Our youth and choir did a wonderful job of sharing the Christmas story!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
Christmas Concert

Our magnificent Chancel Choir performed to a full house on December 10!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
Annual Holiday Pot Luck

All were welcome as Women's Fellowship & the Shawl Ministry gathered on December 6 for the Holiday Pot Luck Feast. Many thanks to Pat Sauter for spearheading this very enjoyable annual event!

Photos courtesy of Glenda Wyant & Tricia Aynes
Resolutions. We’ve all made them on New Year’s Eve, and my household is no exception. I generally keep mine fairly well - and for a long enough period of time that I still embrace the tradition of making them (Carl goads me to do this gently, yet relentlessly). I have too much pride to show up for the first two weeks of post-New Year’s Day Weight Watchers meetings with the predictable hordes of resolution-makers like myself, but I’m off the processed sugar once again, and that’s a good start. Bed time by midnight? I’ll try, but I won’t promise anything. It’s two a.m. right now.

Resolutions. I was a delegate at General Synod this past summer in Baltimore, representing our Southern California-Nevada Conference of churches.* The main business of the UCC is presented there, and our delegates grapple with the work of being “the church” together. Most often we do this by working on resolutions. We are assigned to committees to help wordsmith and offer suggestions regarding the particular resolution before us. Often, these resolutions are simple and make great sense. For example, IUCC was a co-sponsor of a resolution on working with the Boy Scouts through Inclusive Scouting.

Many times, these resolutions are based on deeply sensitive and even polarizing issues. The resolution on the 4th of July, 2005, to become the first Christian denomination to support same-sex marriage, made ripples around the world. A colleague of mine described the intense desire that was present that day to be respectful of every person’s feelings on the floor of the Convention Center. There were prayers instead of applause, and the pain for those who felt hurt was shared, especially by LGBT people who were present. By doing what was right in a civil yet loving way, we moved forward. And, unfortunately, we also lost some churches.

For us in the UCC, how we talk about difficult issues through our use of resolutions is a great example of civility in action.

In this issue’s “Powerful Parenting,” Wise Woman Lorraine Fox has written an article titled, “Civility vs. Cowering.” She says, “Civil behavior does not require that we back down or give deference to those who are behaving uncivilly. It asks only that we respond with behavior that is different from that being directed toward us, but not by cowering.” While this describes the civility I have personally witnessed within our greater church, Lorraine’s statement also captures the tenor of our times.

In Adult Program Director Steve Swope’s column, there are good words about upcoming speakers. In addition, he mentions that we are talking about taking on some of the resolutions that were wrestled with by the UCC at this past General Synod, as a Lenten Series. I wonder if you might take a look at those and let either of us know which of them sounds most compelling. We can only choose five.

http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/index.html

Resolutions. I’m resolved to being a part of a very special year at IUCC. A building will be finished and dedicated, and more room will be made for our community, church and staff. Our preschool will inherit the room three staff members now occupy, and that means more kids. There’s this Administrator who really believes he’s going to retire, and so we have to prepare for a staff transition at the end of 2018. And, I’m resolved that we will all walk through this year together with grace and love.

See You in Church,

Pastor Paul

*The United Church of Christ is a bottom-up structure with the churches (roughly 5,000) at the top. We are divided into 38 Conferences in the US, and within those are Associations. These bodies turn to our main church-house in Cleveland for help and guidance. Our own Conference is made up of 130+ churches.
I grew up on a farm about 35 miles north of Minneapolis. I went to a Lutheran church, a Lutheran school, and socialized mostly with my aunt and uncles and cousins who lived close by. Because of that, virtually all of my holiday memories center on family and the church and school community.

One of the holiday gatherings I remember the most clearly is New Year’s Eve. We would go to church and then all of my aunts, uncles, and cousins would gather at my grandmother’s home. The parents would play cards, visit with each other, and perhaps, drink a beer or a glass of Mogen David wine?! The cousins would scatter throughout the house and usually end up in the basement where we would share stories, perhaps play the board game Clue, and wait for midnight to come. I don’t have a clear recollection of any specific event, but I have a very sharp memory of the good feelings and sense of community and belonging that permeated the evening.

Those times spent with my family are long gone. My parents have passed away, as have all of my aunts and uncles. Some of my cousins still live in that community, and I imagine a few still go to the church in which I grew up. Nevertheless, that need to belong and be part of a community is still an integral part of my life and one of the many reasons why IUCC is such an important part of me.

