Our Christmas pageant on December 23 was joyful!

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
Dear Friends:

This has been one of the most difficult moments for me in my ministry. For a while now, I have been assessing where I am in my ability to be at my best, and where IUCC is in terms of what it needs now that the building is completed and the pre-school is ready to expand.

Last week, our members received a letter from me stating that I will be stepping down on June 9 (Pentecost Sunday).

Sunday’s services were hard for me to get through. Please take the emotions I was struggling with as a testimony to how much I love this community. There is a moment that occurs in the more fortunate pastorates when you hear yourself say, “we” instead of, “you.” Once that happens, the walls begin to fall until you finding yourself grieving and celebrating along with your congregation, and I reached that place a long time ago.

Thirteen years is a long pastorate. I am leaving a couple of years earlier than I had hoped so that I can take care of my health and we can travel while we can. I also think that the next chapter for the church is ahead of you, and the church needs to be ready.

As we settle into this new and beautiful space in these few months ahead, let’s concentrate on building relationships and finding new ways to serve. Not long from now, the wheels will start turning as the church puts together a profile and gets advice from our Conference Minister, Felix Villanueva, and our own Long-Range Plan. Read our Moderator’s column in this issue, and you will see that our leadership, with Renae’s thoughtful guidance, is already planning ahead. Certainly by the time I step down, you will be thinking about an energetic new leader to take you to new places and fill our new spaces with ways to honor God in Community.

You are a strong, smart and loving congregation. Keep the faith and move forward. You have so much more to do.

Support your church. Almost everyone can give something—remember the story of Jesus and the Widow’s Mite.

Carl and I have shared in many wonderful moments with you in this church community. We would both agree that our wedding was one of the most joyful and meaningful. It all comes down to what matters most - being rooted in faith and community, and all that it gives back to us in love and support.

We look forward to the next months ahead with you.

Faithfully Yours,

Pastor Paul
Mark your calendars! IUCC’s Hawaiian-themed Winter Party is Feb. 9!

The IUCC Fellowship Ministry wants you to escape to Hawaii, if only for the evening, at the Annual Winter Party, starting at 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 9. It will be held in the Woodbridge Village Community Center adjacent to IUCC.

A $30 ticket buys a Hawaiian dinner, your choice of a beverage (cocktails, wine, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages will be available) and an evening of fun and fellowship.

Look for members of the Fellowship Ministry (August Lobato, Wayne and Debra Banwell, Alyssa Cornett, Pat Sauter, Dean McCleskey or Cindy O’Dell) to reserve a place for yourself and your friends!

Because alcohol will be available, the winter party is for adults only. Child care is available with advance notice. We hope to see you there!
Moderator’s Column

by Renae Boyum

What a year this has been in the life of IUCC! We have said goodbye and Godspeed to a beloved church administrator and an amazing music director. We have welcomed new, talented additions to our staff. We have watched the construction of our new space and, in a grand celebration, welcomed the promise of what the new space means for us. Finally, Pastor Paul announced his retirement as our loved and respected pastor, mentor, teacher, and friend.

Needless to say, there will be many future accolades given by me and other members and friends of IUCC, but for now let me say how much I treasure Paul’s incredible gifts to all of us. As moderator, it has been my privilege to work closely with him - he has been a caring presence, a wonderful listener, and a constant source of love and support to me. I look forward to working with him during the rest of his time with us. I look forward to celebrating and thanking him. I look forward to building on the firm foundation he has given. I look forward to a bright and prosperous future for this vibrant community of faith.

So what happens next? The Administration Board has begun discussing next steps for both the Interim Pastor and a new permanent pastor. I will convene a meeting of recent past moderators - Diane Rust, Randy Romine, Dave Schofield, Keith Boyum, Cindy O’Dell, and Anne Rosse - to gather wisdom and advice on how we can best move forward during this time of transition and change.

The Chair of the Ministry Board, Felicity Figueroa, and the Chair of the Administration Board, Daniel Blackburn, will also be at this meeting. At some point in the near future, we will meet with our conference minister to discuss the process for hiring an Interim Minister and for calling a new Pastor. Later, we will begin the process of forming a search committee that will be elected by the congregation at a special congregation meeting.

