There was lots of enthusiasm at our Ministries Fair on Feb. 25!

Mission & Service Ministry

Stephen Ministry

Ministry for Young People

Ministry of Music

Ministry of Communication

New Member Development

Ministry of Fellowship

Ministry of Hospitality

Ministry of Adult Programs

Ministry of Congregational Care

Advocates for Peace & Justice & GreenFaith Team
It drew quite a crowd!

Dave Smith encourages people to sign letters for the Advocates
On February 18th, IUCC honored Troop 602 and all current and Scouting alumni in the congregation in IUCC’s annual Scout Sunday service. With the exception of IUCC member and Troop 602 committee member Becky Roach acting as worship leader, the rest of the Scout Sunday program was led by the Scouts themselves. Assistant Senior Patrol Leader and First Class Scout Keith Bauer called out the troop color guard to present the troop’s colors and lead the congregation in the Boy Scout Oath. After the flag ceremonies and a recognition of Scouting alumni in our congregation (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Scout leaders/volunteers), Keith delivered a speech with slide presentation that highlighted Troop 602’s accomplishments over the past year. Tenderfoot Scout and Troop Scribe Jordan Hegdazi read the Scripture reading and Second Class Scout Colin Yu delivered the offertory prayer. Benjamin Steinhart, Joshua Steinhart, Alexander Reyes and Jeffrey Wang assisted with the offering and helped with handing out programs and greeting church members at the door.

It’s never too late to register your child for Scouting. Troop 602 welcomes all age eligible youth (ages 11-17) into our program. Troop 602 meets on Thursday nights at 7:00 p.m. inside Plumer Hall. Our meeting agendas are led by the Scouts and we have one outdoor overnight outing per month. Come see what the excitement of Scouting is all about and join us!

Starting in 2019, females ages 11-17 (or age 10 and completed the 5th grade) will be eligible to join a Boy Scout troop and have an equal opportunity to earn the rank of Eagle Scout like their male counterparts. I have already inquired with our council about participating in a possible Early Bird registration program for female members that want to join Troop 602 sometime in mid 2018. As soon as I get notification from our council of when that Early Bird registration will commence, I will let you know. Troop 602 looks forward to welcoming young female Scouts into our troop with open arms.

~ Matt Mirmak (photos courtesy of Matt Mirmak & Jay Hegdazi)
In less than two weeks, Dr. Amy Jill Levine will be at IUCC. Some of you have seen clips of her speaking in worship, or in Adult Ed classes. Dr. Levine is a highly noted scholar and speaker, and this will be one of the highlights of our year. Make sure to register for Friday night, and be sure to come back on Sunday to hear her preach. You can read more about her visit and other opportunities for adult programs in Steve Swope’s article inside. I’m hearing some good “buzz” around the Conference, and I’m thinking that is going to result in a fair number of visitors. So, come early and enjoy this time with Professor Levine.

Speaking of which, here we are as Easter approaches, with the construction getting heavier every day. From what I am hearing, we are not filling our back parking lot on Sunday—people are being so good about our alternative parking and the short walk to the campus that there are a decent number of places to park at IUCC and Woodbridge as well. In mid-March, the progress will be above ground and well-defined. During the two weeks after Easter, the sanctuary is being painted and sprinklers are being added in our worship space and throughout the building as well. This means we need to be somewhere else.

Long-time members remember very well when IUCC’s Sunday worship took place in Plumer Hall. We will configure the space to match (more or less) the layout of our former worship space. Do you remember where the altar and the pulpit went? How were the chairs laid out? The Sunday after Easter is lower in attendance. What better way to fill up our space and experience what it might have felt like to be at IUCC in, say—1989 or 1993 before the congregation outgrew its building? Pastor Sarah will be preaching on April 8. I will return from a brief post-Easter vacation in order to join you on April 15.

