bringing new indoor and outdoor spaces that will strengthen our bonds with each other and with our surrounding community. And, these new spaces will reflect our commitment to “green faith.”

Below are some of the upcoming campaign highlights.

**May 8**
Join us for an inspiring video reminder of IUCC’s founding and past. Our current campus is here for us because those who gathered here some decades ago envisioned, and provided for, the progressive community of that faith that nourishes us today.

Our thanks and appreciation to Susan Sherman for her leadership and expertise in the production of three outstanding campaign videos.

**May 15**
We will enjoy hearing a personal perspective from one of our members about why this faith community is so important – the hope, comfort and meaning that we help bring to so many lives.

**May 22**
Join us for an engaging video about the legacy we are building today. Our success is a fulfillment of IUCC’s early founders’ vision. IUCC stands proudly as a place of sanctuary, a place of social action, and a place above all where all are welcome.

May 22 will be the first of our “Commitment Sundays.” Campaign volunteers will be on the patio to distribute personalized pledge forms. When you receive yours, we ask that you prayerfully consider your commitment, which will
be payable over three years. Every single gift – no matter the size – will make a difference in the life and ministry of this church. We ask that you return your pledge form no later than June 19. As with stewardship, all campaign pledges will be treated confidentially.

May 29

In a personal testimonial, we will hear from a fellow congregant about why it is so important for IUCC to embrace the future.

May 29 will be the second of our “Commitment Sundays.” On these Commitment Sundays, we are asking for your pledge only, not your donation. Once the campaign is over, we will invite you to fulfill your pledge by announcing the three-year period for pledge payments.

June 5

Join us as we debut a video about the future of our campus and ministry as IUCC, through this campaign, advances what we are today while providing our legacy for the future. We believe that a Progressive Christian church in Irvine is something well worth making into a more significant presence. We are committed to making sure that the openness of this congregation gets experienced by more and more people.

June 5 will be the third and final of our Commitment Sundays. If you aren’t able to pick up or return your pledge form, one of our dedicated campaign volunteers will be happy to personally assist you in completing the pledge process. Please contact the campaign team at capitalcampaign@iucc.org to request more information or assistance.

For more information, please click to iucc.org/embracing or contact any campaign leader: Anne Rosse (chair), Pastor Paul, Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Linda Haghi, Tommie Kozlov, Bill Lawrence, Chris Redrich and Pat Sauter.

In closing, all of the progress we’ve made to date – developing and getting approved the IUCC Master Plan and now stepping forth in faith to fundraise for Phase I - would not have been possible without the commitment and investment that this church is making in IUCC’s future and legacy. So, thank you, IUCC, for embracing the future! 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.

IRA Charitable Transfers

Did you know that an IRA Charitable Transfer is one possible way to support IUCC’s “Embracing the Future” capital campaign? IRA Charitable Transfers can also be used to meet your annual stewardship commitment.

On December 18, 2015, President Obama signed into law the PATH (Protecting American Taxpayers and Homeowners) Act, which includes not merely an extension of the IRA Charitable Rollover, but which makes it permanent.

The legislation keeps in place all of the previous requirements that must be met in order for the charitable transfer to qualify:

- The donor must be at least 70½ years of age when the gift is made;
- Transfer must be made directly from the IRA administrator to the charity;
- The gifts from the IRA cannot exceed $100,000 per person ($200,000 for a couple with separate IRAs) in a given year;
- They can only be outright gifts (cannot be used to fund a life-income gift such as a Charitable Gift Annuity or Charitable Remainder Trust);
- There is no charitable deduction, but the donor does not include the amount distributed in their federal taxable income;
- The distribution counts toward the donor’s Required Minimum Distribution for the current tax year;
- The law is retroactive to January 1, 2015 and is now permanent;
- The Rollover provision applies only to Traditional IRAs, not to 401(k)s, 403(b)s, and other similar retirement plans – gifts must be made directly to a qualified charity and may not be made to donor advised funds, private foundations or supporting organizations. Gifts may also be made from Roth IRAs, but distributions from a Roth are generally tax-free to the donor anyway, depending on the donor’s age and the length of time the Roth IRA has been in place.

Contact your IRA plan administrator to proceed with a Rollover gift.
Dear Friends,

April was a month of many changes. We experienced the winds and the rain. Flowers bloomed. It was a good time for planting.

May brings the beauty and delights of Spring. My garden is filled with geraniums, nasturtiums, and violets in bloom in colors of orange, purple, and pink.