The question is how to achieve that sense of community and belonging here at IUCC. For me, that answer begins with going to church and hearing Pastor Paul’s sermons. Those sermons connect me in a special way to this place I call my spiritual home. The beautiful music fills me with an incredible sense of awe and wonder as I feel myself and those around me enthralled by the soaring notes. As I sit with my church family on a Sunday morning, I know that I belong.

There are many other ways to belong and be a part of this special community. Keith and I have belonged to seven different Comma groups. Each one has enriched our lives in ways we could not even begin to imagine. Our current group, “The Seven Wonderers,” is getting to know each other, and that bonding gives us a true sense of belonging and community.

One of my frequent activities as Moderator here at IUCC is to attend meetings. Some of the meetings are routine, some consequential, some challenging, but all are filled with interactions that bind this community of faith together.

We have an important Congregational meeting coming up on January 28 after second service that I hope you will plan to attend. I promise that you will be impressed with the quality of leaders we have at this church and will give thanks for the countless hours they volunteer to make sure this church is running smoothly. At all of the meetings I attend, a sense of community and belonging is surely part of what I experience.

I’m a part of Seekers, a study group that meets on the third Thursday of each month at 9:30 in Plumer Hall. It’s an incredible group of women who share enthusiastically and openly their thoughts and feelings on the topic of the day. Besides the delicious treats, a sense of wanting to be part of a community and needing to belong is surely what brings us together.

These are just a few of the ways I feel community and belonging here at IUCC. I’m sure you have your own list of groups, meetings, activities, and events that fulfill those needs here at this special faith community. As we move into 2018 and the excitement of new space for offices, meetings, and programs, I hope you will embrace the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead of us.

I am excited about this coming year and the many ways that together we will enhance our sense of community and belonging.

In faith and community,

Renae
2018 is going to be a busy year in adult education! Plan to take advantage of many opportunities to increase your understanding of our faith.

**Adult Sunday** School meets each week at 8:45 & 10:00 a.m. On January 7 & 14, I’ll start an exploration of “Lost Christianities” that will challenge the typical understanding of the early development of the Church.

After that, Eduardo Arismendi-Pardi will begin a 4-week series called “Praying Without Ceasing,” which will look at forms for regular prayer while living in the midst of a secular society.

**Bible Study** on Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m. continues to wander through the Gospel of Luke, gently nudged “back on track” by our knowledgeable and good-humored guide Ken Wyant.

**Midweek Salon** this month will “go where no one has gone before” – the planet Mars! At least, MIT grad and former Mars researcher Jim Martin will share some thoughts on how humans might eventually reach and explore Mars. It’s not “the final frontier,” but it is another step on our Trek toward the Stars…. (Okay, enough nerdy references!) Join us in Plumer Hall at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, Jan. 24!

We’ve got two **exciting speakers** visiting us in the next few months. Please mark these events on your calendar, and plan to attend! On Sunday, Feb. 11, Robert Chase will be with us during and after morning worship. Bob is the former head of the UCC’s Office of Communication, which has advocated for net neutrality and equal media access for all.

Bob has written a new book called *After the Comma*, about the choices we might make in the face of “comma moments” that separate what came before from all that comes after. And he’s going to share some of his thoughts with us as an introduction to the adult Lenten study Pastor Paul and I are planning – how Resolutions from last summer’s UCC General Synod proclaim and demonstrate that “God is still speaking” on issues of social concern. Plan to stay after worship for a light lunch and conversation with Bob Chase!

Second, Prof. Amy-Jill Levine will be with us on Friday evening, March 9, and Sunday morning, March 11. She’s a speaker you won’t want to miss! A New Testament scholar and Orthodox Jew, Prof. Levine has written a number of enlightening books including *Short Stories by Jesus* and *The Misunderstood Jew*.

She comes to us through the gracious cooperation of Chapman University, where she will be the featured Founders Day speaker on Saturday, March 10. Over the three days, she will speak on four different topics. Having heard her myself, I’m confident each one will be enlightening and engaging. Watch for more details soon!
Congratulations, IUCC - we survived our first month of construction! Thank you so much for your gracious cooperation as we navigate the temporary loss of parking spots and our main entrance. And kudos to the many folks who are walking from our offsite parking or taking the Green Faith challenge by walking, biking and carpooling to church.