Here are a few items of note:

- Not all that long ago, we had a dynamic guest preacher by the name of the Rev. Dr. Jill Kirchner-Rose. Jill was giving her neutral pulpit sermon for a search committee. As a result, Dr. Jill is now the Senior Minister at Redlands United Church of Christ. Inside this issue, you will read about how she will be leading this year’s Women’s Retreat. Jill and I graduated from the same Doctor of Ministry Program at Chicago, not all that far apart from each other. She is warm, charismatic, kind and one heck of a good preacher. Although I don’t like the empty chasm of our sanctuary on the May 4-6 weekend, it is worth it knowing that this is such precious time for our women to be together. If you can make it, be sure to sign up soon.

Roger Laule

Finally, I am sorry to say “Good-Bye” to Roger Laule. Roger will be buried on March 8 at a closed interment at Riverside National Cemetery. At the request of his family, no one will be present at his burial.

In Roger’s memory, his IUCC family will honor him on Palm Sunday, March 25, with a special anthem, and we will then celebrate his life after 2nd service with a potluck in Plumer Hall. Roger always loved IUCC potlucks! So, bring your favorite potluck dish to share, and join us to celebrate his life and his love for IUCC.

Roger was a dedicated member of our congregation since 1991. He loved this church and shared his talents with us as a beloved member of the Chancel Choir, as former editor of the IUCC Newsletter (1991-94), and throughout his time with us, Roger held several positions on our ministries boards.

*     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *     *

See you in church! There are some significant Sundays ahead. Also, Maundy Thursday (a service that has grown slowly over the years and is one of my favorites) brings us Scott Williams and his hammered dulcimer. And of course—Easter is coming!

Yours,

Pastor Paul
As I write this column, a couple of stories come to mind. The first story begins after an Ash Wednesday service about 15 years ago. I was heading to my car when Dianne Rust, the IUCC Moderator at the time, stopped me and said that the Nominating Committee had been meeting to fill church leadership positions. She said that my name had been mentioned for the Moderator role. Needless to say, I was totally surprised. Keith and I were relatively new members of the congregation. Keith sang in the choir and my participation had been limited to serving on the stewardship committee and on a capital fundraising project. I had never been on either the Ministries or Administration Board nor had I served in any other capacity on a ministry. Naturally, I asked Dianne, “Why me?” She replied that the Nominating Committee had decided I would do a good job and that I would fit the position very well. The rest as they say is history. I said yes then and then yes, again, 15 some years later. Why do I tell this story? Soon the Nominating Committee will begin the task of filling the myriad of leadership opportunities here at IUCC. We will need Board chairs, Committee chairs, Ministry Chairs and people to serve on those committees and boards.

We began this process on Sunday, February 25, with the Ministries Fair in Plumer Hall. I’m sure many of you walked around, stopped to talk to the Ministry chairs and a few of you may have even signed up to help out one of the ministries. But I want all of us to think about how we can contribute to the life of this special faith community.

A few years, when I was chair of the annual stewardship drive, one of our members came up with the slogan of “This church doesn’t run on prayers alone.” While you might find this message a little blunt or too direct, the message is nonetheless true. We need countless members and friends of IUCC giving of their time, talents and treasure to make IUCC everything it can be. My guess is that if you’re asked to serve as a chair or member of a board, ministry, or committee that you might react much like I did. “Why me?” or “I don’t have the necessary time or experience to possibly serve.” But think about saying yes, and if you do your life here at IUCC will be enriched beyond words. One of our current leaders expressed how becoming a chair of a committee had made a remarkable difference in how he “experienced Church.” He began to know more people to greet on the patio, he felt he was making a difference, and he felt the power of community in his life.

One more story. I often read the back of the bulletin that we get on Sunday morning. The one on February 25 had a powerful story that fits so well with my thoughts. It’s a true story that was told at the IUCC General Synod. “It’s the story of an invitation made to a crowd long ago by a gentleman standing high on a wire stretched over the Niagara Falls. The tightrope walker’s name was Charles Blondin. He walked back and forth on a wire over the falls. He did it blindfolded, on stilts, carrying somebody and crossing the wire with a wheelbarrow. While crossing with the wheelbarrow he stopped and asked the crowd if they believed he could push a person in the wheelbarrow across the wire. The crowd screamed, “YES!” Then he asked for a volunteer to climb in the wheelbarrow. No one volunteered.”

