

April 2022 | www.iucc.org | Join us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)!

OPEN AND AFFIRMING · JUST PEACE · GLOBAL MISSION · CREATION JUSTICE/GREEN FAITH

Looking back through the last few years, we're grateful to be celebrating Easter inside our sanctuary once more! Please join us for the Holy Week services listed below.



Things were still very normal in **Easter 2016** when a brass ensemble accompanied our choir to provide beautiful celebration music.



Easter 2017 featured our amazing choir led by John St. Marie in front of a white balloon cross draped in purple.



On **Easter 2018**, we were well into the process of adding a new building onto our sanctuary. It marked our 13th year with Pastor Paul preaching.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES



Palm Sunday
9:30 and 11 a.m.
on April 10



Maundy Thursday
7 p.m. on April 14



Easter Sunday
9:30 and 11 a.m.
on April 17



Easter 2019 was an inspirational Sunday with an uplifting sermon and our spectacular choir led by Chris Peterson. From the music to the deacons to the Boy Scouts to the staff, many people contributed to make it a truly joyful celebration.



Easter 2020 wasn't much fun because we were stuck at home due to the pandemic, but we did our best to make a joyful noise of gratitude and praise. Led virtually by Interim Pastor Dave Pattee, we gathered around our computers at home, sang some of our favorite hymns, and rang bells to celebrate Easter morning.



We held **Easter Sunday 2021** outside on the patio, where a small choir and a few intrepid members gathered to celebrate the day and listen to an inspirational and hope-filled sermon from Pastor Sarah.

From the Senior Pastor

by the Rev. Dr. Sarah Halverson-Cano, Senior Pastor



Our Lenten journey has us exploring what it means to have a Living Faith and to be people of a living, vital, life-giving faith that makes sense to us in the 21st century. We've been following Bishop John Shelby Spong's final book "Unbelievable"

on Sunday mornings as we explore the aspects of Christianity that can seem unbelievable and address how we as progressive Christians might let go of the antiquated and lifeless aspects of our faith to embrace, and really share, a living faith.

I feel like this intentional reflection really connects us deeper with one another and with God, the ground of our being. Ultimately, that's exactly what Lent is supposed to be about: letting go of the things we don't really need, and connecting ourselves more deeply with God. We do this so that when we come to Holy Week and are asked to sit at table with Jesus, we know where we stand. We know who we are. We know what we believe and we know what our faith requires of us. For me, Holy Week truly is the most powerful week of my life. I am so struck by the courage of Jesus, the humanity of those in the story, the plea to stay to the end, and the reality that so few of us can fully handle the weight of the cross and the demands of this faith. And yet, even our own shortcomings lead us to celebration. And each year we are given a chance to meet Jesus again at that table. Actually, every month. Honestly, if we think about it - every day. So how will we live out our faith? How do we? Do we have a living faith? And if not—how can we shed the dead and resurrect our faith again? This Easter feels all the more powerful and all the more personal because of this intentional journey we've taken together.

So please join us week to week on Sunday mornings as we get closer and closer to the cross. Palm Sunday is always a fun day, and I'm really looking forward to celebrating it with you in person! I can't wait to see the kids and the palms and the joyful celebration as we imagine a triumphant entry into Jerusalem! But don't stop there!

Be sure to join us as we hold what is quite possibly the most powerful service of the year, our Maundy Thursday

service, at 7 p.m. on April 14th. This service of light and darkness invites us to table with Jesus in a powerful service of remembrance as we walk through the final hours of Jesus' life together. It seems no matter how many times we read the same scripture, it is weighted with a new power, as we look for ourselves in the story. We ask ourselves: Are we hungry enough to come to the table? Are we faithful enough to stay by his side? Are we strong enough to bear the weight of the cross? Are we courageous enough to affirm we know him, or do we follow Peter's lead until the cock crows? I think we need to ask ourselves that question annually, to reaffirm our faith, to determine if it's a Living Faith or one that only exists on paper. Join Jesus at the table and find out.

And once we have made it to our journey's end, slogged through the final hard week, we will arrive once again at Easter! Only when we have done the challenging work of Lent, and walked the courageous path through Holy Week, can we fully appreciate the joy of Easter! It's then that I fully feel the invitation to new life!

I want to share a tradition with you that I've picked up along my ministry - a very visual and active way to symbolize Easter - the transformation of the cross. You see, we'll begin with a wooden cross - barren and lifeless, but if each of us are mindful we'll be an active part of the transformation by bringing flowers and placing them upon the cross. If each of us give of ourselves, bringing color, and life, and beauty, that which is dead will come to life in a beautiful way. So please bring yourself and a flower (from your backyard or a store - either works) and give of yourself to be a part of the transformation!

In reality it's all about showing up! So I hope you do! Come for the celebration, come to be a part of this transformation from death to life. As we continue to walk out of this pandemic, we embrace life and with it a living faith we can't help but want to share with others!

I can't wait to celebrate with you! Journey on!

Pastor Sarah

From the Administrative Pastor

by the Rev. Steve Swope



As we enjoy the Southern California spring, there are plenty of opportunities for adult education at IUCC.

Tuesday Bible Study (4 p.m.) is exploring the book of Job from the Hebrew scriptures, with Ken Wyant providing context and insights, as ever.



Adult Sunday School (10 a.m.) is discussing a 4-week video series by Bart Ehrman, "From Jesus to Constantine: A History of Early Christianity." Bil Aulenbach is leading the conversation through April 10.

Beginning April 24, Al Gumb will be leading a 6-week series, reviewing Marcus Borg's final DVD series, "Beyond Belief."