During the past month, construction efforts have been focused on site preparation, which includes demolition and trenching/pulling new utility lines. We saw some delays from the holidays as well as from the City of Irvine but expect progress to pick up in January when the foundation will be laid, followed by framing.

During trenching, an arborist examined trees within the construction site and determined that a few of them were not healthy, so unfortunately, they had to be removed.

We are working with the City of Irvine on our new signage and look forward to being able to share it soon.

Based on the current timeline, we anticipate the new building will be completed and ready for occupancy in June. We will mark this momentous occasion with a dedication ceremony and celebration.

We continue to meet weekly with the contractor and architect to address any logistical issues. If you have any concerns, please let us know by contacting the Church Office or btfchair@iucc.org.

Now that we are in active construction, please continue to make your campaign pledge payments generously. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has given so generously to this project! For questions about your pledge, or for information on how to make a new or revised pledge, please contact capitalcampaign@iucc.org.

While living through construction is never pleasant, just remember what these dirt piles represent: how this vibrant and active faith community came together to embrace IUCC’s future. This new building will support our commitment to nurturing tomorrow’s leaders and following Christ’s teachings to love and care for our neighbors, be good stewards of our environment and live in peace. Watch us grow in 2018!
NO BUY CHALLENGE
From the Greenfaith Committee, IUCC Creation Justice

Take the challenge!
Accept the NO BUY CHALLENGE and commit to buying only what is essential for the next 30 days.

WHY?
There are an enormous amount of resources that go into making the products we buy. Here are some facts about the impact of CONSUMPTION and WASTE on our environment:

- In the past three decades, one-third of the planet's natural resources base has been consumed. In the United States, we have less than 4% of our original forests left.
- Forty percent of waterways in the U.S. have become undrinkable.
- The U.S. has 5% of the world's population but consumes 30% of the world's resources and creates 30% of the world's waste. If everybody consumed at U.S. rates, we would need 3 to 5 planets.
- In the U.S., industry admits to releasing over 4 billion pounds of toxic chemicals a year.
- The average U.S. person now consumes twice as much as they did 50 years ago.
- We each see more advertisements in one year than people 50 years ago saw in a lifetime.
- In the U.S. our national happiness peaked sometime in the 1950s.
- In the U.S., we spend 3–4 times as many hours shopping as our counterparts in Europe do.
- Average U.S. house size has doubled since the 1970s.
- Each person in the United States makes 4 1/2 pounds of garbage a day. That is twice what we each made thirty years ago. For every one garbage can of waste you put out on the curb, 70 garbage cans of waste were made upstream to make the junk in that one garbage can you put out on the curb.

(Cited sources for all facts see https://storyofstuff.org/)

Reduce over-consumption and the harmful effects it has on our environment and health. Be part of the solution by limiting the amount of items you buy and use. Take the NO BUY CHALLENGE!

See Tips for Success on next page
Please welcome these new members from Dec. 10: Paul Strasma and wife Shanthi Nataraj. Their sons: Nikhil (9) and Anath (4).

**Tips for Success**

- **Take an inventory of all of your STUFF.** Make a list of everything you own and do some decluttering.
  - a. Categorize into “Need” and “Don’t Need.” Think about the last time you used the item, when you will use it again, and does it bring you joy?
  - b. See how much money and time you spent on STUFF you threw out.

- **List every NON-Material thing in your life that makes you Happy.**

- **Take the money you saved on NOT buying and take a trip,** spend some time in nature away from material things to gain perspective.

- **Develop a personal “Should I Buy This Test.”** Before you make that next purchase ask yourself:
  - Is this a planned purchase?
  - Will it end up in the “throw out” list one day?
  - Where am I going to put it?
  - Have I included this in my budget?
  - Why do I want/need it?

**Watch The Story of Stuff** ([https://storyofstuff.org/](https://storyofstuff.org/)) and other films on the impacts of our Consumption Culture.

- If you do need to buy an item, consider the following eco-friendly resources:

  - Fair Trade
  - Zero Waste
  - Certified Organic
  - Reclaimed
  - Thrift Stores
  - Recycled Content
  - Renewable
  - Used

Our Stewardship goal is **$425,000**

We’re not there yet!