During this time of challenges and opportunities some things will remain constant.

We will continue to rely on our Administrative Pastor, Steve Swope, to provide ongoing support for the daily life of IUCC. Steve will offer his considerable organizing and planning skills to ensure that details are handled in an efficient, effective manner.

Pastor Sarah Fiske-Phillips will continue in a part-time capacity as Assistant Pastor working with the Ministry for Young People. She is also working in Claremont at Crossroads - a residential program for formerly incarcerated women. Sarah will have an Ecclesiastical Council where she will hopefully be formally approved by the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC for ordination. Sometime this spring, Sarah will be ordained here at IUCC.

As Pastor Paul mentioned in his announcement, neither Steve nor Sarah will be a candidate for either the Interim or Permanent Pastor position.

One of the hallmarks of IUCC is strong and capable lay leadership. That will continue. Both the Administration and Ministries boards are blessed with amazing leaders who give willingly to ensure that we are moving forward to be a beacon of faith and promise in our community.

IUCC is a robust and healthy faith community. That will continue, too. There will be challenges in the months ahead, but this time also offers special opportunities to look back at Pastor Paul’s tenure with us, to celebrate the many successes, and to assess where we’ve been and where we want to be.

I look forward to working with you. As always, we will do that IN FAITH AND COMMUNITY.

Renae Boyum, Moderator
Looking ahead, we’re planning two major speaker events for 2019, and you’ll want to mark these dates in your calendars now!

On Saturday and Sunday, March 30 & 31, Rev. Traci Blackmon will be our guest. She is the national head of Justice & Witness Ministries for the UCC, as well as a local church pastor in the St. Louis area.

Rev. Blackmon was deeply involved in the protests around Michael Brown’s killing in Ferguson, Missouri, and she has joined with Rev. William Barber on a new Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival. She will speak twice on Saturday, March 30, and will preach in both worship services the following day.

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And you won’t want to miss John Dominic Crossan in October! Yes, he’ll be with us again on October 26 & 27, speaking twice on Saturday the 26th and preaching in both services on Sunday the 27th. More information, of course, as we get closer to the date.

Welcome to a new year! Adult Programs in 2019 will offer “more of the same” and some new stuff, too.

In **Adult Sunday School**, we’re exploring the years between Jesus’ death and the reign of Constantine. How DID the Christian church get to be organized? Why did various doctrines come to be?

On January 20, historian Glenna Matthews will start a 3-week series on significant moments and persons in **Christian social justice**, ending on February 3. Join us at 8:45 or 10:00 on Sunday mornings in the new meeting rooms!

**Bible Study** on Tuesdays took a 2-week break; it seems no one wanted to meet on Christmas Day or New Year’s Day! But we’ll return to it on January 8, diving back into the book of Acts with lifeguard Ken Wyant, who keeps us safe in deep biblical waters.

I hope you’ve already seen the information about our newest offerings. Kelly Garrity will be leading a weekly **Yoga** session in Plumer Hall on Sunday afternoons at 3:30. Kelly will be using resources from Y12SR, a Yoga practice designed especially for those dealing with addictive behaviors – but accessible and beneficial to all.

Ask Kelly about it – and if you have some gently-used (or unused) Yoga equipment lying around, let her know! We’d love to “equip” the space to make sure everyone can participate fully. Yoga begins on January 6!

Also beginning in January, a chance to watch and discuss **TED Talks** videos. Al Gumb (a newer member but a regular at Bible Study and Adult Sunday School) leads a **TED Talks** discussion in Laguna Beach, and he’s starting one here at IUCC.

The first gathering is at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 23, and he’ll continue on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays after that.
IUCC’s Early Childhood Center hosted a Family Holiday Program on December 14 that most members will not have heard much about. It was for preschool parents and friends, and the performers were, of course, the children in the preschool (shown at upper left). I counted 45 on stage at one point, being led by a special music teacher, encouraged and prompted by our regular preschool teachers, and accompanied by a preschool parent volunteer. Pastor Paul and our preschool staff are shown in photo at lower left.