Bil Aulenbach is also working with Pastor Sarah on a special Lenten discussion series, based around her sermons on "A Living Faith." They meet on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 or Thursday mornings at 9:30 – both at IUCC and online through Easter.

Jack Sokol is offering four Mindfulness Meditation sessions in April at 10 a.m. on Saturdays, starting April 2. You can go to zoom.us, Join Meeting, and use Meeting ID 878 9265 8912 and Passcode 1111. See next page for more information about Jack and this class.

Please see next page about Chapman University's annual Founders Day program on Saturday, April 30. This year's guest is the Rev. Dr. William Barber II, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign, a re-launch of Dr. King's movement. He is a giant in contemporary social justice.

My Retirement

As my retirement approaches, a number of people have asked about my plans and about plans to find my successor. Thank you for your concern and interest! The Administration Board approved a position description and job posting which have been publicized for nearly six weeks, including on our website and through the Conference. Applicants are being reviewed, and interviews will begin this month. Once a replacement is hired, that person's name and their specific responsibilities and schedule will be announced.

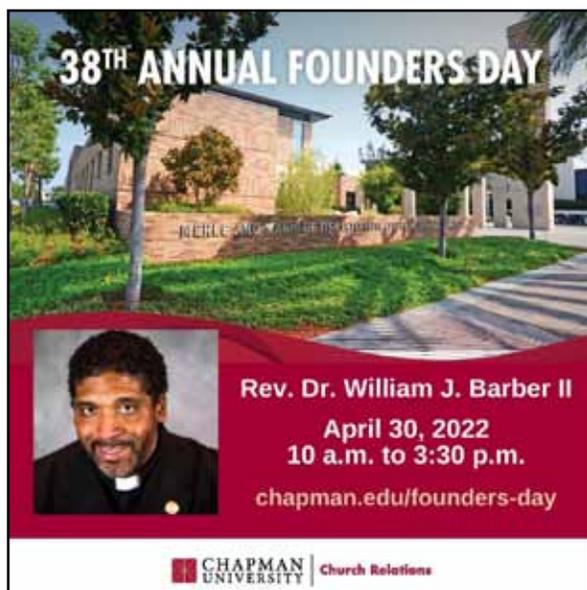
To allow the next Administrator time to get acquainted with all of you and with the position, Mary and I will be "away" from IUCC for six months. Once that time has elapsed, we look forward to returning to IUCC and participating in the congregation once more.

Over the years I've been told by so many people that they are busier in retirement than when they were working. My first goal is to avoid that! My second is to spend some leisurely time with family, including our eight grandchildren (and a soon-to-be ninth!).

I look forward to this new stage in my life, and in the life of IUCC. Thanks so much for all your support and caring!



Chapman University Founders Day



Save the date!

The 38th Annual Founders Day will happen in person on Chapman University's Orange, CA campus on Saturday, April 30th!

Chapman is thrilled to have the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II teach and preach on the very stage that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did in 1961. He will also receive an honorary degree from Chapman University at Founders Day.

Details about the day and registration can be found at www.chapman.edu/founders-day. Please note that this event will follow the current campus guidelines for COVID. If you have questions please contact churchrelations@chapman.edu or call (714) 997-6760. They hope that you will join them for this special Founders Day and help them spread the word about it!



Congratulations, Felicity!



Congratulations to IUCC's own **Felicity Figueroa**, who was honored by OC Supervisor Katrina Foley at a March 31 luncheon recognizing **Women Making a Difference**. The award honored "Orange County's long history of trailblazing women championing causes that benefit families, open spaces, parks, public education, the arts, neighborhood safety, and our amazing Orange County lifestyle and quality of life."

Felicity is much admired for her energetic activism in many worthwhile causes. We are so pleased and proud that she has received this much-deserved recognition! - *Tricia Aynes*

Mindfulness Class Starting



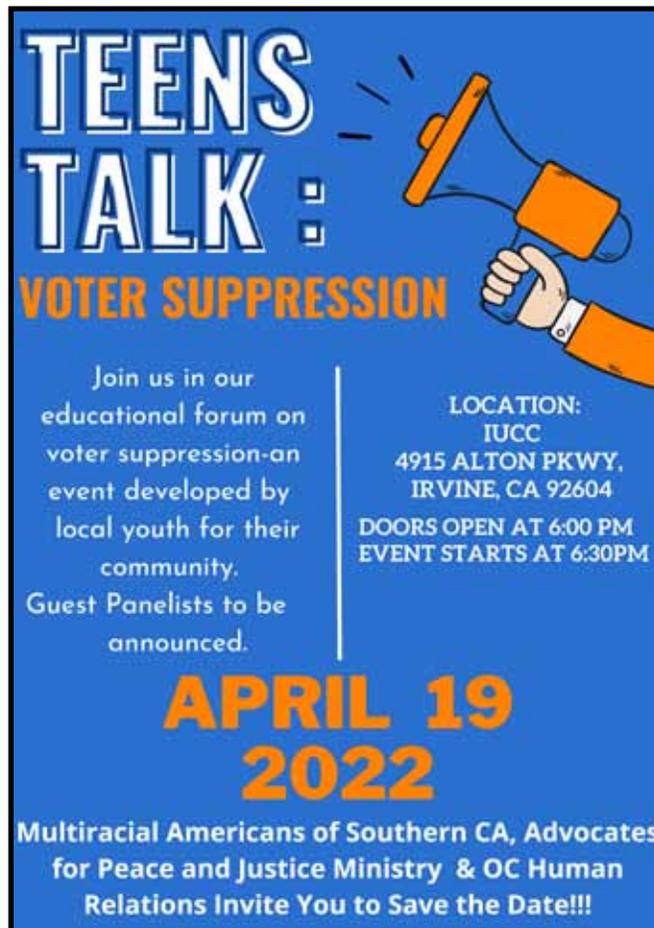
Jack Sokol will be leading a 4-week series on Mindfulness Meditation, starting at 10 a.m. on April 2.

