Our annual Trunk or Treat event on October 26 was another big hit!
Photos From the All Church Retreat

Photos courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips
November brings with it one of the really sweet moments of the year—our Annual Joint-Thanksgiving Service with University Synagogue. We will be hosting this year, and I know that this is a treat for many of the people from the synagogue who remember IUCC as their spiritual home for so many years.

What to do for Thanksgiving this year? Carl and I are having the cabin in Big Bear painted, so it will be a treat for us to head up and enjoy the place in its new pristine condition (until the woodpeckers figure out it is the same place they have been feasting on for years, hidden under a new color).

One of the things I cherished about Thanksgiving as a kid was the sense that our whole nation was coming together to do something special. We were stopping everything we were doing and giving thanks. It happened roughly at the same hour, and with variations, in pretty much the same meal. If I took my bike out and rode down to the shopping plaza afterward, I knew I would find the parking lot empty—the stores were all closed so that everyone could be free to share in this holiday together.

This is why I became disturbed last year to find that so many stores had all decided en-masse that they would open their doors on such an important holiday. It felt like there was some collusion afoot in order to make this new reality a fait accompli—there were too many stores open to take issue with any one of them in particular. In discussions that ensued, people argued, “But, hospitals, fire stations and police departments are open—people have been working on holidays for as long as anyone can remember. Why should employees of stores be treated any differently?” I understand the argument—I knew when I began my first year as a pastor that I wouldn’t be asking for time off on Christmas or Easter. It came with the territory.

But, there is a real difference. We have a compact with our citizens to provide for their health and safety.

Someone is going to have to work on holidays to make sure this compact is honored. A bored person’s sudden desire to walk off the big meal by going out to shop for a flat screen TV at Best Buy on Thanksgiving Day simply does not fall into the category of health and safety.

But more than that, when people are called in to work for employers who do not provide essential services but who instead simply desire to expand the retail year by a few more hours where money can be made, it hints of a class divide.

Of course today’s part-time employees are going to say, “Sorry honey—sorry kids—I can make some real overtime working Thanksgiving Day—save some turkey for me.” With lessening protections from weakened unions paying the way for more part-time workers who cannot earn a living wage or gain access to healthcare, these retail workers have little choice but to give up their holiday time with family. (It could even be argued that we subsidize big-box stores like Walmart with our tax dollars in order to supply food stamps to make up the difference in what their average wage-earning employees need in order to live.)

This Thanksgiving, thousands upon thousands of people will be torn from their families and removed from the day Abraham Lincoln designated for a nation to gather around the table together and give thanks. We might say that this is just how we have evolved into being a country that should be able to have instant access to goods and services, but we might also argue that we are the sum of the decisions we make, and in this case, we are agreeing that there is a class of people who do not deserve the same right to enjoy a national holiday because they cannot earn a living wage.

When their boss asks or even demands that they work on this day, their response is somewhat tainted with coercion. We are also agreeing that our need to be consumers outweighs our desire to be regarded as thoughtful citizens who value a day set aside for all Americans, not just some, to ponder the many blessings we have.

I won’t be in a store this Thanksgiving. Like always, we will make sure we prepared ahead of time. There’s something wonderful about setting aside the day to be together to be thankful for this life we have made. If we run out of something, we surely won’t starve or die of thirst until Friday.

I wonder if you might feel the same—and if you do, perhaps you would be willing to share these sentiments with others and make a compact to stay out of the big-box stores on this special day so that low wage earners are not called away from home. Happy Turkey (or To-furkey) Day.
I was standing at the bathroom sink early one Wednesday morning, diligently brushing my teeth, when I felt the first sharp cramp. I was 26 weeks pregnant, in the midst of a troubled pregnancy. Doctors had already determined that the baby I carried was small; in fact, considerably smaller than average so when that cramp happened, I panicked. At 14 weeks premature, there was no chance that this tiny baby would survive.

As I stood clutching the sink, I started to pray. “Please God, stop these cramps.” I begged, I bargained, I swore, I cried during the interminable drive to the hospitable, hunched protectively over my spasming belly.

