Trunk or Treat on October 28 was a big success!

Photos courtesy of Cindy O’Dell & Anne Rosse
Concerned pastors are traveling across the U.S. by bus to inspire people to vote. When they rolled into IUCC on October 29, they invited us to join in a world in which the Common Good prevails. Pastor Paul gave an exciting call to action. Then for two hours, the group mesmerized a packed house with rousing speeches and stirring music, asking us to have the courage to do things that will make a big difference. “Our world is getting more broken, and we need to make this world whole again - we need to start thinking about the needs of others,” said one speaker. “You are sitting in the emergency row and all America is asking ‘Can you save us, California?’ offered another. The musician had us singing, “Please don’t give up, we need you now.” We left feeling energized and ready to get out the vote!
A memory from long ago comes back to me from time to time. With the murder of 11 Jews who were attending a bris in Pittsburgh, followed by this week’s vandalism by graffiti on Beth Jacob (a congregation here in Irvine), the memory returns.

I remember a view of rolling gray clouds. I am lying on my back on an ice-rink, and I have just been beaten up.

On that day of gray clouds and cold, I am fifteen and I am at the ice-rink at the school, about a mile from my house. It is cold, and I am skating. A group of kids who live at the other end of town approach me. They walk across the ice and make a circle around me.

“Hey, Jew,” one says. “Why don’t you go back to Jew-town?” asks another. “We don’t want you here.” I am closed in by words and threats. I can solve it all so easily. My name is Tellstrom. It is Swedish. I belong to First Congregational Church. I am not Jewish. But whether in fear or because of principle or both, I say nothing. I freeze, until the first fist hits my head, then the second punch to my lower back. I go down, and my head hits the ice. They continue throwing words that come from ignorance and prejudice that can only be taught, and their words sting like a skull against ice.

When there is cold silence, I stare up for a very long time at gray clouds moving fast, and feel the ice numbing my back. I have lived among my Jewish friends and emulated them. I have taken part in their lives and in their rituals. Apparently, to some, I have become a Jew.

When I stood up from the ice that day, I knew that I had taken part in one of the most visceral of all Jewish experiences, that of being hated and demonized. These feelings would surface again in a few years for other reasons, but on this day, I felt that in some small way that should remain personal, that when I stood up from the ground, I stood up as a Jew, and I would always be a Jew if only in solidarity.

In the Gospels, we hear about the time that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

The passage invites us all to recall through our own experiences, or by reflecting on what is happening all around us, what it is like to be in our own wilderness. And when we are in a wilderness where fears arise from feeling separated from the fabric of society, the temptation comes to act on our fears.

As “the devil” tempted Jesus in his separation, modern day “devils” are at work to separate us as well.

These are wilderness days. They are wilderness days for Jews, as anti-Semitism has escalated throughout the world. They are wilderness days for so many—for women seeking to be in control of their own health care, let alone access to equality across the board. They continue to be wilderness days for LGBTQ people with the threat that transgender people may lose the right to declare themselves by a gender other than what their birth certificate declares.

These are wilderness days for immigrants and refugees, and who knows how many more black men, women and even kids will be shot as fear and racism continue to be on the rise.

Scripture says that when Jesus went into the wilderness, he was filled with the Spirit. That same Spirit is with us today, calling from the wilderness for us to join the outcast. It also demands that we avoid the temptation to hate in return.

I was so jazzed by the “Vote for the Common Good” folks who were here last week. In stirring speeches and get-off-your-seat music, they reminded us to act from a positive place and not get sunk by reacting in kind to all the negativity and hateful rhetoric that is being ginned up to create more fear.

Can you stand up and be an advocate against all discrimination, with a voice that will ring with a different authority because you are not a Jew, or because you are not a part of a despised minority of any kind? Can you speak from your experience when others cannot? Can you speak the truth despite what temptation makes you want to say instead, including saying nothing at all?

Our voices need to be heard. Shalom.