A longtime IUCC member, Jack has studied various forms and traditions of meditation and is completing his certification as a meditation teacher.

Jack writes: "A year ago, I embarked on a big adventure: getting certified as a teacher in Mindfulness Meditation. Now I am teaching my first class here at IUCC. This class will be offered online on Zoom as an introduction to Mindfulness meditation. While it is geared to people who have little or no experience with meditation, experienced meditators are welcome!"

Mindfulness is a proven technique for improving physical and mental health. Mindfulness reduces stress and anxiety and can also address emotional trauma, and it can help us develop the wisdom and insight to act effectively and appropriately during times of great change.

Jack Sokol has over fifty years of experience in Meditation and has been privileged to have studied with some truly great teachers in a number of traditions. He has significant experience in meditation and is dedicated to helping others overcome obstacles in their practices.



Voter Education & Suppression Teen Community Forum

Diversity & Inclusion Ministry, Advocates for Peace & Justice Ministry, Multiracial Americans of Southern California, and OC Human Relations are hosting a community teen forum at IUCC on Tuesday April 19, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. to discuss Voter Education and Suppression in the U.S. Four panelists will answer questions from 18 teens. All of the teens are interns from MASC (2) and OCHR (16). Panelists will include: Mayor Khan of Irvine; Professor Dr. Fred Smoller from Chapman University's Department of Political Science; Cynthia Valencia of ACLU and OCCET; and Robert Herrera from Resilience OC and OCCET.

This non-partisan event will cover current voter suppression laws in the U.S., how voting is a fundamental right for all, how our democracy is hurt when people are kept out of the voting process, how California has handled elections and voter suppression, how teens can get involved to ensure a safe election for all, and how they can talk to their friends and family about the voting/election process and the importance of voting.

It is my hope that IUCC will continue to be known for hosting events and discussions about important topics that impact peoples' lives. The event will be held in the sanctuary. The audience will include teens, their families, and community members. There will be light refreshments served afterwards.

IUCC walk-ins for the event are welcome, and this event is free. Everyone will be required to wear a mask for this event, including speakers. Covid-19 test prior to the event is not required. Steve will send out emails regarding how to watch the live stream on YouTube soon if you are unable to attend the event in person.

For questions, please contact Lesli Mitchell at leslimitchellart@yahoo.com or Felicity Figueroa at felicitynf@aol.com.

- Lesli Mitchell, Co-Chair, Diversity & Inclusion Ministry

In Memorium



We are very saddened by the recent loss of a member of the IUCC family. James A. "Jim" Martin, 77, died March 11 following complications from heart surgery. He was active in climate issues, adult education, comma groups, and bon vivant dinners at IUCC. A celebration of his life was held at IUCC on March 17.



Thank you! Generous IUCC members have donated \$5,541 to the Ukraine Relief Fund to support refugees who have fled Ukraine to neighboring countries and for elderly and other vulnerable people who are displaced within Ukraine and unable to leave. We are still accepting donations, which will be forwarded to the UCC national office.

Gifts made to the Ukraine Relief Fund will provide shelter, food, and other care to war refugees and internally displaced people. It will also help refugees and asylum seekers from African, Middle Eastern and other countries who had sought refugee in Ukraine and now are twice displaced, as well as citizens of more than 125 other countries living in Ukraine.

Uniting in prayer, action, and giving, we stand as a people of faith in love and compassion with the people of Ukraine and all who are affected, and with our global partners who are welcoming those driven from their homes.

DONATE NOW

All donations will be deposited into the International Disaster fund designated for "Ukraine Relief." Your generous financial support will be used by our partners in the areas of greatest need.

You can drop off a check to IUCC and write "Ukraine Relief" in the memo line or make an online contribution on our website. You can also mail a check made payable to the United Church of Christ PO BOX 71957 Cleveland, OH 44194. When using this method, please be sure to note "Ukraine Relief Fund" on your check in the memo section.

We all LOVE our Coffee Hour!



We all LOVE our Coffee Hour!

Hello Everyone!

Haven't the goodies served at coffee hour been yummy?!? Jon and I love perfecting our baking skills to provide you with Sunday goodies, but did you know that YOU too can provide goodies? Yes! Whenever you have seen unique things like vegan-friendly products, sandwiches, cheese, and fruit, you are seeing donations from others! Variety keeps things exciting, so please consider donating something soon.

While there are many people who attend service, there are many snack options so your donation should be limited in size to reduce food waste. The MOST I have ever gone through was 100 cookies but typically I go through about 60 servings without donations and 40 or less when people donate. As long as the item can be served with little effort, coffee hour will take it (please avoid temperature sensitive items [like ice cream] any time it is supposed to be over 80F outside).

Now that we are all getting used to leaving out places of comfort on Sundays, why not get into the practice of giving your time as well? Coffee Hour could always use planned assistance. You can help set up, host, OR clean up. If you have questions or would like to give back to your IUCC community, visit the following URL to learn more (or just talk to me on Sunday)!

<https://tinyurl.com/IUCCCoffeeHour>

Jacob Ingal, Hospitality Chair

Outdoor Kiosk Project Takes Shape

Craig Tyrl and Tricia Aynes had fun collaborating on this project to spruce up our outdoor display kiosk. We have such a vibrant congregation, and this was a great opportunity to showcase what we stand for as well as the many worthwhile things we do! Check it out the next time you're at IUCG and see if you are among the happy people pictured!



