Happy New Year!

Here is a reminder that the United Church of Christ (UCC) is a church of “firsts.”

We:

- Brought the first free press with us to America, and it is still with us today as the Pilgrim Press.
- Started America’s first institutions of higher learning—most notably Harvard, Yale and Andover.
- Took the first stand against slavery in 1700 in the work of the Rev. Samuel Sewall and anti-slavery tracts. Through our involvement in the Amistad Event, we were strongly active in the abolitionist movement.
- Ordained the first African American preacher in an established Protestant church, the Rev. Lemuel Haynes in 1785.
- Ordained the first woman, the Rev. Antoinette Brown in 1853.
- Ordained the first gay person, the Rev. William R. Johnson in 1972.
It is this last “first” of which I wish to take note. On January 27, IUCC will be honoring the Rev. Bill Johnson in worship, and we will hear from him at 1:00 in the sanctuary. As you can see from the brief history above, Bill occupies an important role in the history of the church at large, and we can claim him as one of our own.

Bill is a genuine, unassuming man with a warm sense of humor. As IUCC quietly passed the 20th year of our own status as an Open and Affirming congregation in 2012, Bill was celebrating 40 years in ordained ministry and making plans to retire to Pilgrim Place in Claremont. Pastor Ken Wyant went to undergraduate school with Bill, and invited him to make IUCC one of his first speaking engagements near his new home.

These anniversaries are just too important to let go. I want to invite you to take part in celebrating our church’s Open and Affirming designation this month, along with hosting Bill Johnson and celebrating his groundbreaking ministry.

Just over twenty years ago, IUCC became the 57th “Open and Affirming” or “O&A” church in the United Church of Christ. To put this into perspective, there are well over 5,000 churches in our denomination, and the most recent congregation that voted to become O&A three weeks ago (Bethel UCC in Ontario, CA) is number 1,068.

In 1985, I was a member of Riverside Church in New York City. The Rev. William Sloane Coffin led the way for all of us by working with church leadership to create a statement that was intentional and unambiguous in being fully welcoming to LGBT people. There was some tension as you may imagine. Before the church took the vote, there was a weekend when Coffin was away. Without consulting with Bill, one of his associate pastors took the pulpit and preached against gays. A lot of pain and heartache ensued, and people were split on the issue. In the end, the vote was taken and Riverside Church became the first Christian church in the nation (as well as in our denomination) to become “Open and Affirming.”

Seven years later, Irvine UCC, the First Congregational Church of Long Beach and Pilgrim Church in Carlsbad joined the pioneers of this movement and took similar stands. It was during this time that our own Susan Sherman (producer of our new videos) worked with the leaders of these three churches to create video and resource materials that congregations could use to guide their churches through the O&A process. These materials are still being used today and can be purchased through United Church of Christ Resources.
I was able to come back to church because Riverside Church chose to lead the way. I am able to be a minister because the Rev. Bill Johnson and those who loved and supported him took similar brave and prophetic steps.

This month’s Comma Theme – the suggested topic for discussion in our Comma Group small groups program – is “Progressive Christianity” and I will be speaking on some of the more theological aspects of it in church on Sunday, January 6.

The progressive movement in the church speaks to people who find themselves questioning and unable to suppress their thinking so that they can fit within a proscribed doctrine. But, I think that one of the many important reasons that IUCC is a vital and relevant voice of Progressive Christianity is due to the hope it holds out to various marginalized communities, including the lgbt community, and particularly now as we offer love and support to transgender folks in Orange County.

See you in church!

Yours,
Pastor Paul

From the Associate Pastor

Happy New Year everyone! May 2013 be a year in which we as individuals and we as a church truly manifest all of the glory of God inside of us to do our part to bring peace on Earth and goodwill to all. Epiphany is the major church holiday in January, and it has everything to do with manifesting God’s glory. Since actually not much is known about this holiday in many mainline churches, I did a little research and edited some highlights from Wikipedia for your edification.