On a related note, let’s be prepared to give a special welcome this year to University Synagogue and our mosque as well, as we share a time of Thanksgiving together on Tuesday, November 20, at 7:30 p.m.
I’m sure you have all experienced the fun and excitement of seeing your home redecorated or remodeled. It might have been a room addition, adding new windows, maybe moving a wall to open things up, or painting a room a new color. It might have even been something as simple as adding some new pillows or a new picture to the decor. Whatever it is, somehow your home takes a newer, fresher feeling.

We’ve just experienced that here at IUCC. After many years of planning and many months of construction, we are finally in our new space. As you park your car and walk up to the church, I hope you’ve noticed the planting on the new patio space and all the new benches. Perhaps you’ve also noticed how seamlessly the new spaces blend in with the sanctuary. To me, the new building looks like it’s always been there, and that is truly a credit to our architects.

We’ve had many chances to gather in our new meeting rooms aptly named the Peace, Justice, and Wisdom rooms. From meetings of two or three to large groups of over 80 who gathered for the Ballot Review Forum, we’ve begun to appreciate the value and versatility of these new spaces. Coupled with our existing meeting spaces in Plumer Hall, we have the opportunity to expand our program offerings in comfortable and attractive settings.

The new office space has ample room for our office staff to work and even a “flex” space for volunteers to assist with some of the clerical needs of this busy church. There’s seating outside for visitors, a coffee area, separate storage space and most importantly, a place that says “welcome” with its ambience and furnishings.

Our Pastor now has a private space where he can work, hold meetings, and have private, confidential conversations with members and friends of IUCC. It’s a vast improvement over the previous space and also has a separate door to the outside. If you get a chance, check out the Pastor’s Patio - a beautiful outdoor space for meetings and gatherings.

There’s also another staff office for our Assistant Pastor. It has ample work space and a table for meetings. Again, it’s a welcoming and private space.

One of the best features of the new building is the landscaping that fronts on Alton. I hope you’ve had a chance to drive by and see what an attractive presentation we now offer to the community. Our new sign and the many boulders and plants truly make a statement. Better yet, when you’re at church walk around to the front and see this new landscape up close. There is a path that will take you from the street up to the church. Our efforts to incorporate our “green faith” principles are clearly on display both in this front area and in the plantings that surround the new patio.

So now that we’ve “moved in,” comes the real challenge of inhabiting this space and making it come alive with programs and activities that truly reflect the words of Micah 6:8 - What does the Lord require of us, but to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. I’m excited about doing this, and I hope you will join me as we make our new spaces hum with not only words, but meaningful actions!

In faith and community,

Renae
Adult Sunday School – We’ve finished exploring the world of mysticism, and November’s discussions will center around science and religion. Are they two different things? Are they incompatible? Can one inform or enhance the other? Join us, in Wisdom Room 108, at 8:45 & 10:00 each Sunday morning!

Bible Study – We have finished the Gospel of Luke and begun “Luke’s” second volume, Acts. There are still a few stops to make on our journey through the books of the New Testament, with Marcus Borg’s Evolution of the Word. Join jovial leader Ken Wyant and his sometimes-distracted crew of travelers on Tuesday afternoons at 4:00, and afterwards at Square One Pizza!

Comma Groups are up and running! But if you’re late to the party, the door’s still open. Email me or call me at the church office!

Midweek Salon – Thank-you to Erin Burke for sharing her experiences as an FBI agent! We’ll take a break for the holiday season, but watch for another installment in January. And if you’ve got a secret talent or interesting experience to share, please contact me.

Administrative News

Moving-In Update – Putting on my “administrative” hat, I want to share some updates about our new facilities. First, you may have noticed a coffeemaker in each meeting room. Thank-you to Pat Sauter for adding the extras that let us actually make coffee! Just be sure you clean up spills and empty out the grounds, please.

Second, that reminds me about the clean-up supplies that are located in each room; look for a blue carry-all in one of the cabinets, and a handheld vacuum on the counter. Don’t forget to correctly utilize the recycling containers, too – plastics and cans in green, clean paper in blue, everything else is trash!

Third, we now have a hearing-assistance system available for gatherings and events in our new meeting rooms. If you’re planning something in one of our new rooms, ask me about it – and announce it at the beginning of your event, in case someone needs it.

