IUCC’s Trunk or Treat on Oct. 27 was a big success!
IUCC was thrilled and honored to welcome John Dominic Crossan as our guest speaker on October 26-27. Dr. Crossan, a co-chair of the Jesus Seminar from 1985-1996, is a world-renowned scholar, author, and speaker. For a brief recap of the second of his two Saturday lectures, see pages 7-8. Special kudos to Administrative Pastor Steve Swope for his hard work in making this stellar event possible! - Editor

Photos on pages 1 and 2 courtesy of Tricia Aynes
Pastoral Search Committee Presents the Church Profile

On November 3, over 50 members of the congregation gathered after second service to hear the Pastoral Search Committee present a summary of the Church Profile. The profile seeks to answer the question of who we are and what we are seeking in a settled pastor. It will remain on the church website for another few days, so be sure to take the opportunity to read it in its entirety!

A Note from Pastor Dave

The weather is so nice in southern California that I hardly notice the change of seasons. I’ve been swimming and riding my bike this fall pretty much the same as in June when I arrived. Now, five months later, while I’m still wearing shorts and t-shirts to go on a leisurely walk with my dog, friends back in Illinois and Ohio are sending me photos of their first snow.

It feels almost like summer to me, except for one seasonal shift that’s the same here as it is in the chilly north. The sun sets early, the nights are long, and most of my days begin in the dark.

Life is light and shadow… as are we. So let us be grateful for this and every season, seedtime and harvest, the tilt toward and away, this day, this moment that is always passing and being renewed, animated by love.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Pastor Dave

Photos courtesy of Glenda Wyant and Tricia Aynes
EVERY CHILD DESERVES A LITTLE CHRISTMAS
TOY DRIVE NOV 10 – DEC 8

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 5 Sundays between Nov 10 and Dec 8. Bins will be located on the patio.


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!

Mission & Service Ministry

Stewardship! A new approach! Over the next month you will hear more about the change coming in the timing of our annual Stewardship Campaign.

How many appeals are you receiving in the mail from various charitable organizations? The TV Station PBS? The Radio Station KUSC? The Orange County Mission? Doctors Without Borders? The Heifer Project? The Bowers Museum in Santa Ana? the list goes on and on!

Instead of looking at Stewardship as merely fund raising, we are changing the focus of Stewardship to one of ministry. Giving of your monetary gifts is a spiritual practice. Just as visiting the sick, preparing food for coffee hour, serving on a committee, singing in the choir or serving as worship leader are all aspects of personal ministry to IUCC.

In this change, we are moving the timing of Stewardship from fall to January…to Epiphany when the Magi brought their gifts to the Christ child. We’re changing the focus to be on the Magi …becoming role models for seekers who are on a journey to discover God’s presence in the world.

Nothing will change as far as your giving schedule for 2020…just the timing of your pledge. (Of course pledges made on the previous schedule of fall will be joyfully welcomed!)

Yours in faith and community,

Stewardship Campaign
Janet Emery, co-chair
Susie Lang, co-chair
Connie Jones, committee member
In both my former professional life as a teacher, union president, student activities director, and mentor to history teachers, and in my volunteer life as a member of the Assistance League of Irvine (and of course, here at Irvine United Congregational Church), one of my favorite sayings strikes me as having great value and validity. In all of those endeavors, it was and is important to be “professionally persistent” and “respectfully relentless” - in other words, keep working and trying. And don’t give up.

I’ve seen those words in action here at IUCC in a variety of ways. Think of the work of two of our social justice/action ministries - the Advocates for Peace and Justice and Mission and Service. Both ministries have set their eyes on programs and activities that ensure a “just world for all.” Big picture issues like immigration and climate change are part of what they tackle; but there are also more day-to-day activities like writing letters, mounting food drives for Families Forward, participating in rallies, and helping out with Family Promise (to name just a few). The many committed members of these ministries truly are persistent and relentless.

I think of the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. This task force grew out of a desire to make our stated commitment to diversity be more visible and evident - a desire to put our words into action. Not an easy task but a necessary one - one that will require persistence and relentlessness.

I think of our ongoing commitment to growing programs for our youth, families with young children, and young adults. Through the years, we’ve met with varying degrees of success, and I think it’s fair to say we are still being persistent and relentless in our desire to grow and make these programs prosper. When I see our youth leading worship on Youth Sunday, it’s visible evidence of how this church can make a difference and how important youth programs are to the life of IUCC.