The story goes on with a plea - “Is there a wheelbarrow in your faith story right now? In the Gospels, Jesus never ceases to amaze the crowds with his feats, and not everyone climbed in the wheelbarrow with him, either. What is calling you, right now, or your congregation? Are we ready to leave our comfortable spot as a spectator and climb into that wheelbarrow? Can we trust that much?”

I hope you will think about becoming involved in the life of IUCC as a participant on a board, ministry, or committee. Give a resounding “YES” when asked to give the gifts of your time and talent to IUCC.

In faith and community,

Renae
March is another busy month for Adult Education and Programs! We’ve got a great speaker event and a Lenten series integrated with Sunday worship. Don’t forget that your participation is what makes it all work.

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

She comes to us with the gracious cooperation of Chapman University, where she will be the featured Founders Day speaker on Saturday, March 10. (More information about that at [https://www.chapman.edu/about/church-relations/founders-day/index.aspx](https://www.chapman.edu/about/church-relations/founders-day/index.aspx).)

On Friday at 7:00 p.m., Prof. Levine will speak about “Jesus and Judaism: The Connection Matters.” There will also be a dinner in Plumer Hall at 6:00 p.m., which will begin with an interfaith Shabbat led by Rabbi Arnie Rachlis and Pastor Paul.

You can register for the lecture online at [www.iucc.org/register](http://www.iucc.org/register). Sorry, but the dinner is already sold out. You’ll also be able to purchase Prof. Levine's books and register for Founders Day on Friday evening!

**Bible Study** meets at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays in Plumer Hall. Ken Wyant leads us with a gentle hand (and a liberal dose of humor) as we discover the books of the New Testament in the order they were (probably) written. Right now, we’re about a third of the way through the Gospel of Luke — but new participants are always welcome!

Save the date! Our **Comma Group wrap-up luncheon** will be April 29 after second service. Come prepared to share your opinions, both good and bad, so we can keep improving the Comma Group experience for everyone!

The season of **Lent** began with Ash Wednesday worship on Feb. 14, and we’ve already considered four social-justice Resolutions from last summer’s UCC General Synod.

Pastor Paul and I are coordinating a Lenten series of Sunday services and Wednesday educational events exploring significant statements from last summer’s UCC General Synod. The goal is to help re-orient and rededicate ourselves to the values at the heart of IUCC — especially, our commitment to social justice and full lives for all people.

Our Sunday worship and Wednesday discussions will look at UCC Resolutions (you can find them at [http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/](http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/)), and Adult Sunday school classes in March will offer opportunities for follow-up discussion. Together let’s learn how to build “A Just World for All.”

**Adult Sunday School** meets before each worship service at 8:45 & 10:00 a.m. On Feb. 18 & 25, historian Glenna Matthews introduced us to one of her lifelong interests, Antoinette Brown Blackwell (1825-1921). Ordained by New York Congregationalists in 1853, Brown Blackwell was a champion of women’s rights and the abolition of slavery. Thanks, Glenna!

During March, we’ll provide opportunities for further discussion of the Resolutions we’re studying during Lent. On March 4, I’ll be open to talking about Inclusive Scouting, Gun Violence, Economic Justice, and/or Disability Awareness.
Women’s Retreat News

By Laura Long

“Behold! Paying Attention, Being Astonished, Embracing Mystery”
IUCC Women’s Retreat, May 4–6, 2018

Make plans now for a weekend of “Behold!” moments with fellow IUCC women at the annual retreat, May 4–6 at Pilgrim Pines. Registration begins April 8 for three weeks only!