“Epiphany” (Koine Greek: ἐπιφάνεια, epiphaneia, “manifestation,” “striking appearance”) or Theophany (Ancient Greek ἡ Θεοφάνεια, Theophaneia meaning “vision of God”), which traditionally falls on January 6, is a Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation of God the Son as a human being in Jesus Christ. Western Christians commemorate principally (but not solely) the visitation of the Biblical Magi to the Baby Jesus, and thus Jesus’ physical manifestation to the Gentiles.
In classical Greek the term epiphany was used of the appearance of dawn, of an enemy in war, but especially of a manifestation of a deity to a worshipper (a theophany). The observance had its origins in the Eastern Christian Churches and was a general celebration of the manifestation of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. It included the commemoration of his birth; the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem; all of Jesus’ childhood events, up to and including his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist; and even the miracle at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. It seems fairly clear that the Baptism was the primary event being commemorated.

The West observes a twelve-day festival, starting on December 25, and ending on January 5, known as Christmastide or the Twelve Days of Christmas. According to ancient custom, the priest announced the date of Easter on the feast of Epiphany. This tradition dated from a time when calendars were not readily available, and the church needed to publicize the date of Easter, since many celebrations of the liturgical year depend on it. The Roman Missal thus provides a formula with appropriate chant for proclaiming on Epiphany wherever it is customary to do so, the dates in the calendar for the celebration of Ash Wednesday, Easter Sunday, Ascension of Jesus Christ, Pentecost, the Body and Blood of Christ, and the First Sunday of Advent that will mark the following liturgical year.

In Louisiana, Epiphany is the beginning of the Carnival season, during which it is customary to bake King Cakes. The cakes are round in shape, filled with cinnamon, glazed white, and coated in traditional carnival color sanding sugar. The person who finds the doll (or bean) must provide the next king cake. The interval between Epiphany and Mardi Gras is sometimes known as “king cake season,” and many may be consumed during this period. The Carnival season begins on King’s Day (Epiphany), and there are many traditions associated with that day in Louisiana and along the Catholic coasts of Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. King cakes are first sold then, Carnival krewes begin having their balls on that date, and the first New Orleans krewe parades in street cars that night.

In our Sunday worship on January 6, we’ll be focusing on Epiphany, as well as receiving the sacrament of communion and taking up this month’s Comma Group topic of Progressive Christianity. It should be a full day! And I hope that our observance of Epiphany may extend beyond that day into our daily lives, as
we live out the way God was revealed in Jesus 2,000 years ago and is revealed in each of us today as well.

Our communal church life offers us many opportunities to worship, study, learn, explore, teach, serve, and advocate for this ongoing divine revelation. I encourage everyone to explore these opportunities this month by taking part in the Rev. George Johnson's class, “Food, Farming and Faith” beginning January 9; by attending the events the Advocates for Peace and Justice have organized around the visit of Palestinian activist Iyad Burnat on January 13 and 16; by participating in affirming our church priorities and budget at our Winter Congregational Meeting on January 20; by celebrating the Rev. Ernie Fowler’s 100th birthday(!) at a special luncheon following the January 20 meeting; by keeping abreast of our developments as a Safe Church by asking Paul, me, or a member of the Ministry for Young People about the latest progress; and by attending the luncheon and presentation on January 27 of the Rev. Bill Johnson (first openly gay person ordained in the UCC—or perhaps any Christian church in modern times!).

Our special programming for children, youth, young adults, and young families will continue as well of course. Most of our faithful Sunday School teachers will continue their wonderful service with our elementary school-aged kids. But please see me if you would also like to enter this ministry of teaching, as we do need to fill a couple open spots. Our Youth Leader, Erika, will return from six weeks in India, having visited our former Youth Leader, Sarah Fiske-Phillips, explored some of the country’s highlights, and spent time volunteering near Calcutta. I’m sure she will have amazing stories to share! Our young adults group for 20s and 30, Bread for the Journey, will continue its Tuesday evening gatherings at 7pm in the Youth Room also.