These are just a few examples of the persistent and relentless part of the words above. It’s important also to note that parts of those statements are the words “professionally” and “respectfully.” We may not always agree on how to achieve our goals and ideas. We may disagree on how to best use our resources. The bottom line is that treating each other with dignity and respect is vital to our community of faith.

I hope you’ve had a chance to read our Local Church Profile at www.iucc.org. The completion of this profile is the first critical step as we begin the process of calling our next settled pastor. The profile was compiled and written by the elected Pastoral Search Committee: Keith Boyum, Chair; Aidan Mitchell, Vice-Chair, Tricia Aynes, Connie Jones, Eduardo Arismendi-Pardi, Craig Tyril, and Ken Wyant. They have indeed been professionally persistent and respectfully relentless as they sought input, worked through many drafts, and finally completed this many-faceted document.

Finally, I like these words from the back of the October 20 Sunday bulletin. They remind us that what we do as a church - the work of justice - happens in many ways:

- The work of justice is getting educated about the issues
- The work of justice is marching in the streets
- The work of justice is writing letters to those in power
- The work of justice is prayers of persistence
- The work of justice is showing up again and again and again
- AND ALSO
  - The work of justice is gathering community
  - The work of justice is taking time to be creative
  - The work of justice is experiencing intentional sabbath
  - The work of justice is letting go of perfectionism
  - The work of justice is feeling optimism balanced with realism
  - The work of justice is focusing on the task at hand
  - The work of justice is seeing the long view
  - The work of justice is praying with gratitude

These words are powerful ways that all of us can be professionally persistent and respectfully relentless as we strive to make a “just world for all.”

As always, we will do that in faith and community.  

Renae Boyum
I hope you all enjoyed John Dominic Crossan’s visit last month! (He says with a big sigh of relief.) What a wonderful experience – I’m thrilled that so many people turned out!

Thanks to all who helped, to all who attended, and especially to those who supported the Plumer Adult Education Endowment Fund at Saturday’s dinner event.

Our next speaker, on March 14 & 15, is John Pavlovitz, author and blogging social critic. And the Adult Programs Ministry is already thinking about next fall. We’d really like to identify a dynamic speaker who (1) is a person of color and (2) has written a book our Comma Groups can study together. Please share your ideas with me!

Thanks are due to Craig Repp for continuing the climate-crisis theme with Sunday morning discussions on the book *Overshoot!* On Nov. 3 I’ll wrap up conversations about the biblical canon and its contemporary relevance.

And on Nov. 11 Terry LePage will survey “KKK to the Present Day: Racism in Orange County.” It will be a helpful lead-in to the Diversity & Inclusion Task Force’s panel discussion at 12:15 that day.

Ken Wyant has returned from traveling and is jumping right back into Tuesday Bible Study. We’re closing in on the end of 1 Peter, but there are still four short New Testament letters to go! Join in, Tuesdays at 4 pm.

Don’t forget Kelly Garrity’s yoga sessions at 7:30 a.m. in the Wisdom Room – on Nov. 10 & 24! And Al Gumb brings his discussion-group experience to TED Talks – at 4 p.m. on Nov. 13 and 27 in the Peace-Justice Rooms.

On the “facilities front,” the patio-walkway cover is coming down, due to beyond-repair damage and wear. The concrete base under each support post will be made level, when no one is around to hear the noise.

What will replace it to provide shade on the patio? The Administration Board is working on ideas, with “installation as soon as possible” as the goal. And we’ll be replacing some lighting and working on the un-level concrete soon, too.

Thanks to numerous daily, weekly, monthly, and one-time events in October, our new facilities helped us connect with our community 42 times last month!

Last but not least – our annual Thanksgiving Service, this year at University Synagogue at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 26. The speaker is UCI political science professor Jeffrey Kopstein, and as always the combined US/IUCC choirs will sing. In a year when so much divides, let’s give our community an example of unity and harmony!
“Resurrection is a metaphor,” says John Dominic Crossan. “If you were there, you could have seen the crucifixion. But metaphor creates reality if you live it, if you participate in it. That’s why nobody tried to describe it at the time. Think of the ingredients. How does the execution of Jesus save the human race from death? Non-violent revolution against violence itself is the only thing that will save our species. That is what the metaphor means. Have the respect to translate the metaphor before you deny it.”