Pledges now total **$399,032**

Please complete a pledge card and return it on Sunday, or go to [iucc.org/giving/pledge/](http://iucc.org/giving/pledge/) and make your pledge today.

Thank you in advance for your generous commitment and financial support of our church home.
**News & Events**

**congregational meeting**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Winter Congregational Meeting**

**Sunday, Jan. 28, at 12:30 p.m.**

Learn what's next for IUCC, including the 2018 budget (congregational approval needed) and a progress report on the new building. A quorum of members is needed in the Sanctuary for the meeting to begin.

**IUCC is on FACEBOOK!**

Did you know? IUCC has an active Facebook page which has information about upcoming events and related events for social justice and progressive Christianity causes. You can find it at: [https://www.facebook.com/irvineucc/](https://www.facebook.com/irvineucc/)

If you have events you would like to see posted on Facebook, please send the information to Cindy O'Dell at odellcindy19@gmail.com

Thank you!

**Coffee Hour Hosts Needed!**

Ah, coffee hour snacks! They’re yummy, they’re colorful, and they provide a wonderful backdrop of warmth and welcome to our patio after services. Happy IUCC people gather around the snack tables to visit, catch up with friends, and meet interesting new people. It's our guilty pleasure, and we love it! Our coffee hour snacks are provided by volunteers. Won't you add your name to the list of volunteers? Sign up sheets are on the patio on Sunday mornings. If each of us committed to one Sunday each year, our calendar - and our tummies - would be full. Thank you!

**Isaiah House**

**Wednesday, January 3, 4:00 p.m.**
Volunteers serving a meal at Isaiah House meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Steve Goetz's house between 3:15-3:30. Those who are not able to serve the meal can donate menu items. Call (949) 436-1946 for more info.

**The Seeker’s Women’s Group**

**Tuesday, Jan. 16, 9:30 a.m.**

The Seekers meet on the third Tuesday of each month for theological and spiritual study and discussion. Newcomers are always welcome! Call Reefa for details - (949) 859-7091.

**Midweek Salon**

**Wed., Jan. 24, at 7:00 p.m.**

MIT grad and former Mars researcher Jim Martin will share some thoughts on how humans might eventually reach and explore Mars.

**Happy Birthday**

1/13 Tricia Aynes 1/26 Joan McDonald
1/23 Joni Baker 1/01 Kieran Mitchell
1/22 Adele Bloom 1/18 Joan Mortenson
1/27 Isabella Burley 1/10 Eugene Price
1/01 Emily Cordes 1/10 Barbara Ruris
1/01 Paul Duncan 1/27 Chris Sanders
1/18 Felicity Figueroa 1/09 Cesar Sangalang
1/23 Nancy Harris 1/13 Bonnie Shaffstall
1/05 Eric Houston 1/18 Bill Sheak
1/01 David Humme 1/01 Coquelicot Shirey
1/20 Marilyn KeslerWest 1/02 Paul Strasma
1/27 Roseann Landis 1/12 Arthur Ullrich
1/23 Mary Lyons 1/07 Jan Wilson
We enter the New Year with background noise of uncivil “tweets,” continuing stories of behavior toward women and people of color that go far beyond “discourteous,” and weariness from the hostile and aggressive discourse between people who disagree. Just as disturbing are comments made about those who are no longer “silent” about the behavior they were subjected to. In an attempt to shift attention from the bullies and perverts, we hear some talking about the “problem” of women waiting so long to tell their stories.

After listening to another attack on the behavior of victims rather than attacking the behavior of offenders, it occurred to me that we may need to clarify the difference between “civility” and “passivity.” Civil behavior does not require that we back down or give deference to those who are behaving uncivilly. It asks only that we respond with behavior that is different from that being directed toward us, but not by cowering.

A quote from one of our great American leaders can be helpful here. Theodore Roosevelt said: “Let us speak courteously, deal fairly, and keep ourselves armed and ready.” We can do both, he is saying. A concern about the women who responded with fear and silence to their mistreatment is that they, perhaps, did not enter into relationships “armed and ready.”