There is much going on, and your participation in these various activities will only strengthen and deepen the experience for others in your church family. We have heard tell of the newborn baby who brings peace and light into our world. Now it’s up to us to follow along with the Magi to see this holy manifestation for ourselves and then to go “tell it on the mountain!” How will divinity manifest itself in you this year? And how will you share it with others? That story is up to each of us as individuals and all of us as a church to write together in this New Year…

With blessings of God’s peace,
Pastor Elizabeth
Happy New Year and Namaste!

I hope you all had a merry Christmas. I have been in India for about two weeks now. So far, it has been an incredible and eye-opening experience. I can’t wait to share stories and pictures with all of you when I get back to Orange County on January 27th!

Since I will be gone for most of January, youth group and Sunday school will be a little different this month. A few members of our congregation have generously agreed to help lead some youth activities and teach Sunday school while I am away. Be sure to look for updates from Pastor Elizabeth for details about youth group and Sunday school this month.

Looking ahead to the new year, there are some fun opportunities for our youth group. Two of the biggest events are:
• Junior High JANboree for middle school students (Jan. 18-21) and
• Feb Camp for High School students (Feb 16-18).

Both events provide IUCC youth with the great opportunity to connect with their peers from the regional church. I am unable to attend JANboree, because I will still be in India, but am planning to attend Feb Camp with our high school youth.

If you are interested in attending either event, please let Pastor Elizabeth know.

More information about these events is available online:
Junior High JANboree: Click here.
Feb Camp: Click here.

Looking forward to seeing you,

Erika
From the Moderator

January. Already?

2013. Already?

Congregational meeting. Already?

And the answer is yes, to all of those.

This year the winter congregational meeting is Jan. 20. Treasurer Greg Guth will be presenting the 2013 budget, and I’ll be reporting on our recent building survey.

You can find out more about the budget at a forum on Jan. 13. The budget and the building survey will also be online at iucc.org. Here’s a little preview:

The budget committee had a couple of challenges to face this year. The total budgeted pledge amount is no larger than last year. Between the increases we just can’t avoid (health care increases, utilities) and the ones we would like to fund (additional music for our growing choir, more funds for global mission projects and adult education programs and other requests for budget increases), those of us on the budget committee were challenged to find a way to fund everything.

So we’ve built a little more income into the budget in the way of fundraising and cut the discretionary funding available to the administrative board so that each ministry is being funded at the level that was requested in most cases. In some cases, where there was a request for a large budget increase over last year, we were only able to partially fund the increase.

We will be presenting a balanced budget this year. That’s the good news. The bad news is there’s no provision for raises for our wonderful pastoral and support staff, and that pains all of us. I encourage you to attend the budget forum or study the budget online. And please lend your support by attending the congregational meeting.

As for the building survey, I was pleased that so many people participated and had suggestions to offer. Nearly everyone agrees that we need to do something, which is encouraging. Support for the child care center remains strong as does the desire to see a more welcoming office / pastoral space. I look forward to sharing the details and some of the comments at the congregational meeting.

In the meantime, here’s to a happy, healthy 2013 for all.

Cindy
Adult Education: Upcoming Opportunities

Tuesday Bible Study – Doubleheader! "The Beautiful Book of Revelation." Starting January 8, choose the session that fits your schedule:

- afternoons at 2:00 or
- evenings at 6:30 in Plumer Hall.

The last book of the Bible includes a vivid description of the beast. It is also full of beauty. Bibles are provided, but please bring your own ideas and opinions. The discussion enlightens everyone.

- Saturday, January 19, 2013 at 10:30 a.m.: Comma Group Leaders meeting in Plumer Hall. We will review how things are going with the Comma Groups and share suggestions for the remaining sessions.

The Reverend Bill Johnson will speak at Irvine UCC on January 27, 2013 at 1:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. The title of his presentation is: Moving Fences: Our Evolving Commitment to ONA.