Fourth, thank-you to the Youth Group for unwrapping and moving the last of our new chairs during their Oct. 27 overnight! We’ve got plenty of seating now for events large and small.

And finally, mailboxes for Ministries, officers, and staff are now located in the Ministries Office, down the hall from the Narthex and just before the restrooms! (That’s my old office, with the “drive-thru window.”)
What our Advocates for Peace & Justice do

by Felicity Figueroa

Through the Advocates, we translate our commonly-held values of peace, love, justice and compassion into action. For example:

For seven years after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Advocates held annual candlelight vigils on our favorite corner on Alton and Culver and invited the greater community to join us in remembrance of the needless casualties of war and to demonstrate for peace. One year we teamed up with the American Friends Service Committee to create a display of hundreds of pairs of empty boots to symbolize all the lives lost on both sides (we made the front page of the OC Register). At another vigil we had a speaker from Peace Brigades International who spoke to us of the war atrocities she had witnessed in Central America; and we held a memorial ceremony with the OC Brady Campaign and Moms Demand Action on the one-year anniversary of the Newtown shooting.

We have held rallies for Health Care Reform with a Public Option and sponsored a talk by the Mad as Hell Doctors who were traveling the state in a motor home to promote single-payer health insurance.

When LGBTQ rights were threatened, we participated in the Seven Straight Nights for Equal Rights campaign and held a march down Alton. Later, when the Proposition 8 battles were in full swing, our church became the place to go for bumper stickers, lawn signs and phone banking. When Trayvon Martin's killer was acquitted in Florida, the Advocates felt compelled to stage a protest against his murder and in honor of all the black lives that have been lost to violence and prejudice.

Justice for immigrants has been a constant theme with the Advocates. When the Fast for Families campaign was going on at Representative John Campbell's office, the fasters stayed in tents in our parking lot and slept in the sanctuary, as did a Los Angeles-based immigrant support group earlier this year on their way down to the border to meet one of the first refugee caravans from Central America.

We have shown Movies with a Message, like “View from a Grain of Sand” about Afghanistan's history told through the eyes of three Afghan women and “The Ground Truth” about Iraqi War veterans.

The plight of the Palestinian people has figured largely in our choice of films and of guest speakers. We presented the award-winning film “Five Broken Cameras” and had Iyad Burnat, the brother of the film's creator, speak to us after the showing; recently, we showed “Where Should the Birds Fly,” a film about the Israeli bombardment of Gaza in December 2008. The late ambassador Warren Clark, former director of Churches for Middle East Peace came to speak to us, as did author and activist Josh Ruebner of the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights and Daoud Nassar of the Tent of Nations.

In 2011, we had the founder of the Yemen Peace Project speak about the dire situation in Yemen, long before it became national news.

Most of you have signed the Advocates' letters to the editor on the patio on a number of subjects; many of these have been published in local newspapers, which allows the greater community to know where IUCC stands on important justice issues. We also participate every year at the Great American Write-In, where our letters can reach a much wider audience.

And on October 29, we sponsored the Vote Common Good Revival Service right here in our sanctuary.

None of this could be accomplished without the support, both monetary and participatory, of all of you. So thank you for making the work we do as Advocates of Peace and Justice possible.
Our Early Childhood Center (ECC) - an important service to our community and an important source of financial support for the congregation - is reaching new levels of service and organizational strength. This is the first of a planned monthly snapshot to keep IUCC members and friends aware of the good work being done right here on our IUCC campus each week.

As October ended, the ECC was near capacity, serving 57 children. Serving those kids was a talented staff of ten (some part-time), with one teacher recruitment ongoing, and at least two more teacher recruitments in the planning stages. Continuing demand from client families tell us that the ECC is clearly meeting community needs. We recruit principally by word of mouth, and that is a sure marker of high quality services that parents appreciate. Thus, with the Center effectively at capacity, the congregation sensibly has planned to expand our child care operation.

