May 1, 2020

Because of the Covid-19 emergency and the Governor of California’s order to avoid large gatherings and practice physical distancing, the Administration and Ministries Boards unanimously voted to move the Spring Congregational Meeting from May 17 to June 28, 2020.

If we are able to meet on June 28, a principal item on the agenda will be to elect officers. Our bylaws specify that the terms of these officers begin on July 1.

Several factors bear upon a decision of when and how to hold a congregational meeting.

- Members may be reluctant to gather physically, and gaining a quorum of 80 members may be difficult.
- Some members may have reservations about meeting via technology, using platforms like Zoom.
- IUCC bylaws offer no provision for an electronic meeting.
- IUCC bylaws specifically prohibit proxy voting and absentee ballots.
- California Corporations Code specifically prohibits voting by email.

In light of all this, and in case we are not able to meet as planned (due to guidance from the Governor and CDC), the Administration Board passed the following motion on April 20.

**MOTION:** To approve the Administration Board developing a plan in the case that holding the scheduled Spring Congregational Meeting for the election of IUCC Administration Board officers and IUCC Ministries Board officers is not possible; the current Administration and Ministries Boards will execute By-Laws provision(s) for the interim appointment of officers to hold office until it is possible to hold the regular Spring Congregational Meeting. Moved by Renae Boyum and seconded by Apoorva Ghosh. Motion carried.

Once in-person gatherings are again possible, a Congregational Meeting will be held, so that officers can be nominated and approved. Further details will be found in my article in the May News & Notes.

The IUCC Bylaws can be found online at:

Relevant sections of the Bylaws include

- Article 8, Section 1.A.3 – Change of Congregational Meeting Date (page 8)
- Article 8, Section 1.B. – Written Notice of Congregational Meeting (page 8)
- Article 8, Section 4.B. – Prohibition on Proxy Voting and Absentee Ballots (page 9)
- Article 9, Section 2.A-C. – Election & Term of Office (Officers) (page 10)
- Article 9, Section 3 – Vacancies (Officers) (page 11)
- Article 10, Section 5.A.2. – Vacancies (Administration Board) (page 18)
- Article 10, Section 5.B.2. – Vacancies (Ministries Board) (page 18)
An Important Note from the Moderator

Some of you may have seen or perhaps own the sign pictured at right, which reads, “Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning to dance in the rain.” I think that IUCC leaders have had to learn about - if not dancing in the rain - surely about making decisions in these days of COVID 19. One of the questions the leadership of IUCC has been dealing with is when and how to hold the upcoming Spring Congregational Meeting. On May 1, you received an official notice changing the date of that meeting from May 17 to June 28 along with an explanation of a plan for how to proceed if we can't hold that meeting because of COVID 19. Let me provide a few details that show actions taken and actions planned.

- On March 23, the Administration Board voted unanimously to move the Spring Congregational Meeting from May 17 to June 28. On April 13, the Ministries Board unanimously concurred.
- Note that all elected leadership positions are for one year, and per our bylaws these terms will expire on June 30. In light of this, at its regular meeting on April 20, the Administration Board unanimously passed this motion:
  To approve the Administration Board developing a plan in the case that holding the scheduled Spring Congregational Meeting for the election of IUCC Administration Board officers and IUCC Ministries Board officers is not possible; the current Administration and Ministries Boards will execute By-Laws provision(s) for the interim appointment of officers to hold office until it is possible to hold the regular Spring Congregational Meeting. Moved by Renae Boyum and seconded by Apoorva Ghosh.
- On May 1, as noted, a NOTICE OF CHANGE IN MEETING DATE was sent out to the congregation along with an explanation of the plan.
- IUCC bylaws provide for a Nominating Committee, composed of the Moderator (Renae Boyum), the Chair of the Administration Board (Daniel Blackburn), the Chair of the Ministries Board (Felicity Figueroa), the Chair(s) of the Membership Ministry (Randy Romine and Tommie Kozlov), and the Senior Pastor (David Pattee). In May, the Nominating Committee will meet to formulate a list of interim appointments to fill vacancies if the congregational meeting will not occur on June 28. This list will be provided to the Ministries and Administration Boards. The list of interim appointments will also be sent to the congregation prior to June 28.
- The Ministries Board is scheduled to meet on June 8, and the Administration Board is scheduled to meet on June 15. Each will consider a motion that, if the Congregational Meeting cannot occur on June 28, they appoint interim lay leaders for vacancies that will occur at midnight, June 30. NOTE: Per IUCC bylaws, both the Ministries and Administration Boards, acting on the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, must act to fill vacancies in six positions: Moderator, Chair of Administration Board, Chair of Ministries Board, Treasurer, Clerk of the Administration Board, and Clerk of Ministries Board. Acting alone, the Ministries Board may fill vacancies in all of the ministry chair positions on the Ministries Board. The Administration Board, acting alone, may fill vacancies in congregational representative positions.
- If the Congregational Meeting can be held on June 28 (dependent on guidelines from the Governor and CDC), then the election of officers and leaders will take place as in the past.
- However, if the June 28 Congregational Meeting cannot be held, then on July 1, the Interim leaders selected by the Boards would take office, and would serve until such time as the Congregational meeting can be held. When that meeting is finally convened, members of the congregation will vote to select leaders to serve until June 2021. As is our regular process, candidates for office will be nominated by the Nominating Committee, and nominations may be made from the floor.