I am ready for planting, and so is the Children’s Garden at IUCC. Irma Rosales, the Director of our Early Childhood Center (ECC), wants the children to learn about plants, vegetables, and flowers. She will teach them to tend the garden. Buildings & Grounds and Greenfaith will plant seeds and flowers in the Children’s Garden for her.

We will watch them grow and bloom. As Greenfaith taught us, “Every day is Earth Day” at IUCC. Happy Spring!

Thank you,

Miss Lily

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Climate change is easy to understand. Fossil fuel is mostly carbon. Burning carbon creates carbon dioxide (CO2). The CO2 in the atmosphere allows sunlight in but not lower-temperature radiation out, acting like a car window on a cold sunny day. The slides (below and on next page) show how this works, how CO2 is increasing, and how the Earth is heating. The warmer air and ocean cause more water to evaporate. More water in the atmosphere makes larger storms, creating worse hurricanes, tornadoes, snows, and droughts.

The best solution is called carbon fee and dividend. With this approach, a fee is paid where fossil fuel is extracted, at oil and gas wells and coal mines. Those costs are passed on to all users of fossil fuels and energy. The collected fees are returned to people on an equal basis. The result is that poor people, who do not air condition large homes and drive large cars, actually come out ahead. Those who use the most fossil fuel and energy pay more in the extra costs than their dividend. What is most important is that everyone can reduce their costs by reducing fossil fuel use. ~ Jim Martin

The carbon fee can start low, then increase each year until a balance is reached between fossil fuel use at a global temperature that is acceptable. The increased cost of fossil fuel will encourage switching to renewable energy and conservation. For example, IUCC could choose to slightly increase the temperature for air conditioning. Unlike some claims, I believe it is not necessary to eliminate fossil fuel use. ~ Jim Martin

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Atmospheric CO2 Warms Earth

from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_effect

Global Land–Ocean Temperature Index

from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instrumental_temperature_record
All about Love

The Chancel Choir of Irvine United Congregational Church, under the direction of Dr. John St. Marie, accompanied by Christopher Luthi, piano, and Michael Anthony Vigro, classical guitar, is pleased to invite you to their spring concert, featuring Tedesco’s “Romancero Gitano,” along with serious and frivolous, poignant and silly ballads on

Sunday, June 5, 2016, at 7:00 p.m.

In the Church Sanctuary at 4975 Alton Parkway, Irvine, CA 92604 (www.iucc.org)

A free-will offering will be taken to benefit the Church’s general fund.
“Ending Homelessness” Midweek Salon is eye-opening and insightful
by Tricia Aynes

“I understand the skepticism,” said Dawn Price, Executive Director of the Friendship Shelter in Laguna Beach, “But there is a way to end chronic homelessness.” She spoke with thirty IUCC members and guests at the Midweek Salon held on April 27.

“It is possible to achieve ‘functional zero’ (where the number of homeless people in the system is equal to or less than beds available). We’re looking to change the way we address the problem from managing homelessness to ending homelessness. We used to work on fixing people; now we’re working on fixing the problem of homelessness. The expectation used to be on the client to change, now it is on the program to change.”

The revolutionary idea is to end homelessness by giving homes to the homeless – specifically, the chronically homeless (defined as those without homes for a year or more plus a disabling condition). It has been tried with great success in Utah, which is the first state to end chronic homelessness using this method.

Unlike the previous approach, this “housing first” method doesn’t require homeless people to take the initiative to resolve problems like alcoholism, mental health issues, or drug addiction before they are eligible for housing. Instead, it provides them with a place to live without preconditions, then guides them in resolving underlying issues.

Isn’t this terribly expensive? Surprisingly, it turns out to be far less expensive than paying for emergency rooms, police interventions, jail visits, and other services that homeless people use. “If you follow the money,” explained Dawn, “you learn that it costs society an average of $2,897 per month to have a homeless person on the street. In supportive housing, that cost drops to $605. Comparing the same chronically homeless people in the year before and after homes are provided, there is a 67% decrease in EMT (emergency medical care) and a 74% drop in emergency room visits. Every study shows a cost savings.”

“We already have the data,” she explained. “Once a year, we go out and count the homeless – it’s done by teams of two volunteers with a homeless guide.” She hopes IUCC members will want to volunteer for the count.

“The model has changed so that we provide an immediate assessment to identify the housing solution and offer limited case management – swift, data-driven redirection to a housing solution,” she said. There is also a new focus to change from a myriad of disconnected programs to a coordinated entry to programs. “The 211 system has been in place for a while, but now it is being used to do an assessment and place the client in a queue so we can house the most vulnerable people first.”