Before



During



After

From the Moderator

by Tricia Aynes



If you've ever planned a big event (a major birthday party, a memorial service, or a wedding), you know how much effort goes into it. There are hundreds of decisions to make. You want people to come and have fun. You want it to be a big success.

Sunday mornings at IUCC are not that much different. While our services may look seamless, they're anything but. Our pastor prepares a sermon that engages the minds and hearts of her listeners. She meets with staff to make sure the message is echoed in the choice of music, the liturgy, the lessons, and the prayers. The music director works with the choir to practice an anthem that stirs the soul. Our tech people work in the sound booth to ensure that lighting and sound are just right, both in person and online. And how about those Fresh Words? Our kids are insightful, humorous and full of joy - and all of us laugh and learn together in this fun and creative segment. Our worship leader provides the lesson and leads responsive reading. Our deacons greet folks at the door, look out for our safety, help with communion, and do set up and clean up. Our hospitality team serves delicious pastries and coffee with a ready smile. Our membership team keeps a lookout for visitors and greets them warmly. Our youth group volunteers provide an engaging and imaginative Sunday School experience for our kids. It takes a lot of generous-spirited people working closely in concert to make the magic happen so all of us can have a meaningful spiritual experience.

I know you know this. I am, quite literally, "preaching to the choir." Still, I think it bears repeating. It's so important to recognize our wonderful congregants for the immeasurable contributions you make each and every day (and especially on Sundays) to keep IUCC going. Whether your contribution is out in front, "behind the scenes," or financial (or a combination of all three!), you play a vital role in the beautiful, cooperative process that makes our Sunday worship experience so moving and powerful. Members leave the service filled with faith and hope for the coming week ahead, and we are strengthened and renewed for life's journey.

Your efforts contribute to a wonderful sense of peace and well-being in a troubled world, and you are appreciated more than you know. We are very grateful for your time, talent, loyalty, support and dedication. Thank you!

At the same time, we recognize that we are still struggling to adjust to the "new normal," and just when we think we've figured it out, things change again. Some people are ready to rejoin the world, while others are still cautious. We're all tired of dealing with the pandemic gloom still hanging over our heads after two long years. Then there's the war in Ukraine that eats away at us and leaves us feeling utterly helpless.

We look to our church family for respite, and we're impatient for a return to some sort of normalcy. We're hungry for community, especially our church community. We want to sit with our friends in church and clasp hands, hug, and connect again. It feels weird to sit far apart and wear masks. We miss our friends who haven't felt comfortable or may have simply gotten out of the habit of coming to church.

We want you to know that with all of the uncertainty that still remains, we are here. If you've been gone, we can't wait to welcome you back. And if you're worried about when/if your friends will come back, help us reach them! Call them and tell them how much they're missed. Invite them back. Tell them you're saving a spot for them. Pastor Sarah is knocking herself out every Sunday to provide a thought-provoking message that uplifts and educates. She deserves our support and our best efforts to help her reach the broadest number of people possible to spread the word.

After all, there's good news here and we want to make sure we share it!

There is no better time to come back to church as we finish up the season of Lent, enter into Holy Week and celebrate Easter. We have so much to offer and so much to share.

Invite your friends and join us for the celebration!

In hope and optimism,
Tricia

1st Group of Name Tags are Here!

If you requested a new name tag on Name Tag Sunday, they are here! Please pick yours up the next time you're at IUCC. Remember to always wear your name tag to church - it's a wonderful way to get acquainted with fellow members and guests. If you ordered one last Sunday, it'll be here by April 10. If you still need to order one, please talk to Renae or Tricia.

Post Pandemic Project & Luncheon on Palm Sunday!



+ free lunch! = FUN!

Patio "Party" and Participation in Work Day

Save the date: Sunday, APRIL 10 after second service.

What: Patio "Party" and Participation in Work Day!

Where: IUCC patio

When: Beginning after 2nd service

Join us for lunch on the patio (food and drinks provided!) AND then, if you can, help us to get IUCC ready to celebrate Easter by cleaning and clearing items! What a wonderful way to be together in community and spend time visiting and working together! Sign up on Sunday, April 3, to EAT and WORK!

We could use your help with the following projects:

1. Clean and vacuum refrigerators in Plumer Hall and Child Center.
2. Replace light bulbs on patio light strings.
3. Rake/rearrange mulch in bio-swale to cover sand base.
4. Rake/refresh mulch in planting beds.
5. Power wash benches after second service.
6. Replace motor and clean fountain.
7. Remove cobwebs and wash exterior windows in Plumer Hall and Sanctuary.
8. Clean/rearrange IUCC storage cabinets and closet in Plumer Hall.



Our D & I meal outings continued in March with a visit to Kareem's in Anaheim, where we enjoyed Palestinian food and learned about the history and culture of the people from the owner's son Kareem. More D & I outings are being planned! Watch the eblasts for future opportunities! (Photo courtesy of Tricia Aynes)



IUCC Golf and Syncopated Kazoo Team!
IUCC golfing buddies tee up for fun! From L to R are: Wayne Banwell, Bill Dietrich, Howard Emery, Bob Stalter, and Keith Boyum (Photo courtesy of Keith Boyum)



- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 4/01 Jim Carse | 4/07 Lee KeslerWest |
| 4/29 Natasha Dahline | 4/21 Kyle Lutz |
| 4/17 David Deshler | 4/15 Connor McDonald |
| 4/19 Janice Gately | 4/22 Steve O'Dell |
| 4/22 Rafael Gimarino | 4/18 Jim Raver |
| 4/29 Linda Hidy | 4/30 Mark Willcox |
| 4/15 Janice Johnson | |

Life of Moses Performance (Ministry with Young People)

by Lauren Louie, Co-Chair MYP

The youth of IUCC showed what they learned about the stories of Moses through a play on March 27th! MYP is grateful to Martha Mecartney as show director, producer, educator, and creative force extraordinaire! Many thanks to our Choral interns Wendy, Jocelyn, and Jaime as our chorus and music teaching specialists! The pictures shown below are primarily from rehearsals or before or after the Life of Moses show. Martha had a no pictures policy so people could be in the moment. The kids learned modern parallels to better understand Moses' story.