Please contact me or the church office if you have any questions or need additional information. Here is a link to the bylaws: https://www.iucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IUCC-Bylaws-Feb-2020.pdf (Please see Article 9, Section 3, A-C and Article 10, Section 5, A-B, which specifically enable and undergird this plan.)

During these challenging times, members and friends of IUCC have come together in amazing ways. I know that we will continue to do that, as always, in faith and community.

Renae
Institutions matter! That's not the prevailing message of the last few decades as institutions have been widely disparaged and devalued, but it's true nonetheless. Institutions matter!

From governments to community groups, schools, clubs, service organizations and churches ... institutions have received less support for their work and more blame for not solving our problems. But one thing the COVID-19 pandemic has made very clear is that institutions do matter. They have always mattered, and they matter now more than ever.

Our culture may celebrate the individual and the independent. We may want to believe that personal truths and private interests define the moment. But when you need medicines, supplies, and equipment delivered to the right places in time to save lives; when you need vaccines developed and manufactured at scale to save lives; when you need tests and tracking and public health strategies and reliable communication to save lives; when you need a way to connect people who are separated, or isolated, or when you recognize that there is no secure personal health apart from community health; when you find the hopeful vision for your life in a Christian faith that calls us to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves, then you cannot help but see that institutions matter! They are the connective tissue that enables us to give and receive, to share and enjoy.

In the Church's celebration of Holy Communion, not just for our church but throughout the Christian tradition, wherever this sacrament is shared the prayers include “Words of Institution” telling the story of Jesus’ Last Supper with his friends, saying to them and still to us: *this bread and this cup are given for you, my body and blood are given for you, my life is for you to live together with God and one another in a covenant of love.*

These Words of Institution are the truth upon which the Church of Jesus Christ is built, the Communion that establishes our institution and our way of being in the world, the body of Christ gathered in the covenant of love.

We've had another month of Facebook worship and Zoom Bible study – and if you understand those phrases, consider yourself proficient in tech-talk!

I hope you’re experiencing the same thing that I am: we may be apart, but there is a connection online when we share in Bible study or recognize each other during Facebook worship. It’s not perfect, but it’s real.

Ken Wyant is leading the Bible study Zoomers through the final book in the New Testament, 2 Peter. It’s a short book, but a thorough review will take a few more weeks. Don’t hesitate to join in – call or email me to get the Zoom link each week!

And once 2 Peter is finished, Ken will begin a new study – at the same time each week, Tuesdays at 4 p.m. When the topic is settled, you’ll see information in the Tuesday and Friday emails – watch for it soon!

We're adding another online study option this month, on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. I’ll be leading a Survey of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). If you’d like to join in, send me an email so I can add you to the Zoom list.

The first session will be Wednesday, May 6 at 6:30 p.m., and I’ll have a timeline and reading suggestions to share. And watch for yet another online group late this month!

We’ve also begun discussing options for Comma Groups in the fall, in case we need to have alternative ways of meeting and sharing. We’ll keep you posted as things develop.

As I said in last month’s newsletter, we can do this! And we’ll be more capable, with more tools when the present need is over.
Dear Congregation,

We wanted to update you on our progress towards finding our next settled pastor. In our last correspondence, we disclosed that our discernment had narrowed to four outstanding candidates. Our short list now has three names.

The challenge moving forward remains Covid-19. With the stay-at-home order still in place, face to face encounters are not possible. This leads us to creative opportunities to engage our finalists. Over the next few weeks the committee will continue our discernment with the candidates. At this point their bona fides are well established, and we are eager to begin conversations of a more personal nature. It’s time for a shared meal, albeit a virtual one.

Additionally, an important next step in the UCC process is the neutral pulpit where candidates preach in a neutral setting for the committee. This too may indeed be virtual. When an official offer can be extended remains an open question. Clearly, the coronavirus has complicated our initial timeline. However, the committee unanimously agrees that maintaining our forward momentum is crucial.

We are confident our work will bear fruit regardless of the pandemic. Your continued prayers are helpful. Guided by a spirit of Love and Hope, we continue our collaborative work with gratitude and grace.