HUD has increased its efforts to fund housing for homeless people, but it only reimburses at the “fair market rate.” It has proven to be a huge challenge to find housing in South Orange County that’s affordable. Friendship Shelter has responsibility for about 50 units. “The apartments are scattered all over, so our staff must do a lot of driving to reach them all,” said Dawn. “We could really use dedicated sites for supportive housing in South County.”

If the homeless are living on the street, it can be difficult to find them again to provide services. “Year-round homeless shelters allow for ongoing engagement with clients and more meaningful assessments of their problems,” added Dawn. “When staff are observing people daily, they are less likely to miss housing placement opportunities.”

Ken Wyant wrote: “Dawn Price was terrific! She showed us how to use the words “HOPE” and “HOMELESSNESS” in the same sentence. She gently led us to challenge our assumptions about homelessness. She provided professional social policy insights to a group of people who care but have grown numb with frustration. Thank you, Dawn, for an outstanding presentation!”
Don’t miss out - mark your calendar!

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
SUN. * MAY 15 * 12:15 p.m.
Mark your calendar and plan to join us for our annual Spring Meeting. Highlights will include: Embracing IUCC’s future: Capital Campaign update, ratification of the 2016-17 Leadership slate, beginning of process for IUCC to become a “Creation Justice” church, reaffirmation of our ONA designation, and Pastor Paul’s State of the Church!

JOIN IUCC WALK-the-WALKERS FOR AIDSWalk
Saturday, May 14, 2016 * Mason Park * Irvine
Sign up to support one of our walkers or Register today at AIDSWalkOrangeCounty.org

WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP
WED. * MAY 4 *
Women’s Fellowship will go off campus this month to view “The Nature of Water, Our Most Precious Resource” at The Irvine Museum, 18881 Von Karman Ave. in Irvine. We will meet at IUCC at 3:30 p.m. to proceed to the museum for a 4:00 p.m. guided tour. Please sign up on the patio or call Pat Sauter (949 367-1986) to indicate whether you are coming to church or straight to the museum so we know about how many we’ll be. Our tour will take about an hour, after which we will adjourn to dinner at Mimi’s on Barranca to discuss what we’ve seen and what we can do.

ISAIAH HOUSE SHELTER
WED. * MAY 11 * afternoon
Once a month, IUCC volunteers bring food to the homeless. Contact Steve Goetz for details.

WEDNESDAYS IN MAY
“Reading Amos in a Culture of Inequality” with George & Vivian Johnson starts May 4th. Choices: Mornings at 9:20 a.m. or Evenings at 7:15 p.m. A five week Bible Study and Prophetic Analysis that will inform, challenge and inspire. Registration forms are available on the information table on the patio.

ASF Food Drive
The AIDS Services Foundation Food Pantry has been providing food for its clients for many years. Mission & Service will host a Food Drive for the Pantry through May 15. Nutritional items are requested. Suggested food products are: soup, jam, peanut butter, cake mix, nutrition bars, condiments, international foods, rice, mac & cheese, instant coffee, tea bags, and canned fruits and vegetables.

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Adult Sunday School is offered at 8:45 & 10:00 a.m. in Plumer Hall. For May and June, the topic will be: “Appreciating the Psalms in All Their Diversity.” Former Harvard biblical scholar James Kugel called the Psalms “the Bible’s book of the soul.” Athanasius noted that most of the Bible presents God speaking to us, but the Psalms record humanity speaking to God.

During May and June, Steve Swope will lead an exploration of the biblical Psalms: the history and structure of the Psalms, how they may have functioned originally, and the purposes they might serve today. All adults - including guests! - are welcome to participate at either session.

We continue our study of the New Testament in the order it was written (per Marcus Borg’s book Evolution of the Word) by examining the Gospel of John. Ken Wyant leads the study. Join us at 4 p.m. on Tuesdays for a lively discussion!

Do you love the movies? If so, we’ve got a club for you. The Still Speaking Cinema is a club for IUCC members (and their guests) who enjoy watching great films with their friends, then discussing those films over a danish and a hot cup of coffee. A new title will be offered to members of the club every month. You simply watch the film, then at the end of the month, we get together and talk about what each of us got out of the film. If there’s enough interest, we may arrange screenings at the church. If this sounds like something you’d be interested in, talk to Keith Dillon after church or call him at 714-522-5471.