Living well involves attention and astonishment. Spending sacred time in the mountains can attune our eyes, ears, and hearts to wonders we might otherwise overlook. Some mysteries in life are so beautiful there is no explaining them—they take our breath away, and there is only silent awe. These are “Behold!” moments. Gather in sisterhood as we behold creation and Creator alike.

This year’s retreat leader is the Rev. Dr. Jill A. Kirchner-Rose, senior minister at Redlands United Church of Christ (pictured above). She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies from the University of California at Riverside, a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School, and a Doctorate of Ministry in Preaching from Chicago Theological Seminary. Jill is married to Karen Rose. They have an 8 year old daughter, Daniella, and a cocker spaniel puppy, Ace. Jill enjoys time with family, tennis, golf, reading, nature and sacred moments throughout the day to “behold” the mysteries of creation.

Watch for online registration at iucc.org and on the patio after worship services in April. Don’t delay! Space is limited!

For questions and information, contact retreat planners, Lorraine Fox, Karen Smith, Pat Sauter, or Laura Long.
Our Advocates for Peace & Justice will have a table at the Great American Write-In! All are welcome!

CELEBRATE THE 33rd ANNUAL
GREAT AMERICAN WRITE-IN
Sponsored by WOMEN FOR: ORANGE COUNTY

SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 2018
9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
DELHI COMMUNITY CENTER
505 E. Central Ave., Santa Ana 92707

The Pen Is Mightier Than The Sword!

At the Write-In:
- MEET representatives of local and national advocacy groups!
- LEARN about today’s vital issues!
- RAISE YOUR VOICE by WRITING to the decision-makers who can make a difference in health, the environment, peace, human and civil rights, education!

FREE ADMISSION! FREE PARKING!

www.facebook.com/events/787573238110109
For more information, please contact Felicity Figueroa 949-733-0850 or felicitynf@aol.com

Building Project Update
by Anne Rosse, Chair of Building Task Force

We are pleased to report that construction restarted in mid-February with the approval of our revised sewer line plan. The new utility lines are now connected which means that foundation preparation is beginning. We expect the foundation itself to be laid in mid-March.

Following our always-meaningful Holy Week services, the Sanctuary will close from Monday, April 2, through Friday, April 20, impacting our April 8 and 15 worship services. During the first two weeks, sprinklers will be installed, followed by a week for painting.

Some key milestones on our updated construction schedule are highlighted below. Please note that some of these dates may shift as the project progresses. Please contact btfchair@iucc.org with any questions.

March: Foundation work/erect steel columns
April: Sanctuary sprinklers and painting
Late April: Tie-in to existing structure
May: Roofing, HVAC
June: Alton driveway improvements, paving
Early July: Landscape and irrigation
Late July: Construction completion
Early August: Occupancy

We will dedicate the new building and thank this church community for its generosity and vision for IUCC’s future on Sunday, September 9. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us for this important celebration in the life of this church!

Speaking of generosity, your continued speedy payment of campaign pledges is deeply appreciated and helps IUCC stay financially stable. We are still actively raising money so, if you haven’t joined your church family in supporting this project, we invite you to do so today. Please contact capitalcampaign@iucc.org for more information.

Over the next few months, our new building will take shape as we plan for how, supported by strengthened facilities, we can grow in community significance through strong programs and service to our community.

Thank you for your continued patience and we invite you to watch us build for the future!
“Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink.”* My mother recited this line to me when I was a young child. We were visiting my Montana cowboy cousin on his large sheep ranch. While traveling on a hot, dusty trip to the nearest town, my eight-year-old-impatient-self thought it imperative that I have a drink of water – immediately! Since it was the days before the ubiquitous water bottle, I wanted to drink from the rusty-colored stream meandering beside the road we traveled. With a glance at the germ-infested water, that’s when Mother spoke those words: “Water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink.” They’ve come to have immense meaning to me in today’s world.