Representing the congregation at the gathering were Pastor Paul, and Child Care Committee members Sandy Sudweeks, Laura Long, and me (Keith Boyum), shown with Pastor Paul at lower right. During my welcoming remarks, I asked the full house audience to “wave Merry Christmas” to the IUCC congregation. You’ll see the cheerful result in the photo at upper right.

Ah, and representing both IUCC and the North Pole was Santa Claus (a.k.a. Keith Dillon, shown at left). The children and families were delighted, and the kids each had a chance to visit with Santa.

The event was a success – and I am sure we’ll do it again next December.

*Photos and article courtesy of Keith Boyum*
Photos of Early Childhood Center Upgrade and Refresh

Photos courtesy of Keith Boyum
Most readers will know that we have been putting in a new classroom for our Early Childhood Center. Occupying the space that Pastor Paul, Heidi, Michael, and - for a time, Steve - shared, the new classroom will accommodate an additional twelve children, bringing the preschool total number to 60 children. We expect the new space to be available for programming this month, in January 2019, following a final city inspection of the new construction, now that we have passed the review from the state licensing board.

At the recommendation of the IUCC Child Care Committee, a complete rebuild of cabinets and counter tops in the preschool kitchen was nearing completion in December (see photo above). Other kitchen improvements were also being completed, including flooring, heat shields, and electrical switches. The goal was to achieve the rebuild and refresh work during the Winter break in the preschool schedule. An additional bit of work for that kitchen contractor was another upgrade: workers installed new flooring in the preschool boys’ bathroom.

Finally, completing the refresh for the Early Childhood Center, we purchased new venetian blinds and had them professionally installed in our existing classrooms. They provide appropriate window treatments, and a much improved look.

It’s worth noting that our Early Childcare Center is one of the few in Irvine to offer cooked (hot) lunches to the children. It’s a positive differentiator in the market as parents look for the right school for their young children. It’s also worth noting that, as we open our doors to new clients who will fill up the new space, we will have a good look. It will be a best-foot-forward as Director Irma Rosales offers guided tours of our facility to prospective families and children.

Finally, please note that the costs for all of these upgrades, refreshments and improvements have been drawn from preschool reserves, and have not been a draw upon the congregational general budget.

Serving the community. Contributing to IUCC’s general financial health. Keeping “the furniture-assembling-six” off the streets! Thanks to those who put all of that furniture together, and thanks to Director Irma Rosales and a talented and dedicated staff for making all of this a success.
On December 25th, the Scouts, leaders, and families of Troop 602 went to Isaiah House to help feed the homeless of Orange County breakfast on Christmas Day. This service project has been an annual tradition for Troop 602 for the last three years. It is projects like this that showcase the best qualities of the Scouting program and American youth.

Troop 602 meets on Tuesday nights in Plumer Hall at 7:00 p.m. If your child is 10-17 years old and is looking for an activity that emphasizes leadership, civic involvement, outdoor education, and environmental stewardship, Troop 602 is the place to be. Troop 602 also does one overnight weekend outing a month and actively participates in service projects in the community. For more information about Troop 602, please email irvinetroop602@gmail.com.

Article by Matt Mirmak
Four Scout photos below courtesy of Yiling Chen and Ken Steinhart
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!

SAVE THE DATES!
Budget Forum
Sunday, January 20, at 12:30 p.m.
Winter Congregational Meeting
Sunday, Jan. 27, at 12:30 p.m.

Learn what’s next for IUCC, including the 2019 budget (congregational approval needed). A quorum of members is needed in the Sanctuary for the meeting to begin.

Yoga of Recovery
Starts Sunday, Jan. 6, 3:30 p.m.
This new program, offered by Kelly Garrrity, is a 12-step based discussion and yoga practice. Y12SR is recommended for anyone dealing with their own addictive behavior or the addictive behaviors of others. The class will be held weekly on Sunday afternoons.

Isaiah House
Wednesday, January 9, 4 p.m.
Volunteers serve a meal to homeless women at Isaiah House on the 2nd Wednesday of each month. Call (949) 436-1946 for more info.

The Seeker’s Women’s Group
Tuesday, Jan. 15, 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.