With more than 40 years in the struggle for full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the United Church of Christ, few people know it as well as Bill Johnson. Bill was the first openly gay person ordained to Christian ministry in the history of the Christian Church (1972) and founder, that same year, of the United Church Coalition for LGBT Concerns. He was also the primary author of most of the UCC’s social justice policies supporting LGBT human and baptismal rights. Bill will remind us of milestones in the evolution of the Open and Affirming (ONA) movement in the UCC and reflect on work yet to be done.
We are celebrating Bill’s 40+ years of ministry and our 20+ years as an Open and Affirming congregation.

Everyone is also welcome at a potluck brunch in Plumer Hall following the 11:00 a.m. worship.

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Women’s Fellowship Gets Thank-You Note!

Dear Denise and Baking Friends:

Thank you so much for helping to make the toy drive a success! Everyone loved your baked goods. I’ve enclosed a photo [see left] of the “final product.”

- Jen S.
The Adult Programs Ministry
Invites YOU to Join Us in a
7 Week Series

“COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS”

February 13, Ash Wednesday, 7:30pm  
Starts in Plumer Hall  
“Designing A Meaningful Lent For You”  
We then proceed to the Church for the Ash Wednesday Service

February 20  
Hinduism  
Debashish Banerji

February 27  
Native American  
Adelia Sandervol

March 6  
Sikh  
Orange County Sikh Temple

March 13  
Islam  
Alia Aboul-Nasr

March 20  
Buddhism  
Rev. Ken Nagata

March 27, Maundy Thursday  
Starts in Church with the service. Then Plumer Hall for a forum: “The Power of The Resurrection”

All programs are on Wednesdays, 7:30pm to 9pm  Plumer Hall  
except Maundy Thursday:  starts in the church at 7:30pm

Everyone is Welcomed

We are making plans, for those who wish, to visit the places of worship for each of the above religions. TBA

------------------------Registration(simply for planning purposes)------------------------

Name(s)__________________________________________________________

Best way to contact you: (Ph/Email)_________________________________
IUCC has a special message of love, inclusion, and extravagant welcome to share with others! The pleasant task of the Outreach ministry is to inform the public about our wonderful congregation.

We spread the news by staffing booths at AIDS Walk, the Gay Pride Festival, the Irvine Global Village Festival, and various other community-wide events. We also publish ads about our various events and services.

You can participate in Outreach by helping to staff the IUCC booth at any of these upcoming events: OC AIDS Walk (May 4 at the Disneyland Resort); OC Pride (August); Irvine Global Village (end of September); and/or Great American Write-In (April). To volunteer, contact Tricia Aynes at tricia_aynes@yahoo.com or (714) 651-6285.

Global Ministries (part of the IUCC Mission and Service Ministry) is always looking for people who are interested in reaching out to the hurting world both here within our church family or anyplace around the world. Also, we are looking for folks who will help us develop our programs with their time, talents and/or treasures.
We are especially interested in anyone who would like to serve on the steering committee which helps determine where and how we serve.

Our most immediate need is someone who would help us design and implement our 18' by 6' display wall.

In February and April 2013 we are having a series of outside speakers and a Global Mission Faire and would appreciate anyone willing to help with food for lunches, publicity, sign-ups, decorating.

You can participate in IUCC’s fast-growing Global Ministries program by contacting the program chair, Rev. Bil Aulenbach (himself a former missionary). Dial (949) 240-2933; or write to bilaulenbach@yahoo.com.

Global Ministries in Action:

Photo was taken in Peru, on the island of Armantani, on Lake Titicaca. Bil and Ann Aulenbach stayed at the [pictured] woman’s house with a French couple who didn’t speak Spanish or English. The host spoke a little Spanish.

Although Bil speaks French, conversations were, needless-to-say, interesting.
Happy New Year!

An Invitation from Adult Programs

For its size, IUCC surely has one of the more outstanding programs of Christian Education for adults that I have ever seen, notes Bil Aulenbach, Chair of the Adult Education Ministry.