IUCC was honored to welcome Dr. Crossan as guest lecturer for two seminars on Saturday, October 26. The famed theologian and author’s second seminar, entitled “The Claim of Human Resurrection in the New Testament,” is summarized in this article.

When looking at the topic of resurrection, Crossan asked the audience to use his matrix: a common sense approach he has developed to understand the stories of the Bible. “The problem with the matrix is you have to try to get back to the time and place of the events to understand them,” says Crossan. “Back off and ask: what did that mean in the first century – at that time and place? What was going on? Use common sense. If you have a matrix, you can ask some key questions: Why did Jesus happen when he happened and where he happened? What did Herod Antipas do in the 20’s that got John and Jesus excited enough to oppose him? Put it in the matrix. Why were there so many references to fishing? Why does Matthew say that Jesus left Nazareth and went to Capernaum? Put John and Jesus aside for a moment and concentrate on why Herod made the big move. Why did he change the location of his capital? Why the leapfrog?”

Per Crossan, “Herod the Great is the first Roman-appointed King of the Jews. He was told to Romanize the Jewish homeland – to globalize it. That’s his job. What does he do? He builds a giant port on the coast and puts in all-weather stuff to move the legions. He calls the city Caesarea, which makes his Roman masters happy. To keep the Jewish population happy, he expands the temple.”

Herod the Great seems to have been well received in Rome as a King of a client-state. He lasts to 4 BC and dies. Upon his death, Herod the Great’s kingdom is split among his children, and his son Herod Antipas (‘Antipas’) becomes a Tetrarch (ruler of ¼ of the kingdom). Crossan believes that Antipas is disappointed and resentful that he is only a Tetrarch and not a King like his father. He becomes ruler of the Galilee and Perea areas, but he’s not satisfied.

Crossan believes that Antipas wanted to raise money to impress the Romans but felt he couldn’t push more taxes on the general population. Crossan theorizes that “Antipas built the city of Tiberias on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and moved his capital there. Why? He wanted to commercialize fishing in the Sea of Galilee to promote Mediterranean globalization. He was not trying to impoverish the people, he was trying to increase income. He wanted to integrate the fishing industry into the Roman economic system. This required all sorts of dislocation and was intrusive. It made life very difficult for people, especially fishermen. John and Jesus rose up in opposition to Antipas.”

“John and Jesus were experimenting with non-violent resistance,” continues Crossan. “Within the matrix, we can get a sense of why Jesus’ disciples are ex-fishermen. Jesus is not talking to the poorest of the poor – he’s talking to those who were at subsistence level but aren’t there anymore due to the actions of Antipas. Things were all right yesterday, and then something happened to change that.”

Crossan adds, “The matrix is open – a living “Resurrection” continued on next page
sort of thing. I think Jesus learned from John what to do and what not to do. What is John’s vision? John believes that God is coming soon and here’s what we have to do: we’re going to re-enact the return from exile, then God will come. The people must come through the river Jordan and be purified – that’s John’s tremendous vision. Jesus accepts John’s vision and is baptized in the Jordan. But God doesn’t come, and now John is dead, executed. So Jesus changes his mind. He sees that people have been waiting for God’s intervention, but what if God is waiting for us to collaborate? The covenant is a two-way relationship. I think Jesus’ program is that God has been waiting for us to collaborate with Him. It’s not tradition, it’s wisdom. The kingdom of God is already here, we just need to enter it. If we don’t enter the kingdom of God, it won’t happen. If the time and place are right, things CAN happen. John fasted for what was coming, but Jesus feasted for what was already there.”

“Jesus is calling for collaboration and participation with God, without which things won’t happen. He takes his movement to Jerusalem to demonstrate. Jesus is invited to come to Jerusalem and told he will be protected. The question is: why did it take him so long to get executed? Every night he gets out of the city and stays in Bethany. The crowd is on his side. The most important witness to his execution is Pilate. Roman policy was to grab the leader and crucify him to make a point. But the Romans didn’t round up his closest followers because they considered Jesus a non-violent resister to Roman law and order – they wouldn’t have done it if they considered him a mere nuisance.”