Red Cross Blood Drive
Sunday, Jan. 27, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
A Red Cross Bloodmobile will be in our parking lot from 10 am to 4 pm that day to accept blood donations.

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed – Funds Provided!
Thanks to those who heeded our call to bring leftover holiday goodies for our Potluck Coffee Hour on December 30. We may make this an an annual tradition!

To serve as host for an upcoming Sunday, use this link: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0f45acab2ca5f49-iucc to signup online, or signup on the sheet on the Coffee Hour table any Sunday. And let us know if you intend to make use of the donated funds we have in reserve. Thanks!

~ Sandy Exelby & Jan Wilson
IUCC has a Bioswale!

IUCC Has a Bioswale … and most people don’t even know it. Per Wikipedia, a bioswale is a landscape element designed to remove debris and pollution from surface runoff water. Ours is behind Plumer Hall, and was installed as part of our new construction.

Bioswales feature a wide and shallow ditch, designed to maximize the time water spends in the swale, thus trapping silt and debris that would otherwise flow to the ocean. Bioswales like ours also benefit groundwater recharge, and are thus effective storm water mitigation tools. You can learn more online here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bioswale

Take a look sometime, and note that this feature is doing quite a bit to live up to IUCC’s green faith philosophy!

~ Keith Boyum

On Stephen Ministry Sunday, December 9, the Stephen Ministry welcomed three new Stephen Ministers who were commissioned by the congregation at both services. Apoorva Ghosh, Teri Olson, and Allison Singer have completed their 50 hours of training with flying colors and are ready to serve. We also commissioned our newest Stephen leaders Jeanne Maag, Cheryl Trobiani, and Janet Johnson and honored the service of outgoing Stephen leaders Dave Schofield and Brian Pearcy-Schofield. Our continuing Stephen Ministers, Diane Rust and Don Mansell, and several former Stephen Ministers joined us at a luncheon following the service.

Stephen Ministers are members of our church who feel called to volunteer to walk with their fellow church members as they deal with crises in their lives. If you have questions about the Stephen Ministry, please feel free to ask any of us.

~ Janet Johnson

Please welcome these new members who joined on Dec. 9, 2018. (L to R: Randy Brown, Carolyn Brown, and Sheryl Ryan)

Photo courtesy of Paul Shirey
When parents and professionals respond to child/teen behavior that we find unacceptable, the popular tendency is to focus on what they are doing, rather than why they are doing it. If we don't understand what they are trying to accomplish with their behavior, we risk being unsuccessful at helping them change their behavior. Asking why someone is acting the way they are helps both the child and the parent. It reassures the child/young person that their behavior has a purpose and a goal and is not coming from nowhere. This will help them understand that we are not correcting what they want, but rather the way they are trying to get it. Understanding why someone is doing what they are doing also helps the parent figure out a consequence that will also have a purpose. Hopefully, then, both parent and child will be able to make sense of a consequence, and understand that it is not just meant to be punishment, but a way to learn how to stay out of trouble and still get what you want.

Last month we talked about the importance of thinking before acting. Let your child/teen see you deciding how you will respond. I've often noticed how children begin to settle down when they see that the adult is starting to think about how they are going to try to help them. The display of pausing before acting shows love and concern: “Let me think for a minute about how I can help you.” Some parents think they will appear weak if they don't respond immediately when their child/teen “acts out,” but in fact it shows strength when a parent deliberates a while rather than just snapping out a reaction that may not make sense or be helpful. Always feel comfortable giving yourself time to do something in response to behavior you don't like that you think will help your child/teen learn something. They will respect you more, and you will respect yourself more.

A behavior is “unacceptable” only if a child is old enough to understand and follow a requested behavior because they have been taught how to do what you want. Telling a child to “go and clean your room” can be interpreted in a myriad of different ways to a young or adolescent mind. Responding negatively when the room is not cleaned to our satisfaction is unfair unless we know the child/teen is capable of doing it the way we want it done because they have been taught to.