IUCC attracts national and international speakers. There is a constant offering of programs to educate, stimulate and encourage our church family as well as the community, to keep growing in their faith journey. We don’t tell you how to think. We simply encourage you to continue growing on your spiritual journey.

This takes a dedicated committee of people who are interested in offering new and challenging programs. So we are always ready to welcome people who would like to help set the course as to our direction and then are willing to help implement it.

We are also looking for those individuals who are willing to support us in our programming as organizers, staffing tables, setting up, signing up and just being there as needed.

This Ministry is one of the reasons that people want to become involved with IUCC. We would love you to help us keep this Ministry one of the foundation stones of our congregation.

➢ Do you have a heart for Adult programs? If so, please contact Rev. Ken Wyant, Interim Director of Adult Programs, or Bil Aulenbach at (949) 240-2933 or bilaulenbach@yahoo.com

Editor’s Note: The Chair of IUCC’s Adult Programs Ministry, the Rev. Bil Aulenbach, identifies himself as a progressive Christian. Bil holds a Ph.D. in Theology.
Happy New Year!

An Invitation from The Child Care Committee

For the Love of a Child

You can make a difference in the life of a child right here at IUCC as a volunteer in our Early Childhood Center.

Do you have musical talent, are you crafty, do you enjoy gardening, or do you love to read a good story?

When you share your talents with young children in the IUCC preschool you help them to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. That’s because you create a wider caring community in which children can know they are loved and cherished.

According to The Search Institute, a leading organization dedicated to “discovering what kids need to succeed,” caring child care settings, creative activities, and other adult relationships are among the key assets children need to thrive.

- The IUCC Child Care Committee would be happy to discuss your ideas for sharing your talents through a volunteer activity in the Early Childhood Center. Either a one-time visit or longer commitment is welcome. The difference you make will last a lifetime!

— Laura Long, Kathy Brown, Janet Emery, Lyle Norton, Kelly Rehbein, and Elizabeth Schiller


Happy New Year!

An Invitation from Fellowship

Join Bon Vivant Dinners! Small groups of 8 – 10 will gather for dinner on January 26, 2013. Bon Vivants are held at someone’s house as a potluck, and may alternatively be planned for a restaurant.

This is a chance to get to know fellow members in a smaller, intimate setting.

- Sign up on the patio at church until January 20!

Second Thursday Potluck. This informal gathering meets in Plumer hall, starting at 5:45. Participants are asked to bring some light supper item to share. This month’s provision from Fellowship Chair Lindy Garber is: vegetarian quiche.

- No sign-up is necessary: but please bring something to share.

It’s an ideal time for mixing with the choir, many of whom join the potluck for something to eat prior to the choir rehearsal in the sanctuary.

Questions? Lindy Garber: LMLindy@Cox.net (949) 495-1931

Happy New Year!

An invitation from 2nd Service Coffee Hour

Coffee hour following Sunday services is an opportunity for our congregation to meet and greet one another while enjoying a light snack. It’s a time to seek out and welcome newcomers, connect with friends, and thank those who provide the refreshments.

- JoAnne Mansell, second service coffee hour coordinator, has prepared a sign-up sheet for all of the Sundays in 2013, which will be on a clipboard on the snack table. Please consider signing up to host as a way to celebrate a birthday, a wedding anniversary, or just to give service to your church.

Thanks to all of those who hosted in 2012.
Iyad Burnat is head of the Bil'in Popular Committee and a leader in the village’s non-violent popular resistance movement. Since 2005 citizens of Bil'in have held weekly demonstrations against the building of the Israeli separation wall through the village’s agricultural lands, and the steady encroachment of illegal Israeli settlements. The story of their struggle is told in the award winning video, “Five Broken Cameras.” Iyad will tell the stories of Bil’in and life in occupied Palestine, and talk about strategies for non-violent popular resistance with a goal of peace and prosperity for all people. He’ll also share photos and videos with us in his presentation.