- We have hired a contractor, and with the move of the church office into new space, we are underway on a renovation project.
- Earlier this month, on the weekend of October 6-7, our contractor began demolition of the space formerly occupied by the senior pastor, church administrator, and bookkeeper.
- Next up is city final approval of the rebuilding plans, and then a relatively short period of construction.
- The goal is to transform the space into a new additional classroom, in which we can serve approximately ten more children.

Full utilization of the renovated space is planned for January, 2019. And, of course, on weekends our IUCC Sunday School can use the new space as well.

Here is the bottom line. Our Early Childhood Center is serving the community with a robust learning program, and is offering the congregation remarkable financial support. Please look for more information in the coming months.

Building Our Community, Being the Change

Did you know your pledge matters? Did you know how much it matters to let us know what you plan to give next year by November 15?

This allows our finance committee to make decisions about what IUCC can accomplish in 2019. Our mission, service, outreach, our staffing, our music program, all depend on our church members’ pledges. It depends on you. Please help us plan what we can do to change the world together. Our members and our neighbors need our loving, welcoming community, and if you’re looking for ways to make a positive difference in the world, start here by nurturing our own vibrant IUCC. Help us turn our dreams into action.

You can make your pledge online at iucc.org, send your pledge card to Irvine UCC at 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine, CA 92604, or just drop your pledge card in the offering plate. If you don’t have a pledge card, no problem! Just make your pledge online or ask for a pledge card at Sunday service.

Thank you!

Your Fund Development Committee,

Susie Lang
Janet Emery
Connie Jones
Linda Haghi
It was a standing room only crowd in IUCC’s new building on October 14 as a knowledgeable trio of church members (Keith Boyum, Dave Smith, and Felicity Figueroa) provided recommendations on California ballot measures.
BSA TROOP 602
Irvine, CA

Executing the Aims of the BSA program, which helps ALL youth be “Prepared. For Life.”

Chartered By: Irvine United Congregational Church
Chartered Organization Rep: Matt Mirmak
Executive Officer: Becky Roach
Scoutmasters: Ken Steinhart and Keith Bauer

Please join us on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. in Plumer Hall to learn more about Troop 602

RSPV and inquired to: irvinetroop602@gmail.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bsatroop602
Website: www.iucc.org/troop602

ALL FEMALE SCOUTS BSA TROOP 602
Irvine, CA

Recollecting Female Youth and Leaders NOW for February 2019

Executing the Aims of the BSA program, which helps ALL youth be “Prepared. For Life.”

Chartered By: Irvine United Congregational Church
Chartered Organization Rep: Matt Mirmak
Executive Officer: Becky Roach
Scoutmasters: Open

Please join us on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. in Plumer Hall to learn more about this new female troop.

RSPV and inquired to: irvintroop602@gmail.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bsatroop602
Website: www.iucc.org/troop602
SHARED SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 20
7:30 P.M.

The Thanksgiving service is one of IUCC’s most inspiring services every year, and this year we’re hosting University Synagogue for the Tuesday, Nov. 20, service. The service begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary, once home to both congregations.

Let’s welcome our University Synagogue sisters and brothers with a big crowd!

After the service, it’s IUCC’s turn to host the reception, too, which will be in Plumer Hall. We need people – right now – willing to help plan and organize refreshments for this event.

We also need some volunteers for the reception itself. Set-up begins at 5 p.m. Clean-up volunteers should plan to stay until the celebrating is done.

Please remember to keep it kosher – no bacon, pork products, shellfish, etc. If you can provide some yummies, or help with set-up/clean-up, please sign up online at https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0f45acab2ca5f49-iucc1. Thank you!

Our reception menu includes quick breads, cookies and cookie bars, and cheese/cracker platters, which should be brought, already plated, to Plumer Hall by 6:30 p.m.
News & Events

Let’s get together on social media!
Did you know? You can check for updates on our website (www.iucc.org) and look for pictures and videos on our Facebook page and on Instagram!

Let’s Clean Our Blue Chairs!
Saturday, November 3
Many hands make light work. Do you have 1-2 hours to help out? We will have portable upholstery cleaning machines that will enable us to work in Plumer Hall and thoroughly clean all the chairs. You choose your time frame. Thank you!