Frankly, sometimes behavior is “unacceptable” to us because we don't care for how tedious it is to wait for a child to “grow up.” It is true that some perfectly “normal” behavior can be very irritating. Young children will always be “immature,” which is not a judgment but a fact. Teenagers can be a pain in the neck, but the treatment for adolescence is growing up – which takes a while. Although we preach assertiveness, we often do not appreciate a child being assertive with us. In other words, sometimes we are the problem more than the child. Before deciding that a particular behavior requires an “intervention,” we owe it to our children to be sure the problem is theirs, and not ours. I’ll end our deliberations for this month with a thought provoking poem:

In her book “Setting Up Kids for Success,” Ann Anzalone has pointed out that adults are not quite as crazy about kids as many assume, and that we often have a way of “re-naming” things that are acceptable when we do them into “problems” when kids do them. She writes:

If an adult is reinforced for behaving appropriately
we call it motivating;
If a child is reinforced for behaving appropriately
we call it bribery.
If an adult laughs we call it socializing;
If a child laughs we call it misbehaving.
If an adult writes in a book we call it doodling;
If a child writes in a book we call it destroying property.
If an adult sticks to something we call it perseverance;
If a child sticks to something we call it stubbornness.
If an adult seeks help we call it consulting;
If a child seeks help we call it whining.
If an adult is not paying attention we call it preoccupation;
If a child is not paying attention we call it distractibility.
If an adult forgets something we call it absentmindedness;
If a child forgets something we call it lack of interest.
If an adult tells their side of the story we call it clarification;
If a child tells their side of the story we call it talking back.
If an adult raises their voice in anger
we call it maintaining control;
If a child raises their voice in anger
we call it a temper tantrum.
If an adult hits a child we call it discipline;
If a child hits a child we call it fighting.
If an adult behaves in an unusual way we call it unique;
If a child behaves in an unusual way we refer them for Psychological Evaluation.
Deck the halls! I’ve always enjoyed decorating for Christmas. But things are different now. With an apartment of 734 square feet, there is not much space, and certainly no halls in which to hang holly. Besides, will we have any guests to see them? Well, I decide, I’ll put up a few decorations; George likes them. In the future he may not have the same capacity to enjoy them due to his progressing dementia. I’ll do it for him.

The maintenance man, the personification of patience, drags out the Christmas box from storage. I open it; it emits a musky odor from being tucked away in a dark, devoid of fresh air cupboard for a year. What should I take out to put on the coffee table? Here’s the pure-white ceramic Holy Family, a gift from our wedding attendants, Bruce and Gloria. Memories float out as I place it in the center of the table. Here are the glass snowball candleholders that we purchased the year we lived in Sweden. More memories as they grace the table. Oh, Joan gave me this shiny angel. Nan and Ian presented us with these tall, elegant candleholders for our 50th wedding anniversary. Memories ... mmm-m-m, this is fun!

I unwrap the eucalyptus tree candleholders, a wedding gift 58 years ago. They look just right standing on the ancient table on which we acquire from George’s mother. The five angels inscribed with our grandchildren’s names smile at us from their new perch on top of the bookcase. The next item I pull out of the Christmas box is precious: it is the very first nativity set my son Todd and I bought. We found it at Woolworth’s Five and Dime, a store in Minneapolis. Our funds were limited in 1958, so the figures are small, and we could only afford one wiseman, rather than the traditional three. Surprisingly, the 60-year-old set has survived, except Joseph has a chip on his forehead. Better than a “chip on his shoulder,” I suppose.

One of my favorite nativity sets is the one with Joseph leading a donkey carrying Mary and baby Jesus. If you look closely, you’ll see Jesus is sucking his thumb! It portrays the holy family fleeing the violence of Israel after the birth of Jesus. As any refugee knows, in the midst of fear a thumb can be of comfort to a child. These figures, in all their charm, now sit on our entrance table. Another favorite is on the kitchen counter: my friend Sharon made the stuffed cloth figures, each eight to ten inches tall. I love the funky cow looking adoringly at Jesus in his straw manger.

We once had over 50 nativity sets, many of them gifts. Most are now living in our daughters’ homes. A young visitor said, with great appreciation, to one of our daughters, “You sure have a lot of Jesus’ family in your house!”

I stand back and look at the results of my labor. I’m glad I decorated and didn’t miss this opportunity to walk down memory lane. With memories, came enthusiasm for my task. Best of all, George is pleased. Yes, deck the halls. La, la, la.