In solidarity with each of you,

The Pastoral Search Committee

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Green Faith Committee member and IUCC resident expert on light bulbs Alex Ingal has answers to all your LED light bulb questions. Here’s what he wants everyone to know:

Hello everyone! Did you remember to celebrate Earth Day? Forgot? Well at least you are using LEDs to light up your house, but have you noticed that your rooms are dimmer? It is not your imagination but the facts of LED bulbs.

Many of us have been raised using incandescent bulbs and only switched to LED bulbs in the last 10 years. Yet most of us don’t understand a thing on the box when we buy them. There are so many choices today, so which one is best for you? Well after reading this lightbulb guide, you will be a pro! Click here to learn more:

https://www.iucc.org/confused-about-light-bulbs/

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Happy Birthday

5/28 Eduardo Arismendi-Pardi
5/10 Johannah Bullington
5/28 Jeffrey Gaskill
5/24 Sarah Gilliland
5/23 Connie Jones
5/02 Nathaniel KeslerWest
5/25 Jeannie Lee
5/31 Terry LePage
5/23 Christian Murdy
5/19 Cindy O’Dell
5/15 Dale Ramirez
5/29 Mark Rychnovsky
5/26 Scott Rychnovsky
5/02 Elizabeth Schiller
5/05 Ron Steiner
Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

What: Discussion with Rev. Dr. Yvette A. Flunder

Topic: Confronting racism and expanding diversity and inclusion at IUCC

When: May 3, 1 p.m. (Online, via Zoom)

[Editor's Note: This event may have already occurred before the newsletter's publication. If so, please know that the Task Force hopes to bring Rev. Flunder back again to speak to the whole church.]

Details: The Diversity & Inclusion Task Force has asked the Rev. Dr. Yvette A. Flunder to advise our group on Sunday, May 3, about confronting racism and increasing diversity and inclusion at IUCC.

The Rev. Dr. Flunder believes that the creation of a spiritual community can only be accomplished by embracing collective cultures, faith paths, gender expressions, and sexual/affectional orientations. We are eager to learn from her experience.

Who's Invited: If you would like to join the effort to confront racism and expand the diversity and inclusion at IUCC, please consider joining. Use the following link to access the Zoom meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89808839770?pwd=a3lWVDVIVjEvaDJNZEJxczVScmIzZz09
Meeting ID: 898 0883 9770, password 445888.

The Diversity and Inclusion Task Force meets the 3rd Sunday of each month to practice anti-racism and to plan events to expand diversity and inclusion at IUCC.

About Rev. Dr. Yvette A. Flunder
Both a singer and the Senior Pastor of the City of Refuge in Oakland, California, Rev. Dr. Yvette A. Flunder was ordained in the United Church of Christ and is currently the Presiding Bishop of the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. A native of San Francisco, she sang and recorded with Walter Hawkins and was the lead singer for the Love Center Choir. As a progressive ONA Christian, The Rev. Dr. Flunder began her ministry work with people who had contracted AIDS. She founded several not-for-profit enterprises in the San Francisco Bay Area for people affected by AIDS.

Isaiah House
We will not be providing dinners to Isaiah House as usual in May or June. They are currently locked down, but donations may be left on the front porch. Our Isaiah House team visits will be entirely cancelled for these months. We appreciate all of you who regularly contribute to our menus each month. Hang tight until we get back to a normal meal schedule.

This year's Orange County AIDS Walk has gone virtual! The importance of providing essential medical services and maintaining the food pantry deliveries is paramount to assisting our OC neighbors who are even more compromised during these difficult times. Join us in supporting this monumental effort and help us build community around the event by sharing your photos and videos of you walking, running up stairs, working out or otherwise supporting the spirit of the Walk from the comfort of your own home!

We will still have our IUCC Walk the Walkers Team, and potential “walkers” can sign up just like they have in the past. Please sign up with Team IUCC to “walk” with us! Donations can also be made directly to our IUCC Team through the AIDS Walk website. Here is the link both to join the team and to donate: https://www.classy.org/team/289881
Dear Friends in Christ,

We send this with the magnitude of our emotions written large on the surfaces of our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits. We feel deep pain, loss, and anguish on our collective behalf for all that we have experienced in the last two months. Worship in our sanctuaries has come to a sudden halt. Jobs and incomes have been threatened, if not lost. Loved ones have suffered or died from a hidden enemy for which there is no current remedy.

Our sheltering in place is exhausting. For many of us the loss of human contact, the drudgery of unchanging surroundings, our inability to frequent places that brought joy to our lives, and the call to adapt overnight to overwhelming change are taking a toll.