Just a year before this, I had suffered a complete crisis of faith, leaving the church and all semblance of a faith. How ironic, then, that at a time of crisis, I turned automatically to God – on a day when I felt most helpless, with no control over my body or the outcome.

In the ER, thankfully, they managed to get my labor stopped and put me on complete bed rest and around-the-clock monitoring, bed “rest” being a complete misnomer! Here I was hooked up to all of these devices that constantly spewed data – and, if the baby wasn’t active or I inadvertently shifted into an “unapproved” position, alarms would go off. One particularly dreaded alarm heralded the onset of yet another bout of labor. Yup, sleep was pretty elusive. Really, my main entertainment during these long weeks was staring obsessively at those monitors, seeking some kind of reassurance that my baby girl was still ok. You see, we had already named her, “Sarah,” because I’d had so many ultrasounds that her gender and abundance of hair were not a mystery.

With so much time and so little to do during ten weeks of bed rest, I had lots of time for reflection, lots of time for second-guessing – why had I turned to God in those first moments of panic? Did I really think that God could intervene in a situation like this, somehow affecting the outcome? And, more than anything, I was ashamed of my selfishness – using prayer to get something I wanted, not on someone else’s behalf or to express gratitude for my many blessings.

I have found Jeffrey Small particularly helpful on the topic of prayer. He posits that prayer can be a psychological crutch that gives us the illusion of control over forces in the world that we do not or never will have control over. Instead, he advocates that we use prayer for:

- Opening our hearts to God - as a way of connecting with the wellspring of energy within each of us and the universe.
- Centering ourselves - to accept who we are, to become more present and aware.
- Expressing thanks - recognizing that we are dependent not independent creatures.
- Forgiving both ourselves and others - forgiveness is often the first step toward healing.
- Connecting to others - through prayer, we connect with feelings of compassion and empathy.

Unlike intercessionary prayer, these types of contemplative practices have been shown to have significant medical benefits to their practitioners. And, through thanksgiving, Small reminds us, that we can begin to realize that we have enough, and that our societal pressure to always want more (money, power, sex, material items, etc.) will never bring true happiness.

Since that fateful Wednesday, my faith journey has been a convoluted one but prayer has been a near constant in my life. No longer prayers of intercession, I use them instead to help frame certain intentions – among them: serenity, openness, forgiveness and gratitude. As John F. Kennedy reminded us, “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter the words but to live by them.”

Although she was due in November, the month of giving thanks, my impatient daughter made an early arrival in October, too eager to experience all that life has to offer. Needless to say, in the more than twenty years since her tumultuous start on life, I have gotten a whole lot better at expressing gratitude. In fact, I keep a gratitude journal to help keep me on track. There are so many things for which I am thankful, including:

- The gift of motherhood as well as the gift of being mothered, especially by a wonderfully wise woman who always pulled me back whenever I approached the line that divides overprotective and neurotically overprotective.
- The gift of many wise women in my life who go by many names (mother, grandmother, “sister,” daughter, niece, aunt and friend).

Moderator’s Column
Anne Rosse

[Image]
Welcome New Members!

Please welcome our newest members, Janet Bamper and Raymond Scheller, who joined IUCC on October 5, 2014

Photo courtesy of Jim Aynes

Youth Overnight Event Photos

Photos courtesy of Sarah Fiske-Phillips

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Moderator’s Column cont’d from page 4

- The gift of family – the one I was born into, the one I’ve created, and the one I’ve joined (IUCC).

So, this November, what are you thankful for?

Speaking of thankful, I want to express gratitude to all of the fabulous IUCC leaders and members who have stepped up this Stewardship Season. Your support is absolutely essential to funding the important commitments we’ve made to personnel and programs, to creating this community that serves each other and our neighbors near and far. And, please don’t forget to join us on November 9 as we mark the end of Stewardship with an All-Church Work Day. Be sure to wear your jeans to church and encourage your friends, family & Comma Group to stay for a quick lunch, and then help out with the various projects to care for our beloved church campus.

As always, I invite you to share your thoughts. You can catch me on the patio, pull me aside at one of our terrific events, send me an email or give me a call. I look forward to hearing from you.
IUCC’s Master Plan continues to make steady progress through various required review processes. The plan was submitted in late June to the City of Irvine for a Modified Conditional Use Permit, the next step in planning for IUCC’s future and legacy.