SAVE THE DATE!
IUCC Chancel Choir Winter Concert
“The World Sings at Christmas: A concert of seasonal music inspired from diverse world cultures”
Sunday, December 2, at 7 p.m.

Women’s Fellowship
Wednesday, November 7, 6:30 p.m.
We will meet for our usual “salad bar” supper in Plumer Hall. It will be a social evening, planning for the holidays. Sign-up on the patio this Sunday.

The Seeker’s Women’s Group
Tuesday, November 20, 9:30 a.m.
This dynamic group of women meets on the third Tuesday. This month, they welcome Solange Fisch, a Jewish holocaust survivor, who will be talking about her experience as a child in German-occupied France. Contact Reefa at reefahanny@comline.com for more information.

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed – Funds Provided!
Thank you to our faithful members who have hosted our Sunday morning Coffee Hours this past month. Coffee Hour is such a great time to meet new friends and check in with those whom we value as our church family. Hosting this time is a true ministry to the congregation – and fun as well!

Several members have donated funds to underwrite the costs of Coffee Hour snacks and juice. Now we need YOU to step up and volunteer to host Coffee Hour with those funds. Hosts purchase and prepare the snacks and juice, staff the table during the Coffee Hour between services AND briefly after the second service, and clean up the snacks and coffee. If you would like to take advantage of the donated funds, you simply save your receipts and submit them to the Hospitality Chairs, Sandy Exelby and Jan Wilson, for reimbursement.

To be a host, go to https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0f45acab2ca5f49-iucc to signup on line, or signup on the sheet on the Coffee Hour table any Sunday. And let the Hospitality Chairs know that you intend to make use of the donated funds. Thanks a bunch!

We have no coffee hour hosts signed up for the rest of November or December. Please help!

11/08 Ben Allen 11/26 Matt Mirmak
11/13 Nick Allen 11/28 Ben O’Dell
11/23 Nicole Bermudez 11/28 Roni Portillo
11/10 Jennifer Bullington 11/03 Jean Raymoure
11/04 Beverly Deshler 11/08 Christina Ruiz
11/17 Janet Emery 11/22 Tom Silk
11/29 Emme Exelby 11/10 Michael Spinddle
11/15 George Fulton 11/05 Irene Thornton
11/30 Kelly Garrity 11/17 Rob Thornton
11/13 Dean Inada 11/11 Robert Zane
11/07 Glenna Matthews
EVERY CHILD DESERVES A LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Would you like to make a difference in the life of a child and warm your heart at the same time? IUCC has had a long standing relationship with Families Forward. This wonderful organization helps local OC families who are homeless or at risk. This year IUCC is honored to host a toy drive to bring some joy to children during the holidays.

Your participation is simple and easy: just bring a few (or more) new, unwrapped toys or gift cards on four Sundays between Nov 18 and Dec 9. Bins will be located outside the narthex. Here is a list of the most requested gift items: https://www.families-forward.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Families-Forward-Holiday-Drive-Teen-Drive-List-2017.pdf

If you are bringing gift cards, please put them in a larger envelope and indicate the amount and store name on the front. Thank you for giving disadvantaged children a Merry Christmas to show them that they are loved.

The Newport-Mesa-Irvine Interfaith Council presents the 18th Annual Hearts & Hands Community Service Day

November 17, 2018
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Newport/Mesa Interfaith council is holding their annual Hearts and Hands, a community Day of Service on 11/17 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The location is 801 Dover Dr. Newport Beach. This is an opportunity for the entire family to spend the day in service for others while having fun creating meaningful crafts for organizations all over the world. As a part of the Missions & Services team, I will be hosting a table to help package "Purpose Jewelry” for ISanctuary, an organization that helps survivors of human trafficking. Please stop by my table to help us and take in all the other service projects. Your help for as much time as you have to give will be so worthwhile and appreciated. Stay for the great lunch too! Hope to see many IUCC folks in attendance. ~ Pam Kamps

To sign up: visit www.JustServe.org
For info, email Jaimie Day at jaimiemday@gmail.com