Crossan finds it noteworthy that the Bible describes the consequences, results, and effects of the resurrection – things you can infer – but does not describe the resurrection itself. “Where’s the description of the moment itself? This opened up a vacuum. The earliest appearance of an attempt to describe it was in 350-400 Ireland when well-to-do Christians wanted to be buried in sarcophagi covered with pictures. It took 500 years before art showing Jesus resurrected appeared. In 799 in Constantinople, the same process was going on. Where to find an image? Instead of showing the emperor’s boot on a neck, images showed Jesus coming out of the tomb with one knee up and one knee down: a picture of liberation. Some images showed Jesus leading Adam and Eve. It wasn’t until 700-1200 that Jesus became an equal opportunity resurrection.”

When asked during a question and answer period about evolution, Crossan responded, “The mystery of evolution is ongoing – oil and stone – I can’t not see it, can’t separate it. The reason all empires have fallen is they’re against evolution – evolution is not on the side of justice. If you start with evolution, our human mind is incapable of looking at the big bang and not asking questions. I think God is the response of the human mind to the fact of evolution. Start with evolution and see where you go. Vision is your icon. All human creativity is based on time and place. Two vectors cross in evolution. Our human contribution is escalatory violence. How do we as a species protect ourselves from escalatory violence? All we’ve got is knowledge of good and evil.”

When asked about racism and evolution, Crossan’s response was clear and profound: “Racism is against evolution. For the fittest to survive, you need variety and diversity. Diversity is the model we’re getting from evolution. We don’t know which version is the fittest to survive. Evolution is against racism. Heaven and hell are not places in the future – they’re options in the present.”

“Resurrection” continued from previous page

The joint Thanksgiving service with IUCC and University Synagogue is one of our most inspiring, heartwarming services. The two congregations alternate back and forth each year for an evening of warm fellowship and thanksgiving for our 30+ years of friendship. This year, University Synagogue is our host! All are welcome to attend the service on Tuesday, November 26, at 7:30 p.m. followed by a reception.

The guest speaker will be UCI Political Science Professor Jeffrey Kopstein. As always, the service will feature the combined choirs of IUCC and University Synagogue.
October has been a busy month at IUCC’s Child Care Center. Early in the month, we hosted parents and friends of our precious young clients in an open house! Many came to have a look at who we are, at what we do, at how our classrooms are arranged, and of course, at how much our teachers care!

Later in October - seasonally, of course - our dressed-in-costume kiddos delighted the residents in a nearby elder care facility. The intergenerational smiles were worth a million bucks!

Photos courtesy of Irma Rosales
Pastoral Relations Committee

by Renae Boyum, Moderator

A Pastoral Relations Committee has been formed for our Interim Senior Pastor, Rev. David Pattee. The members are Jon Ingal, Lester Ricks, Diane Rust, David Schofield, and Jean Stewart.

According to IUCC Bylaws, “the Pastoral Relations Committee shall be a personal support group to the Pastor(s) and shall serve as a confidential communication link between the Pastor(s) and the Congregation.” This is what our Bylaws specifically say about this important communication link:

- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be a personal support group to the Pastor(s) and shall serve as confidential communication between the Pastor(s) and the Congregation.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall consist of 3 corporate members. The members shall be chosen jointly by the Pastor and the Moderator. Neither the Moderator, the Chair of Ministries or the Chair of Administration may serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall not operate from a formal agenda, and shall not keep minutes.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall make their membership known to the Congregation and invite members to express themselves with respect to the Pastoral Leadership.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet at least quarterly with the Pastor to provide a forum for conscious two-way communication and to review any concerns of the Congregation or of the Pastor.

Good News! IUCC Will Host Family Promise in 2020

by Sharon Lynn, Co-Chair, Mission & Service

As you all know, IUCC successfully hosted 3 families in Plumer Hall from August 11 – 18 thanks to the help of many volunteers. It was an amazing effort that brought comfort and safety to our visiting families. On October 8th the Mission & Service Ministry reviewed the responses from volunteer surveys and discussed thoroughly the issues and benefits of hosting. The consensus was that we believe that hosting is a way of living our social justice mission as a church and that IUCC has enough space and enough enthusiastic volunteers to commit to the effort.