In this column, I’ve been urging parents and other adults in relationships with children and young people to teach them the benefits and specifics of civil behavior. While doing this, we also want to be sure they are clear that being “polite” to someone who is mistreating you is NOT part of civil behavior. Deferring to someone who is misusing their power to frighten or intimidate you is a display of passivity and cowardice which only gives offenders permission to continue their bullying or boorish behavior. There are times when everyone, from toddlers to senior citizens, needs to find ways to stand up to people who are intimidating or taking advantage of them. It is as much our task to teach these skills as to teach ways to be gracious and kind toward others. We may not be able to stop someone from behaving that way toward us! Differences in power and prestige do not infer the necessity to accept any form of behavior directed toward us. This is true between teachers/coaches and students, between bosses and subordinates, and between friends/acquaintances, and couples.

Civility asks that we find effective but respectful ways to let others know what we will and will not tolerate from them. I know this is no easy task and many people tell me that even as adults they are still “working on it.” We give our children a great gift when we begin early to teach both pro-active and responsive behavior. That is, we teach them how to act toward others, and we also teach them how to respond to the ways others are acting toward them to preserve their dignity and sense of worth. It is clear from many of the reports we are hearing from both women and men who have been taken advantage of that these gifts were not given to them. Without being prepared, “armed and ready,” we falter and cower and don’t know how to respond to keep ourselves physically and emotionally safe.

Our first three columns in this series focused on monitoring how children were treating others, and giving them “lessons in civility” with a focus on their own behavior. For the next few months we’ll talk about how we can help children learn to stand up to discourteous, rude, or even harmful behavior in ways that are strong, but that don’t mimic the “uncivil” behavior of those who are behaving rudely and disrespectfully toward them.

Fortunately, these lessons become easier to teach and learn as children mature, but we can start to plant the seeds early. When children are very young, we as adults have to do the “standing up” for them. As children start to go off on their own, it is important for them to feel capable of protecting themselves physically and emotionally, whether or not an adult is right next to them. Learning both how to be civil, and how to respond to those who are not, will promote a Happy New Year!
Embellishing an Embellishment

by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

It's called Epiphany, a Greek word that translates into “manifestation” or “showing forth” and always falls on January 6th of the church’s liturgical calendar. It’s the occasion when followers remember the story of the Wise Men who supposedly came from afar to recognize Jesus as “the King of Kings.”

This story is told only in the Gospel of Matthew (1:18 to 2:23), and the first time it appears is some 90-100 years after Jesus’ birth. (Some Biblical scholars use 6 BCE as the year Jesus was born but no one really knows!) The other birth story is told in Luke (1:1 to 2:52) and is a very long, complex, convoluted fairytale that shows no similarity to Matthew’s fantasy. For the sake of brevity, I’ll let the reader compare the two.

Back to Matthew as we attempt to answer that age-long question: Why was this story even told? Here are some thoughts:

1. It is suggesting to its Jewish readers (Matthew’s gospel is all about proving that Jesus was/is the Messiah) that even Wise Men from foreign heathen lands have recognized Jesus as King, so all Jews need to acknowledge that he’s the Messiah.
2. Heavenly stars understand that this baby is extra special because a certain star defies all common sense and “hangs” over the place where the child is resting.
3. Many years after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Christians were trying to tell the rest of the world that the Roman emperors have come and gone, as well as their empire. On the other hand, Jesus’ Empire (Kingdom) is still around and Jesus is “King.”
4. Recently, some scholars have suggested that Jesus was the illegitimate child of Mary and if he was to be called “Messiah” or “Christ,” he could not be labeled a “bastard,” so the writers developed a story about divine intervention.

Now let’s look at some of the embellishments to the embellishment…the birth story. The first is that we now have three kings and have even given them names. The fact is that the story does not mention a specific number of kings. There could have been two or two hundred, and in no place does Matthew give us the names of Melchior, Balthazar or Gaspar. They are just more “embellishments.” Everyone knows that the Magi rode camels, although the story never suggests that. In Turkey, the Magi are always shown on horses.

Most Christians will swear to the fact that Jesus was born in a stable, even though neither Gospel ever mentions a stable. Fact is, Matthew 2:11 says, “and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother…” Where’s Joseph? Could he be another embellishment? After the birth stories, we never heard about Joseph again. Why not?

Then Matthew tells an elaborate story about Herod murdering all the male (it doesn’t say Jewish) children “who were two years old or under…” (2:16) The church even has a special “Remembrance Day, December 28, to honor all the boys two and under who were murdered that day, even though history never records such a dastardly deed. This “fake news” is there because the Jews hated Herod and were willing to say anything awful about him, whether it was true or not.