Martha and choral interns Wendy, Jocelyn, & Jaime lead the kids in song



Kids in costume



Wendy, Jocelyn, and Mollie



Role playing the parting of the Red Sea



Martha and Jennifer

Youth Group News

Are you or someone you know looking for a loving, fun and inclusive youth group? IUCC Youth Group is back on!

Senior High Youth Group will meet Sunday, April 10th and 24th, 6 p.m. - 8p.m. (and twice a month Sunday evenings thereafter).

We're currently arranging for a **Junior High Group** too. For more info, contact Myrna at myrnabohan@gmail.com.



Children's Palm Sunday Processional on April 10th

Kids and youth line up as part of the Palm Sunday procession at the start of the service! Please come 15 minutes early. We invite everyone to stay for the start of the second service as well (11 a.m.). Everyone has a lot of fun ushering in Holy Week.

IUCC Patio Lunch & Work Day on April 10th

The church will also be holding a work day to help spruce up the space. There will be activities for all ages!



Easter Sunday Egg Hunts

April 17th, after both services! Bring yourselves & friends! Egg hunts will be held after both our 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. services. There will be a special scavenger hunt for older youth and other activities as well!



Pilgrim Pines Summer Camp - July - we want your input! Learn about nature, songs, & crafts with an eye toward God's love and justice at Pilgrim Pines Camp! Read more here: <https://www.pilgrimpinescamp.org/summer-camp>

Your Input Wanted! We are trying to coordinate a week to go together. Please contact Lauren louie735@gmail.com with preferences & questions!

UPCOMING DATES

- April 10th** - Palm Sunday - Children's Processional & IUCC Work Day!
- April 17th** - Easter! Egg hunts after both services
- May TBA** - Family event - Picnic in the park!
- Summer TBA** - VBS / Summer Events
- July** - Pilgrim Pines

ONGOING

MYP Committee Meetings - Every First Sunday at 12:30 p.m. Open to all! We plan events, handle operations, and brainstorm ideas.

MYP is Hiring - Looking for Coordinators and Directors! Interested in helping kids or youth explore their faith and take action in their world? MYP at IUCC is interested in Sunday School Coordinators, Youth Leaders, or even MYP Directors! Please contact our Admin Pastor Steve Swope at the Church Office (iucc@iucc.org) or call (949) 733-0220 for more information.



New High School Youth Group

We have a new High School Youth Group! Our choral interns will be leading the group with support from Myrna. The group relaunched with a beach bonfire on Mar 20th. We are really excited about the Youth Group and hope all of you are too! We encouraged the youth to invite their friends and now we are looking at opportunities to reach out to others looking for a loving, fun and inclusive youth group. Here are some photos of them enjoying time together over the beach bonfire. - Myrna Bohan



Meet Our Youth!



Top photo:
Elliott (L) and
Micah (R)



Bottom photo:
Micah (L) and
Elliott (R)

Meet Elliott and Micah!

My name is Micah and I am 4 years old
My name is Elliott and I am 6 years old

What is your favorite color?

Micah – Blue and red and white and green
Elliott – Red!

What is your favorite toy?

Elliott – Trucks and Car
Micah – My big cars and trucks and 10 Ryan’s World eggs

What do you like about the beach?

Elliott – I like to go the beach and play in the sand
Micah – I like to go to the beach and play in the water

What is your favorite dessert?

Elliott – Jelly Beans
Micah – Donuts

Who do you love?

Elliott – My dads
Micah - Elliott
They both like to come to church to play with their friends!

RESILIENCE AND BEING ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

by Dr. Lorraine Fox



We'll end our series on assessing and building resilience in our children and teens this month, as we seem to be coming out of our international health crisis and begin adjusting to the "new normal." It is generally agreed that after two years of living very different lives than before the COVID crisis, no-one of any age will be quite the same.

We've been focused since the Spring of 2021 on helping our young people weather the social/emotional/health crisis as best they can by assessing and building "resilience." For the last few months we've been taking a look at the "Six Basic Needs" for all people, and understanding how the degree to which each of these has been met, and is being met, factors in to a person's resilience: the ability to adapt, withstand, creatively respond to, find inner tenacity during, and rebound from, crises or traumatic events.

This month we'll complete the Basic Needs "hierarchy" by examining how having lower – or more basic needs – met successfully allows a young person to achieve what Maslow called "Self-Actualization," or the ability to become all that one is capable of being. Being "self-actualized" does not imply any degree of intelligence or "giftedness." A child born with a physical, developmental, neurological, or mental challenge can – if they have their basic human needs met – become the "the best" *they* are able to be, given their abilities, disabilities, and challenges.