Did you know that we celebrate World Water Day on March 22nd? It was designated by the United Nations in 1993 and is observed annually by people and organizations worldwide. Its focus is to emphasize the importance of universal access to clean and affordable water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in developing countries, plus advocating for the sustainable management of fresh water resources.

Each year a theme is chosen for World Water Day. It sets the focus for a World Water Development Report launched annually on March 22nd. The 2018 theme is “Nature-Based Solutions for Water.” This theme will show the potential of nature-based solutions and how they can be considered for water management policy and practice. You may have heard the concern that water is the new oil and that countries will fight over access to water. Some reports claim that is happening already as droughts throughout the world cause thirst and fear.

You and I have an opportunity to reflect on water and other issues surrounding climate and the environment on WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21st at a Lenten class based on a resolution passed at the UCC General Synod last summer.

The resolution, titled “The Earth is the Lord’s – Not Ours to Wreck,” was passed by 97% of the voters. We are so fortunate to have one of our church members, Dr. Gudrun Magnusdottir, facilitating the class at 7 p.m. that evening. If you have not met Gudrun, you are in for a treat. She is a Professor in the Department of Earth System Science at University California Irvine (UCI). Please put this event on your calendar.

One of the false stories that our culture has been telling us for a long time is that the natural world is here for us to pillage. Let us oppose that lie and take up the theme that our UCC is suggesting: The Earth is the Lord’s – Not Ours to Wreck!

Every Day is Earth Day!

Vivian Elaine Johnson

(GREENfaith team: Judy Curry, Tony Dover, Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, Martha Hansen, Bonnie Shaffstall, Eileen Vincent, and Vivian Johnson)
During this season of Lent, I am particularly grateful to be a member of the Music Ministry. It is such a treat to prepare music for Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Easter. This time of preparation is made especially meaningful to me, as I ponder the songs the choir is preparing for special services. These texts, when set to beautiful music, touch my heart in a way unlike any other form of worship. Jesus’s journey is one that gives me hope. His life is an example of one who suffered and overcame the worst of adversity. His example teaches me to strive for love in all situations, not just when it is convenient. He was despised, persecuted, falsely accused, and sentenced to death, yet he loved anyway. Jesus taught, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35

The four designations our congregation has adopted are examples of love. “Open and Affirming” is love for all, regardless of sexual or gender identity. “Just Peace” seeks to show love to persecuted people, and to have social and economic justice for all. “Global Mission” addresses the need to show love not just in our immediate neighborhood but to spread that love worldwide. “Creation Justice/ Green Faith” looks at the need to love the Earth. These designations seem to be a tall order to fulfill, but they are wonderful ideals for which to strive.

The Chancel Choir held a choir retreat on February 17th to begin preparation for the Spring concert. The theme this year is a focus on the four UCC designations. The program has songs that represent each one. If you have ever wanted to bring friends to IUCC, this would be a perfect introduction to the church and the ideals we hold dear. Please join us on June 10th to celebrate love for all people and the planet.

The 2018 Altar Flowers Calendar is posted on the patio bulletin board. Most Sundays are still available! To sign up, write your name by the Sunday you choose. A few weeks before your Sunday, I’ll mail you our “flower letter.” The letter explains that the altar flowers cost $40, and you may take the arrangement home after second service. There’s space on the letter for you to write your dedication for the bulletin, which you’ll return to the church with your payment.

That’s it! The flowers are pre-ordered and delivered to the church, your name and dedication will be in the bulletin, and you’ll have a colorful arrangement to take home.

Thank you!
Irene Shinoda Thornton

Join us on March 25 at 6 p.m. for an All-Church Outing to Angels Stadium. Tickets are $22 and you can pay cash or check (made out to IUCC). Reserve your spot now! See Pastor Sarah for more information.