We are also witnesses in this time to heart-warming acts of human kindness and solidarity that speak to the angels among us. We are not only making great sacrifices, we are doing so in a collective effort to protect and care for the most vulnerable among us. The courage, stamina, endurance, compassion and empathy being practiced among us remind us that we do not grieve as those who have no hope. The power of a faith enriched by Easter joy and resurrection hope is not diminished by anything. Neither death nor life, not angels or demons, not power and principalities, not height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

Seeing the church in and through this time fills us with a lingering hope in humanity, in the Body of Christ, and in the promises of a God whose only begotten child came that we might have life, and have it to the full.

In short order, states and municipalities are going to begin relaxing their shelter in place orders. We also write to strongly encourage you to give deep thought and prayer to how, if, when, and under what circumstances you will return to worship and other gatherings.

There will be a great temptation to rush back into our sanctuaries, celebrate victory over this corrosive and deadly virus, and return to life as we knew it.

Please think long and hard about that. There is no going back to life as we knew it. For a while at least, even what seems like a safe gathering may present a threat to the life of someone we love and care deeply about. Something substantial will emerge on the other side of this that we did not recognize before it started. Some of that we will accompany with our grief; and some of it we will receive as a gift from the God who is always about to do something new.

Please pay close attention to anything coming from your Conference offices about when you should return. Your Conference staff is keeping close watch on this and should be consulted before you make any decisions.

You are all in our thoughts and prayers. All of us in this denomination are working, as one, to find our way through this. You are not alone. We love you all. We are seeing and feeling deeply your pain and suffering; as well as your heroic efforts to find meaning and healing in the midst of it. All of our own efforts are now being expended to help us find our pathway through this – a pathway we share in partnership with each other, and with the Holy Spirit of the living God and the risen Christ.

May the power of the love that created us, the love that redeemed us from the grave, and the power of the Holy Spirit rest upon you wherever you are on this journey. Lift up your eyes to the hills, from whence comes our help. The Creator of us all keeps watch. “All shall be well, and all shall be well; and all manner of thing shall be well.” (Julian of Norwich).

Sincerely,

John. C. Dorhauer,
Traci Blackmon
Karen Georgia Thompson
By now, you’ve probably received a call from someone in the congregation asking how you’re doing and if you need anything. This ambitious volunteer effort originated with the members of our Stephen Ministry, who recognized the importance of checking in with our members during a time of social isolation.

From what I’ve heard, most of you are doing fine (albeit a little stir crazy!). For those who aren’t, members of the Congregational Care Ministry are working in tandem with Stephen Ministers and other callers to track any needs that are revealed and try to match them up with members who can help. They, in turn, work with other ministries to provide comfort in the midst of our isolation. Pastor Dave monitors this activity and steps in when needed to provide advice and support.

There’s been an impressive team effort to livestream our Sunday worship services, which has helped keep us together in spirit while physically apart. With Administrative Pastor Steve Swope’s dedicated and patient assistance, all kinds of Zoom meetings have been arranged to help us stay connected and engaged: Bible study on Tuesdays barely missed a beat before meetings were resumed; some Comma Group leaders jumped on the bandwagon to keep meeting remotely; Administrative Board and Ministries Board members used the technology to meet remotely; and many of our ministries and committees were able to plan and strategize for future events. Leaders of our new book clubs started meeting virtually too, keeping members involved and talking. More Zoom meetings are cropping up every day, and many IUCC members have proven themselves to be up to the challenge of learning new technology so they can continue to participate in the life of the church.

Without much fanfare, our wonderful leaders have stepped up and made our church operate exactly like a healthy, program-size church is supposed to function. I’ve seen some truly heroic effort going on behind the scenes. Our Moderator and Admin Board members have spent countless hours figuring out how to hold congregational meetings in a time of lockdown, and they have been researching and brainstorming ways to protect our church financially in these uncertain times. Ministries Board members have been finding creative ways to continue the good work we do in the community, trying to shore up the organizations and causes we support so they don’t falter. They have faced the challenge with empathy and integrity, demonstrating what it means to practice true compassion for our fellow human beings.

I’ve written about the distinction between pastoral-size and program-size churches before, but I think it bears a quick summary: When a church is small (50-150 members) the pastor can have a direct ministerial role with each member. However, when the congregation gets much bigger than that (say 334 members, which we have at IUCC), it’s too much to expect the pastor to provide that kind of individual care to everyone while still maintaining quality programs and maintaining a presence in the community (including a leadership role in social justice issues). In a healthy, program-size church like ours, strong lay leaders fill the gap by providing care and program support. The program-size church pastor works closely with these “middle management” volunteers, acting as a sounding board and providing guidance and inspiration.