Teacher Appreciation Week is May 9–13, and the Child Care Committee is excited to acknowledge two extraordinary achievements for the staff members of the Early Childhood Center:

- The teachers received very good scores on the recent CLASS evaluation through the county’s StarQuality OC improvement project. The CLASS evaluation examines the quality of the teacher-child interactions in the classroom. The measure uses three domains for the Pre-K and 3-year-old level, and two for the 2-year-old level, based on three 20-minute observations. Our teachers average scores ranged from 5.58 to 6.90 on the 7-point scale, which is at least 2 points higher than the national average! The project consultants have repeatedly highlighted our program as exemplary in this area.

- Three of the ECC staff members have reached or surpassed their 10-year anniversary with the program. Irma Rosales as been at the ECC for 12 years, 10 as director; Melissa Thompson, lead teacher in the 3-year-old room, as reached 11 years, and Rose Gonzalez, lead teacher in the 2-year-old room, for 10.

Join us in thanking and congratulating our fine ECC staff members!

Laura Long
We started our deliberations about the various aspects of the “self” many months ago, devoting much time and thought to self-concept and self-esteem. We move now to the third aspect of one’s “self”: self-awareness.

Self-concept is how we think about ourselves and Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves. Self-awareness refers to the degree to which we accurately “know” ourselves. Again, as with self-concept, there is not a “good” or “bad” judgment here, but rather an accurate or inaccurate knowledge of one’s self. Self-awareness includes being in touch with, or knowing about, a variety of aspects of who we are, such as:

- how we respond both emotionally and behaviorally to situations and other people;
- what we are truly feeling at any given moment;
- how we cope with getting our needs met, or with frustration when our needs are not met;
- knowing our preferences for dealing with things and people
- influence of the past on our present lives
- thoughts
- ways of doing things
- values (things and ideas we hold to be very important)
- hang-ups
- personal style
- skills
- limitations
- temperament/personality

When growing up, self-awareness develops as we receive “feedback” from others in our environment. As we discussed when talking about the development of our “self-concept,” children are not in a position to know if they are being told the truth about themselves. This initial lack of knowledge about the world and themselves leads to problems both with self-concept, where we end up believing inaccurate things about ourselves, and also with self-awareness. This is why it is important for children to get information about themselves from a variety of people. When faced with contradictions in messages we receive about ourselves, we have to figure out who is right, who we are going to believe. If we end up believing those who gave us false information about who we are, we end up with compromised self-awareness. Contradictions in messages about ourselves from other people are useful in that they challenge us to find out what is really true about who we are. The more willing we are to consider what others say about us, and the more willing we are to explore the contradictions, the more likely we are to get to know our “true” selves.

I find it one of the great mysteries of life how many people do not really know themselves, but function with a distorted view of who and how they really are. Of course, as we have discussed, this is often because they have not received accurate information about themselves from others, and thus end up believing things about themselves that are not true.

These mistaken beliefs can be held by people who believe negative things about themselves and feel badly about themselves, or by people who believe themselves to be “better” than they really are. Praising children regardless to how well they actually do things is not good for them, and leads to distortions in their opinion of themselves. Eventually, this leads to difficulties in getting along with others. It is interesting that people can actually believe very good things about themselves, and feel very good about themselves, but not get along well with others. This leads to a lot of confusion in the person with a lack of self-awareness, since they don’t understand why everyone else doesn’t agree with their own perception of themselves. So while it is very important to develop an accurate self-concept and positive self-esteem, it is just as important to develop accurate knowledge about yourself.

Like all mysteries, we can usually track down what the truth is; but it takes courage, and curiosity, and willingness to feel vulnerable. Sometimes new feedback is necessary to contradict wrong messages we have gotten in the past. Accurate feedback from others is the surest way to healthy self-awareness. However, as we will discover in our discussion, accurate is both difficult to come by and difficult to accept, for reasons that are understandable.

Lack of self-knowledge leads to many personal and interpersonal problems. It is hard to problem-solve if one cannot recognize one’s part of the problem. It is hard to be in a relationship with someone who gets to know you who then finds that they know you better than you know yourself. This generally causes such a strain that the friendship is threatened or the relationship is broken off.

As parents you want to give your child three gifts that will last for life: an accurate self-concept; positive self-esteem; and comfort with knowing the truth about who and how they are. We’ll continue our discussion with ways adults can help children (and others in your life) confront lack of accurate self-awareness and make corrections in thinking that will make life considerably more pleasant, both for themselves and others around them.