Music Ministry
by Joni Baker

2018 Altar Flowers Calendar

All-Church Outing to Angels Stadium

HOME & ELECTRONICS REPAIR
Mano Baghban is experienced in all aspects of home maintenance and repair (including painting, plumbing, electrical, flooring, sprinklers, etc.) for $30/hour. I can also install/repair all computer and electronic systems for $15/hr. I look forward to helping you. Please text me at 949-562-6050.
News & Events

Get to know IUCC on the web and through social media!

Wondering when the next Bible Study class is or how to sign up for Amy-Jill Levine's talk? You don't have to wait for Michael's Friday e-mail or the monthly newsletter created by Tricia Aynes. Information is updated regularly on the church website iucc.org and often available on both the public Facebook page (www.facebook.com/irvineucc) or the private group page, which you have to ask to join (search for Group page for Irvine United Congregational Church).

Your suggestions for what should be included on the website and the Facebook page or group are always welcome. You can help shape both and offer other ideas for how to communicate IUCC’s message by joining the Communications Ministry. Contact Cindy O’Dell for more information at odellcindy19@gmail.com.

Want a Cookie? Of course you do!

We love to gather round the snack table after church and visit with friends. The cookies, fruit, cheese, crackers, and other snacks are the perfect complement to our warm and vibrant congregation, and they help make all of us feel warm and welcome. But wait - they do not appear by magic! The tasty treats are provided by smiling and generous volunteers like you. If we don't have sign-ups, we don't have snacks - it's as simple as that. Don't let it happen here! Won't you add your name to the calendar? 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!

Women’s Fellowship
Wednesday, March 7, 6:15 p.m.
Women’s Fellowship will meet for a quick supper before the Lenten talk at 7 p.m. Let’s celebrate an early St. Patrick’s Day with a baked potato bar: potatoes provided, you bring the toppings. Sign up on Sunday or see Pat Sauter so we know how many potatoes to bake. See you then, wearing a bit o’ green for the occasion.

Isaiah House
Wednesday, March 14, 4:00 p.m.
Volunteers serving a meal at Isaiah House meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month to provide a meal for the women at Isaiah House. Call (949) 436-1946 for more info.

The Seeker’s Women’s Group
Tuesday, March 20, 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.

3/20 Anne Aulenbach 3/11 Panee Hsiang
3/07 Mahmoud Baghbani 3/16 Xin Li
3/11 Daniel Blackburn 3/24 Lauren Louie
3/29 Steve Bullington 3/10 Barbara Moss
3/16 Erin Burke 3/16 Jan Osborne
3/27 David Carruthers 3/24 Tom Ruiz
3/10 Dylan Dobbert 3/26 Melissa Sokol
3/09 Megan Dukett 3/11 Michael Trout
3/16 Anders Evensen 3/06 Walter Trout
3/11 Suzie Feick 3/25 Jordan Willcox
3/01 Apoorva Ghosh 3/29 Nicholas Willcox
3/10 Lynette Herndon

Happy Birthday
1 Corinthians 12:12 - For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

For one of our lessons this month, the Sunday School class focused on this scripture from Corinthians. Of course, the result was hilarious pasta people, but I was impressed with how well the kids understood this lesson. They took pride in making their people unique: some with bowties, some with long legs and arms, some short. They were all different from one another, although they all looked like people (okay, we did have one cat). We spoke a lot about how difference makes us human and how we should embrace those who are different from us. For them, difference varied from people having a different favorite superhero to people who have different skin color.

These kids are so deep and intelligent and they grasp concepts; it is an honor to see them shaping their lives, their friendships, and even their faith. Although they may not always be able to articulate it, they are pondering the big questions about God and their place in the world. They want to know more as they grow older in age and experience.

As we look to this summer, I want to harness this curiosity. I want to encourage the kids to get out and explore the world and their faith. Be sure to look for Vacation Bible School, camp, and mission trip opportunities. As always, if you would like to support these programs financially or as a teacher/volunteer, please let me know!