It’s not a perfect system by any means. Despite our best efforts, sometimes people fall through the cracks. Still, for a system that relies heavily on a lean but highly efficient staff supported by a community of caring and thoughtful volunteers, it works surprisingly well. During this time of COVID-19, I think it’s been truly outstanding. Your ability to pivot, learn, adapt, and be flexible in the face of this radical new reality has been nothing short of remarkable.

So – THANK YOU to all the IUCC staff and volunteers who are stepping up big time to keep us connected, engaged, and afloat during these challenging times. None of you signed up for this, but you’ve handled it with a generous spirit and enormous grace. You are all beautiful roses in the garden that is IUCC. Your caring and compassionate efforts are very much appreciated. Please keep doing what you’re doing. Your loving efforts mean more now than ever before, and - God willing - they will get us safely through this crisis. Let it be so. Amen.
Powerful Parenting
Helping Children/Teens of Progressive Christians Live With Uncertainty
by Dr. Lorraine Fox

During a recent afternoon when my Evangelical Christian neighbor and I were walking our dogs, we started talking – as I guess everyone does at some point these days – about the Covid-19 virus and dying. Although she is quite a bit younger than me, she said, “I don’t care if it gets me because I know where I’m going.” I remember those days. I was raised like that. My family is still like that. No questions - only answers. It’s a very comfortable, anxiety reducing way to live. Children of liberal or progressive Christians are not afforded this luxury. Our children hear us talking about “living the questions.” Our children are reminded to “never put a period where God has put a Comma,” etc. Our confirmation classes are not question/answer catechisms but rather thoughtful explorations of various faith traditions as well as our own.

How can this approach, which we have chosen and now find comfortable, serve to provide comfort and reassurance to children and young people surrounded by crisis, isolation due to social distancing, rampant contradictions, and death every day? Is it possible for them to be as relaxed and at ease with sickness, dying, economic insecurity, and constantly changing “facts” as those singing “I’m saved and I know it, Praise the Lord, Hallelujah”? We owe it to them to explain differences as well as we can and to help them learn to sort things out.

To start, we have to help our young people become clear that beliefs are not facts. Believing that something is true doesn’t make it true.

Tell your children what you believe, which is what you think is true. And then tell them why. Don’t tell them what you think you should tell them. Tell them what is true for you. The most important component of all loving relationships is honesty. Deception ruins all relationships, including that between parents and children. Just because you are a parent, or a grandparent, or a teacher, or a youth leader, doesn’t mean you have to know everything. Phony people never win respect and phony parents do not win the respect of their children. You will get the most respect if you don’t make things up. Share with young people where you are now with your thinking about all manner of issues, including issues around faith. Tell them what you don’t know and how you have learned to deal with things that confuse you.

I was riding behind a car once that had a bumper sticker that said: “Jesus is the Answer.” Wouldn’t that be wonderful? It would be like having the answer key on the back of your hand during the test. Progressive Christians, however, even though they love Jesus as much as any other Christian, would want to know what the question was before deciding that Jesus was the answer.

We don’t give our kids an answer key. We teach them to find their own answers. As thinking Christians, we are not afraid of facts and “in fact” believe that finding out as much as we can about the truth of our faith helps us find answers that make sense to us. We also acknowledge that there is a lot we don’t know. That there are different “messages” in the Bible. Eventually, we can learn to relax with what we know, what we believe, and what we don’t know. That’s where faith comes in. Faith in the love of God helps us to tolerate and even relax with mystery. And if you love to read mysteries, are we ever in the middle of a dandy one right now. Read it with your children.

I don’t think it’s fair to leave our young alone to sort out this cacophony of news, fake news, information, and misinformation. We owe it to them to explain differences as well as we can and to help them learn to sort things out.
“I can eat and sleep, walk and talk. What more can I ask for?” my 87-year-old mother responded in a chipper voice when I inquired many years ago as to her well-being. Mother had her share of health problems: heart surgery, edema in her leg, and poor teeth. She was a diabetic and used a walker to weave her way down the halls of the Assisted Living home that was her abode.

In spite of less than perfect health, she chose to focus on her capabilities. She was a petite and stoic Norwegian lady, not given to complaining.

Now, twenty years later, my husband gave our family an update about his health. “I can’t see. I can’t hear. And, I have Alzheimer’s and kidney disease,” he began. “But I can do many things. I can chew, my teeth work well. My stomach digests food. Just think of that!”

He held his arms out in front of him. “Look, my arms still work. My hands, too. Isn’t that wonderful?” He paused to gather his thoughts. “My heart beats, and my lungs breath. My memory isn’t what it used to be, but I can still think.” He, like my mother, in spite of his limitations, expressed gratitude for what he can do.

I reflect on my husband’s and my mother’s words. Now in my eighties, I ask myself the question as to my well-being. Yes, I’ve had health issues, but I’ve lived many years.