Give Thanks

The Youth of IUCC surprised Pastor Paul with a fountain for the Pastors’ Patio.
(Photo courtesy of Cindy O’Dell)

New Members

Please welcome our new members who joined October 21, 2018. From L to R: John Boudreault; Serge Boudreault; and Karolyn Fencl
(Photo courtesy of Paul Shirey)
Recently a young mother asked me for advice. What, she wanted to know, was she to do with a 7-year-old who was obstreperous, outspoken, and inconveniently willful? “Keep her,” I replied. (Anna Quindlin)

Most adults with a degree of responsibility for children find themselves challenged to some degree when confronted with what are commonly called “behavior problems,” i.e. behavior that is “unacceptable” for any number of reasons. This behavior is often referred to as “challenging” behavior, which I think is a good term because problem behavior signals challenges for both young people and adults. For the child or teen, unacceptable behavior indicates a problem for them in cooperating with expectations from adults. For adults, the challenge is usually the experience of feeling the necessity of responding to the behavior by finding a successful intervention to change unacceptable behavior into acceptable behavior.

In conferences for professionals who work with children and adolescents, “behavior management” workshops are usually the first to fill up. Direct care providers - whether parents, foster parents, day care workers, teachers, or professional child care workers - come to workshops in search of a “bag of tricks” to use in “managing” the behavior of children in their charge. Workshop titles often indicate that if you attend, such a treasure trove of “tricks” or “techniques” will be found. Of course, if it was that easy we could eliminate the word “challenging”!

I think the term “behavior management” is one of the major culprits in presenting such a challenge for adults. The term seems to infer that it is up to the adult to somehow manage the behavior of the child! Feeling the responsibility to somehow “manage” the problem behavior, whether mild or severe, is the issue that causes the kind of stress that can lead to punitive and ineffective interventions with problem behavior. Let me suggest to you that we completely change any inference that we - adults - are being asked to manage someone else’s behavior, unless we are talking about an extremely small child or a child truly mentally incapable of self-management. Let me provide some relief for the stress of managing other people, even children, here at the onset of our deliberations. It is not up to me to manage you!

When we accept that safe, effective and truly helpful interventions are designed to help the child manage their own behavior, the stress falls where it should: to the child/teen who is misbehaving, not to the adult. When this mind-set is employed, adults are in a much better “frame of mind” to approach interventions with more self-confidence and less pressure on themselves to “come up with something that works” immediately. Some problem behaviors actually dissipate quickly when the child or teen senses that they are not challenging the adult, who approaches the situation without trepidation. We always want the young person to feel challenged by their inability to cooperate with our expectations, rather than the parent (or other adult) feeling challenged because they believe the child’s behavior is their problem.

Many workshop presenters and writers have proposed some so-called “techniques” which can be useful and are sometimes helpful. However, a “technique” is a precise way of doing something, like playing a musical instrument. If children were as uncomplicated as musical instruments, we could rely on techniques. However, human beings are far more complex and therefore we can never be assured that a particular way of doing something with a particular child will work. This is especially true for any child or teen dealing with developmental limitations.

From my experience, developing a conceptual framework from which to view so-called “problem” behavior (disruptive, inappropriate, unacceptable, or even harmful behavior), and to view the goals for our interventions with such behavior, is more useful and less likely to be ineffective at changing behavior. I’ll be outlining this approach in the next few columns. Your homework assignment this month is simply to notice if you are sometimes accepting responsibility for your child/teen’s misbehavior. When you do this, they don't.
As I open the door of the hotel room, I feel a catch in my throat and wetness on my cheeks. Tears burst like they’re finally escaping a great holding place behind my eyeballs. Why tears? Awareness dawns: I have this clean, quiet, lovely room all to myself for two full days. Relief feeds those tears, I admit to myself. I’m here because George said, “I’ve got an idea. I think you should go away for a couple days, have some time to yourself.” I suspect that my recent diagnosis of hives and rash precipitated this thought. Whatever the genesis, it is an appreciated suggestion. Should I, could I? I hesitate.