Blessings,

Pastor Sarah
Last month we began to explore how responding to “uncivil” behavior from others with “assertive” responses helps to maintain civility in relationships because it does not continue to fan the flames of rudeness or aggressiveness. Rather, assertive behavior provides an alternative way of interacting even when feelings are raw and conflict is immediate. We outlined the “rights” that individuals of all ages have by virtue of their humanity. When children begin to believe these rights are true for them, they can be convinced to try something different when others treat them in ways they don’t deserve. Of course it is important that we, as adults, demonstrate to children how assertive behavior works to defuse unpleasant exchanges by using such responses ourselves with, and in the presence of, our children.

It is true that assertiveness may not always be wise or the most effective response. Sometimes it may be more effective to be accepting, supportive, agreeable or tolerant of a situation or another person. But it is also important to know how to be assertive when you need to be. It requires some maturity to understand when it is good idea or when it is not such a good idea to be assertive, so we may have to wait for children to be older before they can practice discretion in being assertive.

If you wish to be assertive but fail to speak up for yourself, self-esteem takes a beating. Conversely, when you are appropriately assertive, an increase in self-esteem, feelings of social competence, self-respect and respect from others will follow. People tend to respect people who respect themselves.

Assertive people make life easier for others by taking the guesswork out of relationships and making communications clearer and easier to understand. By helping relationships to run more effectively, assertive individuals become assets to themselves and to any group to which they belong. Thus, teaching assertive behavior to children early will help them gain respect from their peers in groups such as: sporting groups, classroom groups, church groups and even play groups. Uncivil behavior is hard on everyone in a group and causes a lot of stress and discomfort. When someone in the group demonstrates that they can respond by being “civil” – polite, respectful – while still not accepting the uncivil behavior – it breathes relief to those either experiencing or witnessing rude, crass, controlling, or downright nasty behavior and may be unsure how to respond.

Next month we will begin to outline specific behaviors that can be called “assertive.”
Progressive Christianity at IUCC
by Bil Aulenbach, retired Episcopal priest

Last month, we visited Golgotha and “witnessed” the death of Jesus. The centurion had pronounced Jesus dead. The soldiers then detached him from his cross and stood guard over him until the cart arrived to pick up all the crucified dead bodies.

I am going to tell this part of the story not from what the Gospels say but from the “sitz im leben,” German for “the situation in life” or what history says the Romans did with those who were deemed criminals of the Empire. Jesus had been accused of sedition, his enemies claiming that he called himself a “king.” Roman Emperors didn’t like that. Because of this crime, soldiers would take extra precautions to make certain that no one, especially family or followers, came even close to the corpse. They wanted no martyrs.

Once the bodies were picked up, the cart, heavily guarded, was driven to the city dump of Jerusalem, called Gehenna. Here, the corpses would be thrown on very hot fires to cremate the bodies quickly and completely. Soldiers stayed there to watch until every corpse had turned to ashes.

Supposedly, this was the end of Jesus, his movement and his followers. Those closely connected to Jesus probably went into hiding, hoping they weren’t next to be crucified. The Jewish authorities had to be very proud of themselves. Within hours of his arrest, this pesky but popular Jewish itinerant preacher/teacher was gone, as was his ministry. Or was it?

No one is exactly certain why these Followers of the Way flourished, even though their leader was gone. Something happened! Paul was part of it, as was James, Jesus’ brother, and his “rock” Peter. Jesus was dead, but his message resonated. Why?

No one can really put their finger on it. Was it because Jesus was the right man, in the right spot, at the right time? Were his followers ready for a Messiah who would save them from so many oppressors and so much oppression? Was it that Jesus’ crucifixion was being interpreted as him being the sacrificial lamb who would save the world? Was it because by the time Matthew, Luke/Acts and John were published, the movement had been expelled from Judaism and taken over by gentiles?

No one really knows, but this we do know: That within fifteen years of his death, Paul was elevating Jesus to be the Son of God, who died for our sins. About 70 CE, forty years later, Mark had gathered stories which were traveling around in an oral tradition and wrote a story about who Jesus was. But there was no resurrection tale.