Later, I return to my chair in the living room, drawn back by the aroma of the gingerbread candle wafting throughout the apartment. I recall that the Christmas carol has another line: “’Tis the season to be jolly, Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.”

Deck the halls is one thing, but are we really up to being jolly? In hearing the news of the day, whether it be local, national, or international, one might be tempted to forget the holly and jolly of the season. Furthermore, I reflect on our current lives. We are elderly and less physically able. We have sad days as we miss friends and relatives who have left this earth – and worse, they’ve left us. We are unable to contribute as we once did. Also, we are on the periphery, no longer in the center of action. It’s not easy to be jolly when we yearn for “what was.”

With such thoughts lingering in my head, I know that aging requires one to adapt, that is, stop clinging to stale expectations of ourselves or the people we love. Just as I learned that I don’t need a big house to enjoy decorating, perhaps I don’t need “what was” to enjoy life. Perhaps I can even be “jolly.” After all, though we are elderly, many people include us in their lives. Our younger friends and relatives lead full, productive lives, yet they take time to show us love. There is also a unique beauty and vitality in making new relationships. While we miss those who are no longer with us, we can focus on relationships with those who are here.

Our contributions, too, are different now: we can encourage the younger generation, we can display a generosity of spirit – and of material goods, we can assist other elderly and, at the other end of the spectrum, pay attention to the young. We’re no longer the center of activity, but it wasn’t many years ago that I craved more time to relax and sit back and observe. We can do that now; we’re not expected to work as we once did. What’s not jolly about that?

I look around our home, taking in its beauty, and I notice the serenity of the glowing, white and silver candle on our table. As its flame dispels darkness, it reminds me of the spirit of hope, hope in the midst of imperfection in ourselves and in the world.

Wherein lies that spirit of hope?
Hope lies in believing God is with us.
Hope lies in expressing good will to all people.
Hope lies in working for peace on earth.

When hope resides within us, we can hang the holly and, dare I say, be jolly!

Together, may we hang the moist, shiny, aromatic, living boughs of holly. May we join in sharing the holly of hope and joy throughout the cobwebbed hallways of the world.
Happy what? Baloney Day? January 6th is really The Feast Day of the Epiphany when the church celebrates the coming of the Magi to bring gifts to Jesus in his house in Bethlehem.

This story is found in the Gospel of Matthew 2:1-12. It was first seen nine decades after Jesus was born. It was not intended to give accurate information about the birth of Jesus. No one knows the where and when. It was written to tell the Jewish people that Jesus was and is the long-awaited Messiah, recognized not only by the Magi from far away but also by a celestial sign, a special star.

The story is improbable. It is unlikely that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. His family was from Nazareth. Then the timeline is off as well. Once the wise men recognized the star, coordinated their trip, and journeyed to Bethlehem, it would have taken them a couple of years to get there. Real stars do not stop, much less hover over houses. In the Old Testament, often stars were angels.

Here’s where more baloney enters the story. Over the years, story tellers have told us that there were three kings. The Bible story never mentions any number. There could have been a hundred. Fiction has given the three kings names: Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar. Fiction says they were riding camels or, in Turkey, horses. Matthew says nothing about names or animals.

Most people will say that Jesus was born in a stable. This Gospel says the Wise men found Jesus in a house. (2:11) The truth: neither story tells where Jesus was born. Luke says there was no room in the inn but never says where he was born. Again, we’ll never know, but the historical Jesus was probably born in a house in Nazareth.

And December 25? Pope Julius I settled on that date for the celebration of Jesus’ birth only in the year 350, and the first time it appears in a written record is four years later.

Here’s some more baloney. In Bulgaria, in the middle of winter, someone throws a Cross in the ocean or a lake and then men drive in and try to find the Cross. What in the world does that have to do with Epiphany? In Latin America, the children fill their shoes with food for the camels and then the Magi come and bring them gifts.

In France, they put a little figurine of Jesus in a batter of cake or bread mix and bake him (that’s why Jesus is so holy. They cook the heck out of him.) The bread or cake is then cut and whoever finds the figurine gets to “bake” Jesus the next year. Caramba! What does that have to do with Epiphany?