We are currently waiting for the City to respond to a supplemental submission that provided additional information about our parking needs at various times of day throughout the week. When the City responds, we expect that they will request a traffic study.

Our project also was reviewed by the Architectural Committee of the Woodbridge Village Association (WVA). The WVA is responsible for enforcing the rules and regulations for the Woodbridge planned community where IUCC is located. With their input, the proposed frontage to Alton Parkway became an even more warm and welcoming one, with a widened pedestrian path and more open feel, so that passers-by will feel IUCC’s neighborly welcome and intentional hospitality. In early November, the WVA Board of Directors will review the project and hopefully give their official approval.

Because of timeline uncertainty regarding the City’s review of our project, along with how much church business needs to be accomplished at our January 25, 2015 Winter Congregational Meeting, we do not anticipate a vote related to the Master Plan at that meeting. Instead, we will call a Special Congregational Meeting when we are ready – when we have Master Plan approval and we have weathered the unexpected bump in the road related to low enrollment at our preschool. Please see the article on page 9, “With Renewed Vision and an Ambitious Plan, the ECC Moves Forward,” to read more about the many individuals within this faith community who are stepping up to set the Early Childhood Center on a steady path toward quality improvement and financial stability.

A Special Congregational Meeting served us well in deciding to move forward with developing a Master Plan – a dedicated meeting format will serve us well again in making the important decision on whether this congregation wants to undertake a capital campaign to build the first phase of the Master Plan or not. In the meanwhile, the congregation will be updated at the Winter Meeting about the project status. Regular updates on this project will continue to be shared via the IUCC website and this newsletter.
Friends of OC Detainees Volunteer Orientation

Friends of Orange County Detainees visit immigrants at the James Musick Facility in Irvine and the Santa Ana Jail. Our purpose is humanitarian. We visit to listen and care. Many detainees have no other visitors and are THRILLED to have a visit. We welcome you to come and learn more!

Wednesday, November 12
7:00 p.m.

Irvine United Congregational Church
4915 Alton Parkway
Irvine, CA

Please RSVP to friendsofocdetainees@gmail.com by Nov. 10th to let us know you will be attending.

IUCC is an affiliate of Friends of OC Detainees, and this program is part of our Mission & Service Ministry

Winter Solstice Concert:
Let There Be Peace on Earth

Sunday, December 14, 2014 at 7 p.m.
IUCC Sanctuary
FREEWILL OFFERING

This year there, instead of ticket sales, we will distribute placeholder business cards with date/time/graphic on them – look for them on the patio in mid-November!

The Chancel Choir, with David Clemensen on Piano, Christine Massey on Oboe, Heidi Hester on Percussion and Flute and members of the Vallejo Drive Adventist Handbell Choir, will present a beautiful variety of Christmas literature sure to warm the cockles of your heart and lift your spirits!
Prepare for a magical mix of of stirring and energetic music to help you ignite the Holiday Spirit.
The music will range from traditional to modern and includes composers/arrangers such as John Rutter, Dan Forrest, Craig Courtney, Felix Mendelssohn, and Edwin Fissinger.

You won’t want to miss this! Invite your friends early. What a wonderful way to share your love of IUCC with the greater community!
We look forward to seeing you there!

Please join us!
Friends of OC Detainees
Volunteer Orientation

Save the Date!
Winter Solstice Concert:
Let There Be Peace on Earth
**November Birthdays**

Ben Allen  
Nick Allen  
Nicole Bermudez  
Jennifer Bullington  
Eric Burley  
Janet Emery  
Emme Exelby  
George Fulton  
Kelly Garrity  
Dean Inada  
Matt Mirmak  
Ben O’Dell  
Roni Portillo  
Jean Raymoure  
Tom Silk  
Michael Spindle  
Irene Thornton  
Rob Thornton  
Robert Zane

We are inviting all those who have been involved with the prayer shawl ministry to participate in our potluck feast on Wednesday evening, November 26 at 6 p.m. in Plumer Hall. Turkey will be provided.