How do I see Matthew’s fairytale? As a great reminder to me that my “guru,” Jesus, was born into this world as a total human being and that his radical, revolutionary message of peace, love, joy and hope has changed this world, and me, all for the better.

Peace Love Hope Joy,

Bil

The Eight Points of Progressive Christianity:

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

1. Believe that following the path and the teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of the many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to: * Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, * Believers and agnostics, * Women and men, * Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, * Those of all classes and abilities;
4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;
6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion and selfless love.
Doing Their Duty for God and Their Country

The Scouts of Troop 602 spent their holiday break helping out the homeless in our communities by putting in their service hours at Isaiah House in Santa Ana and at Caring Kitchen in Costa Mesa with other Boy Scouts from the Tsugoni Chapter of the Order of the Arrow, Scouting’s National Honor Society. At both places, the Scouts helped prepare meals for their guests and assisted the staffs of Isaiah House and Caring Kitchen with other household duties. In a national environment that seems to be lacking in kindness, empathy, and compassion for other people who have fallen on hard times, these young Scouts and their adult leaders are a living example that the values of treating all people with dignity and respect are still being taught and instilled in our youth.

If you believe that our youth could use more of these examples of kindness, empathy and compassion in their daily lives, sign your child up for Scouting and join Troop 602. Troop 602 meets on Thursday nights at 7:00 p.m. inside Plumer Hall. Come visit us and find out what the excitement of Scouting is all about. We do a variety of fun activities at every meeting and do at least one overnight camping outing every month.

For more information about Troop 602, please contact Matt Mirmak, Chartered Organization Representative at irvineeaglescout1987@gmail.com or Becky Roach, Executive Officer, at eaglemom3x@yahoo.com

(Photos courtesy of Ken and Stacey Steinhart)
Statement of BSA’s decision to admit female youth in Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts

On October 11, 2017, the Boy Scouts of America announced that it will be admitting females into the Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs. Prior to this announcement, females ages 13-21 were already permitted to participate in the Venturing, Exploring, and Sea Scouts programs offered by the BSA. Beginning in the fall of 2018, females ages 6-10 will be eligible to enroll in the Cub Scout program. In 2019, females ages 11-17 will be eligible to register as members of the BSA and will be eligible to work towards the rank of Eagle Scout. As a troop that is an extension of the Open and Affirming values of our sponsor, IUCC, we welcome any and all potential new youth members with open arms and will continue to find ways to make our outdoor based educational programs accessible to more youth and families regardless of race, ethnicity, economic status, gender, gender identity, physical ability, and sexual orientation. We are proud of the BSA for taking this step forward and we believe the future is bright for Scouting in America.

How to make Scouting more inclusive:
a challenge to you
by Matt Mirmak, Eagle Scout and Chartered Organization Representative of Troop 602

Many of you may have heard the news that the BSA will be admitting female youth into the Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs. While the official date of Cub Scout registration for female youth will be in the fall of 2018, there may be an opportunity to enroll your child into a Family Pack that would be sponsored by IUCC prior to the fall of 2018.

How can that happen, you ask? Please let me explain.

If there are parents in our congregation who have children between the ages of 6-10 who would be interested in starting a Family Cub Scout pack (unit) here at IUCC, please let me know by January 15. There may be an opportunity from the Orange County Council to establish an “Early Adopter” Family Cub Scout pack which would allow a unit to enroll males and females ages 6-10 into the Cub Scout program prior to the official fall 2018 launch of admitting females into the Cub Scout program. If there is sufficient interest from the parents in our congregation, I, as the current Chartered Organization Representative of the Scouting program here at IUCC, am willing to talk to our council executives about their willingness to participate in the national Early Adopter program. In order for this to happen, I would need at least two parents (male and female) to agree to serve as Cub Scout leaders and get 8-10 youth with a minimum of four (4) female youth members registered into this new Family Cub Scout Pack by March 15. The Cub Scout youth and parents that you recruit and enroll into this Family Cub Scout Pack do not have to be members of IUCC.

When the BSA decided to repeal their ban on gay youth in 2013, IUCC showed their support for the BSA’s new membership policy by establishing Boy Scout Troop 602. We were one of the first UCC congregations in the nation to come out and sponsor a Boy Scout troop after the ban on gay youth was repealed. As a result, Troop 602 has been recognized by our national United Church of Church Working Group on Scouting as the blueprint on how to successfully establish an inclusive Scouting unit within the UCC.