Thus, my title is “Happy Baloney Day” - because so many folks have taken a simple story, that Jesus is the Christ, and made it into unbelievable baloney. I’m for going back to the original purpose. It’s a make-believe story in which believers have this great “Epiphany” that Jesus is our Christ and, like the Magi and star, we need to follow him and do agape. No more baloney. It only detracts from following him.

PeaceLoveJoyHope,
Bil
My website: www.Peacelovejoyhope.com
My blog is “what-bil-is-saying.com”

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.
Most of you who know me know that I love musicals: stage musicals, movie musicals, you name it, I love ‘em all. Now you can’t be a lover of musicals without having a soft spot in your heart for the occasional misfire. So this month, I offer you a list of (mostly) misfires. Each of these films was made by a director who was better known for masterpieces in other genres. Enjoy.

1) **Showboat** (James Whale-1936) – James Whale made horror films like *Frankenstein*. Yet his remake of *Showboat* is one of Hollywood’s finest film adaptations of a stage musical.

2) **Yankee Doodle Dandy** (Michael Curtiz -1942) – Although Mr. Curtiz is best known to us for directing *Casablanca*, he was responsible for quite a few movie musicals. My favorite, at least at this writing, is Jimmy Cagney’s bio-pic about George M. Cohan.

3) **Oklahoma!** (Fred Zinneman-1955) – Mr. Zinneman’s biggest hit was *High Noon*, easily one of the best of Gary Cooper’s westerns. Yet in 1955, Mr. Zinneman brought Rodgers and Hammersteins’ groundbreaking masterpiece to the widescreen. It was okay, but it wasn’t R & H at their finest.

4) **The Pirate** (Vincente Minnelli-1948) – Here’s where the wheels come off the wagon. Vincente Minnelli, Judy Garland and Gene Kelly, three of the leading lights at the Arthur Freed Musical unit, made one of the most laughably bad musical films ever made.

5) **Thoroughly Modern Millie** (George Roy Hill-1967) - George Roy Hill perfected the crime comedy with *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Sting*. Yet this silly do about flappers starring Julie Andrews, Mary Tyler Moore and Carol Channing is one of the most delightful unintentional comedies in the history of the movie musical.

6) **Finian’s Rainbow** (Francis Ford Coppola-1968) – the director of such masterpieces as *The Conversation*, *Apocalypse Now* and, of course, the *Godfather* films, turned this Irish delight into a musical confusion. Unfortunately, it was Fred Astaire’s last musical.

7) **Jesus Christ Superstar** (Norman Jewison-1973) – Actually, Norman Jewison, best known these days for *The Thomas Crown Affair* and *In the Heat of the Night*, made some pretty good musicals. But *Superstar* was not one of them. This film should’ve been subtitled *Bad Acid Trip at Burning Man*.

8) **The Wiz** (Sidney Lumet-1978) - Lumet has given us masterpieces such as *12 Angry Men* and *Dog Day Afternoon*. Nonetheless, he completely screwed this one up. He cast Diana Ross as Dorothy and turned her into a middle-aged school marm.

9) **Popeye** (Robert Altman-1980) - Altman’s one of my favorite American filmmakers. And he had the perfect cast for this one: Robin Williams and Shelly Duvall as Popeye and Olive Oyl. Yet it just didn’t work. For one thing, the score was terrible.

10) **A Chorus Line** (Richard Attenborough-1986) - Attenborough directed bio-pics like *Gandhi* and *Cry Freedom*. But he didn’t understand how to make a musical. For one thing, he often didn’t let his actors finish their songs before cutting away to a new shot.

11) **Annie** (John Huston-1988) – Huston was Bogey’s favorite director. A real man’s man. So why would he want to make a musical about Little Orphan Annie for goodness sake?

12) **The Fantasticks** (Michael Ritchie-1996) - Ritchie, director of *The Candidate* and, currently, Artistic Director of the Center Theatre Group, tried to turn this stage-bound musical into a piece of cinema. The result is boredom.

Next month, we look into the career of one of the most underappreciated performers in the history of American culture: Robert Rounseville.