The M&S recommendation to the Ministry Board and the Administrative Board was to host Family Promise participants for 4 weeks, two weeks at a time, in 2020. We recommended the following dates: April 5-19 and September 13-27. We also recommended replacing our Father’s Day FP offering with opportunities to donate during the 4 weeks that we host. M&S suggested that whatever amount we raise from congregational donations will go to Family Promise without any additional General Fund monies allocated.

The Ministries Board agreed unanimously with the Mission & Service recommendations, and the Administrative Board voted in agreement.

Please mark our hosting dates on your 2020 calendars, in case you might like to volunteer! Thank you all for your enthusiastic support of Family Promise and the families we support and help move toward permanent housing. IUCC will be making a significant difference in the lives of the children and their parents.
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at University Synagogue
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Concern America’s Artisan & Craft Sale - Sunday, December 1
Mission and Service will be hosting Concern America’s Artisan and Craft Sale on the patio for both services on Sunday, December 1. Concern America has very high transparency ratings on Charity Navigator, supporting world-wide projects for potable water, health, nutrition, & education. Also, they have been assisting migrant populations from Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Their local office is in Santa Ana.

Coffee Hour hosts needed
Dear friends, have you ever noticed that when congregants exit a service, very few of them head straight for their cars? There is so much going on under the eaves of the Child Care Center that our curiosity is piqued. There are letters to sign, events to sign up for ... and conveniently located on the path, coffee, food and conversation! What would we do without Coffee Hour??!!
A million THANKS for the servers of the past three months. But volunteers have been dwindling of late. We would love to believe in the miracle of Coffee and Donuts, but a miracle may begin with YOU!! Sign your name on the volunteer sheet on the table, and a second person will team with you. What a great way to get to know people!
Coffee Hour has never been easier! Tables are set up by the Deacons, and coffee is made by the chairpersons. Weekly cleanup assistants help clean up!

So “what do I do?” you may ask. YOU (and a co-host) supply the snacks, keep the table refilled, and visit with congregants! Approximate time commitment: 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. You can attend the 11 a.m. service. Thank you!

Yoga of 12-Step Recovery
Kelly Garrity’s early Sunday Yoga (7:30 a.m. in the Wisdom Room) will be held every other week for a while, on Nov. 10 & 24. Stretch your muscles and center your mind!

Isaiah House
Wednesday, Oct. 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 Seekers Women’s Group
Tuesday, Oct. 15, 9:30 a.m.
The Seekers meet on the third Tuesday of each month for theological and spiritual discussion. Newcomers are welcome! Call Reefa for details - (949) 859-7091.

11/26 Matt Mirmak
11/28 Ben O’Dell
11/28 Roni Portillo
11/03 Jean Raymoure
11/08 Christina Ruiz
11/22 Tom Silk
11/10 Michael Spindle
11/05 Irene Thornton
11/17 Rob Thornton
11/11 Robert Zane

11/08 Ben Allen
11/13 Nick Allen
11/23 Nicole Bermudez
11/10 Jennifer Bullington
11/04 Beverly Deshler
11/17 Janet Emery
11/29 Emme Exelby
11/15 George Fulton
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11/13 Dean Inada
11/07 Glenna Matthews

11

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Happy Birthday

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- Alex and Teri, Co-Chairs, Hospitality
Last month we looked at how “ready” a child/teen is to accomplish a particular task. We outlined four different “readiness levels” and considered the factors that put a particular child at that level for a particular task. It is important to remember that all of us – adults and children – are at different “readiness” levels for different tasks. For example, I may be at readiness level 4 – both able and willing to accomplish an academic task. But I know me well enough to tell you that I am at readiness level 1 – unable and unwilling – to help you fix your car! Remember that motivation only applies to something you are able to do. I can't be motivated to do something I can't do, although I could be motivated to learn how to do it. “Readiness” is not about a person, but about a specific person for a specific task!

Children who are confronted with an expectation to do something they feel unable to do, and are therefore unwilling to try to do (readiness level 1) will require a degree of “structure” if they are to make the attempt, and will definitely not try to do a task they either don't understand or feel bewildered by if left alone to do it. They will almost certainly turn their attention to a task they feel able to manage, even if it's quite different than what you expect. If they are unwilling to do what you ask because they don't understand what they are being asked to do, they don't need a command to do it, but an explanation of what they are being asked to do and how they are to do it. They will also need a lot of interaction focused on exactly (the “nuts and bolts” of) what is expected of them. Not everyone is comfortable admitting they don't know how to do something; you may need to have them explain, in their own words, what is being asked of them to be sure they are unwilling because they are unable.