Why should I be surprised by illness and worn-out parts? Eventually, everything breaks down after long life and excessive use. I decide that my body has served me well. Thank you, body, thank you. You are quite remarkable in your length of good and faithful service.

Gratitude is a quality of being thankful, a readiness to show appreciation. I notice that gratitude is a conscious decision, a choice. As I’ve learned from experience, from the times of emotional, mental, or physical pain, I can choose to be bitter or better!

While I believe it is important to be clear-eyed and realistic about the difficulties of life, I find it possible – and helpful - to be grateful in the midst of it all. A spirit of gratitude helps one to be in the present, to change one’s mood from negative to positive. It generates good vibrations that can affect the reality, and you, as well as the people around you.

We all know that the flu bug is contagious. Guess what? So is gratitude. If we’re going to catch a bug from someone, I vote for catching the bug of gratitude.

The words of author May Sarton ring true for me:

“One thing is certain, and I have always known it – the joys of my life have nothing to do with age. They do not change. Flowers, the morning and evening light, music, poetry, silence, the goldfinches darting about . . .”

How superb that many joys of life are available at any age. I like Sarton’s list, but I would add chocolate! Now, who can’t be grateful for that?
I’m going crazy, people. Last night, I dreamt I was making love to Rita Hayworth. I woke up this morning hugging my pillow. I was so damn angry, that pillow is now in shreds. I NEED TO GET OUT OF THIS TIN CAN! I NEED SOME HUMAN CONTACT! I’M GOIN’ CRA-A-A-Z-Z-Z-Y-Y-Y-Y-Y-Y!

If the above reaction sounds familiar to you, then chances are you are suffering from a condition known as the Social Distancing Blues. There is no vaccine yet, but some epidemiologists believe the following films may provide effective treatments for this condition.

1) Nanook of the North (Robert Flaherty - 1922) – Oops. Bad choice.
2) Goldiggers of 1933 (Mervyn LeRoy - 1933) – Listen, any movie that starts out with Ginger Rogers wearing a dress made of silver dollars is okay with me. So sew me!
3) The Merry Widow (Ernst Lubitsch - 1934) – A ballroom filled with dancers waltzing to the music of Franz Lehar. In the meantime, Maurice Chevalier puts the moves on Jeannette MacDonald.
5) Meet John Doe (Frank Capra - 1941) – My baby Barbara Stanwyck (yummy, yummy) cons America using Gary Cooper as bait.
6) Gilda (Charles Vidor – 1946) – Starring Rita Hayworth. Had to put that in there.
7) Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot (Jacques Tati - 1953) – This guy is so oblivious, he thinks social distancing is a mental state.
8) It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World (Stanley Kramer – 1963) – Just a funny little parable about greed.
9) Les Paradisus de Cherbourg (Jacques Demy - 1964) – Bright, colorful, glamourous and FILLED WITH CATHERINE DENEUVE. And others.
10) The Texas Chain…– Never mind. ’nother bad choice.
11) The Fireman’s Ball (Milos Forman - 1967) – Mr. Forman’s farcical satire of Czech communism set at a Fireman’s Ball (hence the title).
12) Monterey Pop (D.A. Pennebaker – 1968)/Woodstock (Michael Wadley – 1970) – If you like to rock out, you can’t do better than these two.
15) The Grand Budapest Hotel (Wes Anderson - 2014) – That enormous chalet. All those pastels. All those FAMOUS PEOPLE. Oh, and the movie’s good, too.
16) Hail Caesar (Coen Brothers - 2016) – A screechingly funny send up on Golden era Hollywood that is LOADED with folks. George Clooney’s in it. I miss him.
Demystifying penal substitutionary atonement theology (atonement) requires understanding and practicing progressive Christianity in its link to liberation theology. Liberation theology requires taking action against oppressive power structures that persecute, reject, criminalize, disenfranchise, and demonize The Other. Liberation theology is about challenging the evils of racism, poverty, sexism, classism, homophobia, misogyny, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and environmental destruction.

Progressive Christianity transcends believing in Jesus and leads to practicing the teachings of Jesus which, in my view, is more important than believing in Jesus. A belief is passive. Following and practicing the teachings of Jesus allows embracing the aphorism "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Progressive Christianity requires an attitude that silence is not the answer. Progressive Christianity in its link to liberation theology requires standing in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized. Progressive Christianity provides an alternative lens for seeing the goodness and potential of humanity.

Progressive Christianity is grounded in a high anthropology, that is, a high opinion of human beings and their capacity to exercise grace and create change. In contrast, conservative fundamentalist Christianity is grounded in a low anthropology, that is, a low view of human nature. A low anthropology views humanity as fallen, sinful, depraved, hopeless, and in need of being saved. A low anthropology in its link to fundamentalism has had profound negative consequences for individuals and communities.

