1st Annual All Church Bon Vivant on May 31 - a Success!

Thanks to everyone who made our First Annual All Ministries/All Church Bon Vivant such an overwhelming success! We had 11 tables with imaginative hosts creating great themes. Through the generosity of our donors, our Silent Auction added over $1050 to the general budget, making all the work worthwhile. Over 90 of our church family attended and enjoyed the event, with three infants taking advantage of the child care. It was a wonderful night and we appreciate all who helped make it so special.

~ Pat Sauter

Photos by Jim Aynes
Music and Marriage. That’s what June is turning out to be about.

I invite you to join us on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, at 7:00 p.m. for Mystical Elements: A Heart’s Reflection, as our choir delves into the transcendent, exploring themes of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth.

And, bookending the month (Sunday, June 29) will be an Ice-Cream Social featuring a barbershop quartet, some of our own singers and an evening of ice-cream sundaes to follow, produced by Carl Whidden. This is a fund-raiser for the church (and since I am the one responsible for volunteering Carl’s talents as a producer, I am feeling a real responsibility to promote it!).

In between are weddings and celebrations. Matthew and Chris are not only getting married, but Matthew is turning 30 and graduating with his M.Div. all in one weekend. Jean and Elizabeth have a happy day coming up this month, and Carol & Carol will be wed in an interfaith ceremony at their home. Finally, Sarah Fiske-Phillips has been accepted into the M.Div. program at the Claremont School of Theology and will begin this September, while maintaining her position as Director of the Ministry for Young People.

Summer is here, and there is a new feeling in the air at IUCC. Last Sunday, the congregation was presented with a master-plan for the campus as we look to our future together. The architects, Domusstudios, are very creative and flexible. They put together a three-phase plan for our campus that is very forward looking. Our Building Task Force worked well with them over the course of this past year to ask the right questions, and upon receiving their work, made sure that the congregation was apprised of everything in a manner that was forthright, timely and well-prepared.

A sea of blue cards held aloft in assent on Sunday without a “nay” or a single abstention showed the confidence the congregation has placed in both the process and the leadership that brought us to this day.

The plans are beautiful. I invite you to spend some time looking at them on our web page, or on the easels in the narthex. Phase One will expand our sanctuary building and provide us with four multi-purpose meeting rooms that can open into one. It will also give us sufficient office space that both brings the staff together into usable space and extends a hospitable welcome to guests and members alike.

In order to make these dreams happen, we will need to concentrate on the further growth of our community. This is why I put together a “worship experiment” in Lent, and followed up with a worship survey after Easter.

Over the years, our second service grew to 75-80% of capacity, whereupon our growth stopped. If we were to provide the means for growth at our first service, indications are that our services would be evenly split in terms of attendance, giving us room to share our message with more people from our community. Two identical services seems to be the best answer I can think of for helping us to move forward. There will be some thoughtful discussion to come about service times and music as we head towards the fall.

IUCC provides a progressive, inclusive voice in our community, and our vision statement captures where we find ourselves in our plans today: “IUCC seeks growth in spirit, fellowship and number by becoming a more culturally diverse congregation; by strengthening our capacity to serve our neighbors and community; by caring for each other as God cares for us; by inviting others to be a part of our community of faith; and by working to transform individual lives and our community through the power of God’s love in human action.”

More to come! In the meantime, I hope to see you at the concert and ice-cream social!

Yours,
Pastor Paul
It’s been a busy May in the MYP. The youth group is gearing up for an active summer and the children are preparing for Vacation Bible School. The young adults have continued meeting for social lunches twice a month and dinner and discussion on the first Tuesday every month. After a very successful Lent, it seems like each demographic of young people is maintaining their momentum and looking forward to what’s next!

We would like to thank you all for your contributions to our fundraising efforts. Because of your help we have fundraised all of the money needed for our two youth trips this summer (Seattle for the UCC’s Western Regional Youth Event and Kanab, Utah for our All-Youth Service Trip). We will just be hosting one last fundraising event, Pie the Staff for our Vacation Bible School on June 22. The MYP staff (Tricia, Annie, and Sarah) along with some special guests from the wider staff will be allowing people in the congregation to pie them in the face… for a small fee. We look forward to seeing you there!
A fellow congregant stopped me the other day for an earnest conversation. She doesn’t like change and can’t see why growing our congregation is important. I asked her if she had read a recent column posted to the IUCC Facebook page, “Why I Had to Lose My Religion Before I Could Support Gender Equality,” by Samantha Eyler. Her column concludes:

So moderate people of faith, those of you who can endure the cognitive dissonance of espousing progressive politics while gleaning support in religious traditions that are thousands of years old – I ask you to please speak up. There are many of us who need to hear your voices much more loudly.