Children who approach a task with a positive attitude but without the necessary skills to complete the task (readiness level 2) will need a lot of “strokes” and positive reinforcement as they attempt to do what is expected. They will need to know why a task needs to be done, or needs to be done a certain way, as well as instruction about how to do it. The parent/adult will need to be prepared to provide a lot of “coaching” and willingness to answer questions while the task is being tried. With these children, the “rewards” will come through the positive relationship with the person making the request for the behavior as much as from having the task completed successfully.

Children who are actually able to do what is asked but who have reasons for being hesitant to try to get the task done (readiness level 3) will not need instruction in how to accomplish the task but will need a lot of interaction geared toward building up confidence, or cheerleading to try something they are not sure about. Since in this case the child has the ability, they are likely to be open to suggestion as to how to be successful. If they simply lack enthusiasm for the task, the parent/adult may have to be clever in making the task interesting and worthwhile.

Children who are both able and willing to do what they are being asked to do may not need anything from a parent or other adult, but that is not the case. It has been shown that when children are truly “competent” with regard to a specific skill or task, but receive little or no feedback or encouragement and praise, they can slip back to level 3, where they are still able but lose their motivation due to lack of recognition. Parents want to continue to “feed” their self-confidence by telling them “what and when” they want something done and not giving unnecessary instructions, and also appreciate their willingness to do what they are capable of doing and give compliments and encouragement.

Next month we’ll focus on specific ways parents and other adults responsible for helping young people with specific tasks can learn to “match” their interactions with the child to their readiness for accomplishing the specific task at hand.
Ok. I admit it. Today I am weary of caregiving.

Most days I can swing with it, be upbeat, positive. Today I’m weary of the routine, tired of the constant responsibility. I agree with Mark Twain who is credited with saying that the problem of daily life is that it’s so daily. It can be mundane, ho-hum, one-foot-in-front-of-the-other. Add caregiving into daily living and you have the constancy of doctors’ appointments, procedures, ordering supplies and new medications, plus putting the needs of the care receiver at the top of your priority list. Yes, daily life is so cotton pickin’ daily!

You need not remind me of the song, “Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your blessings, see what God has done.” I know I’m a recipient of blessings, blessings galore! When I think of the big picture – famine, floods, war, refugees – my problems are miniscule. Yet, today I just need five minutes to gripe. In the past, daily life was more interesting because George and I always had something to look forward to. We had the habit of making plans and setting goals, so even when life was difficult, we anticipated a trip, a party, a class, a family gathering.

Today, instead of trying to plan for months or years ahead, I need to focus on the present. On days when daily life becomes humdrum, I need to call upon my coping muscles: text a friend, call my daughter, take a walk, do something kind for someone else. Or maybe, horror of horrors, selfishly spend $8 on a Trader Joe’s floral bouquet for myself. (Yes, Vivian, sometimes you need to spend money to feed your soul.) The flowers won’t blow our budget. Rather, they pay dividends because blossoms are soothing, like medicine on an abrasion, like salve to my soul. Lady Bird Johnson said it well, “Where flowers bloom, so does hope.” Simple coping strategies are helpful. (I wish they could prevent wars.)

On the positive side of daily living, while recovering from illness or surgery, I yearn for the daily routine permitted by my healthy self. I rejoice when once again I can make the bed, prepare coffee, water the plants. Magically, the mundane seems glorious. I also deeply appreciate the constancy of daily life when the unexpected happens. When life goes crazy, I say, “I can’t wait to get back to normal.” (Really? Now I’m a lover of the daily? I think so.) Then the same old, same old brings a sense of security in the midst of troubling change. When everything else seems turned on its head, the normalcy of making a grilled cheese sandwich is amazingly comforting. Yes, routine has its place in stabilizing one’s world.

So, what should I do today when I’m weary of my routine? Writing helps; hence this essay. Plus, a secretive tablespoon of the black cherry ice cream, hidden behind the bread in the freezer, was a boost.