Penal Substitutionary Atonement is based on retributive justice, that is, a criminal system of justice based on punishment of offenders rather than rehabilitation of offenders—the latter is progressive whereas the former is oppressive. Retributive justice leads to a construct of God that requires violence to attain God-driven purposes. Retributive justice is antithetical to “blessed are the poor,… blessed are those who mourn,… blessed are the meek,… blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,… blessed are the merciful,… blessed are the pure in heart,… blessed are the peacemakers,… blessed those who are persecuted,… (cf. Matthew 5).

The phrase Jesus died for my sins is dangerously absurd; historically, this phrase was not central to Christianity in the first one thousand years. The atonement requires more demythologization than the Resurrection. The notion that Jesus came to earth, offered his life as a sacrifice for worldly sins, in tandem with the idea that God could not forgive us without having happened, in addition to being saved as a function of believing such story, is unbelievable. Metaphorically, this story can be powerful. Literally, this story obstructs the Christian message. For progressive Open & Affirming Christians, the story doesn't make sense.

This phrase Jesus died for my sins metaphorically means that God welcomes and accepts each of us regardless of whom we are and where we are on life’s journey. The atonement needs to be viewed as a metaphorical journey. Journey stories removed from other journey stories within biblical narratives lead to distorted and impoverished Christianity. The development of penal substitutionary atonement, a concept from the Middle Ages, is something that could have gone—as with many stories about Jesus—beyond anything Jesus himself may have said, intended, or implied. We don’t know. We just have to be uncomfortably comfortable.

This phrase is at the heart of penal substitutionary atonement. This theory was first articulated by the medieval Italian theologian Anselm of Canterbury (Anselmo d'Aosta). The theory evolved into theology based on penal substitution by Reformation thinkers. Unfortunately, this theory is the dominant understanding of the meaning of the cross among most Protestants. This theory dominates the theological imaginations of most Christians because they may not be able to think of the cross outside this paradigm. Those dominated by this theory cannot fathom other ways of understanding the meaning of the cross. Anselm’s theory arose out of his medieval context of the relationship between feudal lords and their serfs. This relationship rests on the cultural
understanding of medieval law and order, in which a serf’s disobedience dishonors the feudal lord. What Anselm understood as honor led future theologians to understand as wrath. Because a serf’s disobedience dishonors feudal lords, satisfaction must be paid or there will be punishment. In the same way, disobedience dishonors God, satisfaction must be paid or punishment will follow. Because sinful humanity cannot make satisfaction, God becomes a human being and pays the price on our behalf.

Anselm’s interpretation leads one to reflect that such phrase is mythological because it is grounded on the assumption that the Father punishes the Son in our place since we cannot redeem ourselves because the only hope of restoration is from God’s side. Penal substitutionary atonement emphasizes God’s wrath rather than God’s love, hence distorting the Christian message and creating a challenge about Jesus’s teachings and the meaning of the cross. Anselm’s argument was published in 1098 as a Latin treatise titled Cur Deus Homo? (Why did God Become Human?).

Penal substitutionary atonement is diametrically opposed to the teachings of Jesus—standing with the poor, persecuted, hungry, homeless, and afflicted. It rests on passiveness—the antithesis of spiritual activism. Passiveness rests on (a) making Jesus’s death part of God’s plan for salvation, (b) emphasizes God’s wrath, (c) makes Jesus’s death more important than his life and ministry, (d) makes believing in Jesus more important than following Jesus, and (e) makes Easter irrelevant in terms of the intrinsic connection between Jesus’s death and Resurrection because what matters is that Jesus died for my sins. Finally, this view of atonement is grounded in wrath/punishment as driving factors of God’s movement in the world as opposed to God’s strength to love and forgive humanity.

As we endure this current pandemic crisis, I can assure you that the scouts of Scouts BSA Troop 602 and Cub Scout Pack 697 are safe and are continuing to do Scouting in the safety of their own homes like other packs, troops, and crews across the country. While we don’t know what this summer will look like for our Scouts as far as summer camp and day camp goes, our adults are doing their best to keep our Scouts excited and engaged with the program.

Our national leadership has also done a fine job in coming up with virtual events to keep Scouts from across the nation engaged. One of the upcoming events is the BSA National Camp-In which will be held on Saturday, May 2, on Facebook Live. The event will consist of presenters showcasing Scouts skills such as campfire cooking, a virtual 5K run, a fun STEM Q&A session with Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, and a virtual campfire with sing-a-longs and skits from Scouts from across the country. The event is free and you do not need to be a registered Scout to join. To register for this free event, go to https://www.scouting.org/campin.