Irvine United Congregational Church

4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine, CA

Sponsored by the IUCC Advocates for Peace and Justice; Friends of Sabeel in Southern California, the voice of the Palestinian Christians; the Cousins Club of Orange County, a Middle East dialogue and peace group, and UCI’s Students for Justice in Palestine.
“Five Broken Cameras”

Screening on January 13, 2013 at 12:45 pm in Plumer Hall, following second service. A light lunch will be available.

This new documentary was a winner at 2012 Sundance Film Festival. It tells the story of the Bil’in Popular Committee and the Palestinian peace marchers who go to the separation wall each Friday protesting Israeli occupation – and the sort of repression and violence they face at the hands of the Israeli military. The title of the film comes from the fact that Palestinian activist Emad Burnat ended up with five smashed cameras (destroyed by Israeli authorities) after he started recording all this stuff. Iyad, his brother, appears in the movie, which will be shown before Mr. Burnat’s visit.

This film is among the finalists in the documentary category for the 2013 Academy Awards.
January Birthdays!

Jillian Allen
Richard Arguile
Joni Baker
Julia Brozek
Emily Cordes
Paul Duncan
Felicity Figueroa
Ernest Fowler
Carol Henden

David Humme
Laura Kemp
Marilyn KesslerWest
Roseann Landis
Ian McClement
Joan McDonald
Ava Mitchell
Kieran Mitchell

Joan Mortenson
Eugene Price
Belinda Robnett-Olson
Barbara Ruris
Chris Sanders
Bonnie Shaffstall
Bill Sheak

SAVE THE DATE:
FEBRUARY 2, 2013:
IUCC’S BLACK & WHITE PARTY!
Liz Smith—

Liz grew up right here in Irvine, and was raised the Evangelical Baptist Christian tradition, which she left years ago. Liz came to IUCC looking for a church family that would accept and embrace who she was without preconditions. She is an artist in her free time, having appeared in gallery showings at California State University Northridge.

Bob and Lynn Terry—

Bob and Lynn both grew up in the Bay area. They now live in San Clemente. Bob and Lynn are from the Catholic Church tradition. Bob is retired from work in sales, and Lynn is also retired. They have been attending IUCC for at least a year, and they both enjoy some of the same things—peace and justice issues, gardening, painting, and this church.

Anne and Cuong Hoang—

Anne grew up in Arizona, and comes from the Lutheran tradition. She works as an RN. Anne is the niece of George and Vivian Johnson. She is married to Cuong—

Cuong grew up in Vietnam, and was baptized in the Catholic church there in 1971. After he left Vietnam, he lived in San Diego. Cuong is a school psychologist by profession. He and Anne have one child, Camille, who is two years old. They live in Aliso Viejo.
New Members – 2012 Yearly Roster

Twenty-seven new members joined the Irvine United Congregational Church in 2012. In addition, two re-instated their membership, bringing the total of new members to 29 for the year.

On February 19, we welcomed Cindy Katz, who’d been a friend of this church through her brother, Dave Schofield. Cindy and her husband Glenn have two children, Danielle and Rachel. One of several interfaith families in our church, Glenn stood with Cindy, and is welcomed with her as part of our church family. Cindy comes from the Southern Baptist tradition and is employed as a registered nurse. Glenn and Cindy live in San Clemente.

We also welcomed Alyssa Stanford, who is from Omaha, Nebraska. She is married to Kyle, and they have one son, Casey, who took to our Sunday school right away. Alyssa is from the Methodist tradition. She is a family therapist. Kyle was also welcomed as a part of IUCC, while not through membership.

On April 8, we welcomed four new members.

Sarah Cook is from Sidney Ohio, where she grew up in the Catholic Church. She attends UCI, where she is working on her PhD in Chemistry. Sarah joined with her partner, Kristen.

Kristen Thoreson grew up near St. Paul, Minnesota in the Methodist Church. She has completed her PhD in Chemistry, and is now looking for a teaching position. Kristen and Sarah live here in Irvine.