This invitation is to all those who have knit or crocheted or contributed yarn or made cards or simply cheered us on and to their spouses and partners. Please let me know what you will bring and how many will attend.

Carol Welsch  
mathcat@cox.net  
949-533-0066

**4th Annual Holiday Feast**

We are inviting all those who have been involved with the prayer shawl ministry to participate in our potluck feast on November 26 at 6 p.m. in Plumer Hall. Turkey will be provided.

This invitation is to all those who have knit or crocheted or contributed yarn or made cards or simply cheered us on and to their spouses and partners. Please let me know what you will bring and how many will attend.

Carol Welsch  
mathcat@cox.net  
949-533-0066

**Mark Your Calendar**

**CHURCH WORK DAY**  
* SUNDAY * NOVEMBER 9 *

We’ll mark Stewardship Sunday with an all-church work day to care for our beloved church campus. Plan to be part of the fun and meet new friends as we tackle chores together!

**ISAIAH HOUSE**  
2nd WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH  
* NOV. 12 * 3:15 p.m.  
MEET AT IUCC PARKING LOT  
We will meet in the church parking lot and leave at 3:15 p.m. If you are interested in preparing and serving food at the shelter, please call Steve Goetz at 949-436-1946 or write to sgoetz53@gmail.com.

**26th SHARED SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING**  
TUESDAY * NOV 25 * 7:30 p.m.  
Join us for our Pre-Thanksgiving service with University Synagogue, led by Rabbi Rachlis and Reverend Paul Tellstrom, with guest speaker Lalo Alcaraz. This service is for adults and children. The University Synagogue and IUCC Choirs and Cantor Braier will be singing. Join us for this wonderful service of friendship!

**ADVENT WORKSHOP & CHILI COOK-OFF**  
SUNDAY * DEC. 7 * 4 p.m.  
A fun-filled seasonal event that is intentionally intergenerational! There will be caroling, crafting, Christmas stories and more. In addition, there will be the annual chili cook-off. If you think your chili has the stuff to knock the socks off the judges, then sign up to enter. It is always a great time! Sign up on the patio to bring a potluck dish and to register for the Chili Brawl!
You've heard it said: “It takes a village to raise a child.” Now IUCC is putting that principle into action. With newly approved vision, mission, and values statements and a strategic plan, the committee and others in our faith community are stepping up to set the Early Childhood Center on a steady path toward quality improvement and financial stability.

Here’s what has been happening in the last few months. First, the ECC’s new vision, mission, and values statements were created to draw the preschool closer to the overall vision and mission of our progressive Christian community. Specifically, these statements are:

- **Our Vision**: Children grow healthy and strong in body, mind, and spirit in environments that support their needs and teach them to respect the diversity of humankind and to care for the Earth.

- **Our Mission**: The ECC is dedicated to the well-being of children and families in the broader Irvine community. We demonstrate this dedication by providing the highest quality preschool experience for children, which we achieve through a caring, cooperative workplace in which human dignity is respected, professional satisfaction and creativity are promoted, positive relationships are modeled, and quality improvement is intentional and continuous.

- **Our Values**: Because of our association with Irvine United Congregational Church and the United Church of Christ, we value the religious traditions and faith journeys of all people. Our preschool is based on spiritual values common to all faith traditions, such as kindness, generosity, empathy, and respect for differences. All families and their children are welcome. We also emphasize good stewardship of the natural environment and gratitude for the blessings all around us.

Next, the Administration Board approved a strategic plan for the ECC that includes four measurable goals: (1) to improve the quality of our program to meet a 2-Star Rating on the QualityStart OC matrix in spring 2015, and a 3-Star Rating in 2016; (2) to apply targeted marketing efforts and raise our average monthly enrollment to 42 children in June 2015 and 46 in June 2016; (3) to update and improve our interior facility and outdoor playground as financially feasible to maintain a more attractive, child-centered environment; and (4) to have an actively involved Child Care Committee to support the ECC and to provide interactional opportunities for IUCC members and ECC staff to create mutual understanding of their complementary missions, and include opportunities for IUCC members to support or volunteer in the ECC.