Amen! IUCC does an amazing job of sharing a loving message, of being a church family that does not ask people to choose between individual freedom and the collective strength of a faith community.

We are here because a small group of dedicated folks created this space and this community. Isn’t it our turn to grow that vision and respect our legacy?

When we started down the path of exploring building plans, we were cautioned to watch out for “Edifice Complex” – when you get carried away in your planning by coveting or trying to outdo your neighbors’ facilities. As Seth Godin calls it, “Organized waste. . .profligate spending designed to communicate confidence and just a bit of hubris.” Valuable warnings, indeed. However, I believe that we have planned modestly and appropriately, not out of desire to have a grand campus, but to have facilities that reflect our values and support how we want to live out those values. Some of the aspects of the new Master Plan that speak to this are:

- Meeting rooms to support our advocacy, service and community-building activities.
- A strong commitment to green practices to honor our planet.
- Education space and hands-on play areas for younger members to learn our progressive values and to serve the community’s childcare needs.
- Designated space for youth -- to offer sanctuary to all those looking for a safe place to explore their faith and grow on that journey.

I’m not sure that I managed to sway that congregant’s feelings. She told me that change is scary and all of her needs are being met by IUCC just the way it is. I’m genuinely glad we are meeting her needs. But, I am reminded of the parable of the rich man: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ’What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops. Then he said, ’This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, ’You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” (Luke 12:16-20)

As we move forward, we need to turn out, not in – committing foremost to planning that is driven by IUCC serving a purpose in the community, not to just making it more comfortable for those already in the church. That’s how we can grow our founders’ vision and respect our legacy. That’s how we can raise our voices to be heard by those marginalized by other churches and the least among us. That’s how we share our message of love.

At Sunday’s Spring Congregational Meeting, we affirmed our shared vision for planning for IUCC’s future and we recognized that we are so blessed by our stellar pastoral leadership, dedicated staff, fabulous musicians, enthusiastic lay leaders, and an active and caring congregation. A heartfelt thank you to all those who are transitioning out of leadership and a very special thank you to Pat Sauter for her service as Chair of the Ministries Board and member of the Coordinating Council.

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.
With a unanimous vote, the new Master Plan for the IUCC campus was approved at the Spring Congregational Meeting. It will now be submitted to the City of Irvine for a Modified Conditional Use Permit, the next step in our process of planning for IUCC’s future and legacy.

The plan was developed with domusstudio architecture (http://domusstudio.com), a San Diego-based firm with extensive experience in planning religious and educational facilities. The plan, which encompasses new administrative, fellowship, outdoor, and educational space, has been developed to ensure maximum flexibility – giving us options for phased build-outs, depending on church priorities, needs and growth, along with our financial capabilities. To view the plan, click to the “Spring Congregational Meeting” tab at http://iucc.org/portal/documents/.

Gratitude and thanks to members of the Building Task Force for their dedication, thoughtfulness and creativity in helping to develop this plan. The members are: Martha Selby (chair), Mark Allen, Keith Boyum, Lindy Garber, Laura Long, Cindy O’Dell, Jim Raver, Anne Rosse, Pat Sauter, Michael Spindle and Paul Tellström.

A special thank you to the many folks who stepped up to fund the development of this Master Plan. And, many thanks to this congregation for its commitment to a shared vision of planning for our future.

Be sure to check back regularly for progress updates via the newsletter, website, Friday emails and Sunday bulletins.

~ Anne Rosse
The 2014 AIDS Walk was held on May 17. Our IUCC Walk the Walkers team (pictured above) raised over $14,000 and was in fourth place overall. Many thanks to our intrepid walkers and all those who supported them!

COMMA GROUP
ANNUAL LUNCHEON
SUNDAY * JUNE 8 * 12:30 p.m.
If you are a member of the IUCC Comma group program, you will receive information regarding this luncheon through your Comma Group leader.

CHOIR CONCERT
SUNDAY * JUNE 8 * 7 p.m. *
SANCTUARY
Join the IUCC Chancel Choir for an evening sure to ground you in a journey of shared humanity. It will be a mystical evening as we navigate the choral literature and breathe life into poetry. See page 7 for more information.