We now have another historic watershed moment in our midst: the admission of female youth into the former single gender programs of the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. IUCC led the way in helping the Boy Scouts become a more inclusive organization by establishing an inclusive Boy Scout troop in Troop 602. Now that female youth will be permitted into the Cub Scouts (and eventually the Boy Scouts in 2019), we have another opportunity as a congregation to be a leader in furthering the aims of inclusive Scouting within the UCC and nationwide. By establishing a Family Cub Scout Pack here at IUCC, we will be sending a message that our congregation is one that supports positive social changes through their actions. We’ve done that with Scouting before by forming Troop 602 and with other initiatives like the formation of our Greenfaith Ministry which led to our designation of a “Creation Justice” congregation. Why not do it again by showing our congregation’s support for gender equality in the Boy Scouts by starting a Family Cub Scout Pack?

If you decide to move in the direction of starting a Family Cub Scout Pack here at IUCC, I will be happy to lend my support to help get the adult Cub Scout leaders trained so that they can have a successful unit. This will not take away from my duties with Troop 602 or my decision to step aside as Chartered Organization Representative at the end of April. This initiative will help expand the Scouting program here at IUCC to all youth and families.

With the current divisive state of our nation, we need a program like Scouting to help teach our youth how to be decent, selfless, and civil people who are willing to help other people at all times. The values of the Scout Oath and Law are timeless, tried, and true. They have been the bedrock foundation of the Scouting program for 108 years. And with these new opportunities for positive progress and growth, we will get to spread that message to more youth and families. We can make America great again not by building walls and shutting people out, but by spreading messages of acceptance, compassion, and inclusion through our living examples. Why not help spread that message to our youth by getting them involved in Scouting?

I hope you will join me in making this initiative of establishing an inclusive Family Cub Scout Pack here at IUCC a reality. Scouting is a great program. Too great to surrender to the forces of intolerance, bigotry, and exclusion.

Yours in Scouting,
Matt Mirmak
For the last four years, it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the Chartered Organization Representative of Troop 602. To see the Scouts and adult leaders of this troop grow into their roles and evolve into living examples of the Scout Oath and Law is something that has been a joy to witness. In its four years of existence, Troop 602 has become an important part of our church’s outreach to the community and is an living example of the values of our congregation.

Although I may have been one of the founding members, Troop 602 does not belong to me, our Scoutmasters, our troop committee, any individual Scout, or the Orange County Council. Troop 602 belongs to you, the members of Irvine United Congregational Church.

After careful thought and consideration, I have decided that effective at the end of April 2018, I will no longer be serving as the Chartered Organization Representative for Troop 602. My reasons for stepping down are simple. After four years I believe I have accomplished enough with this troop and feel that the time is right for another IUCC member to take the reins and help continue to write the story of Troop 602. I have told Pastor Paul of my decision and have agreed to help him find a suitable replacement for the role of Chartered Organization Representative. The ideal candidate does not need to have any prior experience in Scouting but must have a willingness to learn and to help promote and grow Troop 602. The ideal candidate must also be willing to register as a member of the Boy Scouts of America and agree to a background check conducted by the Boy Scouts.

If you are interested in taking on this important role for Troop 602, please contact me, Pastor Paul, or Becky Roach. The job description is included at the end of this article. As an organization, the Boy Scouts have made a lot of positive changes in recent years in expanding their membership to LGBT youth and adults. Starting in 2018, the BSA is now expanding the Cub Scout program to young females ages 6-10 and will give young females ages 11-17 the opportunity to earn the rank of Eagle Scout beginning in 2019. Troop 602 hopes to find that person who will continue to help Troop 602 and the BSA as a whole move in a direction of inclusive membership. Scouting is a great program for our youth and too important to surrender to those who do not share our values of inclusion and acceptance.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve and bring the Boy Scout program to IUCC.

Yours in Scouting,
Matt Mirmak
Eagle Scout (1986)
Chartered Organization Representative, Troop 602

Job Description—Chartered Organization Representative
From www.scouting.org/scoutsource/CubScouts/Leaders/About/ThePack/chorr.aspx

The chartered organization representative is the direct contact between the Scouting unit(s) and the chartered organization. This individual is also the organization’s contact with the district committee and the local council. The chartered organization representative may become a member of the district committee and is a voting member of the local council. When a chartered organization has more than one unit, a single chartered organization representative serves them all.