One day later, I have hotel reservations and I’ve made arrangements with our daughter to provide care for George. Okay, I didn’t hesitate long; it was just like my response to “Would you like some ice cream?”

People and articles tell me that caregivers need a respite, a time apart. My friends say, “Be sure to take care of yourself, Vivian.” My daughters caution, “Mom, you need some time away.” Members of my support group are equally compassionate, saying, “How are you holding up? Plan time for yourself.” I’ve said the same thing to others.

So, here I am in a hotel doing just that. My unexpected tears tell me a truth so deeply hidden that I didn’t allow it to surface: I need this escape. Why? I love my husband. I want to help care for him. He’s frail. In his words, “I’m not the man I used to be.” He needs me.

But, if truth be told, caregiving is not easy. Caring for an adult’s daily needs, making sure that correct medications are given at the correct time, cleaning up after toileting and upset stomach, doing laundry, sleep-interrupted nights, financial aspects such as bill paying and income tax preparation. All these, plus being a chauffeur and a listening ear at 16 medical appointments in 8 weeks. (Lest you think I exaggerate, I counted.) No matter how much one wants to do these things, no matter how appreciative the receiver is, it’s not easy.

On the other hand, it’s not easy to let go, to take time away, to retreat. Even though it’s temporary, it feels selfish, this focus on one’s self, this neglect of duty. Then, I remember the words of writer Henri Nouwen, “A life without a lonely place, this is, without a quiet center, becomes destructive.” Hmmm. Wisdom. So I read, I write, reflect, plan, nap, eat when and what I want. Best of all, I am quiet.

It is two days later, time to return home. I’m ready. Just as the space key is important in typing, we need space in life. The last two days were my space keys. Space that allowed me to relax, to analyze, to bring clarity to my life. Not only is space important, it’s imperative. Once again, words from Henri Nouwen rest in my heart: “... when we spend quiet time away from the places where we interact with each other, we are opened for a deeper intimacy with each other.”

Now, I’m home. I’m restored, invigorated, refreshed. Think I’ll have some ice cream!
Your IUCC Stephen Ministry serves the IUCC church family by providing comfort and support to those church members going through any crisis, large or small, or why simply need an ear to talk through a problem. Stephen Ministers are members of IUCC who feel called to volunteer to walk with their fellow church members as they journey through a tough time in their lives.

The Stephen Ministry has been training three new members over the course of the last three months. Subjects studied so far have included:

- Feelings
- The art of listening
- The imperative of maintaining Confidentiality
- Ministering to those in grief or depression

Our current training is scheduled to conclude on December 8 and the new Stephen Ministers will be commissioned on December 9, which has been designated Stephen Ministry Sunday. Please come and welcome your newest Stephen Ministers!

~ Janet Johnson

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*GREENfaith*

*Committed to Environmental Justice*

IUCC is a Creation Justice Church of the UCC

More Environmental Tips
(Collected from various sources by Eileen Vincent)

**Use a Clothesline** - Do your clothes a favor and switch off the dryer. Hang clothes outside to dry naturally. The material will last longer, it will smell and feel fresher, and of course, you are saving on that power usage!

**Have a Vegetarian Day** - You don't have to give up meat for life, but try to commit to one meat free day a week. It takes 2,500 gallons of water to produce a single pound of beef. And each hamburger that comes from animals on ex-forestry ground is responsible for the destruction of 55 square feet of forest.

**Launder Sensibly** - For your own pocket, and the good of the environment, don't wash half loads. Wait until there's enough to do a load and cut your laundry in half. Also, think about the water temperature. If every household in the US switched from a hot to a warm cycle, it could save the equivalent of 100,000 barrels of oil per day.

~ Eileen Vincent for the GREENfaith Team

(GREENfaith team: Judy Curry, Nancy Dreckman, Howard Emery, Carol Getz, Martha Hansen, Bonnie Shaffstall, Eileen Vincent, Anita Schwab, and Vivian Johnson)
A few weeks ago, I received this question on my blog site, “What-Bil-is-saying.” “How do you pray and to whom do you pray, Bil?”