August Lobato was born and raised in the Catholic tradition. He and his partner, Mahlon, came to IUCC seeking a church that would embrace them, challenge their thinking and help renew their faith. Mahlon passed away before they had a chance to join as a couple, but August joined in order to continue the journey they began together. August is an active member of the choir. He is a science, art and theatre teacher for Junior High students at Vista Verde School in Irvine.

Kelly Rehbein grew up in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and was baptized in the Catholic Church. She lived in Rhode Island for many years, where she worked as a Marriage and Family Therapist, and attended the Unitarian Church. Kelly is married to Ron, and they have two children: Charlie, who is six, and Maya, who is three. Charlie and Maya attend our Sunday school. They live in Irvine.
On May 13, we welcomed four new members via confirmation. They are: Ben Allen, Annika Evensen, Taelor Exelby, and Alaina Haynes.

On September 9, we added six members.

Elizabeth Hall is originally from Virginia and moved here with her late husband in 1972. She grew up in the Episcopal church, but as an adult never found a spiritual home until attending IUCC. She has a dog who is the love of her life, and is now retired. Elizabeth volunteers and also works at Atria Woodbridge, an assisted living facility just down the street, where she has found a passion in this work.

Jordan Tennessee Hicks was born and raised in Durham, NH, and has been a member of the Congregational Church all his life. He met Tara and moved to Finland. Upon their return to the US and after the birth of their daughter, Erica Jane, he finally found a spiritual home at IUCC. I work with my wife at a custom sports clothing manufacturer in Santa Ana, where I am the manager of the art and embellishment department.

Tara Lucy Hicks is from South Africa, and grew up in the Roman Catholic Church. Jordan and I were meant to be together. We have a lovely daughter, Erica Jane Hicks. She works with her husband at a custom sports clothing manufacturer in Santa Ana where she is the International Sales Coordinator, and he is the manager of the art and embellishment department.

The reason that Tara has been drawn to the IUCC, is that she can be herself and come to her understanding of God in her own way, while finding a great sense of community.

Erica Jane was baptized by Pastor Elizabeth not long after Jordan and Tara joined IUCC.

Mark Miller and Jim Soha --

Jim is from Maryland and was baptized in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. He is a physician with Kaiser. Jim has two children, Caleigh and Aiden. Jim is married to Mark Miller.

Mark is from Southern California, and comes from the Catholic tradition. He owns the Trading Post Fan Company in Huntington Beach.

They are drawn to IUCC for the Open and Affirming Atmosphere of unconditional love. For them, the concept of a safe sanctuary in a loving community is important.
**Susan Sayre** lives in Irvine, and she is a retired social worker. She has a son. Susan was born in and raised in the Bay Area, graduated from U.C. Davis and then served in the Peace Corps in Brazil for 2 years. She comes from the Unitarian tradition, and was baptized a Baptist. She was in search of a church that was both spiritual and actively involved in human rights and other social issues. Susan enjoys our adult Sunday school, our worship and music.

On October 14, we again added six members, and welcomed two who re-instated their memberships.

**Bill and Jean Dietrich** are retired, and moved here from San Rafael, where they were members of the First Presbyterian Church. Jean worked as a Human Resources Director, and Bill as a transportation engineer. Bill is from Illinois, and Jean is from California. They have three grown children, Dave, Doug and Deborah.

**Colleen McNamara** attends first service. She grew up in New York in the Catholic tradition. Colleen lives in Irvine, and previously attended Mariners. Colleen is a retired nurse, and she has two grown sons.

**Ken Matsuyama** transferred his membership to IUCC from Diamond Bar UCC. Ken was raised in the Gifu prefecture in central Japan and his mother, father and two brothers still live there. He became a Christian after attending IUCC several years and was baptized by our own Terry Lepage. He was her first baptism.

Ken served as a volunteer coordinator at the Emmaus Christian Center in Sendai Japan for one year after the 2011 tsunami and continued his Christian studies there with the Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek, UCC Global Mission Youth minister operating out of the center. He has been active at IUCC for many years with his partner, Randy Romine.