Children who are hungry, cold, unattended to at home, or worried about their survival at any level, will never be able to focus well on their education, thus beginning the problem of reaching their potential. This is why schools have lunch programs, and some schools even have breakfast programs. Children are not interested in math, or geography, or history, or any other academic program, if all they can think about is whether there will be food in their house, or whether they'll be cruelly physically punished, or evicted from their home. During the pandemic, children spent unusual amounts of time alone, especially if their parents were distracted with work or had to work outside of the home, leaving children alone with their computers, or without a computer. Without the ability to learn, for any number of reasons, a person can never develop into their finest self.

Children who grow up insecure and filled with anxiety about what they can depend on also find it difficult to concentrate on matters not directly related to their emotional well-being.

Children who don't experience a sense of belonging within their families, and within their peer groups, do not learn the necessary social skills to "work and play well with others." We've all encountered an adult who displayed this inability. No one can be their best self if they don't know how to share, get along with others, and deal with conflict successfully. These skills are learned in a group.

Of course if children do not feel loved, and are unable to give love, they will never be able to have the emotional stability to achieve enough satisfaction with life to feel self-fulfilled, content, and useful.

Feelings of unworthiness and insecurity about personal strengths and abilities will always interfere with the confidence needed to achieve levels of satisfaction with work and relationships for a life well lived.

And so we continue working on building the *foundation* necessary to thrive! We provide all necessities; we provide predictability and orderliness in life; we let our children know that we value them as part of our family, classroom, church, and neighborhood; we love our children – and even our obnoxious teens; we praise them for all of their strengths and abilities. That done, the foundation of resilience is there for whatever life brings.

Special Note: *I've been writing the Powerful Parenting column in the IUCC Newsletter for 30 years. Two things give me permission to let my quill dry out:*

1. *There are very few families with young children in the congregation now; those grandparents who used to send the column to their own children now have grandchildren that are grown; and*
2. *The IUCC Newsletter has become a very full, interesting read that is wide in scope. In other words, there is plenty of news and contributors these days.*

So with your permission I will take my gray hair, tremors, and fading brain off to my recliner, with full gratitude for the privilege I have been given for these decades to share my views.
- Lorraine

I Assume ...

by Vivian Elaine Johnson



Have you had a negative first impression of someone and learned through more involvement that you were completely wrong? A young woman of my acquaintance turns down dates if she doesn't like a man's name or hair style. One look and she's done. We may scoff at such superficiality, yet not be aware of our own lack of acceptance.

What do we assume if a person uses a wheelchair? While it aids their mobility, it most often has nothing to do with the user's other functions. Some who are pushed in a wheelchair report that people tend to ignore them, only addressing the one doing the pushing. Is there an assumption that the pushed person isn't capable of relating? Contrarily, people who use a motorized wheelchair or electric scooter report that people are more likely to speak to them, the assumption being that they are independent, therefore fully functioning.

In the popular book, [A Gentleman in Moscow](#), I was struck by author Amor Towles's words about first impressions:

After all, what can a first impression tell us about someone we've just met for a minute in the lobby of a hotel? For that matter, what can a first impression tell us about anyone? Why, no more than a chord can tell us about Beethoven or a brushstroke about Botticelli. (p. 120)

First impressions can result in false assumptions. We may assume that being wealthy is synonymous with being smart and honest or, contrarily, with arrogance and greed. Do some assume that elderly people are wise and accepting, or negatively assume that they are boring and complainers? Sadly, I've learned that a smart person may not be wise or ethical. Nor is a religious person synonymous with being kind and forgiving. Assumptions are risky.

Author Towles addresses assumptions:

By their very nature, human beings are so capricious, so complex, so delightfully contradictory, that they deserve not only our consideration, but our reconsideration – and our unwavering determination to withhold our opinion until we have engaged with them in every possible setting at every possible hour. (p. 120)

I need to take Towles's words to heart. I learned that when a person has an Alzheimer's diagnosis, some people assume that the patient can no longer communicate. That is not necessarily accurate. Yes, they may speak without filtering some thoughts, and they may forget things, but they still have thoughts. Some may have slower speech and need time to form words. We need to understand, stop our babbling, and give them time.

Iceland's first female president, Vigdis Finnbogadóttir, was a divorced single mother. Prior to her election in 1980, some reporters assumed a woman couldn't be president. One reporter asked her, "Do you really think that you can be president? After all, you have been treated for breast cancer." Her reply was, "It won't be a problem because I don't plan to breastfeed the citizens of Iceland." She was the world's first woman to be democratically elected as president and went on to serve for sixteen years. So much for assumptions!

Initial false assumptions can keep us from gaining knowledge and from enjoying delightful friendships. Some studies found that one negative incident with a person of a different race, religion, or gender requires numerous positive interactions with a person of that same race, religion, or gender to negate the one negative. Do we really want one negative interaction to result in the dismissing or stereotyping of an individual, or of an entire race, religion, or gender?

One thing I know: My first impressions, and resulting assumptions, can lead to inaccurate judgments. I don't want to emulate a man I know whose wife said, "He has hardening of the *attitudes*." His assumption, among others, is that all tattooed people are "no-good attention seekers."

Instead, I want an attitude that is open to knowing people more fully. I think that Towle had it right:

People deserve our unwavering determination to withhold our opinion until multiple engagements with them.

Robert Wise

by Keith Dillon



Good morning y'all. It's been a long while, hasn't it? As a greeting, I offer another in my irregular series of mad ravings on movies. You see, it irritates me no end when a fine filmmaker, a man or woman with their name on many essential projects, is ignored by the so-called "cineastes." Oh, that word: CINEASTE. A meaningless piece of macaroni if you ask me. Despite

celebrated catalogs, folks like George Cukor, Michael Curtiz, Alan Parker, and Norman Jewison even, are seldom mentioned at the Film Societies in the same breath with the John Fords, the Howard Hawkes and the Frank Capras. Can anybody tell me why? One victim of such willful ignorance is Robert Wise. This editor-turned-journeyman's name is on some groundbreaking movies of the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Yet, the CINEASTES (ugh!) rarely mention his name. Again: WHY?