For more information about Troop 602 and Pack 697 and how you can get your child and family involved, email Troop 602 Scoutmaster Keith Bauer at marykeith1@aol.com or Pack 697 committee chair Paul Main at chair.pack697@gmail.com. Pack 697 is open to male and female youth ages 5-10 and Troop 602 is open to male and female youth 11-17.

For 110 years, Scouting has endured the best and worst of times in this country. No matter how bad things seem to be now, our Scouts are out there doing their best to help make this world a better place. From helping distribute food to senior citizens and at risk people to making masks for health care and medical workers, our Scouts are out there helping their communities with a cheerful attitude.

In closing, I want to showcase a speech given by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935 to the Boy Scouts (see following page for the text of his speech). The Scouts were to have their first National Jamboree in Washington DC only to have it postponed due to an outbreak of polio. While the Scouts would have their Jamboree in 1937 with the President as one of their guests of honor, President Roosevelt felt that it was his duty as a leader to be that voice of comfort and optimism for those disappointed Scouts. The speech delivered via radio in 1935 is still relevant to what our Scouts are experiencing today and still serves as a reminder of what the Scouting program is all about.
Fellow Scouts, for more than a year I have been looking forward to taking part in the great National Scout Jamboree to be held here in Washington, but the best-laid plans sometimes go awry. A splendid program and a wonderful camp have been prepared for the reception of 30,000 Boy Scouts and Scouters in the national capitol. You were coming here from every point of the compass, and in addition to the American Scouts, our brother Scouts from 27 other nations had accepted invitations to send delegations.

But, alas, a rather serious epidemic of infantile paralysis arose in the vicinity of Washington, and on Aug. 8, the United States Public Health Service and the health officers of the district and the nearby states concluded that to hold the Jamboree would be a hazard and a danger. With great reluctance, therefore, we had to call it off. Except for this unfortunate happening, I would’ve reviewed this day the thousands of Scouts lined up the whole lengths of Constitution Avenue. And later we would’ve had a party on the White House lawn.

I want you in your own hometowns tonight to know how sorry I am that I cannot be with you myself. I am in spirit with each and every one of your gatherings tonight. You boys, old and young, in every part of this broad land, present Scouts and former Scouts, your numbers running into the millions, you constitute a very real part of our American citizenship.

We are bound together — together in a democracy operating under a Constitution whose purpose was and is to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. The success of that Constitution is dependent on the attitude of mind and the degree of the spirit of unselfish cooperation that can be developed in individuals.

Scouting is essentially and clearly a program for the development of that unselfish, cooperative attitude of mind. Scouting revolves around not the mere theory of service to others but the habit of service to others. Scouting makes the individual boy conscious of his obligation to his patrol, to his troop, to his community, to his state and to his nation. Even before you become of voting age, you actually have a part in civic affairs, and you bear a responsibility in your home communities. We older citizens are very proud of the many contributions that individual Scouts and Scout organizations have made to the relief of suffering, the relief of the needy, to the maintenance of good order and good health, and to the furtherance of good citizenship and good government.

You who are active Scouts are, in addition, learning many, many useful things. Knowledge that will stay with you all the rest of your lives. You are having opportunities to fall in love with and understand the great outdoors. Do not ever fall out with nature and her wide-open breathing spaces. Love them. They will sustain and strengthen you in later years when confining circumstances of life may tend to narrow the spirit or the soul that is in you.

I do not have to tell you to throw yourselves with all the enthusiasm and energy that you have into your Scout work. Into the programs of your patrols, your troops and your councils. But I do want to express to you the very deep hope that when you grow older and get out into the stream of life, you will retain that same enthusiasm and energy, and that you will apply it to every day and every year that you live. Our Scout Motto — Be Prepared — applies just as much to the wider service which is your opportunity when your full civic responsibilities are attained. And just as you are individually a necessary part of your patrol or troop today, so will you become necessary parts of the citizenship of your communities.

I do not have to remind you that one individual who lags behind slows up the whole troop. In the United States Navy, we had an old saying, that the speed of a fleet is no greater than the speed of the slowest ship. When you go out into life, you have come to understand that the individual in your community who always says “I can’t” or “I won’t” or “I don’t,” the individual who by inaction or by opposition slows up honest, practical, far-seeing community effort, is the fellow who is holding back civilization and holding back the objectives of the Constitution of the United States.

We need more Scouts. The more the better. For the record shows that taking it by and large, boys trained as Scouts make good citizens. I hope that a Jamboree in place of the one that we missed this year will be planned for some time in the future. And in the meantime, fellow Scouts, I send you my warm greetings, personally and as the honorary president of the Boy Scouts of America.

Good luck to you, each and every one. And carry on.