Qualifications: Is at least 21 years old, is a member of the chartered organization, and is not the unit leader or assistant unit leader. Is appointed by the chartered organization to serve as its official Scouting representative and is registered as an adult leader of the BSA.

Responsibilities: The chartered organization representative’s responsibilities are to:

- Help select the right leadership for the unit.
- Promote well-planned, quality unit programs, including outdoor programs, advancement, and recognition.
- Serve as a liaison between the units and the organization.
- Promote the recruiting of new members and units.
- See that boys transition from unit to unit.
- Help with the charter renewal.
- Suggest Good Turns to benefit the organization.
- Encourage the unit committee to hold meetings.
- Cultivate organization leaders, and encourage necessary training of existing and new leaders.
- Utilize district help and promote the use of district personnel and materials.
- Use approved unit finance policies.
- Cultivate resources to support the organization.
- Represent the organization at the council level.
I admit it; I love musicals. So to start the new year, I offer you this list of musical films. You’ve most likely not heard of some of them; actually, if I’ve done my job well, you’ve most likely not heard of most of them. Also, they’re not necessarily my favorites. Still, each film on this list is, in my opinion, worthy of your attention. This month, English language musicals. In March, I’ll give you a few foreign language musicals.

1) Applause (1929-Rouben Mamoulian) – The first of two by Rouben Mamoulian, the Stanislavski student who directed the Broadway premieres of Porgy and Bess, Oklahoma! and Carousel. This backstage drama features Helen Morgan, the Janis Joplin of 20s era Broadway.

2) Love Me Tonight (1932-Rouben Mamoulian) – This pre-code masterpiece features one of early Hollywood’s sexiest pairings: Jeannette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier. You heard right. It also features Rodgers and Hart at their finest and camera set-ups that would change the way films were made. Check out Isn’t It Romantic as an example.

3) Dames (1934-Ray Enright) – For me, this film is Busby Berkeley at his most mind-blowing. The electric violins, for one, is a psychedelic image that looks forward to 2001: A Space Odyssey. The score features I Only Have Eyes for You.

4) Show Boat (1936-James Whale) – This remarkable retelling of Kern & Hammersteins’ groundbreaker is, by most accounts, the finest Show Boat on film. Don’t confuse this with the 1951 Arthur Freed (MGM) version that starred Howard Keel and Ava Gardner. This film features Helen Morgan from Broadway and Paul Robeson from London.

5) Anchors Aweigh (1945-George Sidney) – This film features Gene Kelly dancing with cartoon characters isn’t enough, this little ditty features Fred Astaire dancing on the ceiling…literally. Made to celebrate the Wedding of the Queen Mother to the Greek Prince Philip, its story was suggested by Fred’s Broadway career with his sister Adele.

6) Royal Wedding (1951-Stanley Donen) – As if Gene Kelly dancing with cartoon characters isn’t enough, this little ditty features Fred Astaire dancing on the ceiling…literally. Made to celebrate the Wedding of the Queen Mother to the Greek Prince Philip, its story was suggested by Fred’s Broadway career with his sister Adele.

7) Carmen Jones (1954-Otto Preminger) – This Afro-American retelling of Bizet’s opera features new lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, a bedeviling Carmen by Dorothy Dandridge, a bewitched Joe by Harry Belafonte and a supporting cast that includes Pearl Bailey.

8) Passing Strange (2009-Spike Lee) – Spike Lee’s filming of the last performance of this musical’s initial Broadway run did a favor to all lovers of modern musicals. It’s a delight to watch and it’s a lasting archive of what I consider to be the finest rock musical ever made.

9) The Last Five Years (2014-Richard LaGravenese) – Spike Lee’s filming of the last performance of this musical’s initial Broadway run did a favor to all lovers of modern musicals. It’s a delight to watch and it’s a lasting archive of what I consider to be the finest rock musical ever made.

10) La La Land (2016-Damien Chazelle) – Because of the debacle at the Oscars, many have forgotten just what a wonderful film this is. But La La Land is much more than an Oscar contender. Its infectious score, its creative use of locations and its Jacques Demy-inspired storyline makes it one of the few Oscar contenders of the last few years that I had to see more than once.