Robert Earl Wise was born in Winchester, Indiana, on September 10, 1914. After college, he followed his brother David to Hollywood and got a job at RKO. Within a year, he was working as a sound effects editor and soon thereafter, he began work editing movies. Then Orson Welles came to RKO. First, there was *Citizen Kane*. After *Kane*, Mr. Wise did some second unit stuff for Welles on *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Within three years of *Kane*, Mr. Wise was directing his own films. His first was a B-movie called *The Curse of the Cat People*. With that curse, his career as a director, a career that would go on to produce over forty films, five Academy Award nominations and two wins, was up and running. In the year 2000, Mr. Wise made his last, a TV movie called *A Storm in Summer*. Mr. Wise passed away on September 14, 2005.

As a director, Robert Wise thought like an editor and it made him great. He understood how images could be arranged to create both stories and emotional reactions to those stories. In *The Set-Up*, for example, throughout the course of four unedited rounds of boxing, little glances, to the trainer, to the ring girl, to the clock, to some guys in the stands, these little glances remind us that there's something rotten in the boxing arena. In *I Want to Live!*, the Academy Award winning film about an execution of a woman, little painful details, a shot of the phone, a picture of Susan Heyward offering confession, an uneaten meal,

men preparing the gas chamber, all these images work together to create for the audience a sense of impending doom. Even in his most famous movies, *West Side Story* and *The Sound of Music*, small images work like mosaics to build danger in the key scenes. Here are some of Mr. Wise's finest:

- 1) *The Gay Divorcee* (Assist. Editor - 1934) His first with Astaire and Rogers.
- 2) *Top Hat* (Assist. Editor - 1935) Number 2 with Fred & Ginger.
- 3) *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Editor - 1939) Charles Laughton at his best.
- 4) *My Favorite Wife* (Editor - 1940) Screwball comedy with Irene Dunne & Cary Grant.
- 5) *Citizen Kane* (Editor - 1941) His first Oscar nomination: Best Film Editing.
- 6) *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Editor & Second Unit - 1942) Orson the second.
- 7) *The Set-Up* (1949) The finest boxing scenes I've ever seen. Robert Ryan stars.
- 8) *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) You can't bring peace to a bunch of fraidy cats.
- 9) *Executive Suite* (1954) A critique of post-war capitalism; Stanwyck and Holden star.
- 10) *I Want to Live!* (1958) A terrifying look at the death penalty starring Susan Heyward.
- 11) *West Side Story* (co-directed with Jerome Robbins - 1961) The finest movie musical ever.
- 12) *The Sound of Music* (1965) The most popular movie musical ever.
- 13) *The Sand Pebbles* (1966) Mr. Wise's last Oscar nominee. About the USS San Pablo.
- 14) *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) Science fiction about an alien epidemic.



Robert Wise

Can God be Defined?

by Dr. Eduardo Jesús Arismendi-Pardi, Adult Education
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The late Bishop John Shelby Spong (1931-2021) argues that understanding God from a theistic perspective as a supernatural being dwelling somewhere in an external setting capable of interfering in the world with miraculous power is something that is no longer believable. Spong points out that most liturgy and conversations

about God have become meaningless. I believe that one reason for his thesis about the concept of God being meaningless may be a function that it is, at least in my view, impossible to define God. I do believe that one can only experience God and such experience is a non-distributive event that can neither be transferred nor properly defined qualitatively or quantitatively. Experiencing God is a mystical event or mystical experience that is difficult to convey to others as evidenced in the writings of mystics such as Saint Teresa de Ávila (*Interior Castles*), Paramahansa Yogananda (*Autobiography of a Yogi*), Howard Thurman (*The Creative Encounter: An Interpretation of Religion and the Social Witness*), Evelyn Underhill (*Mysticism: A Study in Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*), Richard Rohr (*Mystical Experience*), Brother Lawrence (*The Practice of the Presence of God*), Frank C. Laubach (*Letters by a Modern Mystic*), and the writer of the Book of Revelation.

Experiencing God is personal and individual; it is something that is not well defined and is infinitely unique and different for each person. There is a difference between experiencing God and defining God. The latter is something that has challenged the human mind and has resulted in an explosion of religious traditions and theologies attempting to arrive at a precise definition and understanding of the mystery of God by using language, art, and others modes of communicative explanations or expressions. Hence, creeds, doctrines, dogma, and religiosity are just human explanations that attempt to provide explanations for the mystery of God. In my case, I agree with the assertion that:

God is not a Christian, God is not a Jew, or a Muslim, or a Hindu, or a Buddhist. All those are human systems which human beings have created to try to help us walk into the mystery of God. I honor my tradition, I walk through my tradition,

but I don't think my tradition defines God, I think it only points me to God. (Spong, n.d.)

This assertion by Spong makes sense and somehow reveals to me that experiencing God is an evolutionary process that is in a constant state of flux and which I understand as theological or spiritual Darwinism. Defining God, for me, is impossible and akin to defining the Seven Deadly Sins of Calculus which deals with operations involving infinity

(∞) and which mathematicians refer to as *Indeterminate Forms*. These forms occur in mathematical operations that yield results represented by the following seven concepts:

0^0 , $\frac{\infty}{\infty}$, $\frac{0}{0}$, $0 \cdot \infty$, 1^∞ , $\infty - \infty$, and ∞^0 all of which are not

clearly defined. Hence, the experience of God in one's life journey is a commutative event. To experience God is to be one with God and to be one with God is to experience God. However, such experience is not distributive because mystical experiences are not transferable. This might be one reason why the Book of Revelation is so difficult to clearly and conclusively understand. My assumption is that the Book of Revelation was the record of a mystical vision of the writer. The author's vision of events recorded in the Book of Revelation is neither transferable nor distributive and thus is not clearly understood.