In the 90s, Matthew releases his story, including a birth narrative and an “eye witness” account of a resurrected body. Luke must have found some new sources and one-upped Matthew with a very different story about Jesus’ birth and his life after death. Then the School of John developed a whole new story. The Gospel of Peter, which only covers the end of Jesus’ life, was discovered in a ninth century manuscript but was probably written much earlier. Peter plagiarizes from Matthew/ Luke and John and uses snippets from each to spin his tale.

Stay tuned. Next time we are going to talk about the resurrection stories which first appeared some 45 to 60 years after Jesus died. What took so long? Are they true? Or are they metaphors? Something happened, something so powerful that this pesky itinerant preacher from obscure Galilee changed the course of civilization.

PeaceLoveJoyHope 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.
I promised you a list of Non-English Musical films for March, but when I made that promise, I forgot about Lent. Sorry folks; we all have to give up something. Anyway, here’s a list of films that will put you into the Lenten mood. Next month, Baseball. And as for those Non-English musicals, we’ll have to put them off until May.

1) The Ten Commandments (Cecil B. DeMille-1923, 1956) Cecil B. DeMille was a master of the epic from the silent days right through to the 1950s. His best epics tended to be biblical. He made his Passover Story twice: the first was a silent, and the second was in Cinemascope.

2) The King of Kings (Cecil B. DeMille-1927) This one was DeMille’s Passion story. And, again, it’s silent.

3) The Passion of Joan of Arc (Carl Theodor Dreyer-1928) Although not an Easter story, this silent is one of the most compelling Christian films ever made. Renee Jeanne Falconetti, the actress portraying Joan, gives a mystical performance. Unfortunately, she suffered from mental illness while shooting the film.

4) The Robe (Henry Koster-1953) This is a “what if” movie, if you will. Marcellus Gallio, the Centurian responsible for crucifying Jesus, is haunted by Jesus’ robe after drawing lots for it. The Robe features Richard Burton, one of the most well-cured hams of the 1960s.

5) The Agony and The Ecstasy (Carol Reed-1965) Next, a pair of stories about religion and art. This first one is Sir Carol Reed’s Academy Award nominated film about the Passion of Michelangelo as he painted the Sistine Chapel.

6) Andrei Rublev (Andrei Tarkovsky-1966) The next tells the story of one of the finest iconographers in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was released in the Soviet Union amidst the Khrushchev years. Imagine that.

7) Jesus of Nazareth (Franco Zeffirelli-1977) This TV mini-series featured cameos from some of the finest actors of the time. Like his mentor, Luchino Visconti, Zeffirelli was a master of the Epic. He had a special touch with Bible stories, Shakespeare and Opera.

8) The Life of Brian (Monty Python-1979) If you can’t make fun of your own faith, whose can you make fun of? This story of a young Judean mistaken for the Messiah is uproarious, irreverent and, oddly enough, thought-provoking. Always look on the bright side of life!

9) The Name of the Rose (Jean-Jacques Annaud-1986)-Based on Umberto Eco’s story of the same name. I can’t comment; I haven’t seen it yet. But it’s one of Steve Swope’s favorites.

10) The Last Temptation of Christ (Martin Scorsese-1988) This, on the other hand, is my favorite. Based on Nikos Kazantzakis’ great novel of the same name, it offers us a Jesus that is not simply God’s sacrificial lamb. This Jesus, in fact, has a choice.

11) The Little Mermaid (Walt Disney Pictures-1989) King Triton, the King of the Merpeople, descends into the Sea Witch’s Garden of Lost Souls to save his daughter from a bad choice she made. If that isn’t a Christ Story, I don’t know what is.

12) Silence (Martin Scorsese-2016) The story of two Jesuit priests who travel to Japan to find their mentor at a time when the Christian voice was being silenced. Strange as this may sound, Scorsese’s ear is precisely tuned to the Catholic voice.