As they say, have a great day! (Even though it’s so daily.)
My husband Jim and I were deeply involved at IUCC from 1996 to 2003. We moved away for a number of years, then returned in 2011 and became active once more. I call it IUCC Part 1 and Part 2. This is a very special church, and I love it!

At some point while we were gone, an amazing thing happened: IUCC changed from being a pastor-led church (roughly 75-150 active members) to a program-sized church (roughly 150-350 active members). What does that mean? It means that we grew into a new category of ministry with different expectations of a called pastor. A church our size can no longer expect its pastor to minister to each member individually, because it’s just too much for a single person to handle – they would burn out trying to meet the needs of so many congregants.

In a program-size congregation, the pastor’s focus is on program planning and development: setting direction for the congregation. The pastor becomes more of a “vision caster” and far less time is devoted to counseling and one-on-one care. Lay leaders become surrogate ministers, so training/supporting them becomes very important; they step up to guide and mentor the congregation so the pastor can focus on big picture goals that help the church reach its vision for the future.

We have wonderful programs in place that do just that: our congregational care ministry, our Stephen ministry, our women’s groups, our prayer chain folks, our Comma Groups, our deacons, our choir, our adult education programs, and much more. We have a generous network of mini-ministers and caregivers, and we rely on them to provide the glue that holds our congregation together.

However, that doesn’t mean the rest of us can just kick back and let these surrogate pastors do all of the heavy lifting for us. I’m wondering if – during this time of search and reflection as we seek a settled pastor – we might all consider how we might serve as surrogate pastors for one another: maybe even minister back a little to our own congregational caregivers who give so much of their time and talent. What can we do in little ways to lift each other up and provide encouragement?

We’re good people, and we go about our daily business trying to do the right thing. Most of us instinctively try to help when a need is obvious. A friend is in the hospital, so we visit. Our adult offspring need a place to stay while their home is being renovated, so we offer them a place to stay.

What about when the need isn’t so obvious? I learned a while back that most people are starved for positive reinforcement and encouragement. Yes – starved. They may not be obvious about it, they may act self-assured and confident, and they may seem to have it all together. But the need is there, just below the thick skin that most of us have developed to protect ourselves from the outside world. Without some recognition and positive reinforcement, even the most zealous of volunteers can become discouraged and lose heart.

I’ll be honest with you: I’m not a great hand to get into the trenches and really “be there” for someone else unless it’s a family member or a close friend. Even then, no one in my orbit is likely to describe me as being “emotionally available.” I’m not especially proud of that, but it is what it is. There’s just so much emotional availability to go around, and my nearest and dearest soak up most of it! I try to practice enough self-care to keep my emotions on an even keel. Mental serenity is very important to me. I’ve learned to protect my emotional reservoir by not letting it get too low, and I think at my age I’ve earned that right. Maybe you feel the same way. That’s okay.

So - I’m not asking you to become Mother Theresa. All I’m suggesting here is that maybe each of us can step it up, just a little. Dig a little deeper, open our eyes, and be truly intentional about offering each other a well deserved acknowledgement of effort, a word of encouragement, or a little positive reinforcement - especially to the surrogate pastors among us who are serving in leadership roles, but to everyone else as well. It’s not time consuming, it costs nothing, and it could mean the world to someone on the verge of burnout. If you’re able to step it up beyond that, great! But this will be enough for now. If you think something nice, find a way to express it, be it verbal, email, or text message. You could make someone’s day.

Now that we are a program-size church, it’s even more important that we make the effort to express what’s in our hearts and support one another. Our new pastor won’t be able to do it all, so it’s up to us. Something to think about.
This list was intended for October, but I had some e-mail troubles. Sorry, folks. Anyway, this list comes out of a conversation with Eduardo Jesus Arismendi-Pardi. He told me that, given the times in which we live, he believed Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* was frighteningly prescient. My mind began to whir, and this list of prophecies made their way to my computer screen.

So here they are, a little late for Halloween… my favorite dystopic nightmares.

1) *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang - 1927) – This one scares me too, Eduardo, especially when I think that Fritz Lang left Germany to escape the tyranny he was predicting in this film.

2) *Frankenstein* (James Whale – 1931) - After all, Ms. Shelley’s story is about science run amuck.