Spong tries to explain the experience of God by using this example: An insect may be able to experience a bird, but no insect has the frame of reference out of which it could ever describe to another insect what it means to be a bird. In a like manner, how can anyone who has experienced God as a function of a mystical non-distributive experience tell another human being what it is like to be God? We as humans can experience God but there is really no way that as humans we can define God in finite terms and with finite human language or modes of expressions or communications. The experience of God is an act of liberation and emancipation from religious oppression and dogma, as well as all forms of religious shame and guilt. Finally, in my view God is only revealed as an experience through the humanity of the historical Jesus. Can God be defined? I have not been able to define God in precise finite terms. I cannot quantify God and I cannot tell what is like to be God. God is *Indeterminate*. Can you define God? If so, how do you define God? If not, then can you experience God and if so, how do you experience God? Can God be defined?

Reference

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Jean-Paul Sartre on Radical Freedom and Decision-Making

by The Reverend Doctor Jerry von Talge

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The importance of freedom for progressive Christians

Freedom to think and to choose is the foundation for the 8 points for progressive Christianity. This freedom allows us to embark on our own spiritual journey, to question and to explore. This freedom makes it possible to create our

own beliefs, rather than having someone tell us what to believe, with an attempt to control us.

Progressive Christians value a spiritual journey in which wisdom is garnered from many sources, including the life and teachings of Jesus. We believe that there is more value in questioning than in absolutes. Sartre's concept of radical freedom is an excellent fit for the progressive Christian journey. Existentialism gives support, helping us in our journey. It provides both a conceptual framework and encouragement.

Existentialism provides a unique and compelling account of what it means to be human, with a focus on the questions of existence and the human experience. This and the resulting emphasis on subjectivity are similar in nature to the journey of progressive Christians, whose learning along the way will be subjective in nature because it is personal.

Freedom and existentialism

Existentialism is focused on questions of existence and human subjective experience. With the exception of Kierkegaard, existentialists believe that all that human beings know is through subjective experience. There is no objective knowledge (except for Kierkegaard, who believed in God), therefore there are no givens in life. Each person must create their own meaning and purpose. This requires making decisions, choosing what to believe and what actions to take. Albert Camus expresses this reality by saying that we must give the void its colors.

It takes a lot of courage for a person to decide what their life will be, to choose their values and to act upon those values. The human existential condition is one of not knowing, of having a life that is a void, not yielding answers to questions that people have about their lives. Consequently, existentialists were interested in the idea

of personal freedom and decision-making - in order for individuals to fill the existential void in their lives.

Freedom is a gift and a curse

Sartre believed in the sanctity of every individual consciousness. That consciousness had the gift of being totally free to make decisions in all circumstances. The curse of freedom was the personal responsibility that was required in choosing to create a person's life and the resulting selfhood.

Absolute freedom

Absolute freedom in all circumstances was a radical concept held by Sartre. Although several other existential philosophers believed in personal freedom to choose, his concept of freedom is more extreme. There are limitations on decisions in terms of consequences, but freedom is absolute in the sense that a person is always free to choose how they will respond to any circumstance in which they find themselves. For example, a person could decide to fly without wings. They are free to make the decision to fly, but without wings they will fall to the ground.

Total responsibility

With absolute freedom comes total responsibility. Total responsibility includes not only the responsibility for creating one's life, but also responsibility to other people for how they are affected. There is also the necessity for courageous decision-making and the owning up for a person's decisions. Decisions not only create a person's life but also a person becomes their decisions, a kind of self-creation. This is an important point for progressive Christianity and decision-making.

Decision-making and virtue

Virtue in decision-making is important to Sartre. Virtue is achieved by assuming total responsibility for one's decisions and their impact, both on oneself and others. He does not come to the point of creating any system of ethics.

Self-transcendence

Sartre's radical idea of freedom in decision-making has many facets. One of these facets is humankind's ability for self-transcendence by reaching beyond themselves,

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“Sartre” article continued from page 17

outside themselves. In this act, a person becomes authentic, creating self-transcendence.

Danger of the other

The concept of the other is a major theme in Sartre’s writing. The other is a self-conscious entity that poses some kind of a threat to a person’s existence. Sartre had a strong social conscience and was concerned about such threats to humankind such as racism and sexism. This idea of the other supports the social justice part of our progressive Christian faith.

Conclusion

Existentialism offers a great deal of support for progressive Christians on their spiritual journey.

John-Paul Sartre’s concept of absolute freedom is of critical importance. He has underscored the truth that we always have a freedom of choice, regardless of the circumstances. We always have the freedom to choose how we will respond to any situation in which we find ourselves.

This truth has helped me immeasurably throughout my life, easing burdens and providing courage in difficult circumstances. Absolute freedom makes each person’s spiritual journey easier and more rewarding.

Sartre’s ideas on virtue, self-transcendence, and danger of the other - social evils - help us to be bold, courageous, and committed in the choices that each of us makes along our spiritual journey in life. He supports our social conscience by the idea of the other. With this concept he reinforces our desire for social justice.

The 8 Points of Progressive Christianity

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; and
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion and selfless love.

Existentialism and a Do-It -Yourself Faith
How Existentialism Supports Progressive
Christianity

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