To execute this ambitious plan and provide consistent oversight for the ECC, a newly formed committee will meet monthly beginning November 24. The committee includes ECC director Irma Rosales (nonvoting member), Pastor Paul Tellstrom, Administration Board Chair Martha Selby, and members-at-large Lyle Norton, Eric Burley, Joanie Burley, and Colin Austin. Thanks to each of them for agreeing to serve our church and community through this important work.

As a committee member with long experience in human resource management, Martha Selby is preparing new staff performance goals that will align with the strategic plan. Martha also has been helping with other operational improvements and has completed a “deep dive” of the ECC family registration information for the past five years to determine our target market. Based on this information, Chris Redrich has provided some key marketing strategies that the committee will continue to execute. In addition, Anne Rosse and Matthew Redrich have updated the preschool page on the IUCC website. These team efforts are very valuable and greatly appreciated.

The ECC and IUCC face challenging times, but providing a high-quality early childhood education program that reflects our values of diversity and inclusion is a worthy goal and a witness to our community. I am heartened by the words of child care center’s founding director Ruby Fulton in her first annual report to the congregation: “We are committed to creating a Christian family atmosphere where each child may feel secure, happy, loved, and accepted—a place where children may develop through learning experiences to their fullest capacities as they learn about themselves and others. This is what your child care center is about!” And it still is!

We are all part of the “village” that is raising our children.
It's the month for displaying an attitude of gratitude, and for parents to pay attention to the attitudes developing in their children. There's never a “right” time to teach children about the importance of attitude, but the Thanksgiving holiday provides a perfect “moment” for thinking about teaching and modeling.

Being thankful and appreciative is a feeling that can become a habit. Likewise, failing to feel grateful for, and pay attention to blessings and benefits can also become a habit. As with other habits we try to build into our children’s daily lives, like picking up clothes and not leaving dirty dishes in the sink, we want to build in the habit of paying attention to things we are fortunate enough to have, more than to things we don’t have, or have and don’t want. Of course, the easiest way to develop this habit is to make it part of everyday family life, so that we display this approach to life ourselves, and then pass it along to our children.

A lot is being written about the current generation being one of “entitlement.” Like gratitude and appreciation, feeling entitled is also an attitude that can become a habit. One can begin to believe that one should be guaranteed prosperity, happiness, and other blessings so that when they are missing one feels entitled to feel deprived and cranky. And so it is that one’s attitudes largely determine the degree of satisfaction and happiness one feels about life. Giving thanks at Thanksgiving and every other day, then, becomes not a small deal but a big deal.

Attitude is “a habit of thought.” Our attitude informs the way we look at things and becomes our disposition toward interpreting reality. We often hear the example of deciding how to look at a glass that is filled with water to the midline. A glass with water to the midline would be “reality.” How we interpret what we see is an attitude. Is the glass half empty? This is a “negative” interpretation of reality. Is the glass half full? This is a more “positive” interpretation of reality. Or should we just be happy that we have a glass, an even more ideal way to view reality?

Looking at my cookie shows me reality. Looking to see if another child got a bigger cookie and complaining about it begins a pattern of ungratefulness. Is the cookie too hard? Too soft? Too hot? Too cold? Not my favorite? Or are we just happy we got a cookie. It’s never too early to begin monitoring the kinds of attitudes kids are developing. They will become “habits.”

Attitude is perception, the process of organizing and interpreting sensory data – information we take in through our eyes, ears, and mind. Perception has a role in both the creation of stress and in the successful management of stress. Perception determines the way we label events. And for every experience we have we have numerous “perceptual options” available to us: many different ways to view our situations. Our choices of perception, then, determine, to a large extent, the quality and feeling tone of our daily experiences.

We cannot always decide what will happen to us, but we can always decide how to look at, or perceive, what happens to us. After a while, our brain starts to “see” what it expects to see, not necessarily what is. When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.

Many people have suggested the excellent “habit” of going over each day together as a family, with each person talking about the parts of the day they didn’t like, and always sharing a part of the day they did like. Thus we learn together to always notice, and be thankful for, any little blessing or good thing that comes along to balance what may not be so good. Help to make being grateful not just a practice, but a part of who we are. After all, we do not see things as they are; we see things as we are. Happy Thanksgiving.