**Robin Palmer** had been attending IUCC since January, and is pleased to be making IUCC her “official” church home. She lives in Aliso Viejo, and has taught school in Capistrano Unified for over two decades.

**Jayna Tisdale** joined IUCC, having been introduced to us by her partner, Van Muse. She was born in Oregon and grew up Catholic in Fort Jones, California. Jayna is an Accounts Administrator and a Coordinator for a non-profit foundation. Jayna now has four kids: Kaitlynn, Raymond, Madelyn and Sophie.

**Jim and Tricia Aynes** re-instated their membership after many years living away up north. They were long-time members of IUCC.
December Photos

Babies!

Singers!

Rev. Fowler – voicing Isaiah

A Winter’s Solstice Concert

Sanctuary Decorations

Performers!

Winner!
We’ll be winding up our series on bullying over the next couple of months, but an error in last month’s column allows me to integrate the New Year theme into this discussion.

It’s the end of one year and the beginning of the next as I write, and as always I sit wondering about the wisdom of carrying on the tradition of making a new year’s “resolution”. As we all know, such resolutions rarely last, because if we really wanted to do what we’re resolving to do, we’d be doing it.

Most people I talk with about new year resolutions have one of two experiences:

1. The resolution is made with very sincere intention, but will not last, as others made in the past have not;

2. The just-mentioned experience has been so consistent we don’t even bother making resolutions anymore. Such is the phenomenon of habit and complacency.

On the other hand, I like the idea of using the start of a new year to think about resolutions because it reassures us that it really is possible to make positive changes. While past habits are hard to break, they are not impossible to break. While we often get discouraged with ourselves because of our lack of follow through, most of us have had the experience of actually making improvements in the way we live. As parents, this knowledge is invaluable because it reassures us that we really can be “change agents” for our kids. With patience, wisdom, and lots of luck, our guidance and nudges may well actually “pay off” with improved abilities in our kids to manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, as we resolve to be better parents. And so we persist.

So here is my resolution I publicly declare to you, my faithful readers. I will, starting now, do a better job of editing my column before submitting it for publication. My blunder last month was very instructive for me, both because it reminded me that being careful is always a good thing, and because it reinforces one of the major themes of this series: the power of words, and the importance of paying close attention to them.
In the spirit of gift giving, popular in December, we talked about giving our children the “gift of listening”. We then considered how with older children, or well-treated children, we can pay careful attention to their words. With young children, who have feelings and experiences just as we do, but who don’t have the words to use to express themselves, they are more likely to express themselves **non-verbally**: other forms of communication such as actions, gestures, or facial expressions. What I actually wrote last month did not make any sense (“the fewer words children know, the more likely they are to communicate verbally”). This lack of attention to the important detail of the sentence caused the meaning to come out completely wrong. (Of course, it’s a little disconcerting is that not one person-other than my partner- pointed out this error or asked for a clarification. But I won’t speculate now about this omission.) For this our first discussion of the new year let’s use my carelessness and your lack of confrontation to reinforce one of the important lessons of this parenting series: If we don’t pay close attention to what another person is communicating, we risk either missing something very important that they need to “tell” (with or without words) us, or, our lack of close attention causes us to think that something is okay that isn’t okay.

For me, talking with adults about our responsibilities to intervene with all bullying (aggressive, hurtful) interactions brings us always to the theme of the new year. To be at our best, we need to resolve (make up our minds, decide, form a plan, intend, set out) to do so, whether it’s about taking care of ourselves or taking care of our children.

I started the discussion on bullying last year by saying what I think is true. There are “proven strategies” to prevent bullying. These strategies, however, involve a big commitment of time, energy, and attention on the part of all adults who have responsibilities for children and their well-being. I’ll make a resolution to be more careful with my editing; and I’ll ask you to make a resolution to **use what you learn** about keeping children safe to help them to have a better next year.

Happy New Year.
News & Notes
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