I am often asked this question because I call myself “a Christian A-Theist.” This translates: I do NOT believe there is a god living in his “mansion(s)” above the 3rd tier of the flat earth, an idea prevalent in Jesus’ time and still alive today in Judaism and Christianity, its theology, prayers, liturgies, dogma and doctrine.

However, I do believe scientists who tell me that the universe is composed of 2 to 4 trillion (12 zeroes) galaxies, each with about 100,000 billion stars. I feel there is a “Force” in the universe that I call “Creation.” Bishop Spong calls it “The Ground of all Being.” Alcoholics Anonymous refers to it as “Higher Power.” It’s beyond my comprehension, so I don’t try to explain it. Many do. I can’t. An example: some say, “God is love.” How do they “know” that? I don’t, so I state, “Love is God.” In other words, love is a trait I want my God, Creation, to have. (Could God be an invention of mankind?)

My answer to the initial question is: “Yes, I ‘pray’ every day.” I arise between 5 and 6 a.m. and after making coffee, I go to my desk and spend an hour preparing for the day. I start with a special prayer which reminds me what I (not “NoOneUpThere”) have to do that day to minister to those on my “Concerned” list. It could be a card, a phone call, an email, a visit, a way of saying, “I care!”

Next, I meditate on the daily thought from Sr. Joan Chittister’s publication, “Benetvision.”

I receive four different “religious” magazines: “Sojourners” (Jim Wallace), “The 4th R” (The Jesus Seminar Westar Institute), “Biblical Archeology Review” and “Jewish Insights into Scripture.” I read one article a day in each of them.


I call all this “My Daily Prep” (or Prayers), as it centers me on my Christ, Jesus, and what I have to do to make this a better world in which to live and love.

PeaceLoveHopeJoy

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.
Yes, it's election time again. So while you ponder whether or not you will vote, I offer you this small list of films about the benefits and hazards of democracy. Don't forget: When it came to democracy, Plato wasn't a fan. But what does he know; he's dead.

1) *Duck Soup* (Leo McCarey - 1933) – Groucho and the Marxists demonstrate how despots (specifically Nazis) use war to change the political subject.

2) *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (Frank Capra - 1939) – This is the third time I've listed this film. WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG? SEE THE MOVIE, ALREADY! Sorry, didn't mean to shout.

3) *The Great Dictator* (Charlie Chaplin - 1940) – The Little Tramp uses a beach ball to expose Der Führer's lack of clothing. This is Chaplin at his very best.

4) *A Face in the Crowd* (Elia Kazan - 1957) – After becoming an overnight celebrity, a little country boy, played by the Rev. Andy Griffith, turns into a power-mad kingmaker. Or, should I say, kingfish.

5) *Advise and Consent* (Otto Preminger - 1962) – An object lesson (maybe even a prophecy) about how dirty Senate confirmation hearings can become.

6) *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer - 1962) – The classic anti-communist thriller about brainwashed soldiers being used for assassinations.

7) *The Candidate* (Michael Ritchie - 1972) – Robert Redford is a principled young lawyer who runs for the Senate and loses his principles in the process.

8) *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam - 1985) – Terry Gilliam's post-Python comedy about a dystopian society in which torture victims are charged for their torture procedures.

9) *Secret Honor* (Robert Altman - 1984) – A monodrama about Richard Nixon's last night in the White House. The crew were college kids from Michigan. Go Blue.


11) *Wag the Dog* (Barry Levinson – 1997) Robert DeNiro and Dustin Hoffman concoct a fake war to save a Presidential candidate from an October surprise. One of the last of David Mamet's great scripts.

12) *The West Wing* (Aaron Sorkin – 1999-2006) – Aaron Sorkin's masterpiece. A brilliant portrayal of how our democratic republic works at the nuts-and-bolts level. If you've not seen these shows yet, GET BUSY! Sorry; yelling again.

13) *The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross – 2012) – A dystopian depiction of another kind of fascist state. This one uses an odd mixture of violence and show biz to distract, then oppress its people. This film made Jennifer Lawrence a star.

With thanks to Felicity Figueroa for her clever and timely “Vote” pumpkin! - Editor