4) *H.G. Wells’ Things to Come* (William Cameron Menzies - 1936) - William Cameron Menzies’ pre-war parable about the lunacy and the greed at the root of war.

5) *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Stanley Kubrick - 1964) – The title says it all. Yee-hah!

6) *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard - 1965) – A strange film noir about a society that criminalizes human emotion and turns logic into a weapon for despots.

7) *Planet of the Apes* (Franklin J. Schaffner - 1968) – The story of a world run by apes in which humans are both pets and beasts of burden.

8) *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick – 1971) – This dystopia uses drugs and aversion therapy to rid itself of its criminals. This film ain’t for the kids.


10) *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg – 1983) – A warning from the 80s about the terrors that come when we spend too much time in front of our screens.

11) *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam - 1985) – Gilliam’s Brazil is one part centralized economy, one part authoritarian state and one part London at Christmastide. This one’s both funny and unsettling in equal measures.

12) *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir - 1998) – Peter Weir’s clever parable of the isolation at the root of reality TV.

13) *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze – 1999) - This film gives new meaning to the word “stalker.”

14) *Artificial Intelligence* (Steven Spielberg - 2001) – From a screenplay by Stanley Kubrick. This film reminds us that, despite technological advances, humans are still capable of evil.

15) *The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross – 2012) - A terrible vision of a society that has turned the desperation born of economic collapse into a sport. There’s no room for love in such a world.

16) *Ex Machina* (Alex Garland – 2014) - Is it possible for robots to have free will? I mean the moment they develop free will, aren’t they then beyond our control?

17) *The Lobster* (Yorgos Lanthimos – 2015) - A disturbing, yet occasionally hysterical portrait of a world that simply has too many single people.
This month, you get two film lists for the price of one. You see, last month there were technical difficulties. Trish, being the peach she is, has allowed me to publish two lists this month. This one is my yearly I’m-gonna-predict-the-Oscar-winners-even-though-I haven’t-seen any-of-the-movies-yet list. As usual, I relied on websites like Gold Derby and Indie Wire to make my choices. There is, of course, a strong chance I’m full of hooey on this, but here goes. And may the best unknown, unseen film win.

Best Picture

1. *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (Quentin Tarantino) – I saw this one. It’s my favorite Tarantino since *Jackie Brown*. Seems to be wearing out its welcome, though.
2. *The Irishman* (Martin Scorsese) – Netflix. November 27th. Be there or be square. Be warned: it’s three and a half hours long.
3. *Marriage Story* (Noah Baumbach) - A cinematic battle royal between a boyfriend…
4. *Little Women* (Greta Gerwig) - … and a girlfriend. Good luck to you both.
7. *1917* (Sam Mendes) - World War One on a grand scale.
8. *Bombshell* (Jay Roach) – Roger Ailes, Bill O’Reilly and their incapacity to keep their hands to themselves.
9. *Farewell* (Lulu Wang)
11. *Ford v. Ferrari* (James Mangold)
13. *A Hidden Life* (Terrence Malick) – Another puzzle from the cinema’s master enigmatologist. This one’s about Nazis.
14. *The Two Popes* (Fernando Meireilles) Most likely best actor nominations for Anthony Hopkins and Jonathan Pryce, although Meireilles is a major figure.
15. *Joker* (Todd Phillips) - ????????????????????????????????????

Best Foreign Language Picture

1) *Parasite* (South Korea/Bong Joon Ho) – Won the Palme D’Or. Nuff said.
2) *Pain and Glory* (Spain/Pedro Aldomovar) – Adios, Don Pedro. We’ll miss you.
3) *Les Miserables* (France/Ladj Ly)
4) *Atlantics* (Senegal/Mati Diop)
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.

Green Tips
by Miss Lily

Dear readers,

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday! I love the pumpkin and pecan pies, the stuffing, and the green beans.

I am grateful for many things. I am grateful for my church. I am grateful for my friends. I am grateful for my home and garden.

I will be counting my blessings this Thanksgiving!

In gratitude,
Miss Lily

We love to share our IUCC family story with others, and so you’ll see a lot of photos and videos being taken and shared in many ways. If you don’t want your image used in our story telling, please turn in a Media Opt Out form, which is available through our church office by calling us at 949-733-0220 or by e-mailing us at iucc@iucc.org. Thank you!