SEEKERS
TUESDAY * JUNE 20 * 9:30 a.m. *
PLUMER HALL
We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month to share ideas about the church’s meaning and role in society. Discussion is sparked by a video of prominent theologians’ conversations. Our meeting starts with refreshments.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL
SUNDAY * JUNE 29 * 7:00 p.m. *
PLUMER HALL
Come join in the fun as the award winning “Harmony Partners” Barbershop quartet stage an old-fashioned, turn of the century summer evening of laughter and song. See page 5 for more information.
Mankind has long been fascinated by the properties of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth. Before the Christian Era, the great philosopher and scientist, Plato, developed the theory of the solids which put forth the idea that all the constituents of the natural world consisted of mixtures of a small number of “elements,” particularly the four elements of fire, air, water, and earth in varying proportions, but that these four elements were inviolable and could never be changed.

If, as Plato hypothesized, all things are essentially made of the same elements in different proportion, what does this say about how, one to another, we are connected?

Consider the poetry of Gaïa Willis-Owen who tells us that we are bound together – in threads of joy, of grief, of soul – your tears fall from my eyes, my joy rings in your laughter – I know your heart’s journey, it is my own.

Join the IUCC Chancel Choir on June 8th at 7pm for an evening sure to ground you in a journey of shared humanity. You won’t want to miss this mystical evening as we navigate the choral literature and breathe life into profound poetry; an evening sure to set your imagination on fire!
Experiencing Sexual Diversity: Questioning Young People

Dr. Lorraine Fox

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After almost a year of columns devoted to sexual diversity, we have validated a quote by an author who writes frequently about sexuality: “Sexuality is very complex, and we know far too little about sex for our own good” (Presnell).

As young people develop into adolescents and their sexual hormones become more active, they begin to experience sexual urges and social and sexual attractions to their peers. The nature of these attractions begins to provide them with information about themselves, the degree to which they are comfortable in their own bodies, and the degree to which they are comfortable with their feelings of attraction.

Unfortunately, more children than we would like to acknowledge are prematurely exposed to sex by being sexually abused by an adult. Sexual abuse confronts young children with an experience for which they are both physically and mentally unprepared. Most sexual abuse begins when children are pre-adolescent and without sexual urges of their own. Premature exposure to sexual activity can lead to considerable confusion around their own sexuality when it’s “time” for them to start dating and feeling attractions and responding to the attractions of others.

Since there is no way to know whether exposure to either pleasant or unpleasant sexual experiences at an early age leads to same sex orientation, it is not useful to engage in speculation at the expense of working with a young person to deal with their current feelings. We can only know what comes “naturally” if they are left to develop normally and in safety.

- Pleasurable experience (orgasm, affection) during an abusive same-sex relationship can cause a young person to wonder if that means they are gay.
- Unpleasant experience (fear, shame, guilt) during an abusive opposite-sex relationship can cause a young person to conclude that all opposite-sex experiences will be the same and therefore think they must be gay.

We do not know what “causes” homosexuality or gender discomfort, which unhappily leads to rampant opinion and speculation that can cause distress to youth struggling with their sexuality. It is important to remember that there is a very good chance that you will not know whether a young person you are having contact with has been abused, since it is rarely acknowledged. For that reason we want to be able to openly discuss with them the many unfounded theories they will be exposed to as they hear adults and peers talk about “why some people are queer.” They will almost certainly hide their distress as they try to make sense of what they are hearing as compared to the experiences they have had.

Most scientists today agree that sexuality and sexual orientation are the result of a “complex interaction” of environmental, cognitive, and biological factors. The evolution of one’s identity is a web of interconnecting and interdependent features, including gender, ethnicity, class, ability, sexual orientation, thoughts, feelings, and experiences; the picture is fluid and always being negotiated (White, 2004). Realizing that development is fluid and cannot be dictated causes anxiety not only in young people but in some adults who walk the developmental journey with them.

An adolescent may be in a stage of “exploration” or may feel in a stage of “confirmation” as a teen. A young person may be feeling a same sex attraction, but not feel comfortable labeling themselves as gay or lesbian. The pressures of dating can lead to severe stress for a young person who is not yet sure about their affections and attractions. It can be especially puzzling to be attracted to both sexes. Be sure to reassure them that although there is pressure to “declare oneself” they actually have time to figure it out. Some people have quite surprised themselves as adults when they discovered a sexual aspect to themselves they didn’t know existed.

As adults, we each have the responsibility to find a way to let young people know that they can bring their questions and talk with us without being judged. The good news for both them and us is that we don’t need to have “answers” to be their friend and to listen.